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# **Cultural Property and Heritage in Japan**

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Thesis submitted for the degree of PhD in September  
2011

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## Abstract

This thesis examines the nature of cultural property and heritage in Japan, primarily on the basis of fieldwork conducted in the Iwami Ginzan World Heritage site in 2007-2009, which was immediately after its designation by UNESCO. The impact of the designation on the local community of Ōmori is examined. The site, located in the mountains of Shimane Prefecture, contains many items that are administered under various schemes of classifying objects that have been determined to be valuable on the national and regional levels. It thus provides a microcosm of cultural property policy and conflicting interests. Although the resident population is only four hundred, the village contains the ruins of extensive silver mines dating from the sixteenth century, and has maintained a core of buildings from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries that have been recognized for their outstanding value. Official recognition changes the property relationship between residents and their built environment by exposing the objects to the reinterpretation of administrators and tourists, but establishes these objects as having unique characteristics worthy of preservation. At a time when technology allows exact reproduction, the identification of unique things of value is a process that converts symbolic to economic capital through branding, which is a method of staking a claim to a resource by restricting its use. Even though those in a community such as Ōmori may not want to engage themselves in this process and prefer to maintain taste preferences and property arrangements that differ from urban standards, the legal regime of cultural property transformation implicates them in its operation. Examples of cultural property from elsewhere in Japan are given, particularly to show how it is used in community improvement programs (*machizukuri*). The history and language involving cultural property and heritage are discussed.

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## Cultural Property and Heritage in Japan

日本の文化財と遺産

### Introduction

The genesis of this thesis was a desire to document a set of attitudes and behaviours that I found in a Japanese village which to me, being accustomed to life in Tōkyō, seemed extraordinary; how could people be so engaged with creative activity and the aesthetics of their environment that they appeared to be almost oblivious to the ‘practical’ concerns of economic reality, or if not totally unaware of the forces driving the country at least not much interested in them? They appeared to have decided that there was a better life than accepting the pace and values of urban Japan, and it was based on a return to the strength of their own local traditions – a slow appreciation of community and perception of nature undisturbed by market calculation. I imagined myself eating great meals and taking quiet walks in the mountains. I did end up eating amazingly well, but the rest of the scenario changed abruptly when this peaceful village was designated a World Heritage site. When I arrived in July 2007 to begin proper fieldwork, the train station and several government buildings in Ōda City hung signs reading “Congratulations on World Heritage for Iwami Ginzan!” So, when I got to the village of Ōmori, which is the centre of the designated site, I imagined everyone was thrilled with this news. I began to congratulate people, but was soon told “this is not something to be congratulated about” (*omedetai koto-ja nai*). The shock of having their world disrupted by becoming famous, accepted as being of ‘universal human value,’ and now a premier tourist destination did not impress them. For the most part, they worried that a way of life was coming to an end, and it was because of the intrusion of a global notion of cultural property. My subject, therefore, changed to examine the nature of this concept from various angles and how it has come to be of increasing importance in the country. There is a formal, legal system that operates to list and define as cultural property those items which are important to various groups. But at the lowest level of community such definitions do not necessarily apply; wholly different values may operate and govern the relationships between people and their environment. Cultural property may be brought forth as a means to control the debate over specific items. This, however, is always a political move that frames a particular narrative and channels social action.



The anthropology of Japan, although being concerned with rural life at its inception (Embree 1969 [1939]), has increasingly become pre-occupied with urban issues and viewpoints. But the understanding of such issues has neglected the perspective which can be achieved when rural input is added. This dichotomy between the countryside and the city is very much a central part of cultural property. How can we understand, for example, the way the landscape of Kyōto has been altered over the past thirty years? The pattern of development there has depended on legal practices and community improvement efforts that also apply on a smaller scale in Ōmori, where attitudes on what is lost or gained by change puts into relief what has happened elsewhere.

This thesis is not an ethnography of a village; it is a broad treatment of a subject that attempts to bring to bear both urban and rural attitudes, but my underlying assumption is that the understanding of the rural attitudes need more emphasis to redress balance away from an official urban bias. By this I mean that most treatments of cultural property and heritage assume that official lists produced by government bodies such as the Agency for Cultural Affairs pretty much settle the matter of what is recognized as important and worth consideration. The bureaucracy provides objective standards of classification, by this notion. After all, if UNESCO says the landscape of Iwami Ginzan has universal value does this not mean it must somehow be better in an objective sense than, say, Mt Fuji, which so far has not obtained recognition?

An alternative appreciation can be sought from an investigation of the phenomenology of perception provided by those who live on a daily basis with valued items, both designated and not recognized by outside interests. What do people actually experience as important and remember as emotional elements in their lives? The answer is different for those who have lived in Ōmori, or have never been there before. Most of the time during my year and a half of fieldwork I lived with a family in Ōmori and spoke with residents of the village who introduced me to one another, following lines of inquiry as they came up in conversation. These pursuits often pointed to connections with other places in Japan that residents thought had relevance to their own situation, and so I travelled around the country to learn about affairs in other places that were sites of cultural property, especially those that were already or wanted to be World Heritage sites.

When thinking about these issues, I was struck by how closely patterns I found in Japan seemed to mirror those in the West. Clusters of attitudes from history, such as Romanticism

and the 1960s counter-culture, seemed to echo those I was finding in Japan. This was no coincidence or delusion; it turns out that not only were some of the forces generating these attitudes in the West, such as rapid industrialization or neo-liberal policies of privatization, similar, Western theorists directly or indirectly influenced the situation in Japan. I trace some of these interconnections. It may seem a stretch to apply concepts from Heidegger to twenty-first century rural Japan, but not only was he a direct antecedent of ways of thinking about place and space that his students brought to Japan and applied; the tools he used had an uncanny way of being relevant to the actual statements I was hearing in villages such as Ōmori when I asked about how people experienced their environment and appreciated their situation. This was particularly the case with language and history. So much depends when interpreting a culture on the specific understanding of words that do not map directly on concepts in another language, and the words and concepts keep changing. To a large part, this thesis attempts to unravel the linguistic background in the cultural property semantic space over time; as concepts such as *seikatsu bunka* arise, they have important repercussions in forming social awareness of certain issues, helping to coalesce awareness and direct action. Besides language, the other useful perspective on cultural property, which is implicated by its very nature, is history. I try to excavate underlying understandings by digging back into how they may have come about.

This approach may upset those who want a more demonstrably idiographic explanation that extensively quotes informants. However, I found that asking people to explain the deeper motivations of their actions unrewarding for the most part, although they did provide clues in certain ways. For example, people kept telling me that an old patch of *aizome* (indigo dyeing) was amazingly important and the key to appreciating the whole aesthetic sense of Ōmori and the real meaning of cultural property. Why? Well, just look at it (you must be able to see the same thing we do). When I traced the work of Miki Kiyoshi back to the origin of *seikatsu bunka* I thought everyone must know about him, but no one did. Therefore, while I have tried to explain aspects of cultural property and heritage from the viewpoint of those engaged with these issues on a daily basis, I have not expressed only their literal understanding but looked beyond, in some cases, in an effort to produce a more general account. Some points, such as the contrast with city attitudes, were very much part of the regular discussion every night at dinner. However, other topics, such as place branding, are not necessarily connected to specific incidents encountered during fieldwork; they are part of my effort to look behind the

surface structure of many different aspects of cultural property and put it into a context that encompasses global concerns.

Nevertheless, the range of officially recognized cultural property, especially when added to the even broader concept I employ that makes virtually anything seen or unseen as a possible property item, requires me to concentrate on those aspects of the problem that appear the most salient. For me, these are the immovable properties of land, landscape and structures in the built environment. These things are not entirely tangible, although they are classified as such by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, because they encompass traces of past use that connect with memories and values which give them meaning. It is the intangible element in immovable items that generate their emotional power and make them special. The largest single official category of cultural property is fine art and craft items (Table 1). These chattels, which now fill museums, are sometimes what city people think of when cultural property is mentioned. To try to understand what such movable treasures might be on an individual level, I asked a woman in Ōmori what she would save if her house was on fire. After a moment, she said she would save the house. If it burned down, the items in it would lose their meaning. People in Ōmori tend to speak a lot about space rather than objects. In addition, being subject to area-wide designations such as World Heritage and the special preservation zone, there is constant awareness of how the landscape is treated and how it is changing.

The overarching argument of the thesis goes back to my original question about the role of creativity and community within a technologically advanced society. The answer concerns the difference between analogue and digital systems. While living in Ōmori, a visitor came from Tōkyō who collected and repaired old, hand-operated gramophones. He brought a portable machine that was made in the 1920s and required a new needle each time a record was played. While by modern electronic digital standards of stereo recordings his small, scratchy player was a marvel of inefficiency and ambiguous sound, it totally enchanted everyone. Each time a record was played no one knew what would happen. Listening to the machine was a unique adventure – it could not be reproduced, but that was its charm. This could be explained as yet another example of Benjamin's aura in the age of mechanical reproduction, but Benjamin never had to face digital media. Reproducibility has come to an entirely different level in recent years as exact copies of everything can be made and transmitted instantly over information networks. But these exact copies, by cancelling the aura, tend to kill any special relationship people might form with things. Or, at least, we can

say that the relationship formed with a unique item is likely to be different than one formed with a recognized commodity; branding provides a standardized authentication of special qualities that acts as a bridge between the truly unique and the endlessly reproduced. Cultural property then can become just another generic brand geared to the fate of consumption. How can something be special when it or a facsimile is always everywhere available such as in the 'superflat' world of Takashi Murakami? While the search for a technical fix to this question continues, unique relationships can still be established and mediated by things in places such as Ōmori, where small, subtle moods that recall past intimacies still linger. But, having said that, no matter how much a community might want to retreat into self-sufficiency and its own particular satisfactions, the penetration of external concerns draws it into wider affairs which feed back and transform its behaviour.

A dialectic process between technology and creativity operates in Japan. It can be seen in the contrast between urban and rural lifeways. History is the cyclical dynamic by which such tensions are amplified and resolved. Cultural property and heritage represent one contested dimension of this process. The production of unifying cultural symbols generate an opposing move to other forms of value, but this initially destabilizing effort is, over time, subsumed into a new synthesis. Efforts to reify Japanese attitudes distort the dialectic involved. At present, the forces of technology and creativity are pulling hard in opposing directions. Cultural property lies at the centre of this struggle. As Touraine (2000: 25-26) says, "the world of networks of exchanges and the world of lived cultural experiences – are drifting apart more rapidly than ever." Said another way, "what lies at the heart of our experience at the end of the century is the dissociation of extension and soul, to use the old terminology, or the dissociation of the economy and cultures, of exchanges and identities." While this pattern is recognizable throughout the world, Japan is a particularly clear instance.

The depressing monotony of megatechnic society, with its standardized environment, its standardized foods, its standardized invitations to commercialized amusement, its standardized daily routines, produces a counter drive in over-stimulation and over excitement in order to achieve a simulation of life. Hence 'Speed' in all its forms, from drag races to drugs.... Modern technology has helped to create a counter-culture whose very disorder serves admirably to stabilize the power system. (Mumford 1970: 340)

Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst

Das Rettende auch.

'But where danger is, there grows / also that which saves'

(Hölderlin, *Patmos* [1808] quoted in Heidegger 1953)

### **The illusive dialectic of analysis**

The quotes above both refer to the dialectic which arises in society when certain conditions become oppressive.<sup>1</sup> Mumford, late in life, believed that the responses he witnessed in the 1960's counter-culture ultimately worked to support the political structures that they purportedly opposed. But the desire for speed and the simulation of life have been only one of many post-modern manifestations of the rejection of standardized, mechanical life. Mumford's reading of the counter-culture captured only certain facets of the movement. In addition to strategies that increase the quantity of stimulation, other, 'slow' approaches seek to improve the quality of life by a focus on a range of local values, including community, tradition and 'natural' relationships -- the same organic ideals that Mumford eulogized. This second strategy can be observed in action in many rural communities in Japan, where separation from the urban, industrialized centres of the country has allowed the preservation and adaptation of older patterns of living and space.

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<sup>1</sup> Heidegger can be read as seeing both technology (the danger) and creativity (that which saves, or helps to grow, *poiēsis*) as mysteriously interlinked approaches to the truth: "the irresistibility of ordering and the restraint of the saving power draw past each other like the paths of two stars in the course of the heavens." (Heidegger 2009:338).

By dialectic I refer to the definition, for example, of Adorno (1990: 5) "that objects do not go into their concepts without leaving a remainder, that they come to contradict the traditional norm of adequacy," and the fact that this remainder leads to dissatisfaction with the concept because of such inadequacy. The provisional resolution of the dialectic is a new synthesis based on language that Adorno (*ibid.*: 162-163) terms a 'constellation.' For an analysis of how Adorno applied his ideas about dialectic to the philosophy of Heidegger, see Macdonald (2008).

The process by which human effort produces anything, from material forms to cultural institutions, for both Hegel and Marx, is objectification, which reflects the spirit of the individual and the social relations which made creation possible. When a subject opens its awareness to the ‘otherness’ of its labour, failing to grasp that objects are in fact products of its own efforts, alienation (*Entäusserung*) necessarily occurs. By this theory, history is the dialectic sequence of objectification, alienation and resolution, whereby subjects come to understand their role in this process.<sup>2</sup> Ultimately, there is no disjuncture between subjects and objects, and the structure of relationships, including those with historical antecedents, generate a particular ethos (Miller 2010: 60).

Such a dynamic provides a useful framework for understanding how cultural property and heritage may be considered in Japan. In the treatment of both material objects and the production of space, we can observe the interplay of various efforts to define the nature of cultural property and heritage along opposed dimensions, and thereby form social groupings based on the choice of criteria. This is an ever-present dynamic that resists a simple description that reifies a static ‘Japanese’ approach to cultural property; the category ‘Japanese’ contains many conflicting interests and attitudes regarding cultural property, and these change through their interaction. A different and much more elaborately structural view of these processes of social differentiation is presented by Bourdieu (2002), whereby a nuanced examination of various groups in broad French society demonstrates that cultural tastes, far from being uniform, recognize extreme divergence in order to establish status rank.

The monolithic claim concerning Japanese attitudes to cultural property can be seen, for example, in Siegenthaler (2004), who argues that post-war Japan should be viewed as either not interested with the preservation of buildings and landscapes because of the drive for economic growth, or only involved when there has been direction from the state bureaucracy. In other words, historic preservation in the country has been one dimensionally directed by the national policy elite. This idea he finds mentioned in some environmental protection literature from the 1960s. He then uses this misrepresentation to emphasize the importance of local preservation efforts as a new development. In fact, local efforts to preserve cultural properties have been continually recognized in Japan. They have been part of a long debate among various parties to define planning priorities and designate property for protection. There has always been a grassroots element, but the state bureaucracy, construction industry, academia, agricultural experts and technical planning

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<sup>2</sup> Kitching (1988:17). On the historical connections among Hegel, Hölderlin and Heidegger, see: Taylor (1979:167-8), and for the transmission of these ideas to Japan: Mayeda (2006).

professionals have all played roles as well. Nishimura (2004: 99-161) provides a balanced history of the various actors. He mentions, for example, the boom in amateur archaeology in Japan immediately after the war (*ibid.*: 108). It is possible that Siegenthaler is considering only foreign sources, which do sometimes reflect the belief that the Japanese are not serious about preservation. Hohn (1997:249) writes that “while Europe tends to hold sacred what is old, Japan generally does not have such a negative attitude towards the transitoriness of the built environment.” But we also find conclusions such as by Enders (1998:22) that “the owner and also the users appear to play an especially important role in the decision-making process in Japan. It is remarkable how seriously the Japanese take the intactness of property. The Japanese constitution has no provision for social responsibility in connection with ownership.” Such uncertainty over the fundamental nature of Japanese cultural property attitudes reflects the fact that these writers are trying to establish a fixed point as the defining feature within a longstanding contest for which the goal posts keep moving.

The subject of this thesis is not a fixed, well-determined set of objects, nor is it derived by clearly established principles; it is a contested field that appears quite differently to diverse people. Depending upon whom you ask, you can get a very different idea of what constitutes cultural property and heritage. These differences are meaningful, however, in that they reflect differing networks of relationships between people and material objects in daily life. I will argue in this report that cultural property and heritage frame a disputed symbolic space in which those who make, use and live with the objects understand them in significantly different ways than those who seek to regulate them externally, or ‘consume’ them as one-time visitors. Moreover, even those who have local ties to cultural property may consider it in differing ways, and the ways they employ also change over time. While it is possible to find broad groupings that fall somewhat along the lines of the above modern, and ‘fast’ and ‘slow’ post-modernisms, such distinctions are not entirely static, absolute or exhaustive. Attitudes towards cultural properties concern not just their recognition but also are demonstrated in the treatment or usage of such objects -- their conservation, preservation and display. Ultimately, property constitutes a form of social relationship. It operates to structure society, and changes to reflect new realities. Cultural property is concerned with that fraction of relationships that are most important to a group either because they relate to group history or symbolize their identity in some recognized ideal.

There is nothing which so generally strikes the imagination and engages the affections of mankind, as the right of property; or that sole and despotic dominion which one man claims and exercises over external things of the world, in the total exclusion of the right of any other individual in the universe.(Blackstone 2001 [1766]: 3)

It is by treating the heritage as an object of *ownership* that its reduction to a commodity is affected and the gift increase that represents the creation and maintenance of community is thereby taken away. (Carman 2009: 44)

Cultural property implies a permanence of ownership that studies of exchange call into question (Welsh 1997: 12)

### **Property under law: Western background**

Common beliefs and norms of behaviour can govern how things are used in a community. These do not need to be written or officially recognized by law. But law serves to make explicit the norms and highlight their boundaries. In this respect, law serves to make clear relationships that are recognized by consensus, or enables the adjustment to a new consensus through contest and adjudication. By appeal to general principles that reflect political interests, law also creates a screen that obscures the complicated local conditions that give rise to conflicting claims. Current anthropological theory on law places rule-making institutions within a broad spectrum of dispute-related behaviour and social processes which are quasi-legal in function. It therefore sets law at the centre of change in society when political forces are mobilized (Just 1992: 373-374).

Because much of the Japanese legal system has been established on the basis of Western models, it is relevant to examine the context of these ideas (Saikawa 1998). Law was codified in Japan before the Meiji Restoration (1867) and the massive Western influence that led up to the Constitution of 1889. Pre-Meiji codes were influenced by Chinese models. However, another major re-writing of Japanese law occurred with the Allied occupation after World War Two and the Constitution of 1946 (Dean 2002:60 and Beer 1982). These imports could never be accepted in an unchanged mass, and ran into many problems of adjustment within a system that held other, older traditions of behavior, but they have been very influential in promoting certain concepts of action and attitudes in society. The formation of a legal framework for the administration of cultural property in Japan, in addition, has been primarily based on Western precedence.



Current Anglo-American legal views on property, which originate from the individual ownership of land, are based on the concept of bundles of rights,<sup>3</sup> rather than the absolute control posited in the above, very influential quote from Blackstone, but the principle of usage, or utility, as emphasized in his work, has continued to be a fundamental determinant of property rights.<sup>4</sup> Under Roman law, occupancy of land, with the intention of using it, was at the basis of property ownership, and this included land seized from an enemy (Maine 2004 [1866]: 245). At the outbreak of hostilities, the assumption under European-based international law through the nineteenth century was that property rights returned to “a state of nature,” i.e., the origin point for tracing ownership was reset to the individual occupant at the cessation of war (*ibid.*: 250). On the other hand, arguments in favour of full individual ownership have rested since the eighteenth century on the assumption of initially equal starting chances to possess something (Vogel 1988: 102). This assumption is difficult to make under nearly any circumstances, but is particularly inoperative in colonial occupations. Mitchell (2002), for example, gives many examples of how Egyptian property regimes were established throughout colonial history by the use of force and coercion. The sectioning of plots of public land in the Western United States by the use of barbed wire was specifically prohibited by federal law during the nineteenth century, yet it became common practice from the mid-1870s and resulted in a virtual seizure by enclosure that was ultimately recognized as a valid occupancy (Anderson and Hill 1975: 172).<sup>5</sup> Thus, the history of property acquisition,

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast, an extreme case of disaggregated property rights, where such bundles were broken apart, occurred in the former Soviet Union in the 1990s during its transition from a socialist system of state ownership of everything to a complex fragmentation of rights shared by various types of owners (Heller 1998: 638). Because many parties could veto any transaction involving a specific property, markets did not function. Heller termed such a situation an “anti-commons” – property for which there are so many owners with the right of exclusion that it cannot be used.

<sup>4</sup> It is generally agreed by legal scholars that the strong view of property rights put forth in this statement was a ‘slightly anxiety-provoking metaphor’ (Rose 1998: 602) or so ‘hyperbolic’ that the statement can serve ‘as a shorthand for a pristine package of private entitlement in land’ (Ellickson 1993:1362). This trope emphasizes individual, private property *in rem* rights, which attach to a specific thing and apply to everyone. Modern legal discourse tends to reject ‘property’ as having a useful meaning because it can encompass such an ad hoc collection of different rights and focuses instead on contracts over resource use, which will tend to achieve optimal economic distributions. Cf. Merrill and Smith (2001: 357-359). Utility and efficiency is considered the fundamental consideration under Anglo-American legal theory on property regimes, cf. Munzer (1990: 191).

<sup>5</sup> This seizure was in addition to the original seizure by the colonists from the native populations, although that seizure was not recognized under United States law by means of the ‘discovery doctrine,’ which held that native

although often justified on the pretext of usage or prior occupancy, is suffused with examples of the exercise of force to obtain claims and promote self-interest, which then are reinterpreted as rights that can be protected by rules.<sup>6</sup> It is useful to remember that behind property claims there is a threat of force and often a history of the use of force to secure certain conditions:<sup>7</sup>

The history of private property is rather silent on the conditions that produced it and the precedents incorporated into it... Presented as a history of legislation, of an abstraction, it has little to say about how private property was actually constituted in a particular place (Mitchell 2002: 57).

Selection and control over objects that can be termed cultural property, as one form of property, is a vital political function, and, therefore, a socially contested area of action with important consequences for the distribution of resources and status. How cultural property is negotiated, recognized, defined, and administered takes place on many levels: globally, nationally, regionally, locally and within small groups. It is recognized that cultural property has a public importance that justifies its recognition in a manner that abridges certain private concerns over use or prior ownership. In this sense, it appeals to different sources of property rights than standard law, at least in some cases.

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peoples had not sufficiently used their land in a productive manner to be able to claim title. See Bratspies (2006).

<sup>6</sup> Another way of saying this is that markets and politics are mutually dependent. See: Tushnet (2007: 1223-4). Legal and economic theory tends to rely, in this regard, on the Coase Theorem – that the initial entitlement to a property is not relevant to its ultimate disposition because it will inevitably be decided by contract among the concerned parties so that the most efficient outcome will be obtained. A clear system of individual property rights, understood as absolute ownership, promotes efficiency because it maximizes the number of independent agents competing for resources. Liberty itself is seen as dependent upon private ownership of property. See: Farber (1997), Peñalver (2005) and Friedman (1968: 26). This claim is extended by Posner (2007) to the theory that common law rules tend to allocate resources efficiently, and Rubin (1977), who believes that the direction of legal reasoning in civil cases evolves to maximize the utility of disputants. Such arguments often emanate from Hayek (1978), who contrasted law made by judges with statute, or ‘command law’, in an effort to show that market-based decision making is ultimately better than that of the state. These views are a primary part of neoliberal rhetoric and have played an important role in neoliberal policy formation since its post-war inception (Van Horn and Mirowski 2009). Exposure to market forces is a requirement for property under this approach – even cultural property needs to have an economic rationale.

<sup>7</sup> On Marxist interpretations of how property, the use of force and labor exploitation interact, see Elster (1985: 169-171).

Cultural property may be claimed to represent a value to a group and in need of preservation because it is 'significant' and has a 'use' (Emerick 2001: 279-281). The latter can mean it represents an important historical archive of information, but often it implies that an economic benefit can be derived from its preservation, and, thus, is a community 'resource.' This effort to return to a use-value justification for cultural property makes it into a commodity; it is both cultural (symbolic) and economic (use) capital which can be transformed back and forth, from one treatment to the other, depending upon circumstances (Bourdieu 2002: 118-121, Throsby 2000: 31-33).<sup>8</sup> Thus, Carman (2009: 30, 48) notes that most cultural property consists of a 'mixed' property regime where there are certain rights retained by private owners and others, such as the right to alter or destroy, held by a public body. It is an 'environmental good', and therefore is sometimes treated under environmental law when it takes the form of a physical object or site, where there is a recognized public interest that supersedes individual control in certain respects. But the reliance on the 'usefulness' of the property implies that it should be preserved in a form that can be made available to public exposure, and the institutions that undertake this, such as museums, routinely participate as agents in the market for cultural property.<sup>9</sup> In a wider context, cultural property can be construed as a legal counterpart to treasure defined in more personal terms; a valuable item must be treated differently than a commodity, and this requirement entails

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<sup>8</sup> There is a subfield specialization of art management (*Kulturmanagement*, in German) called 'cultural institutions studies' (*Kulturbetriebslehre*) that examines such transformations (Hasitschka et al. 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Heilbrun and Gray (2001:187) refer to the works of art at museums as their 'investment portfolio' and, indeed, some museums transact on a substantial scale in both the purchase and sale of objects. See White (1996). When such market activity is viewed alongside the refusal by museums to repatriate objects that appear to be stolen and their increasing exhibit of items with no provenance, the 'public' benefit of such institutions must be questioned and they may be treated in the same way as any private collectors. Renfrew (2000) equates collectors with looters. Examination of the source of museum holdings usually reveals a history of questionable acquisition practice. The foundation of Northwest Coast Indian collections at museums in New York, Ottawa and Toronto, for example, is the result of the confiscation of privately-owned objects after the potlatch was made illegal and tribes were prosecuted in 1921 (Harding 2003: 19). Legal effort to repatriate such personal objects has been thwarted when legislation requires objects to be demonstrably significant to a group. Museums competed 'like entrepreneurs' to obtain such collections (Cole 1995: 169). Even more aggressive plunder led to the transfer of the Dunhuang Manuscripts from China to the British Museum and other museums in Berlin, Paris, Copenhagen and Boston (Hopkirk 2001). Beyond all these considerations, museums seek to use their properties for display within an exhibition narrative; this is a fundamentally different motivation from any use the properties had before acquisition (Karp 1996:12).

some plan for preservation and restriction on use. In normal conversation, few people refer to cultural property, but when they talk of treasure or the prevention of use it brings into focus the items in a culture which could have cultural property status if legally designated.

Strathern (2005: 56-57) argues about property rights from a different viewpoint: that abstract concepts of intentionality are more fundamental than economic concerns in cases of reproductive and intellectual property rights.<sup>10</sup> She does not begin with land as the origin of property concepts, but believes that the body and kinship relations are extended by metaphor to relationships with things, both tangible and intangible.<sup>11</sup> The exchange of objects of value does not imply economic activity, because the relationships formed by the exchange are of paramount importance.<sup>12</sup> In her view, there is a conflict in Anglo-American legal reasoning

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<sup>10</sup> 'Unequivocal intentionality to act' is the common law concept at the root of property ownership. Giving notice, in the form of title, patent and copyright, lies behind ownership regimes of tangible and intangible items. Such notice should be classifiable and permit accountability within a socially recognized framework for registration and governance. See Strathern (2000) and Coombe (1998).

<sup>11</sup> See Munzer (1990: 37-60). This line of argument leads to rights to life and suicide, cf. McCloskey (1975), and privacy. Locke (1996 [1690]: 286-288) also grounded his influential theory of property in the body of each individual: "every Man has property in his own Person. This no Body has any Right to but himself."

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Weiner (1976), which shows how Trobriand systems of exchange shape gender identities. This refers to what Rose (1994:5) calls 'the peculiar gap between property-as-thing and property-as-relationship.' Weiner believed that exchange masked strategies of retaining the truly valuable as inalienable possessions. Ownership, in her view, established identity. This view is opposed to the classic theory of Mauss (2000 [1924]), and its extension by Hyde (2007), which both rely heavily, but by no means exclusively, on the work of Malinowski (1961) that Weiner critiques. Hyde (*ibid.*: 28), relying on Sahlins (1972), emphasizes the fundamental difference in the concept of scarcity between hunter-gatherer societies that practice extensive gift exchange and production-for-use versus the modern, market driven idea. The assumption of scarce resources and analysis of how to efficiently control these are at the core of modern economic and legal theory (Schäfer and Ott 2004). Gift exchange relationships tend to operate outside the concept of resource scarcity and trade markets, tending to employ unique items that circulate in the society. Such flow is often believed to stimulate resource availability, for example by promoting harvests or fishing success, rather than as the consumption of a valuable commodity. Gudeman (2001: 86-87) argues that the reciprocity inherent in gift exchange is a method of extending the community and, thus, its economic base. Seen as an invitation to join a community, the 'spirit' of a gift is productive and fits within kinship theories of generalized exchange (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 398-399). Household economies, which tend to revolve around services, are "sites of staggering amounts of altruistic gift-giving" (Ellickson 2008: 65). In opposition to Weiner who tends to stress the economic and legal aspects of Trobriand exchange, all of these other writers see gift giving as an example of Durkheim's 'total social fact' which later transformed into contractual relations. See: Tarot (1996). Lévi-Strauss (1969:54), in reviewing the literature on

between establishing property rights on the basis of market-oriented individuals who negotiate relationships for their own benefit, or on 'holistic communities' that take responsibility for the exercise of rights in light on their social costs to the group. Singer (1988) argues that efforts to establish tangible property claims on the latter public basis, which posits a mutual 'reliance' on the treatment of property, have failed in the United States because it has been difficult to locate a Constitutional source for such reasoning other than the power of eminent domain that can be invoked from the Fifth Amendment recognition that 'just payment' must be made when private property is seized for public use. The first Supreme Court case recognizing a federal power of eminent domain did not occur until 1876. Recent legal argument has tried to place all governmental bodies on the same standing in negotiating property rights as private parties, i.e., denial of eminent domain as a possible remedy (Epstein 1985). The United States increasingly is adopting private land use controls in housing. Such controls are agreed by contract with neighborhood or homeowner associations when property is purchased, rather than by the regulation of public bodies (Korngold 2004, Nelson 2005, Ellickson 1998). This neo-liberal, utilitarian view contrasts with the communitarian views, as outlined in Rose (1994), in the same way as the market-based versus moral community relationships described by Strathern. Both views accept the wealth-producing capacity of property, but the latter would sacrifice some of this capacity for the sake of its fair distribution and does not find that private property necessarily is the best arrangement for maximizing benefit. Rose (1981: 494) sees the real value of historic preservation as a potential tool for decentralizing power and promoting pluralism through its regulation of space, for example when used to block 'urban renewal,' but there are counter

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reciprocity, found that "goods are not only economic commodities, but vehicles and instruments for realities of another order, such as power, influence, sympathy, status and emotion;" they are often exchanged with no notion of economic profit. Hyde (*ibid.*: 110) refers to gifts as 'anarchist property' because the relations generated by their exchange are not enforced by a top-down authority. Ingold (2000: 43) notes that hunter-gatherers commonly refer to their environment as a parent that gives unconditionally, and not 'nature' or a 'resource' to be exploited. Property rights and ownership, however, are now routinely treated as fundamentally economic concepts (Carruthers and Ariovich 2004); in the United States, public goals, such as environmental policy, are increasingly examined by judicial review in terms of their impact on private property ownership. The balance has shifted from considering it possible to have valid regulation of property towards an emphasis on the danger this presents as illegal confiscation (Jacobs 1999: 141, Haar and Wolf 2001: 2174). There is also a strong tradition in American anthropology of defining property in terms of economic ownership, particularly relating to the exclusive use of resources (White 1959: 250).

examples where historic preservation has been used as a screen for development as well (Brookstein 2000).

With this brief conceptual apparatus in mind, let us examine in detail the case of a complex set of cultural property claims in a particular Japanese place. The history of this place is integral to its relevance as the setting for such claims. We will describe the situation and then show how cultural property and heritage concepts have been applied there.

### **Iwami Ginzan: the setting**

According to legend, in 1526 Kamiya Jutei (神屋寿禎),<sup>13</sup> a merchant from Hakata in Kyūshū, was sailing along the Japan Sea coast of what is now Shimane Prefecture on the way to Sagidōsan (鷲銅山) near Izumo, where he intended to buy copper. He noticed a gleam of light reflecting from the Chugoku Mountains to the south. This led him to investigate the area. He discovered a rich supply of silver in the mountains, and began to ship the silver ore via Hakata to Korea, where it was refined. In 1533, he reportedly brought two technicians (Abe and Keiji, 宗丹 and 桂寿) from Hakata to Iwami Ginzan. These men, purportedly Koreans<sup>14</sup>, introduced a powerful refining process (*haifukihō*, 灰吹法), or ‘cupellation’ method, (Ōkuni 1992: 16-18, Ōda City 2010a).<sup>15</sup> As a result, annual production volumes in

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<sup>13</sup> On Kamiya, see Saeki (2009) and Toyota (2010: 173-178).

<sup>14</sup> This Korean connection is prominently stated in the literature concerning Iwami Ginzan. It is an example of the trend noted by Graburn (2009: 15) of both liberal multiculturalism in Japan and the emergence of Korea as a leading source of foreign tourists since the 1990s. Koreans represent the largest number of foreign tourists to Japan. There are signs in Korean scattered around recreation places in Ōda City. When I asked residents whether there were many Koreans in the area who might need such signs, I was told that there were not any currently but the city hoped they would come. Shimane Prefecture (Shimane-ken 2010a) encourages the spread of signs at tourist sites that accommodate visitors in many different languages, including Korean and Chinese. Tourists from China and Taiwan accounted for over 40 percent of total foreign tourists to the prefecture in 2009 (Shimane-ken 2009b: 51), but total numbers of foreign tourists are small (21,914) and few stray beyond Matsue and Izumo. Shimane regularly ranks at the very bottom of all prefectures in terms of foreign tourism, actually ranking last in the number of lodging nights (JNTO 2009, Shimane-ken 2009a: 23, Chūgoku un’yukyoku 2008: 23-24). The statistics on lodging nights for Shimane show that about three-quarters are by prefecture residents, one-quarter by those from other prefectures, and a statistically insignificant amount by foreigners (MLITT 2010a:12).

<sup>15</sup> Cupellation refers to the ‘cupel’ which is the small crucible into which air is blown to oxidize the base alloys in the ore, and thereby purify the precious metal fraction. The cupel acts as a small furnace. The method used in

the Iwami Ginzan mines by the early seventeenth century are estimated to have represented about one-third of total world output (Inatomi 2006: 63, *Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2006: 77-79). This amount was second only in size at that time to the Spanish-controlled Potosi mines in Bolivia.<sup>16</sup> The cupellation refining technology was applied later at new mines in Sadō and Ikuno.

The history of refining in Japan, which is the official narrative used in World Heritage presentations (Bunkachō 2007c: 31), is uncertain on many of the particulars provided by this account. The main source of information is the ‘Old Chronicle of Ginzan’ (*Ginzan kyūki*, 銀山旧記).<sup>17</sup> It states that Kamiya Juntei was at Iwami in 1526 and silver mining began at that time, although it was already known as a location of naturally occurring silver and was of interest to regional warlords from as early as the thirteenth century. This is considered a ‘legend’ (*denshō*, 伝承) because the information was compiled hundreds of years later based on oral tradition, although some supporting records exist. Iwami Ginzan silver ore was discovered in 1309, but no production occurred until Kamiya arrived (Ōda City 1994: 4). Control of the mining took place during this early period from a stronghold at the village of Kawamoto under the Ogasawara clan. After several years of conflict between the Omago (尼子) and Mōri (毛利) clans, the latter, under Mōri Motonari (毛利元就) achieved command over the mines.<sup>18</sup> Refining at Iwami Ginzan was done using an advanced process

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Iwami Ginzan on relatively low-grade ore was an efficient means of performing a process that had been known throughout the world for millennia not only as a means to separate elements but also as an assay test (Forbes 1950: 208-209, Needham 1997: 36-39).

<sup>16</sup> On Potosí and the silver industry in Spanish America, see Bakewell (1984).

<sup>17</sup> A copy of this document, compiled in 1816 by Ōka Yoshitsura (大賀吉茹), is in the possession of the Faculty of Engineering, Kyūshū University. It is part of a collection of material outlining the history of Iwami Ginzan titled *Iwami-no kuni Ginzan yōshū* (石見國銀山要). A printed text is in *Nihon Kōgyōshi* (1984), which is part of the 106 volume collection of historical records related to mining in Japan and can be searched under 銀山関連文書 18 at: <http://record.museum.kyushu-u.ac.jp/>. This document is an important source of much of the narrative concerning Iwami Ginzan history, including the estimates of population near the mine, stating that there were “11,000 houses in the seven valleys of Ginzan” around 1600 (銀山七谷家数 1 万数千軒) and that “foreign people” (*tōjin*, 唐人) lived there.

<sup>18</sup> The Omago were associated with the house of Ouchi. On the rise of the Mōri clan in western Honshū, see Kawai (1977: 80-86), who describes Japan of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries as no longer capable of central bureaucratic control and made up in the provinces of a “patchwork of holdings by semi-independent

that had similarities to the process used later in the century for copper and lead in Japan. This was the ‘southern barbarian method’ (*nanbanbuki*, 南蛮吹). It is not certain where this technology came from nor what exactly it consisted of (*Sangyō Shinbunsha* 2008: 12-13). The new refining methods, however, certainly allowed a great increase in the domestic output of metal during the sixteenth century. This dramatically changed their availability in Japan, making it one of the leading metal producing places in the world by the time Tokugawa Ieyasu, the first shogun, took control in 1600 (Murakami, R. 2008:114-115).

Metal was particularly important as a means of creating coinage and thereby expanding the money supply (Kobata 1965). Monetary payment had a complex structure during the Tokugawa era: wholesale payments took place in gold in the capital Edo, where it was the government’s unit of account, and silver everywhere to the west, while retail payments were in copper. Silver had the advantage of being denominated in decimals and was less subject to debasement. A unified system of coinage was established only in 1630, and rice became less frequently used as a medium of commercial exchange throughout the seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup> There was constant demand in various light manufacturing around the countryside for copper, and to a certain extent, silver. These metals were used to make weapons, for example.<sup>20</sup> Gold was used to settle foreign trade accounts and to pay for *daimyō* expenses in Edo; it was necessary for lords to sell rice in Ōsaka and, ultimately, obtain gold for their Edo expenses. The provision of this monetization mechanism enriched the banking establishments in Ōsaka, which was also the location of the large Sumitomo copper smelters (McClain 1999: 69). Najita (1987: 2) places the rice to metallic currency exchange business at the core of Ōsaka’s commercial prosperity during the Tokugawa era. Variations in the supply and demand for these metals required the government to adjust the ratios in circulation and, thereby, regulate

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local proprietors (now increasingly referred to as *kokujin*, or ‘men of the province’) and of estates belonging to religious institutions or absentee noble proprietors residing in the capital” (*ibid.*: 65).

<sup>19</sup> See Crawcour (1961: 345-346), Sansom (1978: 471), Ohnuki-Tierney (1994: 67-69), and Torao (1993: 434-436).

<sup>20</sup> The handgun is said to have been introduced to Japan by the Portuguese in 1543. The greater availability of refined metal did allow a domestic firearms industry to develop, but the extent of their use varied. Jansen (1995: xiv) writes that the employment of the new technology revolutionized warfare and was the key behind military victories of the three warlords who unified Japan: Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. By the late sixteenth century Japanese troops, such as those who invaded Korea under Hideyoshi (1592-98), were well supplied with muskets, but their domestic employment was highly restricted during the Tokugawa era when warriors were expected to carry swords (Suzuki 2000, Perrin 1988 and Brown 1948: 240).



the domestic rates of exchange, which was done very successfully during the eighteenth century and resulted in remarkably stable price levels (Cullen 2003: 71-74). Silver from Iwami Ginzan, therefore, flowed mainly into the wholesale payment mechanism based in Ōsaka. The export of silver was banned in 1685.

The period of civil wars (*sengoku jidai*, 戦国時代, 1467-1568AD) leading up to the establishment of the Tokugawa Shogunate in 1600 is normally characterized by its great demand for metal used in weapons and tools, and particularly precious metal to finance military campaigns (Matsuo et al. 2005: 180, Mokuji 2007). Mining technology developed rapidly in the Sanin region of present-day Shimane and Tottori prefectures. Although Japan is now considered ‘resource poor’, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it contained a booming metallurgy industry based on domestic reserves of gold and silver (Sansom 1961: 257-259). The Iwami Ginzan mines were fought over by many feudal clans, and eventually were placed under direct control of the Shogunate (Matsuo et al. 2005: 199-200). Ōkubo Nagayasu (1545-1613), a famous samurai official and retainer (*kashin*, 家臣) of the Tokugawa, was appointed as the first magistrate (*bugyō*, 奉行) to direct mining administration and supervise the district, which was a dominion (*tenryō*, 天領) of the imperial government. He constructed walls around the perimeter of the mines, built castles on the mountaintops, and established an administrative office in Ōmori-*chō* (Ōkuni (1992: 66), Izumi (2001: 233) and Hanmura (2004)). The administrative office in Ōmori-*chō* (*daikansho*, 代官所) for the mines was converted from a military encampment (*jinya*, 陣屋) based near the mine entrances on the mountains to a central governmental body located in the town during its direct incorporation under Tokugawa dominion in 1613, (Ōkuni 1992: 42-47). This conversion marked the bureaucratic transformation of the region and the pacification success of the Shogunate (Totman 1993: 50-54). The region, which is now considered remote, depopulated, and isolated from ‘mainstream’ urban Japan, was economically vibrant 400 years ago, contained a relatively large population, and was strategically important to political rulers of the time. This importance, however, waned from the early eighteenth century as silver production declined and the underground resources were exhausted, although quite a high level of economic activity persisted up to the early twentieth century. Ōmori was the

location of a branch of the Bank of Japan and held a district court house<sup>21</sup> from the nineteenth century. It is important to remember that it is only since the late 1950s that the Japan Sea side of Japan has been considered the undeveloped ‘backside’ (*ura Nihon*) in contrast to the economically more progressive Pacific coast on the ‘front’ (*omote*) of the nation (Okuno 2008: 75-76). The isolation of the Sanin region is relative to the extremely fast means of access now provided by highways and trains along the Pacific coast. Until the late Meiji era, the city of Kanazawa on the Japan Sea, for example, was considered to have easy access by ship and trade with northern Japan normally flowed through the Japan Sea and the Straits of Shimonoseki to Ōsaka.

The population in the vicinity of the mines by 1650 was said to be about 40,000, according to material now provided to tourists and found in the World Heritage application. Just before the Tokugawa era (1600-1868AD), there is good evidence that 25,000 to 30,000 people lived near the mines (*Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2007b). After the mines fell under Tokugawa dominion, there were said to be over a thousand dwellings within direct jurisdiction and extending over several valleys, although by the eighteenth century the built-up area shrank as greater security was imposed and administration was tightened. In the official record for 1627, there were 336 dwellings in Iwami Ginzan, rising to only 461 by 1815. There was a decrease in population in the late 1830s due to an epidemic, but this decrease still only amounted to about 100 people (Nakano 2009: 147-149).<sup>22</sup>

Silver from Iwami Ginzan was first shipped from a now deserted harbour on the Japan Sea called Tomo-ga Ura (鞆ヶ浦)<sup>23</sup>, which is about 6.5 kilometres in a straight line from the original silver discoveries at Senoyama (仙ノ山) and 7.5 kilometres by trail. The current hot spring town of Yunotsu (温泉津), now a tiny resort on the coast to the south-west of Tomo-ga Ura and 12 kilometres by trail from the mines, was built up by the Mōri clan from 1561. It became the main port in the region for silver shipments which were exported throughout

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<sup>21</sup> Now the community centre. In the Meiji era (1868-1912), Ōmori was the seat of government for Nima-gun, one of twelve districts in Shimane Prefecture. As such, it was the location of administrative offices, a police station, post office and tax collection agency. There were seven district court houses and three higher regional courts at the time in Shimane.

<sup>22</sup> As can be seen from these numbers, the size of the mine population is subject to some debate, depending upon the area included as being proximate to the mines, and the purpose of the document asserting a number.

<sup>23</sup> Part of the World Heritage site and a nationally designated historical ruin, there is evidence around the natural harbour of the old anchorage positions where rope ties were cut into the rocks.

Asia. From 1608, the silver was also transported over the mountains south on the ‘Ginzan Highway’ (*Ginzan kaidō*, 銀山街道) to the port of Onomichi, from where it was loaded on ships to cross the Inland Sea to Ōsaka (Michishige & Kigara 2005).<sup>24</sup> The long distance transport and trade in silver are considered emblematic of Japan’s history during the ‘age of exploration’ (*daikōkai jidai*, 大航海時代). The export activity was crucial for the World Heritage application because it provides evidence of the global importance of the silver mines (Toyota 2010).<sup>25</sup> The location of the mines appeared prominently on sixteenth century European maps (Murai 2007: 20-22, *Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2006: 235-243). Silver production probably peaked by 1624, but significant production continued through the Tokugawa era. In 1887, control of the mines passed to the Ōsaka-based trading house Fujita-*gumi*, which focused on copper production until the slump in prices after World War One (Ōkuni 1992: 117-120). Ōmori-*chō* was relatively prosperous until the mine closed in 1923; there are records that show the village had seven inns, seven eating and drinking establishments, two theaters, four geisha houses with over thirty geisha, and an inspection station (Nishimura 1997: 181). Recent research shows that in the early 1800s the pleasure quarter of Ōmori-*chō* occupied about 10% of the village buildings (*Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2008). Such night-time activity for a village that now totally shuts down by 4:30 p.m. is difficult to imagine; the village has been slowly converted into a museum that does not preserve, nor recognize, such

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<sup>24</sup> The path from the silver mines to Yunotsu is also called *Ginzan kaidō*. This relatively short hiking trail is part of the World Heritage zone. It was selected in 1996 by a committee commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs for a list of 78 important historical roads and has received subsidies for maintenance over the years: [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/hakusho/nc/t19961101001/t19961101001.html](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/hakusho/nc/t19961101001/t19961101001.html).

<sup>25</sup> And this is why the Agency for Cultural Affairs organized its application around three ‘groups’ of property: the mines, the ports, and the transport links among them (2007:10). This cluster is proposed as fitting the UNESCO requirement for an ‘organically evolved landscape,’ and provides the evidence of significant commercial and cultural exchange, particularly with the Korean peninsula and, ultimately, China (*ibid.*: 54-55, 37-38). On the difficulties of calculating trade levels for Japan, Korea and China, see Lewis (2003: 99-100); this was not just because of poor record-keeping but was due mainly to the avoidance of state restrictions by private traders. During the Ming period (1368-1644) there was enormous demand for silver ingots in China, where they became the standard means of exchange for large-scale transactions (Braudel 1992: 454-455). There is controversy over the levels of silver imports to China during the late Ming, although Atwell (2005) claims that they fell precipitously and led to the collapse of the Ming state. Silver was traded for Chinese silks and porcelain, usually through Spanish and Portuguese traders (Brook 1999: 207-208). Precious metals were the vital means for conducting trade both within Europe and Asia during the seventeenth century (Wilson 1967: 510-513); European manufactured goods were worth little in Asian trade (Kobata 1965: 255).

aspects of life. The old mine shaft area was made a designated historical site by Shimane Prefecture in 1967, and by the nation in 1969, although it was not developed for tourist use on any scale until the late 1990s.

Iwami (石見) was a historical subdivision of the current Shimane prefecture, the other, eastern part consisting of Izumo (出雲) province<sup>26</sup> until the Meiji era (1868-1912AD) reordering of administrative units; at one point in 1869, when competing groups could not decide the disposition of the mines, there was actually an autonomous Ōmori prefecture with administrative offices located in Ōmori-*chō* (Ōkuni 1992: 116). The place designations of Iwami and Izumo go back to at least the eighth century, and their use as province (*kuni*, 国) names during the Tokugawa era solidified their common usage. By the 1960s, the lack of transportation facilities linking the region with metropolitan centres was considered a serious obstacle to economic development and workers permanently left for jobs elsewhere in Japan. By the early 1970s, the Sanin region, which comprises Shimane and Tottori prefectures, was considered an exemplar of rural depopulation (*kasochi*, 過疎地), in which demographic change was so extreme that basic public services, such as schools and post offices, could not be supported and once lively communities collapsed (Matsuo et al. 2005: 329-332, Imai 1968). The best known regional landmark, and the most popular tourist destination in the region, is the Grand Izumo Shinto Shrine (*Izumo Taisha*, 出雲大社), which typically identifies the region as the ‘province of the gods’ (Watanabe 1964, Shintani 2009). It has drawn pilgrims for centuries, but after they return to the major cities, the region remains a ‘dusty backwater’ where the annual income of residents is about half that of the urban visitors (Torrance 1996: 331).

### **The village of Ōmori-*chō***

When I first visited the village of Ōmori-*chō* several years ago, it was a very quiet mountain community that was known elsewhere in Japan, if at all, because of its relatively well-preserved main street (*machinami*, 町並み) and its craft activity, particularly in textile design. The Iwami Ginzan mines and local historical sites, such as the Gohyakurakan grotto of Buddhist stone carvings, despite their former prominence, were hardly mentioned in regional guidebooks -- about ten of 260 pages devoted to historical walks in Shimane, *Shimane-ken no rekishi sanpo* (2002: 137-147); two of 125 pages in a general guide to the

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<sup>26</sup> Technically, the Oki islands (隠岐) were also a *kuni* (Matsuo et al. 2005: 81).

Sanin coast, *Ai japan* (2003: 120-121); four of 130 in a guide to the area published in mid-2007 by the Japan Travel Bureau, *Tabi rie* (2007: 116-119). There was no local inn, sporadic lunch served at three noodle shops, and few day visitors. It did have a post office and bank branch. Everything closed before 4:30PM. Even now, although people will have heard of Iwami Ginzan, they are likely not to know how to get there – what cities one would transit through, for example, or even which part of the country it is in.

Technically, the *-chō* (町) in *Ōmori-chō* reflects the fact that it has been a ward of Ōda City since 1955, and is not now, strictly speaking, a village with independent municipal administration. Many of the disagreements about what constitutes cultural property reflect the loss of autonomous status by Ōmori, which like many such places in Japan were forced to merge with larger units after long histories of self-government; Ōmori clearly fits Suzuki's definition of a 'natural village' that could trace its administrative boundaries back to before the Tokugawa era (Suzuki 1955: 77). It is not now a fully autonomous governing body (*jichitai*, 自治体).<sup>27</sup> Residents simply refer to it as Ōmori or Ōmori Ginzan.<sup>28</sup> Older residents tend to use the latter. Stockwin (1999: 190) translates *chō* as town within the context of larger urban areas. Neary (2002: xii, xvi) defines *chō* as 'town, local government unit with more than 10,000 and fewer than 50,000 residents,' and *-shi* (市, city) as an administrative unit having more than 50,000. But there is not a formal classification based on population in Japan. Size matters, but it is not an absolute determinant of administrative autonomy or terminology. Until 2005, the smallest village recognized as an autonomous administrative unit in Japan was Kita Shitara-gun Tomiyamamura in Aichi Prefecture, which had a population of 215 when incorporated into Toyonemura, which has 1,300.<sup>29</sup> There are several

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<sup>27</sup> A useful review of all the permutations undergone by local governing bodies is provided by Matsushita (2010). The general topic is usually referred to as 'reform' (*kaikaku*, 改革) of municipalities.

<sup>28</sup> See Martinez (2004: 57-58) for a similar usage elsewhere in Japan.

<sup>29</sup> As can be seen from this name, Kita Shitara is a *gun* incorporated into a *mura*, or village. In Shimane, this order would not be found. Kita Shitara has been able to maintain its own post office and elementary/ middle school, which has fifteen students: [http://www.vill.toyone.aichi.jp/1\\_kurasi/2\\_hoiku/04.html](http://www.vill.toyone.aichi.jp/1_kurasi/2_hoiku/04.html).

Takahashi (1986: 118-125) reported on the situation in Tomiyamamura almost twenty-five years ago when it was already the smallest Japanese village. Its large land area was even then almost entirely covered by forested mountains. It was founded in the fourteenth century and run in 1985 by a seven-person town council, in the elections to which the top vote-getter received thirty votes and the seventh-place person received fifteen. One-third of residents were over 65. Its town office employed fifteen people, not including the education division. The head of the council said that they were just barely above the absolute minimum staff necessary to manage a

large *-chō* that are not incorporated in cities in Shimane; Hikawa-chō, for example, has a population that approaches that of Ōda City in size.<sup>30</sup> In rural Shimane, there are *-gun* (郡) -- districts equivalent in legal status to cities such as Ōda in the sense that there is no larger entity between them and the prefecture. They vary in size between 27,000 and 5,000. Each case of terminology has a complex genealogy and translation can be misleading.

The village is situated along a three kilometre stretch of the narrow valley of the Ginzan River; the main street comprises a 0.8 kilometre commercial and residential section at the bottom of the valley, and the mine entrance, with a few scattered homes and other structures, separated about 2.3 kilometres up the valley. These two parts of the village correspond basically to the former industrial area near the mines, and the commercial/residential neighbourhoods. They have long been recognized as distinct, with their own police boxes regulating the flow of people and goods when the silver mine was in operation. The lower district of the village proper is known as the Ōmori district, while the area closer to the mine entrances is known as the Ginzan district. This is just an informal division that is based on the historical partition between town and mine, but it also reflects the slope of the road up the valley, which begins to steepen from the edge of the town district. This edge is marked by a parking lot that is the limit for tourist vehicles. There is an information office and small park next to the parking lot, and local volunteers monitor the flow of traffic moving towards the mine at this checkpoint. This point is in the section of the village known as *koma-no ashi* (駒足), where from the late sixteenth century those bringing goods to the mines were made to dismount from their horses to pay a tax. The Ōmori preservation zone extends from this point almost one kilometre north to the Kigami Shrine at the far end of the town.

Near the information office there is a street intersection that is the location of a Shingon sect Buddhist temple and a grotto filled with five hundred carved statues of bodhisattvas – *Gohyakurakan* (五百羅漢).<sup>31</sup> This national historic landmark is a favorite place for taking

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village and the biggest issue was not total population but number of children, because if the school closed sixteen residents would automatically leave, not including the teachers.

<sup>30</sup> Hikawa-cho had a population of 28,378 at the end of August 2010. The totals are updated each month on the home page of the town's website:

<http://www.town.hikawa.lg.jp/www/toppage/000000000000/APM03000.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Literally, five hundred arhats, or enlightened followers of Buddha. Such groupings of statues were common in China from about 950AD (Li 2006: 397).

pictures when it is not under construction. For more than a year after World Heritage listing, engineering work at the grotto restricted admission while the hillside around it was reinforced. The Rakanji temple was built under the supervision of the head priest of the Kanseonji temple (Fukuoka) in 1766 to perform funerals for dead miners. The grottos are found across the street from the temple and over three arched bridges (*soribashi*, 反り橋). There are such five hundred statue galleries in many locations in Japan, but they are not necessarily sheltered in a grotto such as that found in Ōmori.

The surrounding mountains are densely forested in all directions, but following the highway north to Ōda City one comes to a mostly flat agricultural zone and the single-track coastal rail-line of the Sanin mainline. Hiroshima is the nearest large city, located about two and one-half hours by car over the mountains to the south. Two buses daily travel from Ōda City through Ōmori and on to Hiroshima (¥3,000 single ticket). Because travel in this direction has been difficult until the construction of toll roads and tunnels through the mountains, the orientation of residents tended to be towards the prefectural capital of Matsue on the Japan Sea coast, and further east to Okayama and Kyōto. There is a regional airport at Izumo, which provides about five flights to and from Tōkyō daily, seven flights to Ōsaka, two to Fukuoka and one to Oki Island.

### **Demographic ‘problems’ and the economy**

Ōmori-chō’s population has declined to less than 450 (187 households in the October 2005 national census). This is a decrease of 64% since 1960 (Ōda City 2007a: 164, Ōda City 2009a: 14). It continues to slowly shrink because there are few families of child-bearing age, the elderly are predominant, and net migration of people is minimal. Roughly 20% of the houses in the village are vacant. At any time, it is possible to ask a resident the population and receive an exact calculation; every death, birth, departure and new arrival is known by most people and their estimates tend to agree that by August 2009 the population had fallen to 420. Deaths always exceed births, and very few residents move in or out. In fact, the death to birth ratio is about ten to one. Demographically the village reflects its region: Shimane Prefecture has suffered from a drastic overall decrease in population since the early 1960s, a high death rate, a net outflow of working-age people, and a severe shift in its age structure towards a greater percentage of the elderly (Shimane-ken 2006: 78, Matsutani 2004: 88). These trends persist in the most recent five-year census to 2005; Shimane lost 2.5% of its population, the fourth greatest decline among Japan’s forty seven prefectures. It is now

equivalent in size roughly to what it was in 1930 – 740,000, having reached a peak of 930,000 in 1955 (Shimane-ken 2006: 17). In this respect, Shimane represents a demographic pattern that is spreading throughout Japan, especially in its relatively more rural prefectures. Concern over depopulation often centres on low birth rates, but notice how rural prefectures, such as Shimane appear in a very different light when fertility rates are used to calculate the rate of birth for women in child-bearing age and the elderly are removed from the equation; Shimane has the sixth highest total fertility rate in Japan, while urban areas such as Tōkyō have the lowest fertility rates. Therefore, if the drain of people into the cities were to stop while the natural cycle of mortality drag reverses in the rural prefectures, their population would theoretically stabilize (Coulmas 2007: 46). Official estimates, however, place Shimane Prefecture's ratio of old aged people consistently higher than national averages in the future; it is expected to rise from 29% in 2009 to 37.3% in 2035, versus national figures of 22.7% and 33.7% (Seisaku tōkatsukan 2010: 7).<sup>32</sup> The aging of rural communities is a social policy issue in many countries and has long been a concern for urban planners, who have sought to disperse the elderly rather than have them concentrated in pockets: “old people need old people, but they also need the young, and young people need contact with the old” (Alexander et al. 1977: 216). Without the physical integration of the elderly, the transmission of cultural values is inhibited. Many people in Ōmori are concerned that traditional knowledge is not being passed to the next generation because there are so few children in the village.

The depopulation of rural villages has been treated as a social problem by the country for over forty years, and there has been a constant stream of policy proposals to remedy it (Aoki 1996). One of the most common responses has been to reduce the number of administrative units, as villages and towns are merged together (Hisaoka 2002).<sup>33</sup> Generally speaking, the

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<sup>32</sup> Japanese statistics divide the population into the young (up to age 14), the working age (15 to 64), and the old aged (65 and older). Official estimates expect a long-term decline in total population from 127million in 2010 to 90 million in 2055, and the ratio of working aged to old aged moving from 3.3 in 2009 to 1.3 in 2055 (Seisaku tōkatsukan 2010: 3-5). These estimates show both that Japan will have the highest ratios of the aged in the world for the next fifty years and that the change from a low ratio in the 1980s to a high ratio now has been exceptionally sudden.

<sup>33</sup> The logic for consolidation of administrative units is that public services can be more efficiently delivered over larger areas by centralized bureaucracy than by smaller units that duplicate effort. Of course, the same level of service is not provided and the main reason such mergers are undertaken is financial. In the eight years to 2007, the total number of autonomous municipalities in Japan was reduced from 3,232 to 1,808. The number of



entire country is graying and its population has begun to decline in absolute numbers. The ‘problems’ of an aging society (*kōrei shakai*, 高齢社会)<sup>34</sup> have been a significant part of government planning for decades (Kanamori et al. 1992, Campbell 1992), and reflect concerns in other countries where population growth is stagnant or negative (Coulmas 2007, Clark et al. 2004). The World Bank (2000) considers there to be an “old age crisis” of global proportions, both in terms of providing care for the elderly, especially pensions, and as a threat to economic growth because of the relative decline in the working-age cohort. Concern over the effects of the aging population has been linked in the popular media to various changes in long-held social beliefs and practices. For example, the financial burden of providing funerals and graves during a period of economic stagnation has apparently led to a trend in disposing with these altogether; while families have less contact with Buddhist priests, they also have increased need to call on their services for aging members, but are deciding to forego such rituals (Oketani 2010). There has been relatively little written about any of these topics in the anthropological literature (Cohen 1994), although there is some treatment in Sokolovsky (2009). In Japan, concern over the aging population is intense and books are appearing that describe how much better the elderly were treated during the Tokugawa era a hundred and fifty years ago (Tatsukawa 1996).

While the contribution of industrial policy has concentrated wealth in cities, rural areas in Japan, as elsewhere in the developed world, have needed to rely on primary sectors or, increasingly, tourist-related services, to sustain themselves economically (Sullivan 1997, Rowan and Baran 2004, Moon 2002). The decentralization and potential redistribution of

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villages (*mura*, 村) in this group was cut from 568 to 195. This mass reduction is known as the ‘great Heisei merger’ (平成の大合併). Local bodies are a large drain on central government funds. The burden became such an issue during the 1990s that former guarantees to the local level were withdrawn and subsidies cut. One of the shocking results of this ‘administrative reform’ policy was the 2007 bankruptcy of the city of Yūbari in Hokkaidō (*Nihon Keizai Shinbun* 2007d, Onishi 2007). Okuno (2008: 134-135) notes some of the problems that arise. They include the loss of a feeling of belonging to the new, larger entity by the population and a reduction in the detailed statistical information that can be obtained when more units are present. Also, isolated pockets of population receive less attention for all services, particularly public safety. A history of the consolidation movement is given by Matsushita (2010) and a critical case study in Aomori by Rausch (2006).

<sup>34</sup> Sometimes referred to as ‘low-birth rate aging society’ (*shōshi kōrei shakai*, 少子高齢社会) or increasingly as the ‘extreme aging society’ (*chōkōrei shakai*, 超高齢化社会). Strictly speaking, the former refers to the rising percentage of those over 65 in the total population, while the latter is the percentage of those over 75. For the gradual shift in emphasis from aging to low birth in Japanese media and public policy, see Roberts (2002).

economic opportunities to rural areas expected from improvements in communications and convergence across the digital divide have not yet occurred in Japan or in other countries (Lind 1996, Woods 2006, Grimes 2000). In fact, access to information networks is better everywhere in urban locations – to the extent that Tōkyō is described as made up of “invisible networked communities” connected by horizontal and vertical grids of electronic communications (Suzuki 2001: 69), or entire neighbourhoods converted into electronic playgrounds for those interested in computers and animation (Morikawa 2008).<sup>35</sup> The use of messaging services over Internet-enabled mobile phones has grown to the point of making it difficult, particularly for urban young people, to conceive of having personal relationships not mediated by such technology (Tomita 2005: 195). There are an estimated 5,000 ‘internet café refugees’ in Tōkyō (Sterling 2007, Parry 2007). This situation is nothing like that found in Ōmori-*chō*, where the cellular infrastructure cannot handle the current overload in demand from tourists and Skype is considered an exotic technical system of little relevance. The local computer expert is Chinese. Even the land line service occasionally breaks down. However, all this is not to say that rural areas remain in what would now seem the pre-Internet technological backwater of fixed-line telephones, tractors, and television described only fifteen years ago by Kelly (1992).

Because of the perceived economic consequences of an aging population, planning on many government levels aims to stimulate growth, or at least prevent further decline; very often in rural areas this has been the equivalent of tourist promotion, whereby urban dwellers are enticed back to scenic beauty, ‘hometown’ (*furusato*, 故郷) tradition<sup>36</sup>, and the retro longing for ‘simple living’ (Ivy 1995, Creighton 1997, Schnell 2005, Tamamura 2007). During the 1980s, there was a boom in resort development throughout Japan, and by the end of the economic bubble in 1989 about 27% of the land area of the island of Kyūshū was included in plans for potential tourist projects (Satō 1990: 3). The Japanese tourism industry virtually

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<sup>35</sup> Morikawa (2008) explains how the Tōkyō district of Akihabara has developed from being a place that specialized in the sale of electric appliances to the geek mecca for the *otaku* sub-culture, in the process reconfiguring the space to suit new tastes. For the psychological background on *otaku*, see Saitō (2003).

<sup>36</sup> *Furusato* is potentially a highly emotive word that conjures up complex feelings about identity and spiritual belonging. It has been used intensely since the 1980s in advertizing every conceivable object; its use can be seen as a tool to de-commoditize, or personalize, goods. It has been compared to the use of the term ‘roots’ in the West (Reader 1987: 290), and is often linked with the word *kokoro* (heart, spirit). One of the better reviews of the subject is Ivy (1995: 107-108), who writes *furusato* indicates “a return of something estranged under the guise of the familiar.”

took over other Pacific islands such as Guam and Hawaii (Yamaguchi 2007). Shimane Prefecture never experienced this boom, and by the time the financial bubble burst in the early 1990s it had failed to build the golf courses and ski resorts that proliferated elsewhere in more accessible locations.

Rural prefectures are dependent upon financial transfers from the national government to balance their expenditures, and are under pressure to scale them back. Municipalities likewise depend upon their prefectures for financial support: Ōda City, the municipal administrative unit for 40,000 residents including those of Ōmori-*chō*, receives over 70% of its basic account funding from public sources outside the city, i.e., mostly from the prefecture since its local property tax base is shrinking (Ōda City 2007a: 171). Shimane Prefecture's budget also continues to shrink; the estimate for fiscal 2008 calls for an overall reduction of 2.6% and a cut in funding for economic promotion of over 30% (*Nihon Keizai Shinbun* 2007b). 'Industry' in Ōda City consists of clay roof tile production and small-scale processing of agricultural and marine products.<sup>37</sup> All of these businesses appear to be in structural decline: the largest tile firms are going bankrupt (*Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2007a). Tourism, therefore, is the central plank in economic promotion strategy (Ōda City 2007b), which also endorses local foods that provide 'hometown flavour' (*furusato no aji*, 故郷の味) such as *hako-zushi*, *Sanbe soba*, and *heka-yaki*, but because there are so few retail establishments in Ōda City, these products are conspicuously difficult to find.<sup>38</sup> In fact, the largest market in Ōda City is outside the city in a mall development of a national chain; it displays shrimp from Saudi Arabia and a huge selection of Chinese products rather than regional specialties.

Local promotion efforts appear to have had little impact on improving the economic fortunes of Ōda City. Time hangs heavily over its central business district. But the listing of Iwami

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<sup>37</sup> Tile roofs are a special feature of the Sanin region, reflecting its relative affluence in the past. In northeast Japan, by contrast, buildings were normally thatched and then replaced directly with slate from the 1950s, signifying the shift to modern construction.

<sup>38</sup> Local food is a hallmark of authenticity; every place must have its own specialty (*meisan*, 名産), even when these are invented for the sake of tourist promotional literature. The list from Ōda City, which refers to boxed sushi, mountain vegetables with noodles, and a grilled meat dish, is an example of such quasi-imaginative produce. It is a necessary symbol of authenticity that cannot be discovered as part of everyday life, but is expected to exist and thereby insure the authenticity of a native place. 'Heirloom' vegetables from Kyōto, which were replaced by mass market produce after World War Two, have made a comeback and are now sold as part of the national culinary heritage. See Cwiertka (2006: 167-169).

Ginzan as a World Heritage site literally put the area back on the map and into the consciousness of the nation; Iwami Ginzan was given one of the top awards in the 2007 Nikkei hit product list and Matsuba Tomi, chairperson of the local textile design company was named one of the Nikkei's Woman of the Year for 2008.<sup>39</sup> Being one of only fourteen World Heritage sites in Japan, Iwami Ginzan is now officially recognized as a legitimate tourist destination that should be recognized both as a cultural property of national importance and also of 'universal human value.'<sup>40</sup> The rush of visitors to Iwami Ginzan has, however, slowed markedly since the peak in 2008. This is the normal pattern expected whenever a new site is designated in Japan – there is an initial boom and then a falling off of interest as media attention shifts elsewhere. In the case of Iwami Ginzan, the decline during 2009 was roughly estimated at 30 percent and the trend continues.<sup>41</sup>

The economy in Ōmori is not just a small version of what can be found in cities; it exhibits many features that differ significantly from the urban situation. Just as the rural community described sixty years ago by Lefebvre (2001a [1949]: 29), it is an organic whole that cannot be reduced to a mechanical solidarity of individual elements that has been overcome by the

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<sup>39</sup> See: *Nikkei Woman*. March 2008. <http://www.nikkeiwoman.net/>, consulted 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2008. The Nikkei is Japan's leading business publishing group, equivalent to Dow Jones Corp.

<sup>40</sup> The World Heritage list can be viewed from the perspective of a long tradition of ranking tourist sites in Japan, dating back to the Heian era and lists of famous places where poems could be written. This practice seems to have come from China. Probably the best known list is the seventeenth century 'three great views of Japan' (*Nihon sankei*, 日本三景), of which only Miyajima is a World Heritage site. In the twentieth century, newspapers and the national railroad, with the aim of promoting tourism, have commissioned opinion surveys to determine modern selections of the 'best scenes' for visiting. In 1927 and again in 1950, major opinion surveys categorized these places into eight topographies: coastline (海岸), lakes/marshes (湖沼), mountains (山岳), rivers (河川), valleys (溪谷), waterfalls (瀑布), hot springs (温泉), and plains (平原) (Umekawa 2009: 67-69). None of the eleven villages recently listed as the most beautiful in Japan are in the Sanin region, although the World Heritage village of Shirakawagō is included (Saeki 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Statistics are available for tourist numbers to several venues at the site where admission is charged. These indicate that the main mine figures decreased by 34 percent in 2009 over the previous year, those for the Iwami Ginzan Museum were down by 49 percent and admission to the Kawashima-kei, a relatively minor attraction on the main street, declined a remarkable 65 percent (Shimane-ken 2009: 20). This progression tends to indicate that not only did visitor numbers decrease in absolute terms, but also that visitors tended to focus primarily on the mine rather than the town of Ōmori. Typical tours increasingly bypass the town centre, move directly to the mine and then depart. Recorded visits to Yunotsu Spa were also down by 22 percent, but note that tourist numbers were down generally in the prefecture during the year and even Izumo Shrine had a roughly 8 percent decrease in visitors.

triumph of market exchange, money and individuals who engage in work under contract. There is quite a lot of ‘subsistence’ living on very modest means in Ōmori-*chō* (Nibe 2003). Residents tend their vegetable gardens and fruit trees. In season, they collect bamboo shoots and berries. There are many vacant houses in various states of disrepair. The contrast with urban lifestyles in Japan is extreme (Suzuki 2001), transportation access is inconvenient, and the local dialect differs noticeably from standard Japanese, particularly when people get excited and start to add various emphatic particle to their sentences, such as *-kei*, which would strike a Tōkyō speaker of standard Japanese as strange.<sup>42</sup>

Each March, the village holds a small festival at the Ido Shrine. All residents are given coupons to redeem at a lottery stall where an old bin-like device is turned by men, and based on the number that drops out, prizes are awarded. These range from cooking oil to facial tissue, and have been donated by a few businesses in town. A steady flow of women hobble up to the stall, present their coupon and collect their prize. They come to socialize, but the lure of a small prize appears to be a serious draw and some have made a great effort to walk from their houses. It is getting increasingly difficult to bring together all of the community to such events, not because they are busy pursuing jobs or no longer want to see neighbours, but because they are becoming so old that physical weakness slows them down.

The artisan economy of the village encompasses two relatively large companies that employ about 40-50 people each; one designs textiles (Gungendō) and the other manufactures artificial limbs (Nakamura Brace).<sup>43</sup> There are a few small shops that sell *tofu* (bean curd), *soba* (buckwheat noodles), and baked goods. Much of what is for sale is handcrafted locally.

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<sup>42</sup> The NHK morning TV drama (連続テレビ小説) while I was doing fieldwork in 2008-2009 was *Dan-Dan*. This expression in the local dialect of Matsue means thank you, and not the standard ‘gradually’. Its use related to the fact that the main actresses came from a family in Shimane, although they spend most of their time in Kyōto. These shows regularly highlight some feature of a local region and use some dialect. *Dan-Dan* was tied into various tourist promotions in Shimane.

<sup>43</sup> A third company, Ceramica, is located outside the main village near the tourist parking lot. It is a manufacturer of roof tiles. The clay *Sekishū* tiles (石州瓦) that are made in the western part of Shimane Prefecture are produced under a designated regional trademark (*chiiki dantai shōhyō*, 地域団体商標) for the specific place and manner of their manufacture: <http://www.ceramica.jp/>. There are 456 such trademarks approved by the Japan Patent Office at August 2010 (Tokkyochō 2010). The other designations in Shimane are for Shimane beef, Tamazukuri Hot Spring, Uppurui-nori (seaweed), and Taki figs. Each designation has a holder of the right to apply the regional designation (*kenrisha*, 権利者), which in the case of *Sekishū* tiles is the local industry association: <http://www.sekisyu-kawara.jp/>.

Even the souvenirs sold in the small gift shops were, until recent ‘upgrade’ efforts, mostly homemade objects such as metal wind-chimes and straw indigo sandals. The nearest convenience store is in Ōda City, ten kilometres away, and young people say the only thing they buy there is printer cartridges. Material things are not ‘consumed’ in the same, extravagant way as the disposable culture of the city (Plath 2000). This is a very different environment than that described by Bestor (2006: 125-126) for Tokyo, where “garishly intrusive shops purvey a highly impersonal popular culture of consumption that especially targets alienated teenagers and young adults” and the “affectless, robotic voices that young workers use” are “seemingly modelled on video games” and are the antithesis of local sociability and the “thick texture of daily interaction”. Because of its peaceful surroundings, the village has attracted a few artists. Several residents who grew up in the region have come back, as part of the ‘U-turn phenomenon’, from cities because of the better quality of life in the countryside (Perry et al. 1986).

When city people ask what do residents of Ōmori do, they are likely to get unsatisfactory answers because residents do not define themselves in these terms. The question sounds as if an occupation provides identity, but people in Ōmori do so many different things that many could not restrict their answer to a simple response. This is just one instance of the communications gap between city and country that often arises. It appears that local people, as pre-ideological individuals, innately resist being transformed into an Althusserian subject of interpellation (Althusser 1971: 174).

### **World Heritage**

The village, as mentioned, is part of Ōda City, which contains the municipal planning department that helped to promote the area as a World Heritage site, and with the aid of officials in the Shimane Prefectural government and *Bunkachō* (Agency for Cultural Affairs, 文化庁) obtained a tentative listing for World Heritage approval in 2001. In other words, it passed through the national selection process and became a candidate for official UNESCO recognition. Iwami Ginza had been passed over for promotion to official listing several times, but through a process of political negotiations it managed to be named in 2007 in spite of an evaluation report from ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites), the UNESCO advisory body on cultural property, that listing be deferred.<sup>44</sup> Many people were,

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<sup>44</sup> See Motonaka (2007) on the negotiations behind the reversal of this evaluation. ICOMOS produced a long list of reservations about the site, which were point by point answered in a 120-page supplemental submission from

therefore, surprised when the final decision was made, and preparation for the increased numbers of tourists was minimal. Other parties, such as the Ōda City Chamber of Commerce were in favour of the listing. People in Ōmori-*chō* that I spoke with were equivocal about the designation; they resented the disruption to their lives and worried that some of the attractive aspects of their village would change, however many felt that it was too soon to judge the full impact of change. In general, they were worried rather than relaxed about the changes. There was concern that the only other World Heritage site in Japan where people lived, Shirakawa-gō in Gifu Prefecture, has been made unlivable by the tourist flood (*Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2006: 211-215, Yang 2006).<sup>45</sup> That village, unlike Ōmori-*chō*, appears to have actively courted the economic stimulus of tourism and consciously preserved its distinctive farmhouses, beginning in the 1950s, for that purpose<sup>46</sup>. All of the other thirteen sites in Japan are either

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the *Bunkachō*. Most notably, ICOMOS claimed that insufficient comparative research had been done to show the universal value of this particular mine site. The response said that the academic standards required by ICOMOS were Euro-centric and unfairly discriminated against Asian sites. Iwami Ginzan is the only Asian mining site on the World Heritage list. As natural sites, historic monuments and groups of architecturally significant buildings were substantially listed for European countries by about 2000. The mandate of the World Heritage Convention has been applied to increasing numbers of industrial places, but non-Western representation is still relatively limited (Cooney 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Hohn (1997: 247) has the idea that isolated settings have a better chance of preservation than cities: "The chances of preserving a traditional townscape and its environs are of course especially good for villages and small towns in peripheral regions like Shirakawa-gō or Tsumago-juku, where the respective preservation movements' aims are the same as the economic goal of promoting tourism and using the historic townscape as a means for achieving this end." Of course, the argument of this thesis is exactly the opposite; villages are particularly delicate and the rush of tourism caused by related heritage crusades has repeatedly destroyed communities by turning them into museums managed for the sake of outsiders. Shirakawa-gō is a perfect example of how to wreck a place by following Hohn's line of reason. Lowenthal (1996) is an antidote to this with examples from around the world. The Mt.Koya Declaration (2007) provides evidence from Japan. See also Igarashi and Nishimura (2008). Miura (2004) gives the example of Angkor Wat.

<sup>46</sup> The case of Shirakawa-gō appears somewhat similar to the Toraja village in Indonesia studied by Adams (2006), although the latter village has so far failed to achieve World Heritage status. Indonesia has only three cultural sites on the list as of 2010, as compared for example with Belgium with ten. A number of Japanese villages now are applying, or considering application, to the Agency of Cultural Affairs for submission to UNESCO for World Heritage review and for cultural preservation status within the national scheme (*Asahi Shinbun* 2007, *Nihon Keizai Shinbun* 2007a, c). On the *gassho* (合掌) style of huge farmhouse in Shirakawa-gō, see Nishi (1967: 256) and Rowlands (2007). This regional style, which is classified as part of the central highlands zone of *minka*, is very different from *minka* found in Ōmori-*chō*, which falls between the Sanin and Chūgoku Mountain zones (Sugimoto 1977: 105-112). Anthropologists have shown interest in the Shirakawa-gō

specific buildings, such as temples, shrines, historical monuments such as the Hiroshima Peace Memorial, or are natural park landscapes.

The Iwami Ginzan site was officially promoted to World Heritage status for three specific reasons: it exhibited an important interchange of human values, bore unique testimony to a cultural tradition, and was considered an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement which is representative of a culture. The village of Ōmori-chō is not the significant feature of the site; rather it is the existence of the extensive, abandoned silver mines in the mountains behind the village that attracted international attention. It is an ‘industrial site’ in spite of the current lack of any industry (Hirai et al. 2009: 10), and is typically classified with mining heritage sites such as Kutná Hora in the Czech Republic, the Cornwall and West Devon mining landscape, and Las Médulas in Spain (Cole 2004, Dicks 2000, Cameron 2000, Edwards and Llurdes i Coit 1996). It is not, strictly speaking, part of the Agency for Cultural Affairs’ program of designated ‘modernization heritage’ (*kindaika isan*, 近代化遺産) because these must belong to the period from the end of the Tokugawa era to World War Two (1868-1945).<sup>47</sup> However, it is often included in reviews of historical sites related to the

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family structure; as many as forty members were housed together in rural dwellings that could have five floors above ground (Mizunoe and Nishiyama 2007, Kōguchi and Nishiyama 2006 ).

<sup>47</sup> In other words, they would be considered important sites or objects during the Meiji, Taisho and early Showa eras. The Agency formed a committee to begin collecting data and cataloguing such historic remains in 1996. The objective was to locate and evaluate the condition of historical sites that had not previously been considered old enough for inclusion in the cultural property regime (Itō 2000). Its report on the mining sector was published in 2002 (Bunkachō 2002). The survey reviewed nine other sectors, including energy, agriculture, politics and culture. Iwami Ginzan is, however, often included in more general reviews of modernization properties, such as by Shimizu (2007: 178). There is a growing tourist business associated with industrial and modernization related sites beyond the earlier interest in railroads and engineering marvels. This is parallel to developments in Europe, and is encouraged by UNESCO. A good example of the range in property that could be covered by such a ‘modernization’ designation was the Ōiso residence of former Prime Minister Yoshida Shigeru. It was built in 1888 by his foster father and enlarged after the war using mostly *hinoki* (Japanese cypress) wood in its reconstruction. In 1979 it was the venue for a summit meeting between Japan and the United States, although being the property of Seibu Railways after Yoshida’s death in 1969. It received subsidies from Kanagawa Prefecture, which planned to develop a public park at the site, but in March 2009 the house burned down (*Mainichi Shinbun* 2009). The destruction of the unoccupied house immediately raised the possibility of arson and why such historically important structures were not better protected.

The precedent that came naturally to mind was the destruction of the Temple of the Golden Pavilion (*Rokuonji*, 鹿苑寺, also popularly known as *Kinkakuji*, 金閣寺) in Kyōto by an arsonist monk in 1950. An account of the episode is in the novels of Mishima (2001) and Mizukami (1963). The former, in particular, comes close to



modernization of Japan. The abandoned castles, shrines, temples and other ruins that now cover the mountains around Ōmori-chō date mostly from the sixteenth century.<sup>48</sup> From the seventeenth century, when the Tokugawa Shogunate took direct control of the area, it was given ‘dominion status’ (*tenryō*, 天領), which is celebrated by a local festival in August (Matsuo et al. 2005: 199-202). Because the area boomed economically for several hundred years, archaeological remains cover the landscape, although most are now engulfed by forest. There are hiking trails in the mountains. These are still lightly developed, but one goal of the future exploitation of the site is to use these trails as an added attraction for those who want to walk in the forest, making it a destination for those interested in both culture and nature (or physical fitness). The strenuous mountain trail route is still not a course most visitors follow; in fact, the typical visitor on a tour of Iwami Ginzan will arrive at the World Heritage Centre parking lot, board a bus to the tourist information office in Ōmori, walk up the road to the publicly open mine and then reverse the sequence. Such a tour would typically require about

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justifying the destruction as an act of violence against beauty in the postwar world; the arsonist is presented as both loving the temple as an ideal of traditional aesthetics and heritage, and hating it because he feels those qualities should have perished with Japan’s defeat in the war (Nemoto 1993: 233). This property, which included extensive gardens as well as the temple originally built in 1397, was a designated national treasure as long ago as 1925. It was temporarily removed from this designation while being rebuilt, and was reinstated as a place of special scenic beauty and a special historic site in 1956. The fire also destroyed the Buddhist statuary and religious objects housed inside; the building was a reliquary. The rebuilt temple has substantially more gold leaf applied to its surfaces than before the arson. The site is one of seventeen within Kyōto and Shiga prefectures included in the 1994 Kyōto World Heritage registration, and very often the Kinkakuji structure is pictured as the representative image of the entire collection. ICOMOS in its recommendation to add Kyōto temples and gardens to the World Heritage list did not dwell on the fact that the temple was entirely rebuilt after the fire; it merely mentions that a fire occurred and the temple was rebuilt because it was considered an essential part of the gardens. In fact, the building has been entirely rebuilt several times due to fires in the sixteenth century, and again in 1908 when structural reinforcements were installed in the roof (Enders and Gutschow 1998: 68). There has been major repair work at the temple several times in the past thirty years, particularly in the 1980s when the gold leaf was increased because of deterioration. The designation by the Agency for Cultural Affairs emphasizes the gardens.

<sup>48</sup> Ōuchi Yoshitaka, the local warlord, began the fortification of the area around the silver mines in 1528 with the establishment of the Yataki Castle (矢滝城) on a 634 meter high mountain overlooking the trail towards Yunotsu. He built the Yamabuki Castle (山吹城) on a lower hill near the mines in 1533. Yahazu Castle (矢筈城) and Iwami Castle (石見城) were added on neighboring hilltops during the 1550s and 1560s. All of the castles were abandoned in 1602 by the Tokugawa administration and are national historic ruins (Iwamura 1988). They can be reached by primitive trails from the mine area but are not developed for tourism.

three hours. One fully developed mine-shaft (*Ryūgenji mabu*, 龍源寺間歩) is open regularly for tourists. It has lighting and has been extensively configured with reinforcement, extra tunnelling and pavement to make it accessible to large flows of visitors through almost half of its approximately 600 meter length. Some original chisel marks are preserved. The exit tunnel is newly dug to provide safe egress. This less-than-imposing venue is the destination of nearly everyone who visits Iwami Ginzan with the intention of seeing the World Heritage attractions. But Iwami Ginzan is really a tourist site “without a monument” (Toyota 2010: 10). This lack of a famous sight, such as the recognizable images of Shirakawa-gō or Miyajima, disappoints many visitors; the pictures of a narrow tunnel inside the mine really are not impressive, except to a few engineers who avidly read the descriptions of historical mining techniques that are provided on sign boards in the tunnel. There is a small museum in Ōmori, which is somewhat off the beaten track for most visitors, and a large World Heritage Centre, which is usually the first place tourists see, next to the main parking lots outside of the village. Efforts to develop further mine-sites for public entry were temporarily halted because of the discovery of bat colonies, but since 2009 four tours daily can be booked to the Ōkubo mine (大久保間歩) in season (April to October) for a cost of ¥3,700 per person. These guided tours are still restricted because the mine has no lighting or the kind of preparation that would allow safe access for unescorted visitors. The mine is the largest known complex at Iwami Ginzan at about 900 meters in length, but because of the danger of falling rocks only about 150 meters are open to visitors. The tour includes a stop at a nearby smaller shaft. In total, over 600 mine excavations have been identified spread over a large region in the mountains. Seven are separately designated as national historic sites. Many are very small, almost surface diggings, which have been posted with number plates by the archaeological survey. Some local people feel that the small diggings are more representative of the activity that took place in Iwami Ginzan and deserve to be featured more than the larger tunnels, but of course such a program would be even less impressive than the current tours. The Ōkubo mine was used from the seventeenth to nineteenth century, and shows evidence of both the honeycomb hand-tool digging of the earlier period and the machine drilling of later work. There is an assortment of other sightseeing spots in Ōmori and the World Heritage zone. In fact, if tourists have five hours for their visit, they can walk down the Ōmori main street and find several places to take photographs, although these tend to look like the preserved street scenes available in several other places in Japan and do not have a single imposing image that would identify the location as unquestionably Iwami Ginzan.

Guides who show tourists the features along the Ōmori main street point out Edo-era construction details in the old houses. These can include *mushiko-mado* (narrow slits in the upper stories of town houses, 虫籠窓)<sup>49</sup>, *agejitomi* (lattice shutters, 上げ葺), and *udatsu* (protrusions of painted walls used for fire prevention on upper floors, 卯建). Tourist photos tend to pick out small details of interest that are scattered around the length of the road from the mines to the town.<sup>50</sup> These often show worn surfaces and the traces of aging on the

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<sup>49</sup> Literally, “insect basket windows.”

<sup>50</sup> Samuel (1996: 27) reminds us “a historiography that was alert to memory’s shadows – those sleeping images which spring to life unbidden and serve as ghostly sentinels of our thought – might give at least as much attention to pictures as to manuscripts or print. The visual provides us with our stock figures, our subliminal points of reference, our unspoken point of address.” In Japan, it has been argued that taking photographs to document a trip is the real purpose of the trip, and what tourists select to put in the pictures represents the images that they want to remember and associate most strongly with a place. Berger (2010: 12), for example, writes that “arriving at a desired place, such as the Golden Temple in Kyōto, photographing it becomes more important for some tourists than actually looking at and experiencing the temple.” This type of orientation is very different than that of local people, who document different things, particularly group feasts. Residents are very interested in the traces of aging that are found in the village and are happy to talk about them, but because they live with them every day such images do not seem to draw their conscious attention and certainly are not what they record in photographs; the traces strike urban tourists as unlike anything found in their modern life and the unusualness, for them, is part of their motivation to record them. Such traces seem to represent an image of *furusato* as described by Ivy as familiar yet uncanny, and their interest in these elements in the landscape demonstrates the power of the appeal of hometown mythmaking. According to MacCannell (1999: 14-15), the process of tourism is a way of attempting to overcome the discontinuities of modern life and sightseeing helps people to produce an orderly series of representations of life and society, such as snapshots in a photo album. These images of thematic fragments correspond to and reinforce ideas about society. Of course, many tourist pictures seem to be taken because they reflect shared beliefs about what is interesting, beautiful or important, and others are produced to document having been at a particular spot. In the latter case, the backdrop is carefully selected to reveal iconic images of the location. So, for example, at many popular destinations there is a certain picture-taking stage that is routinely used to document visits. In Shirakawa-gō, there is an overlook at the top of the valley from which a wide perspective of the thatched roofs in the village can be seen. This place has been used for taking pictures for decades and in one of the main display houses there is a collection of pictures taken from the spot in various seasons. In Miyajima, tourists can stand in the Itsukushima Shrine and position the famous *torii* gate in the water behind them. In Iwami Ginzan, there is, as yet, no clearly obligatory spot to take a picture, and this seems to irritate many visitors. Among the candidates is the metal diorama of the area or the view along the narrow main street showing old houses. Neither of these is particularly suitable for large group pictures, and the courtyards of local shrines and temples do not really satisfy the desire to identify a specific, famous place. To capture the typical long-distance perspective of Ōmori nestled in the valley and surrounded by the forest requires a trek into the mountains far beyond the mine entrance to a place virtually no tourists

physical environment and scenes in which this built environment is combined with the forest or other ‘natural’ features. These would be, for example, the bridges over the stream running through town or scenes of the overgrown ruins of shrines. Such images reference the long history evident in the landscape. They show the ordinary and domestic. It is possible to walk a short distance from the main tourist route in many directions and stumble upon such ruins and stone foundations that ramble up the sides of the hills and into the deeper mountains. These places leave the impression that no one has been there for many years, and so although there are crowds of thousands of people trudging back and forth on the road up to the mines and down the main street of Ōmori during daylight hours, just a slight detour can lead to pockets of quiet and isolation. While many visitors take advantage of bicycle rentals or velotaxis<sup>51</sup> to reduce the time it takes to walk to the mines and miss such pockets, many also

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venture, and, even if one were to get that far, there is not space for people to stand in the foreground. There is also little opportunity for tourists to incorporate local residents in their pictures; these residents do not frequent the mine area during the day and they tend to move inconspicuously behind the scenes rather than the main artery. Tourist photographers rarely would experience the ‘reverse gaze’ reported for other places (Gillespie 2006). Digital photography and video have changed the gaze of tourist photography somewhat by making it possible to experiment on site with various positions, selecting the ‘best image’ and incorporating many complex effects in editing. It makes montage an even more flexible tool in decontextualizing and fragmenting the experienced scene and disrupting the perspective (Adorno 2004: 202-203). The rearranged images produced from such manipulation allows tourists great scope to present a picture of Iwami Ginzan that may be hard for residents to identify; the experience and its reflection in the photo ‘record’ can be unrecognizable to those who see the objects within an historical context that has generated strong emotional ties. The tourists coming to the World Heritage site are expected to share in the universal values represented in the landscape, but the sense of place and the cultural memory they draw on, as reflected in their photography, are very different than those of residents (Taylor and Altenburg 2006).

<sup>51</sup> These “bicycle rickshaws” have been imported from Europe and can now be found in most tourist districts in Japan. A local resident in Ōmori runs the hire service. Originally, the concept came about because when the road up to the mines was closed to tourist vehicles, there was concern that some older visitors or others with physical disabilities might struggle to make the trip up the hill and some kind of conveyance would help. Velotaxis are marketed as merely a technical advancement from ‘traditional’ Japanese runner-pulled models. In fact, most customers seem to be young women who do not want to walk. While the velotaxis are portrayed as environmentally friendly because they are propelled by human muscle, this claim only makes sense in urban settings when the choice is to take a fueled vehicle, not where nearly everyone is walking on a narrow road through a village or up a mountain. The drivers of the velotaxis in Ōmori have been hired from outside the community and they are conspicuous because of their appearance and behavior, which locals describe as urban. There have been complaints about their manners, particularly from leaders of school groups, but a shortage of local young men willing and able to do the physical labor of driving a velotaxi necessitates recruitment

seem able to stumble across them and capture them in pictures. When asked why they have departed from the beaten trail, some tourists say they are looking for ‘natural scenery’ and want to get closer to it; they are curious about crossing over the boundary between the prepared course and wilderness, looking for what is hidden in the forest beyond the road. The mystery of the hidden objects attracts their interest and draws them away from the standard itinerary. Unlike many older mass tourist sites in Japan, Iwami Ginzan provides the possibility of exploring this undeveloped region on the edge of what is presented as the main attraction. Because the onrush of World Heritage seekers came suddenly and before sufficient preparations could be made, facilities have been in a partly-finished state and trying to catch up with the imagined requirements of planners, who in any event have been primarily concerned with channelling the flow of bodies through the site on a prescribed route; anything off the route has been ignored. Time is usually the limiting factor in whether one will be able to look past the prepared map; group tours, usually conducted by a guide, are on fixed schedules and normally release members for “free time” only in the town where they can collect souvenirs or eat. First-time visitors, who make up the bulk of tourists, are primarily concerned with seeing the main attractions, collecting some information and navigating around the site while in a state of disorientation. This difficulty in understanding the local layout is in spite of the relatively simple arrangement of the overall site; it comprises more or less a single axis leading through the village and up the mountain towards the mine entrance to the south. However, visitors remark that the narrow valley makes it hard to keep a reference point in view and the rural landscape seems alien to those who live in large cities. I was often asked what was the ‘course’ that would allow one to efficiently seek the obligatory sights. Japanese tourist venues normally have recommended routes, usually profusely signed, and the expectation of following such a sequence whenever visiting a tourist site is strong.<sup>52</sup> In Iwami Ginzan, this course is now decided by the parking regulations that force most visitors to leave their transportation in the World Heritage centre and take a bus into the

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elsewhere. Rental bicycles are so popular that there has been discussion about restricting their number to about 100. At one town meeting a resident complained that certain spots in Ōmori now have so many bicycles that it looks like China. Part of the problem is that the bicycles can reach high speeds when driven down the hill from the mine.

<sup>52</sup> The tourist resort of Hakone, for example, has a recommended circular course that follows a counter-clockwise direction around the lake; it is so well observed that if one travels in a clockwise direction the only people one meets are foreigners. Guide books to tourist destinations always have recommended routes with details on how to stay on course and where to stop, including places for food, photographs and souvenirs.

site.<sup>53</sup> The situation was much more chaotic when the tourists first arrived after designation and automobiles were allowed to drive through town and up to the mine site. In the initial period after designation in the summer of 2007, Iwami Ginzan was receiving an average of 9,300 visitors per day and on weekends the traffic was so congested that shuttle bus service could not operate. Residents wanted to place a 2,000 per day limit on visitors but this proved unworkable. After some time, the large parking site outside the village was prepared and a tour bus reservation system was put in place to control flow.

At the base of the village there is a small parking area, bus stop and cluster of souvenir shops. Taxis from Ōda City will normally take visitors to this destination if requested to travel from the railway station to Iwami Ginzan. It is next to the Iwami Ginzan museum, which was established in 1976 by the proprietor of one of the largest businesses in the area, Nakamura Toshirō, whose firm Nakamura Brace manufactures prosthetic and orthopaedic devices from silicone rubber (Shiomi 2005).<sup>54</sup> He was a director of the committee to promote heritage status for Iwami Ginzan, a member of the Ōda City Chamber of Commerce, and chairman of the Iwami Ginzan museum (石見銀山資料館), which is located adjacent to his company offices in Ōmori. This museum is on the site of the former Edo-era provincial governor's office for the Iwami Ginzan mines (*daikansho*, 代官所),<sup>55</sup> and housed in a building constructed in 1902 for the Nima-gun administration (.Iwami Ginzan Gaido-no Kai 2009: 2). It displays an extensive collection of historic mine-related materials that Mr Nakamura assembled over the years. It is fair to say he was the most active local resident involved in the process of enhancing the status of Iwami Ginzan as a candidate for World Heritage listing, and he attended the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Christchurch, New Zealand, when Iwami Ginzan was inscribed. His company sponsors advertising of Iwami Ginzan and awards a cultural prize for research about Iwami Ginzan. His company participates in the 'cultural power from the people project' (市民から文化カプロジェクト) organized by the Agency for Cultural Affairs to involve the private sector in promotion of the

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<sup>53</sup> The 'park and ride' scheme begun in October 2008 is detailed in *Mainichi Shinbun* (2008). This regulation was approved at a general meeting of Ōda City council members (市議会全員協議会).

<sup>54</sup> The private firm employs about 65 people, many of whom commute into Ōmori from the surrounding area. It also provides some company housing. Its identity is strongly tied to the World Heritage status of Iwami Ginzan and its web-based content at any time is likely to have nearly as much information about the silver mine attraction as it does on neck and leg braces: <http://www.nakamura-brace.co.jp/>.

<sup>55</sup> The site is a nationally designated historic ruin.

arts. He has also been active in refurbishing several old buildings at the north end of Ōmori. His activities are motivated by memories of his childhood. His father worked for the Japan Nitrogen Co. in Korea before World War Two, and after repatriation to the family home in Ōmori the senior Nakamura was the treasurer of the town until it was merged in 1955 with Ōda City. The merger meant he was forced to retire and the lack of other suitable work in the region made an impression on his son, who also remembers visiting the Iwami Ginzan mine ruins with his father and being told that Ōmori once had an important place in history comparable to Marco Polo because its silver reached the West and provided the outside world with a symbol of Asia. He promised not to forget and his pride in the community has driven many of the developments that are evident there today (Nakamura 2009: 23). His business does not benefit directly from tourism, but its status has been immeasurably enhanced by its association with the successful candidature. While he describes Ōmori as a declining ghost town before World Heritage, it is now quite busy during most days of the tourist season. While previously the name Iwami Ginzan was obscure in Japan, now, thanks to the media exposure of World Heritage, it is recognized by nearly everyone.



Figure 1: Nakamura Brace sign at Ōda Station

It must be noted that the promotion of Iwami Ginzan as a World Heritage site by a few local residents such as Mr. Nakamura took place in a prefecture that has had strong affiliation with

the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP).<sup>56</sup> This political leverage by the prefecture may be one reason why Iwami Ginzan was able to mobilize the required support within the government to be nominated for World Heritage. Shimane Prefecture has received extensive investment in public works projects over the years, and is a prime example of how the LDP tended to favour rural areas in development policy. As one of the least densely populated prefectures, it has consistently elected Diet members from the LDP and has maintained the highest level of registered voter turnout in the nation. In the 2009 lower house elections, for example, both Shimane single-member districts continued to elect LDP representatives in the face of a nationally weak showing by that conservative party (Arase 2010). Ōda City falls within the Shimane second district, represented in his fourth term in the Lower House by Takeshita Wataru, grandson of the former Prime Minister Takeshita Noboru. If the LDP can be characterized as dependent upon the rural vote and still organized around the traditional political institutions of local support groups (*kōenkai*, 後援会), family faction and membership allocation in the Policy Affairs Research Council (*seimuchosakai*, 政務調査会), then the political situation of Shimane helps to support such an organization, and puts it at odds with both urban concerns and many of the policies promoted with the rise of the Democratic Party of Japan (Scheiner 2006: 174-177, Krauss & Pekkanen 2011: 250-254). The urban-rural divide is both politically salient and culturally recognized, although the control exercised by rural groups through the LDP over the national allocation of resources may have been broken in the 2009 general election, and, therefore, the achievement of World Heritage status for Iwami Ginzan may be part of the last hurrah from the old order.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> The LDP was ruling at the time of designation but has subsequently been replaced in power since September 2009 by the Democratic Party (民主党).

<sup>57</sup> However, a small sign of the changing political scene in Shimane was the election to the Upper House of former English translator 42-year old Kamei Akiko of the People's New Party (国民新党) in 2007. She ran with the support of the Democratic Party, women groups, those resisting the privatization of the post office system and her father's political support group. Kamei Hisaoki was a former LDP diet member in the Lower House for five terms and the Upper House for two terms representing Shimane, and was defeated in the 2005 and 2010 Lower House elections by Takeshita Wataru. His daughter defeated two-term LDP member Kageyama Shuntarō (*Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2007c). The seat, therefore, was lost by the LDP, but the family connections and local organization supporting the candidate remained a feature. The second member of the Upper House from Shimane was long-time LDP leader Aoki Mikio, who was briefly acting Prime Minister in 2000. He did not run in the 2010 election because of illness, and was replaced by his son Kazuhiko who successfully defended his father's 'reserved seat' (*Asahi Shinbun* 2010g).



The selection and preparation of items for classification as cultural property is an investment in nationalism when performed by the state. On a more local level, it is an investment in forming a more narrow identification for a region or community. Breton (1964: 376) has argued that such investment when carried out for political purpose is not specifically done to increase income but rather aims to redistribute it; the framing of cultural property discourse justifies the claims by one group over another in the exercise of rights over the property, and more broadly confers status because of such assignment. Johnson (1965: 176) points out that property can be considered ownership of certain types of status positions, and is not just physical and financial assets, especially when political considerations drive the debate as in the case of nationalism and ethnic division:

“The question that immediately arises is, To what kinds of property does this utility of nationality become attached? Clearly, in some sense it is the "important" or prestigious or socially relevant kinds of property that acquire this added value. One such, obviously, is the result of cultural and artistic activities - the national literature, music, and drama. Another is positions of authority in the governmental apparatus and in the social structure. Still another comprises particular types of economic activity and economic roles that carry superior status.”

Although Johnson’s treatment begs the question of how to decide which items should be considered “important,” his stress on the motivation behind the selection process is useful in understanding the process of cultural property designation – status considerations are very influential in how nationalism is presented to both citizens and the outside world. Especially in the case of World Heritage, there is a sense that recognition certifies the relative value of a nation and projects an image to others that reflects positively on its history, culture, or natural environment. The Auschwitz-Birkenau extermination camp was inscribed in 1979 with the explicit statement that its universal value was to present a monument to the Nazi genocide of the Jews, but it happens to be located in Poland, not Germany; such “dark tourism” sites, which present a critical perspective on a nation’s history, generally do not get recommended by national committees for World Heritage listing (Stone 2006, Beech 2009).

### **Japanese cultural property law as derivative: classification schemes**

The legal framework regarding cultural property in Japan is conventionally explained with the basic post-war act that was written to manage these issues – the Law for the Protection of

Cultural Properties (*bunkazaihogohō*, 文化財保護法) of 1950<sup>58</sup> -- as the source document. Article One states that “the purpose of this law is to contribute to the cultural improvement (*kōjō*, 向上) of citizens by means of the preservation (*hozon*, 保存) and practical use (*katsuyō*, 活用) of cultural property, and serve in the advancement of world culture.”<sup>59</sup> This statement raises numerous issues. One obvious question concerns ‘improvement’ in culture. How does a culture advance (*shinpo*, 進歩)? The assumption is that having more of something makes it better (Betts 2004). The general interpretation seems to be that citizens should be made more aware of certain elements deemed to be important within the culture.. In this sense, advancement is somewhat akin to providing information, a focus of attention and access. This goal of advancement is codified in many related laws that affect the operation of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, including the Fundamental Law for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts (2001) and The Law for the Promotion of Character-based Culture (2005).<sup>60</sup> The cultural property Law does not begin by claiming a need to prevent further destruction of objects, but rather ties its goal to the idea of improving the situation for the sake of its citizens through preservation and ‘use’ of cultural property. It does not make any statement regarding what this usage would entail, nor does it link the preservation to any specific historical or geographical context, although it does imply later that preservation will connect the past with the future.<sup>61</sup> Instead, it immediately launches after this declaration of purpose into a categorization of cultural property. Article Three says that cultural properties are required for the correct understanding (*tadashii rikai*, 正しい理解) of the nation’s history

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<sup>58</sup> Available at: <http://www.houko.com/00/01/S25/214.HTM>. See Nakamura (2007: 20-23), Nakamura (2004: 106-107), and Neki (2010) about this foundational law.

<sup>59</sup> All translations are my own. The official English text was at:

[http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/laws/pdf/japan\\_cultural\\_1950.pdf](http://www.wipo.int/export/sites/www/tk/en/laws/pdf/japan_cultural_1950.pdf). Consulted 5<sup>th</sup> August, 2008.

<sup>60</sup> The Fundamental Law for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts (*Bunkageijutsushinkōhō*, 文化芸術振興基本法) and Law for the Promotion of Character-based Culture (*Mojikatsujibunkashinkōhō*, 文字・活字文化振興法) both use the term *shinkō* instead of the words found in the earlier cultural property law, which were *kōjō* (向上) and *shinpo* (進歩). The difference is meaningful. The more recent usage implies financial support from the state and other cultural bodies for cultural activities to improve availability of musical and theatrical events, and literary activity. *Bunkageijutsu* is a neologism with unclear reference. (Neki 2003). See: [http://www.bunka.go.jp/bunka\\_gyousei/kihonhou/kihonhou.html](http://www.bunka.go.jp/bunka_gyousei/kihonhou/kihonhou.html), and <http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htmldata/H17/H17HO091.html>.

<sup>61</sup> As in the case of US preservation law, there is no discussion about which properties are selected or exactly what qualifies a property for inclusion (Brookstein 2000: 1848).

in order to provide the foundation for future cultural development. There is no definition of cultural property, only a long list of possible kinds of objects, including skills, folk customs and animals, which could fall under the purview of the law.<sup>62</sup> Specific items can lose their value, and have their designation revoked (Article 29). When we consider the problematic nature of both the notions of ‘culture’ as a well-defined concept that can be associated with a bounded community, and, as we have seen above, the concept of property as an object removed from its sited environment and relationships, the source of legal discourse immediately becomes difficult to comprehend. Moreover, by tying the purpose of property designation to the educational utility it might provide, the Law automatically generates a bias in what items can be included; those things which cannot be exposed to public view in a controlled environment are *prima facie* ineligible for designation.

In fact, the wording of Article One of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Property presents immediately the issue of striking a balance between use of the property and its maintenance; the wear and tear caused by exposure to the public, plus the normal deterioration from aging will require attention. The property will need ‘preservation’ because it is used. The Law clearly does not call for preservation in the sense of removing the property from all danger by isolating it from harmful exposures, but rather steps to help it survive disasters such as fire and earthquake, plus the effects of being brought into contact with the population. It implies a need for the maintenance, repair and safekeeping of cultural properties, and not their preservation in the sense of storing them in an unchanging state (Nishimura 2004: 220).<sup>63</sup>

According to Takeuchi and Iwata (1950), the ideas animating the draft of this law included the desire to make Japanese cultural objects in a broad sense more available to view, both within Japan and internationally via cultural exchange programs. There was a belief that

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<sup>62</sup> For the case of an animal species designated as cultural property, see the example of Mishima cattle in Yamaguchi-ken (2008).

<sup>63</sup> In practice, there is a tendency to apply the stronger sense of preservation as a freezing in time (*tōketsuteki hozon*, 凍結的保存) to cultural property of the very highest order, such as Katsura or Ise, although such a freezing is envisaged at a stage in history when the property was believed to be at perfection, and restoration to this ‘original state’ is on-going. (Yoshida 1997: 33-34). Note, however, that Katsura and Ise, along with many other very important cases, are not designated cultural property in any respect, which is consistent with the requirements of the Law to make property available to viewing. It begs the question of whether items should be selected first and then be open to the public, or whether places which for various reasons are not open to the public, or only open under special circumstances, should be able to maintain such exclusivity.

cultural exchange, including tourism, promoted international understanding, which would produce a positive image useful for both trade and diplomacy (Reeves 2004: 59).<sup>64</sup> The simple goal of protecting passively certain things was not considered; ‘protection law’ was aimed at educating the public about the creativity and individuality that was manifest in the nation’s traditions, particularly when found in the most outstanding examples, which would be designated national treasures, or in the somewhat less distinguished cases, important cultural properties. Making these properties ‘open to the public’ (*kōkai*, 公開) was specifically dealt with in Articles 47 and 48, which provides the Cultural Affairs Agency a right to order an owner to display, or make available for display, a designated property, which would be subsidized by state funds. The value of cultural property, therefore, was explicitly related to its educational potential; objects were useful because when shown to people they could reveal some important feature of the national heritage and broaden the perspective of observers, who otherwise would not know about such matters. Making items open to the public has been interpreted to provide tangible objects to museums and intangible objects (performers) to theatres and concert venues. Many of these places of exhibit are managed and subsidized by the Agency. In 2009, there were 1,196 registered museums in Japan under the Museum Law of 1950 (*hakubutsukanhō*, 博物館法), 70% of which were fine art or historical museums (Nihon hakubutsukan kyōkai 2009). Of these, there are five national fine art museums plus four national museums that, although considered independently administered corporations, are closely tied by personnel and planning to the Agency. There is also a registration system for all items held by museums that is supervised by the Agency (Bunkachō 2009: 68). In addition, the Japan Arts Council (*Nihon geijutsu bunka shinkōkai*, 日本芸術文化振興会), another independently administered corporation under the Agency’s auspices, helps support six national theatres of traditional performance genres, such as the National Noh Theatre.<sup>65</sup> Cultural property research centres in Tōkyō and Nara are also parts

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<sup>64</sup> There is little evidence that cultural exchange programs produce goodwill. The subject appears related to the concept in diplomacy that discussion can lead to easing of political tension through the exchange of idea.

<sup>65</sup> See: <http://www.ntj.jac.go.jp/>. Independently administered corporations (*dokuritsu gyōsei hōjin*, 独立行政法人), sometimes translated as ‘agencies,’ were formed as part of the reforms undertaken by the Hashimoto government from 2001 to move towards the privatization of various public institutions. Their funding does not enjoy the guarantee of the state and they are expected to pay income and other taxes like business corporations (Fukuya 1999).

Cf. for updated list: [http://www.soumu.go.jp/main\\_sosiki/gyoukan/kanri/pdf/satei2\\_01\\_03.pdf](http://www.soumu.go.jp/main_sosiki/gyoukan/kanri/pdf/satei2_01_03.pdf).

of this network. They provide technical support for the evaluation of property around the country.

The interpretation of the Law by the Agency for Cultural Affairs has broadened the scope of its application; whereas the original Law of 1950 only contains the term ‘cultural property’ (*bunkazai*, 文化財), recent reports from the Agency have tended to use the word for heritage (*isan*, 遺産) in its place.<sup>66</sup> This appears to be a usage influenced by the World Heritage activities of the Agency, which also have achieved a much higher profile than previously and includes work on intangible heritage. The implication of this subtle shift is to emphasize the open-ended character of the Law’s preservation mandate. New classification schemes can be added, and, indeed, the register of cultural property types has grown steadily. Rather than a limited list of well-recognized property, heritage allows for the expansion of the range of valuable objects to hitherto less known categories as the interpretation of history itself changes (Bunkachō 2007b).<sup>67</sup> In 1996, for example, the Law was revised to expand recognized categories of cultural property to include modern (*kindai*, 近代) heritage items, which would be placed in a new category of ‘registered’ objects. These were specifically related to the country’s heritage in the Agency’s advisory report (Bunkachō 1996).

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<sup>66</sup> *Isan* is also used as a term for inheritance, or property that is passed on to the next generation as a bequest. In legal terms, those who inherit have a right of patrimony. UNESCO has been particularly insistent that important cultural properties are the heritage of the world (*le patrimoine mondial*), i.e., assets that belong to future generations in common and should be passed to them as our gift. This terminology has been adopted in Japan. Jeudy (2008) finds the drive to preserve objects for the sake of the future so relentless that it robs us from their current enjoyment. On the history of heritage protection as patrimony in France, see Lamy (1993), and Babelon and Chastel (2008). One of the effects of classifying property as heritage is that it serves to conflate the entire past on a nation into a single frame of reference that is considered “living” because it links ancestral values to the present and makes them appear to accords with our own; while for history the past is considered foreign and unfamiliar, for heritage improves the past, makes it relevant, highly understandable now and for the future (Lowenthal 1998: 139). Heritage tends to imply a simplifying and sanitizing of history, such as found in theme parks. When authenticity demands a more gritty presentation, such as in Colonial Williamsburg, dirt can be applied (*ibid*: 154-55). The critical public does not simply accept heritage presentations as served up by institutions, which must adjust their offerings to satisfy demand (Smith 2006: 31-32).

<sup>67</sup> The Agency provides a site called ‘Cultural Heritage Online’ that provides comprehensive information, including images and reference screening tools, about each item that has been chosen through official national and local programs of designation, selection and registration: <http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/Index.do>.

Until recent years, there was not enough manpower to check on all possible properties and the effects of urbanization and industrialization transformed the landscape rapidly. The selection of more candidates had to wait until the government could catch up with documentation on the already recognized properties. It is believed now that the situation has stabilized to some extent and local areas are keen to cooperate in the investigation and documentation of the newer items. There has been considerable interest in establishing local museums for the display of ‘modernization’ objects from the immediate post-war period, such as basic electric appliances. These museums often recreate a *tatami* room with a black and white television as representative childhood environments of the generation who now have their own children in school. The national social studies curriculum encourages visits to such places in order to help children understand their parents (Aoki 2007: 55). ‘Past lifestyle (*mukashi-no kurashi*),’ therefore, has come to represent the high-growth Shōwa era and cultural property recognition has followed this shift. The focus on everyday life is one method of relating history to immediately understandable concerns of today, domesticating it by emphasis on ‘timeless daily routines’ rather than momentous events. “What is most important is to note that feelings, ideas, lifestyles and pleasures are confirmed in the everyday. Even and above all, when exceptional activities have created them, they have to turn back to everyday life to verify and confirm the validity of that creation” (Lefebvre 2002 [1961]: 45). This process works to ‘flatten’ history by always surrounding the extraordinary with the mundane.

The structure of ownership provisions in the Law provides for a continuation of certain private rights over designated properties, including an ability to sell an object to other private or public parties, not including export. Depending on the type of object, other national laws may also apply to ownership rights. To transfer the ownership of real estate, for example, a legal standing (*taikōyōken*, 対抗要件) must be established under the Real Estate Registration Law.<sup>68</sup> Designation of cultural properties is at the discretion of the Cultural Affairs Agency;

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<sup>68</sup> The most powerful ownership rights are absolute and unconditional (*zettai*, 絶対) ability to use freely, obtain profit from, and dispose. These property rights (*zaisanken*, 財産権) are enshrined in Article 29 of the Japanese Constitution (1946), which states: “The right to own or to hold property is inviolable.” However, there is the qualification that “2) property rights shall be defined by law, in conformity with the public welfare, and 3) private property may be taken for public use upon just compensation therefor.” In practice, there are many exceptions of all kinds. For example, in the past, ownership title of land was normally made only in the name of

in other words, there is no limit in the Law on how this determination should be made other than that an object is considered to match one of the many categories specified under the Law. Certain activities of the Agency regarding cultural property, such as its scope of maintenance and repair responsibility, are separately provided for under Ministry of Education ordinances.<sup>69</sup> Special notice must be given to the Cultural Affairs Agency for such properties when repair or alterations are planned, and the Agency may deem it necessary to supervise or undertake directly this work. The Agency may, independently from owner notification, decide that a property requires maintenance. Article 31 stipulates that owners can designate a custodian for the property (*kanrisekininsha*, 管理責任者). The custodian may be the owner, or may be some other individual or body, who will be held accountable for reporting on the status of the property and its preservation. The Cultural Affairs Agency supervises this activity and may intervene in numerous ways when it finds a property requires attention. Under the normal workings of the Law, the cost of upkeep is born by the owner, and subsidies from the state, although available under many circumstances, are considered exceptional.

A council for the protection of cultural property (*bunkashingikai*, 文化審議会) is provided for in Article 153, which is given the task to report to both the Minister of Education and the Director of the Agency for Cultural Affairs on important matters that involve the preservation and designation of properties. This council of five members has a subcommittee (*bunkazaibunkakai*, 文化財分科会) that specifically concerns itself with these issues. Other subjects, such as general policy planning, language policy, selection of distinguished contributors to culture,<sup>70</sup> and copyrights, are delegated to different subcommittees. The

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the husband. Now, some wives use their personal savings to buy property jointly and receive joint title (Nakamura 2009).

<sup>69</sup> The Agency falls under the auspices of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. There have been several re-organizations of both the Agency and the Ministry since 1950, but many aspects of the Cultural Affairs Agency can be traced to content in the Fundamental Law on Education of 1947 (*Kyōikukihonhō*, 教育基本法): [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/houan/kakutei/06121913/06121913/001.pdf](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/houan/kakutei/06121913/06121913/001.pdf).

<sup>70</sup> The term *bunkakōrōsha* (文化功勞者) refers to people designated as having made outstanding contributions to culture, and may include those awarded the Order of Culture (*bunkakunshō*, 文化勳章), which is a more prestigious award that is part of the national order award system and presented in the name of the Emperor (Ogawa 2009). This selection process is separate from the one which determines living national treasures, who are treated as intangible cultural property within the main categorization scheme. Parts of this system are the historical descendents of military honour awards established in the Meiji era. Some individuals are also selected

cultural property subcommittee has a further four special research subsections that advise it, including one for World Heritage nominations. The members of these various committees are predominantly university professors, although it also includes the chairman of the Japan Association of Travel Agents. The liaison of the special research subsection on World Heritage, for example, is Nishimura Yukio, of the University of Tōkyō, Department of Urban Planning. The subsection itself has 17 members, who visit potential sites and report on their suitability for further designation.<sup>71</sup> Its chairperson is Adachi Kumiko, Planning and Research Manager for the quasi-governmental body Historical Route Promotion Conference (*Rekishikaidōsuishinkyōgikai*, 歴史街道推進協議会).<sup>72</sup> Unravelling the membership of these various bodies shows the close intertwining of academic, administrative and political institutions in setting Japan's cultural property policy. However, that is not to imply a close coordination of policy among these groups. There is a sprinkling of artists, writers and musicians on the various committees, although many of these have further university affiliations. Media is represented through members from broadcasting concerns such as NHK. These committees are prominently described in the Law, and are an integral part of the operation of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. Members work together with the Agency staff assigned to the Cultural Property Department in various sections that handle work related to preservation, museums, monuments, World Heritage and the maintenance of listed items. Popular enthusiasm (*netsui*, 熱意) does have an effect on the selection process within Japan. Signature campaigns, for example, are sometimes conducted to show the government the

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to become members of the Japan Art Academy (*Nihon Geijutsuin*, 日本藝術院). The culture contributors are given special pensions by the national government in recognition of their achievement. About 15 new people are listed annually, whereas only about five are given Orders of Culture. The system of awards related to culture and the arts is very extensive. There is, for example, a series of annual awards to corporations that support the arts, the Japan Mécénat Awards. These are made by a private organization under charter of the Agency of Cultural Affairs: [http://www.mecenat.or.jp/awards/about\\_awards.html](http://www.mecenat.or.jp/awards/about_awards.html). They are named after the Roman art patron Maecenas. It is always well to keep in mind that cultural property regulation concerns these various awards and recognitions of people; it is not just for objects with national living treasures some kind of exception.

<sup>71</sup> See: [http://www.bunka.go.jp/1hogo/sekaiisan/sekaiibunkaisan\\_1\\_siryou\\_1.html](http://www.bunka.go.jp/1hogo/sekaiisan/sekaiibunkaisan_1_siryou_1.html).

<sup>72</sup> See: <http://www.rekishikaido.gr.jp/>.



degree of support for listing various properties. To an extent such efforts to demonstrate the popularity of certain objects are taken into consideration.<sup>73</sup>

Much of the effort at the Agency consists in maintaining a classification register for the recognized types of cultural property and determining which new members should be added. The process for designation, selection and registration of items is the same, but occurs in stages, depending upon the required category (Nakamura 2007: 8). The proscribed flow of this bureaucratic procedure begins with research of the item. This can be done by various bodies, but often may start with the local board of education or other governmental office, after contact with owners or interested parties. A request is submitted to the Minister of Education, which submits an inquiry to the subcommittee on cultural property. The subcommittee delegates review of the proposed item to its relevant research subsection, which reports back after investigation. The subcommittee on cultural property uses this information to answer the Minister of Education, who then makes the official notice of designation, selection or registration to the owner of the property and a certificate is issued. Items of the highest standard, which include national treasures and special historic sites, places of scenic beauty and natural monuments<sup>74</sup> undergo a second evaluation. This process

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<sup>73</sup> During 2010 a citizen's group was formed to promote the listing of the main tower of Matsue Castle as a national treasure. This structure had been a national treasure until demotion to important cultural property status in 1950. By September, the group had collected over 127,000 signatures that it intended to pass to the Agency for Cultural Affairs. See *Sanin Chūō Shinpō* (2010d).

Such campaigns by citizen's groups can use the designation of properties to block development, such as in the case of requesting that the Hanezawa Gardens in Tōkyō be listed as an important cultural property (see: <http://sky.ap.teacup.com/hanezawa/>) and gaining World Heritage designation for Tomo no Ura (see: <http://www.vesta.dti.ne.jp/~npo-tomo/top/preservation/syomei/index.html>).

Such signature drives are considered political acts and are regulated by various laws. Public employees, for example, cannot engage in them (Usaki 1990: 135).

<sup>74</sup> This is a fixed term used to describe an assortment of places (*shisekimeishōtennenkinenbutsu*, 史跡名勝天然記念物). Preservation for such places was first established by law in 1919 based on German models of listing natural and culturally important landmarks. See: <http://www.jomongaku.net/horei/smt.html>. By 1950 and the promulgation of the Law for Protection of Cultural Property, 1,580 items had already been listed under the former legislation, and were incorporated under the new system (Yoshikawa 1952:49). The items classified under this designation are diverse. Natural monuments include plants and animals. An example of the latter is the cattle on Mishima Island near Hagi, which have been protected by national regulation since 1928. In Germany, old trees have been legally protected as *Naturdenkmal* since the nineteenth century. Many old trees in Japan are designated cultural property by local bodies.

takes place, in theory, with very little direct participation of Agency staff members, who are expected to play primarily a coordinating role; the majority of the work is delegated to the advisory committees. However, the Law does contain language that indicates in some cases the Minister of Education should ‘solicit the opinions of relevant local public bodies on the advisability of listing’ (*ibid*: 82), which implies a more active role on the part of the Agency in finding candidates for the system. The registry of national cultural property administered by the Agency for Cultural Affairs at April 2009 appeared as follows (Bunkachō 2009: 33-34):

Table 1: National Cultural Property by Type (2009)

Designated (指定)			
Important Cultural Property (incl. National Treasures)		12,655	(1,076)
Buildings and structures		2,344	(214)
Fine art and craft objects		10,311	(862)
Important Intangible Cultural Property			
Public entertainment	Individuals	36 cases	55 people
	Groups	11 cases	11 groups
Handicraft	Individuals	44 cases	58 people
	Organizations	14 cases	14 orgs.
Important Tangible Folk Property		207	
Important Intangible Folk Property		264	
Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, Natural Monuments (Special)		2,866	(161)
Historic Sites		1,614	(60)
Places of scenic beauty		313	(29)
Natural monuments		939	(72)
Selected (選定)			
Important Cultural Landscapes		15	
Important Zones of Traditional Buildings		83	
Registered (登録)			
Registered tangible cultural property - Buildings		7,407	
Registered tangible cultural property - Arts and craft objects		9	
Registered tangible folk property		12	
Registered natural monuments		44	
Preservation-related items that are not cultural property			
Selected preservation techniques			
	Individuals	47 cases	52 people
	Organizations	27 cases	28 groups

There is an additional category of buried cultural property that the Agency administers, but because of the uncertain nature of the location of such objects it cannot fit within the above register and, as specified in the Law for the Preservation of Cultural Property, regulates the disposition of discovered items as they may occur.

The history of cultural property in Japan is usually presented as a sequence of laws that begins with the Meiji Era (1868-1912) (Bunkachō 2001). Although occasionally it may be treated in terms of the branch of archaeology that examines the techniques of preservation (Miura 2004), there is a dearth of coverage of the social and political context in which the laws were produced and how they shaped the concept of cultural property as a bureaucratically determined category of rights and obligations.<sup>75</sup> If we consider cultural property in a broad perspective, it is clear that it would be related to the notion of treasure and particularly valuable objects. Before Meiji, many of such objects were considered to be the Buddhist statuary and related objects owned by temples. Such sacred treasures (*zaihō*, 財宝), which could include texts or esoteric implements, would only be revealed to the public at a fixed day during the year in a highly ritualized space, and some treasures would very rarely be revealed – even only once in fifty years. This display of special objects at temples (*kaichō*, 開帳) involved the secret images of Buddha (*hibutsu*, 秘仏) and other numinous objects (Rambelli 2002).<sup>76</sup> The power of these religious objects originally rested in part on their invisibility and the ‘empty space’ protected at the centre of these objects was considered the most spiritually powerful possibly because it was the most removed from external pollution (Hendry 1996). The fact that many are now designated as national treasures and their images by law are required to be seen in public demonstrates as well as any example how the cultural property system has stripped layers of meaning from some objects it is designed to ‘preserve.’ The wooden tenth century Shaka Nyorai statue of the Seiryō-ji in Kyōto, for example, is a national treasure made open to the public on the eighth of every month.<sup>77</sup> Its image is readily available.<sup>78</sup> The Seiryō-ji sells postcards of the image for ¥400 and owns copyrights to these. This is an excellent example of the removal of the ‘aura’ from a work of art by the use of mechanical reproduction (Benjamin 2002 [1936] and Stoessel 1983). The display of art in museum space has also been associated with this removal of aura (Sherman 1994, De Bolla 2000). In the process, the object is converted into a form of intellectual property that can be sold by the owner, but by removing it from its original space of ritual the reproduction also allows different interpretations. Benjamin tended to believe such portability

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<sup>75</sup> See Yamauchi (2000) for a useful collection of articles on the history of property ownership law in Japan within a comparative framework. It does not specifically reference cultural property.

<sup>76</sup> Information on the display of secret Buddhas is conveniently organized on several tourist websites, with notice of the cultural property status of each, at: <http://www.hibutsu.com/>.

<sup>77</sup> Rambelli (2002: 274) mistakenly states this object is never on display even to priests.

<sup>78</sup> See: <http://www.kyotok.net/tera1207.html>.

promoted democratic values, although it could be twisted into a type of propaganda. But his colleagues Horkheimer and Adorno (2002) found that commerce tied to reproductive technologies that simulated aura led to monolithic deception, false glamour and worthless uniformity of value.<sup>79</sup>

When Okakura Tenshin and Ernest Fenollosa began to survey Japan for their catalogue of art in the 1880s, they dismissed the resistance of priests to display their treasures and clearly detached the sacred from the aesthetic evaluation of these objects (Rambelli 2002: 279).<sup>80</sup> Their efforts took place within the context of collectors combing temples for objects during the anti-Buddhist drives of the Meiji era when many of these works were removed from Japan and deposited in Western museums (Suzuki 1977). Okakura and Fenollosa were merely acting as collectors on behalf of the Japanese state, and for themselves and museums in the United States as well. In 1880, the government allotted funds for the preservation and repair of certain shrines and temples.<sup>81</sup> In 1888, an office for the inventory of treasures was created within the Imperial Household Agency (*rinji zenkoku hōmotsu torishirabekyoku*, 臨時全国宝物取調局), and by 1897 Okakura and Fenollosa had catalogued 210,000 items (Shimizu 2008). They were able to acquire the basis of the Japan collection at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts at a time when temples had been made impoverished and priests desperately sold their treasures for trifles (Usuki 2004). Okakura was known to have

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<sup>79</sup> For example, they found that “film and radio no longer need to present themselves as art. The truth that they are nothing but business is used as an ideology to legitimize the trash they intentionally produce” (Horkheimer and Adorno 2002: 95). Adorno (1982:271) wrote about popular music that “one cannot avoid the suspicion that liking and disliking are inappropriate to the situation...The familiarity of the piece is a surrogate for the quality ascribed to it. To like it is almost the same thing as to recognize it.”

<sup>80</sup> There have been attempts to view the collecting and cataloguing of such sacred objects as a transfer of spiritual power to the state, which occurs because the narrative they construct, enforced with images deemed to be art, can be used to energize national spirit (Tanaka 1994: 39). I believe that it is more accurate to see these objects as retaining the ability to be converted back and forth from symbolic to economic property, as mentioned above, although undoubtedly numinous objects are powerful in many ways which can be activated according to context. The removal of Buddhist statues from temples produces a clear desacralization, as anyone visiting the National Museum in Nara can immediately perceive when viewing dozens of these objects placed together in a modern hall, but it is this juxtaposition of opposites, ‘the tension between opposite poles of meaning (Turner 1975:89), that makes them symbolically powerful.

<sup>81</sup> The background to these cataloguing activities under the direction of Kuki Ryūichi (九鬼 隆一), the head of the Imperial Museum and member of the Privy Council of the Meiji-era government, is provided by Matsumoto (1984: 29-32), Hosaka (1989: 61-65) and Scott (2003:335-344).

employed similar tactics in China (Cohen 1992: 46). Fenollosa was aware of this situation (Dusenberry 2004: 269). The impetus for preserving cultural property is often described as a reaction to the threat to such items due to industrialization, pillage, war, or neglect (Nakamura 2007: 14), but clearly the timing of efforts to ‘preserve’ valuable objects seems often to coincide with opportunities such as occurred in the mid-Meiji era when the state could itself gain control over the property at relatively low cost. Once a threat is posited, it becomes the justification for legal protection efforts. Of course, some threats to valuable items are not just pretexts to seize them for others purposes; some objects need protection badly, although these tend to be movable pieces of art (Rothfield 2008, Stille 2002: 71-95).<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> As Gluckman pointed out (1972: 113), there is a major distinction in a great many legal systems in the treatment of movable property (usually chattels) and immovable property (usually land). He surmised that part of the reason for this distinction is that immovables can be encumbered with complicated ownership structures, but certainly another part of the issue is that movables can be seized and a whole series of identification problems then arise. But Gluckman’s other explanation is more interesting (*ibid.*: 116):

“My hypothesis is that immovable property and chattels have different functions in the maintenance, through time, of a social system as an organized pattern of relations. Immovable property provides fixed positions which endure through the passing of generations, through quarrels, and even through invasions and revolutions, and many social relations are stabilized about these positions. Movables establish links between individuals occupying different immovable properties.”

Nader (1990: 247, 272) accepted the importance of this distinction but took a political-economic, rather than symbolic, view of the matter. She found that land in a Mexican village was the basis of power and prestige, and disputes concerning land were a public challenge to the social structure itself. Disputes over chattels, however, tended to be between two individuals in the form of a contract and could be settled more readily by recourse to their private interests. Land is clearly a special type of property that relates to communal interests in ways that most movables cannot. Shipton (1994) notes: “nothing excites deeper passions or gives rise to more bloodshed than do disagreements about territory, boundaries, or access to land resources” in modern Africa. As can be seen, if we believe Gluckman’s basic claim that property forms a symbolic nexus that glues together society, or even the more limited challenge related to land found by Nader, when items are extracted from such systems for cultural property classification, it necessarily has a disruptive effect on the community; the relationships and associations held together by the property are changed. In the case of movable property, the items are physically taken away, but in the case of immovable property, various limits on its meaning and how it may be used, such as requiring it to be ‘preserved’ in a particular form, come into play that differ from the previous situation. The Japanese classification system does not map directly onto the Gluckman division. Its major distinction is between tangible and intangible items. The latter hardly figured in anthropological treatment of property until recent years and the adoption of the UNESCO convention on intangible heritage in 2003 (Smith & Akagawa 2009). But it is important to note that none of these categories totally capture the intertwined histories of particular cases, so that, for example, land is never just a commodity to be sold; each piece has a specific past

To a certain extent, it was the case in the Meiji era that Japanese treasures were removed from the country by foreigners and the threat was real enough, but the imposition of state regulation to block export and install a regime of cultural property within the country also tended to deprive local communities of objects that had different associations than when these things became official property. Since the early work of Okakura and Fenollosa, compiling lists of valuable property has been at the heart of the official effort to manage Japanese cultural property. The lists designate what has been chosen as valuable; they are the tools of public appropriation of certain rights of action in regard to particularly important objects. Much of the history of cultural property work, therefore, consists in the broadening and refinement of classification schemes and catalogues of items that have been designated to be important.<sup>83</sup>

### **Branding in the built environment – spatial designations**

Buildings and structures make up one of the largest categories of Japanese cultural property. This type of property has been included as one of the main concerns of preservation work since the early twentieth century. In addition to specific buildings, there are other forms of designation that encompass larger spaces, such as gardens, parks and cultural districts. For example, most of the main street of Ōmori was specified a Zone of Important Traditional Buildings (*jūyō dentōteki kenzōbutsugun hozonchiku*, 重要伝統的建造物群保存地区) in 1987 (Kawai 2005: 140-141). There are ninety-one such nationally recognized zones in Japan

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that both physically and symbolically shapes it for a community which holds it in collective memory. It may have been, for example, the site of violent battles that persist in the memory of subsequent generations (Merridale 1996). The consecration of such places as cultural property disrupts the local recollection of these events by imposing an official narrative of history, such as pursued in Nora's (1989) project of *les lieux des mémoire*, which classifies an inventory of items (symbolic systems) that have meaning in French national life and collective memory. He argued that such work on the excavation of memory needed to be undertaken because the canon or "classical model" of French national consciousness collapsed in the 1970s (Nora 1998:614).

<sup>83</sup> Lawson and Rudden (2002: 28) note "some articles have a value so great and so dependent on their individual characteristics that some sure and permanent measures are required of identifying them and the persons entitled to them. This often leads to the formation of registers."

as at June 2011, administered by a separate part of the Agency for Cultural Affairs within the national cultural property scheme.<sup>84</sup>



Figure 2: Historic preservation zone, Kurayoshi, Tottori Prefecture

Yunotsu also had most of its hot spring main street designated in 2004. Each zone has an inventory of property affected by preservation ordinance.<sup>85</sup> In return for following regulated construction policies for the zone, building owners are partly subsidized by the state (up to ¥5 million for repair and ¥1 million for new structures). When a home owner in a zone wants to perform work on the external appearance of the building, it is necessary to consult with

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<sup>84</sup> Individual prefectures or municipalities can establish their own zones for preserving historic buildings. They regulate and subsidize them in a manner similar to the national process. Tomonoura in Okayama Prefecture, for example, has an historic preservation zone that is administered by Fukuyama City since 2008 and hopes eventually to get approved by the national organization for historic building zones: <http://www.city.fukuyama.hiroshima.jp/toshikeikaku/css/tomo/matinami/kijun.html>.

<sup>85</sup> For example, there are 120 buildings in Yunotsu and 250 in Ōmori considered in the zone. Of these, 8 in Yunotsu and 21 in Ōmori have outstanding renovation permits for 2010. Other objects such as gates, street lanterns, bridges, trees and waterways are also affected by the zone regulation. Annual traffic through the zone is estimated at 62,000 for Yunotsu and 700,000 for Ōmori. Both of these zones are considered qualified because “their buildings and surroundings particularly express the special characteristics of the region.” The other two criteria for qualification for becoming a protection zone are excellence in overall design, and maintaining an “old condition” (*kyūtai*, 旧態) in the built environment. For reference, the Gion district in Kyōto qualifies under the former and all three zones listed in Hagi under the latter.

architects certified in the community for review of such construction.<sup>86</sup> The architects are charged with assuring that any change conforms to the integrity of the zone. Construction inside structures is not regulated formally if it is not in public view. Because design features, construction methods and materials may be unusual, there is almost always greater expense when following restoration instructions than when unregulated. Committees in the local community regularly review the status of their zone and receive advice from outside experts. Locally, the Board of Education acts as the representative of the Agency for Cultural Affairs in supporting these activities. A national council is charged with providing assistance to zones for repair, rebuilding, disaster prevention, management, environmental protection and community involvement. This category was created with the revision of the Cultural Properties Preservation Law in 1975. It aims to protect historic townscapes (*machinami*, 町並み) and hamlets (*shūraku*, 集落) together with their surrounding environment.<sup>87</sup> In discussing how such regulation affects the actual implementation of construction projects within such protection zones, people in Ōmori mentioned many details of their buildings that had to be done according to the direction of the city architects but which they considered arbitrary, non-functional or aesthetically poor. While residents grant that professionals are better engineers, they do not believe these experts actually know how structures should look in the community or fit within their lives.

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<sup>86</sup> The review of construction projects is conducted by private professionals who fit Parsons' (1997: 58-60, 1939) definition of being characterized by training, expertise and credentials, as well as by bureaucrats, who merely hold office and exercise discipline. Both are expected to rely on impersonal, universal standards, and achieve their status in a meritocratic system, but the ultimate source of their institutional authority differs. Officials at the Ōda City Board of Education have graduated from university, often specializing in law, and have passed a civil service examination, but they are generalists who learn on the job with no special training in construction, although there are such employees elsewhere within the municipal administration. Weber conflated bureaucrats with professionals, and this Japanese example shows how the two can overlap and work together. Work on status in Japan (Ishida 1989) tends to show that status is strongly correlated to group membership, and that people doing the same job at different levels of the corporate or bureaucratic hierarchy would have very different status roles although similar in socio-economic class. If true, a national-level bureaucrat would have substantially greater status than a municipal official. People in Ōmori do not necessarily agree with this assessment, and tend to make fun of the formal dress and manner of national officials when compared to local ones, who they may respect because of their better knowledge of local issues. The status of architects is generally higher than that of urban planners in Japan, but the background of certified planners should be understood in Japan as oriented towards the engineering of physical projects more than the social and environmental orientation found in Britain (Masser and Yorisaki 1994: 117-118).

<sup>87</sup> Some of the background of these efforts is provided by Hohn (1997).



In 1993, Imai-chō, Kashihara City, Nara Prefecture was accepted as one of these special protection zones. It was the first time a ‘rustic temple townscape’ (*jinaichō-zaigōchō*, 寺内町・在郷町)<sup>88</sup> was selected, and like most of the places included on the list there is a poignant history behind the process of gaining selection. Residents must weigh the benefits, which can be intangible, against the restrictions when deciding how their property will be treated, and since a contiguous area is placed in the zone, it is not easy to achieve the necessary agreement of all neighbours. Regulation basically entails the acceptance that a government official can dictate the appearance of one’s property to a greater extent than under normal construction permit standards. Some buildings will be extensively remodelled in order to conform to zone standards. In 1979, the long-running NHK documentary *New Japan Traveler’s Journal* (*Shin nihon kikō*, 新日本紀行)<sup>89</sup> made a program about the situation in Imai-chō and the efforts of the local priest to organize the community to apply for the historic zone preservation scheme that had recently been launched. He had been trying to organize a preservation movement there for thirty years. Imai-chō *minka* were investigated by a team of architectural historians from the University of Tōkyō in 1956.<sup>90</sup> But only about half

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<sup>88</sup> The town grew up around the Shōnenji temple (称念寺):

<http://www.city.kashihara.nara.jp/kankou/spot/imai/den.html>.

<sup>89</sup> NHK sōgō 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1979: Kashihara-shi Imai-chō – furui minka-no shita-de. Viewed at NHK Matsue 10<sup>th</sup> December, 2008. The series ran from 1963-1982 with the mission of discovering Japan’s original landscapes (*genfūkei*, 原風景): [http://www.nhk.or.jp/archives/shin-nihonkikou/library/library\\_kinki.html#pg18](http://www.nhk.or.jp/archives/shin-nihonkikou/library/library_kinki.html#pg18).

<sup>90</sup> *Minka* are representative vernacular architecture – private houses, made of wood with *tatami* floors made by traditional craftsmanship and lived in by ‘common people’ (*shumin*, 庶民). They were massively destroyed in the post-war period and replaced throughout the country by ferro-concrete housing complexes (*shūgō jūtaku*, 集合住宅). The classic treatment is Kon (1999), which is mostly concerned with farmhouses. See also his treatment of thatched roof dwellings (1946). On the exodus from *minka* to the modern *danchi* apartment blocks (団地), Miyamoto (2007: 36-38) points to the post-war rise of the university-educated office worker as a driving force. The new blocks of standard units helped to ‘homogenize’ domestic space (Ivy 1993: 249), which Miyamoto contrasted to the pre-war heterodox housing and spatial arrangement.

There was little academic interest in *minka* until the 1970s, when it was noticed they were rapidly disappearing (Nishimura 2004: 115). To the extent they were investigated before the war it was by ethnologists, and only two *minka* had been designated as important cultural property before 1945. Inventories of what were considered the most important old *minka* were compiled during the 1960s. By 1965, thirty-three *minka* were nationally designated important cultural property. The Imanishike in Imai-chō was designated as early as 1957. There are currently (September 2010) a total of 343 listings designated important cultural properties by the Agency for Cultural Affairs as “*minka* from the Tokugawa era to present” (重要文化財、近世以前／民家), the third

the residents were in favour of systematic preservation efforts and regulation. One of the concerns was that young people wanted to leave and not continue in the local family businesses; emphasizing the museum-like character of Imai-chō, it was felt, could further drive away those seeking modern lifestyles. In many cases family businesses could trace their activities back to the eighteenth century. Increasingly, it was becoming a commuter suburb for people who worked and did business in Ōsaka and Kyōto, rather than a place where everyone knew each other and frequented each other's shops. One family had been brewing sake for fourteen generations in Imai-chō. A drugstore had been in business continually since the Tokugawa era. In general, the layout of the neighbourhood had hardly changed from maps of that era, and a few traditional craft people were still working. The last in a family of bamboo basket weavers talked about how all his customers had been switching to plastic since the 1960s. Old people were living alone in large, important cultural properties that they struggled to maintain. Nine buildings were separately designated important cultural properties within the village.<sup>91</sup> There were already twenty empty houses and others were falling apart. The NHK reporter questioned residents how they could live in such cold, dark places and was told that there were no real problems in that regard and that the *minka* houses were particularly comfortable in summer. Imai-chō now, thirty years later, offers a 'wholly in the past experience' (まるごと昔体験) of staying at a refurbished *minka*, and finds that it is becoming popular with young people (*Asahi Shinbun* 2010a). A local NPO converted an eighty-year old vacant townhouse into a place to stay; because the house does not satisfy the requirements for windows, fire escape and other regulations under the Inn Business Law (旅館業法), it is offered on the basis of a fixed-term rental agreement.

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largest category of structure after temples (704) and shrines (544). No *minka* are classified as national treasures. The official database for structures is at: <http://www.bunka.go.jp/bsys/categorylist.asp>.

<sup>91</sup> This is an incredible concentration. There are only five important cultural property *minka* in Kyōto City, four in Hagi and two in Shirakawa-gō. There are not really recognizable *minka* in Ōmori strictly speaking; the vernacular dwellings are townhouses (*machiya*), which have a slightly different structure, although there are ruins of some *minka* among the abandoned houses in the mountains nearby. Colloquially, *minka* can be used to refer any old wooden house. One of the distinguishing features of a *minka* used to be its thatched roof, but these are now very rare and often replaced with metal cladding when old buildings are maintained, such as in the preservation zone in Tamba-Sasayama. In Ōmori, roofs are uniformly made from the local orange-brown tiles. Efforts to save the remaining *minka* have been mushrooming in the last twenty years. There are now detailed guidebooks on construction technique and how to rebuild them (NMSRK 2007), magazines promoting them as part of being self-sufficient in the countryside (*Jikyōjisoku*, 自休自足) or all things about them (*Minka*, 民家), and many accounts of the pleasures of living in them and appreciating their design (ZJMT 2003, Andō 2009).

When located in towns, *minka* are usually known as *machiya* (町家). Strictly speaking, these are old merchant houses where the shop fronted the street and the family residence was in the rear. Most of the old houses in Imai-chō are actually *machiya*. This style of construction is probably most famous and still preserved in Kyōto, although even there it is under threat. Muneta (2009: 68-123) has investigated the reasons behind the continued decline of these historic structures. Among his findings are issues such as the unavailability of craftspeople to maintain the traditional construction. The lack of such skills is a very great problem in a great many Japanese arts and design professions. In the case of thatched roofs, for example, not only the material but the ability to apply it has become a rare specialty with only a few skilled practitioners. Even growing the thatch grass (*kaya*, 茅), which used to be normal in most villages, is now extremely rare. Because such work consists of a series of connected skills, whenever one part of the process fails the ability to supply a final product can be jeopardized. In the case of hand manufactured Japanese paper (*washi*, 和紙), there may be as many as 300 craftsmen still working. They all require bamboo strainer mats to draw through the vat and collect the paper material, and these high precision tools are only made by a handful of people who are not passing on their skills. As a result, because the mats wear out and cannot be replaced, the entire craft is likely to end soon. Moreover, paper makers have had close relationships with their mat suppliers for long periods of time and each knows the other's capabilities and requirements. It is not just the future lack of skills but the coordination of the whole production process with familiar people that presents a threat. As each network of relationships is extinguished, a particular type of *washi* is no longer made and the variety of the craft is diminished. The same situation is evident in the repair of Kyōto *machiya*. Muneta (*ibid.*: 85) mentions that surveys show owners feel unable to maintain their properties partly because the workers who they used in the past are no longer around and they do not trust new people that are unfamiliar with their property. They also say that the old workers understood what was needed to adjust the house to the owner's requirements and when the history of both the house and the owner family is not known, nothing can be done. There is a discontinuity in relationships that blocks the repair of the buildings. There is not an absolute lack of construction people in Kyōto; in fact there is an enormous number by any standard. But they have lost contact with the aging owners of the townhouses, and thereby lost their trust and the knowledge base necessary to handle specific buildings.

In addition to making cultural property available to public view, the national system derives financial benefit from these items by controlling access. This is a form of the symbolic to

economic transformation mentioned earlier; the branding value of such imprimaturs as ‘important cultural property’ and, particularly ‘UNESCO World Heritage,’ is considerable. The expression ‘promoting culture’ is used in many of these efforts, but the renewal and stimulation to local areas that is sought usually has economic development concerns deeply implicated in the process.<sup>92</sup> Yokohama and Kanazawa, for example, have been named ‘Cities of Culture’ (*Bunkageijutsusōzōshi*, 文化芸術創造都市). Agency documents (Libertas Consulting 2009: 1) refer to the ‘large effect such designations have had towards the revitalization of cities in Europe,’ such as London and Liverpool, which they analyse in detail. The later, for example, which was the ‘European Capital of Culture’ in 2008 and is attempting to become a UNESCO ‘City of Music,’<sup>93</sup> is said to have devised plans to renew its urban centre by appealing to its artistic and historical traditions; music and sports are being mobilized to stimulate development. These cultural assets have value, on this scheme, because they can be monetized. They are not being promoted to provide a richer cultural life for residents; that would be a secondary effect (*ibid.*: 11-13). The spread of UNESCO cultural

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<sup>92</sup> In theory, this is the opposite of the goals of the Cittaslow movement, which makes community, environmental sensitivity and stress reduction for residents its planning priorities: <http://www.cittaslow.net/>. This network is not active in Japan, but has a large presence in South Korea..Thompson (2009: 58) provides the example of standard development rationale applied to the rural ‘heritage’ village of Asume. He claims it exhibits “the post-war urban-rural dynamic that brought about the need for economic development through cultural heritage tourism.” Roberstson (1988) gives several other examples of commercialization and politicalization of nostalgia by the “recreation of village-like ambiance” (*ibid.*: 498).

<sup>93</sup> Among its many programs, UNESCO has introduced a ‘creative city network’ with designations of a total of 19 cities for music, literature, film, craft, media, design and gastronomy. Interestingly, the only city with the latter designation is Popayan, Columbia. From Japan, Kobe and Nagoya are cities of design, and Kanazawa is a city of craft. This list is a good example of the counter-intuitive and arbitrary nature of all such recognition systems; they are the consequence of specific political negotiations and are not necessarily the result of widely accepted understanding. However, once a brand has been obtained and used in promotions, it become somewhat a self-fulfilling definition; Kanazawa is a city known for craft because of its official designation, not because it particularly is one of the most outstanding craft cities in the world, let alone in Japan. Thus such examples underline the impossibility of objective standards to select property for designation. In the Cittaslow movement there is detailed list of requirements that places must meet to be found in agreement with the movement’s philosophy and its designation. These requirements are totally different from the ones used in the UNESCO programs, but the selection process is similar in the sense that applications must fit certain predetermined parameters set by a sanctioning body.

See: <http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php->

[URL\\_ID=35257&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=35257&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

activities takes place within a stated strategy of enhancing the organization's visibility while protecting its own intellectual property. It has a growing co-branding programme with corporations. So, for example, it works with Google to provide more web content on World Heritage sites, with street-view images inset in Google maps and plans to add content on YouTube. It has a partnership with TripAdvisor to provide tourist information, but couched as an 'effort to help protect and preserve the world's greatest landmarks.'<sup>94</sup> 'With the mission of contributing to peace and human development in an era of globalization, UNESCO considers cooperation with the private sector as a necessity, not just an option.'<sup>95</sup> There is a parallel 'patronage' philosophy at the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which describes its activity as occurring 'in the context of heightened corporate awareness of the need to contribute to society and recognition of the indispensability of cultural considerations to economic development (Bunkachō 2009: 12). Cooperation with private sector enterprise and solicitation of patronage in return for co-branding opportunities is part of an Agency effort 'to use regional culture to make Japan (economically) healthy' (Bunkachō 2007a). In Shimane Prefecture, the Ōda City government has organized a study group that coordinates the use of the Iwami Ginzan World Heritage brand; this work aims to control and focus the use of this designation in marketing and commercial development for local companies. Branding of cultural property has gone so far as selecting the recognized culinary products in Shiga prefecture as culturally important.<sup>96</sup> All these bodies, from UNESCO to Ōda City, are attempting to establish what Holt (2004: 13-15) terms 'cultural branding' – the production of an icon of identity that performs a myth addressing an acute contradiction in society. This model finds that consumers experience a ritual when engaged with the product's myth. This type of branding, when successful, is said to be the strongest model for identity formation and product promotion. When coupled with the tourist promotion associated with these branding programs, the ritual consumers experience is the exposure to a property that has been verified

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<sup>94</sup> See: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/news/561>.

<sup>95</sup> See: [http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=17587&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/ci/en/ev.php-URL_ID=17587&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

<sup>96</sup> See: <http://www.pref.shiga.jp/biwako/koai/handbook/files/3-14.pdf>. This practice is somewhat analogous to the French *Appellation d'origine contrôlée* (AOC) system of managing product status. Iconic brands have been compared to monuments to national cultural heritage, which bind communities together as material symbols of common identity and ideology. See Kravets & Öрге (2010) for the case of a famous Soviet cheese which serves to mythologize a national past for present-day Russians, and Ory (1997) for cuisine in general as the distinctive feature of French identity.

by these bureaucratic agencies as ‘authentic,’ either because of its historical or aesthetic importance. They are presented with a ‘spectacle,’ as described by Debord (1998), which distracts them from the daily bombardment of stimulation (Garoian and Gaudelius 2004) and, at the same time, provides a type of empowerment in the form of a historically and geographically situated identity (Friedman 1992).

While modern commodification led to the fear of cultural homogenization – the ‘monotony of megatechnic society’ referred to above by Mumford, branding is a key tool of post-modern fragmentation “by converting the principle of market choice into a mechanism for group differentiation” (Harvey 2000: 40). There is still a tension between the fear of homogenization and its alternative disintegration into proliferating divisions of taste and value that are generated on a global scale (Appadurai 1990). The former, termed ‘despondency theory’ by Sahlins (1999: 401-402) because it envisioned a uniform dominance of local particularities by global generic standards, although unquestionably affecting many communities, faces strong countertrends from branding practice and individual creativity. The designation of cultural property falls squarely within this nexus of concerns and can be seen within the context of other branding enterprises of commercial merchandise. But note that the designation process does not only work to organize group preferences around arbitrary symbols; it can occur when a group for its own reasons recognizes some object as uniquely valuable and places it outside market relationships.

As evidenced above regarding the branding of entire cities, the size of the object placed under cultural property designation as a brand has constantly increased, together with an explosion of the number of approved items. Thus, the trajectory of designation has moved since the Meiji and Taisho eras’ listing of discrete statues and landmarks as national treasures and important sites to collections of items in preservation zones, and increasingly to entire regions. Hagi City, for example, has plans to regulate itself as a ‘city-wide museum’ (Nishiyama 2004). The argument is that historic spots are dispersed throughout the city, and therefore the most appropriate means to preserve the urban landscape is to subject the entire place to special regulation. UNESCO has a World Heritage Cities Programme, which aims to help cities plan on the basis of historical preservation standards and effectively place large parts or all of the cities under cultural property designations.<sup>97</sup> The Old and New cities of Edinburgh, for example, are designated a World Heritage site. UNESCO has been asked to

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<sup>97</sup> See: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/cities>.



review, through its specialist consultant ICOMOS, the suitability of recently proposed developments there. Its opinions can be used by the local government in the planning process, but ultimately the only recourse that UNESCO has if its advice is rejected would be to delist a property, which it unfailingly reminds us.<sup>98</sup> Such narrative takes the form: ‘to avoid the development having an impact on the Outstanding Universal Value, authenticity and integrity of the World Heritage property, it recommends the integration rather than demolition of two listed buildings,...’<sup>99</sup>

In other words, at this level of cultural property management the primary considerations are the problematic concepts of universal value, authenticity and integrity, yet these concepts are the very foundation of the World Heritage programme and are now being applied on an ever-wider scale. Cities such as Kyōto and Nara do not have this designation; the listed properties there are dispersed. But Iwami Ginzan, a large area (3,663 ha, including buffer zone) that is mostly forest, extends in all directions from the mines.<sup>100</sup> There is also a plan to incorporate the route towards the Inland Sea, the ‘Ginzan Kaidō,’ which would come close to linking the site to Hiroshima.<sup>101</sup> Meanwhile, other recent World Heritage designations in Japan include

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<sup>98</sup> In 2009 the Elbe River valley site was delisted when Dresden proceeded with the construction of a four-lane highway bridge, the Waldschlößchenbrücke, in the centre of the city. This was interpreted as having destroyed the ‘outstanding universal value’ of the cultural landscape (Spiegel Online 2009).

<sup>99</sup> See: <http://www.culture.gov.uk/ukwhportal/documents/Final2009EdinburghDecision.pdf>.

<sup>100</sup> An application to UNESCO was made in January 2010 to extend the area included within the heritage site. This was recognized as a minor change by the World Heritage Committee in May 2010 and finalized at the General Conference in August 2010. This change enlarged the core zones from 442.4 ha to 529.17 ha (Shimane-ken 2010b). This was the first time a Japanese site was allowed to be enlarged and was agreed exactly in accordance with the request from the prefecture.

<sup>101</sup> In 2010, the World Heritage Committee inscribed El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro in Mexico, which made Japanese candidates for historic highways encouraged that such properties would be given increased attention. The Mexican long-distance road links five existing World Heritage sites along a 1,400 km path, including the silver mine town of Guanajuato (Asch 2009). It does not cross the border into the United States, although the historical route stretched from Mexico City north through El Paso to Santa Fe and south to Guatemala City. The selection of El Camino Real follows the 2008 inscription of San Miguel de Allende, a town on the road considered to have outstanding architecture and now experiencing the kind of tourist influx witnessed in Iwami Ginzan. It is classified as a foreign retirement community by Zoomers (2010: 438-440), who provides a typology of factors behind what she terms the “global land grab and foreignisation of space.” The targeting of World Heritage sites by international hotel chains is another of her examples of transforming cultural into economic capital by non-indigenous parties. For the importance of silver mining in the establishment of this road and its various arterials, see Bakewell (1971: 18-25).

the sacred sites and pilgrimage route Kii Mountains (1,632 ha), and the attempt for Hiraizumi – a cultural landscape associated with Pure Land Buddhist cosmology. The latter, which failed in its initial attempt in 2008, re-applied in 2010 with a more detailed proposal and the general strategy of presenting the entire city as a historic site, with certain temples and archaeological sites distributed inside the zone.<sup>102</sup> Hiraizumi presents itself as a ‘medieval landscape’ (*chūse-no fūkei*, 中世の風景) with streams that in the twelfth century were used for floating poems. It achieved recognition in June 2011 along with the Ogasawara Islands (*Asahi Shinbun* 2011b). The acknowledged highlight at Hiraizumi is the twelfth century Konjikidō (金色堂) mausoleum<sup>103</sup> for the Fujiwara rulers of northern Japan located within

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<sup>102</sup> In September 2010, ICOMOS sent another delegation to inspect the sites at Hiraizumi and submitted a recommendation to the World Heritage committee in May 2011. The Agency of Cultural Affairs staff said that a good level of ‘understanding’ had been reached (*ittei-no rikai*, 一定の理解). The Agency has consistently taken the view that UNESCO and ICOMOS standards of listing are based on European knowledge and assumptions about historical importance, and, therefore, that specifically Japanese elements, such as the Pure Land in Hiraizumi or samurai culture of Kamakura, are systematically underappreciated. Finding foreign experts on such subjects is considered difficult, yet must be done in order to pursue these applications. ICOMOS (2004: 8-9, 15-16) recognizes that judging a different culture is a learning process and that a balance of representation in chronology, culture and theme needs to be considered. They have been working with a typological template since 2004 that aims to classify properties for the purpose of obtaining a balance, and candidates that fit within under-represented categories are prioritized. It is much less finely calibrated outside Europe. See *Asahi Shinbun* (2010b). While two of the Japanese candidates in 2011 were recognized, the application for the National Museum of Modern Western Art in Tōkyō was deferred as part of a six nation joint application for the important works of the architect Le Corbusier who built the structure in 1957. The museum is usually not considered one of the architect’s major achievements, but the entire application was deferred on the grounds that it could not demonstrate universal human value as a whole. Apparently, there were questions about which works should be included and ICOMOS had submitted a negative evaluation partly on the grounds that a “series” of works by any artist would produce a new kind of property designation and could be extended to the *oeuvre* of many other architects (Hertzberg 2011), although UNESCO had decided in 2009 that outstanding universal value is not limited to objects themselves but is constituted in the “links” (*le lien*) which unite them and form a type of series (Dauge & Petite 2011). The new World Heritage properties received relatively little news coverage in Japan, probably because there was so much other news at the time related to the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear power disasters. Hiraizumi is located just inland from the areas of major devastation in Iwate Prefecture and this situation was discussed in the debate over its inclusion on the World Heritage list. The governor of Iwate Prefecture said he believed the inclusion was a global expression of sympathy (*Asahi Shinbun* 2011a).

<sup>103</sup> Three mummies rest in the Konjikidō. This is anomalous, since Heian beliefs on impurity supposedly would not have allowed this practice if the building were a temple hall or small pagoda, which in some respects it appears to be (Yiengpruksawan 1993: 48). There is speculation that the massive use of gold was for purification.



the Chūson-ji temple. Built of wood and covered with gold leaf in the Heian Era (794-1185), the structure has been considered one of the outstanding architectural achievements of Japan. The interior, which is filled with paintings, lacquered decorations and statuary, is said to be ‘opulent enough to suggest a Buddhist paradise’ (Yiengpruksawan 1993:35). Taut (2008 [1935]: 22) found the Konjikidō a ‘Byzantine’ structure that was one of the very few surviving links to a time before temple architecture took on a rational character, yet an important contributor to what he considered superior trends in Japanese architecture. Not many buildings survive from the Heian period. Because construction at that time was mostly in wood, extensive repair has been necessary over the years, and the Konjikidō underwent major restoration from 1962-1968. A movie of this work is a part of a visit to the site. The entire structure was relocated and now is housed inside a cramped, glass encasement within a ferro-concrete hall. The original image of a gold building shining in the forest has been lost, although that change occurred by the Kamakura era (1185-1333) when a shelter was first constructed to protect the Konjikidō. Nevertheless, in spite of the acknowledged importance of the Konjikidō, which is a national treasure, the initial World Heritage application was made for sites scattered around Hiraizumi, several of them being archaeological excavations with virtually no features visible above ground.

Therefore, there has been speculation on whether just presenting Konjikidō as the property for World Heritage inscription might not have made more sense. After all, several sites in Japan already designated as World Heritage properties, such as Himeji Castle, Hiroshima Peace Memorial and Itsukushima Shrine, are single structures. But the policy of applying for large areas has continued; another candidate for review from Japan in 2009 was the modern industrial heritage sites in Kyūshū and Yamaguchi, which stretch across six prefectures from Kagoshima to Hagi.<sup>104</sup> Unofficially, the Agency believes that World Heritage applications

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<sup>104</sup> This agglomeration of places uses the term ‘modern industrial heritage grouping’ (*kindaika sangyō isangun*, 近代化産業遺産群), which is said to be comparable to Blaenavon in Wales and the Zollverein Mine Complex near Essen, but of special value because it is non-Western. The introduction of cultural property that is considered important because of its recent history, which fits the Agency’s registered tangible cultural property category, is considered a potential benefit for areas that have undergone deindustrialization as heavy industry moved away and could be a means to activate regional economies (Itō 2000). Details on this extension of the Cultural Property Law are in Liebs (1998). Increasingly, UNESCO seeks to employ World Heritage to multiple sites that are related by historical context. An extreme example of this from the 2011 new inscription is the entry for prehistoric pile dwellings around the Alps, which consists of 110 archaeological sites spread across six countries.

have gotten more selective, particularly for individual objects; a narrative concerning a large piece of history must accompany each candidate, and that requires multiple, inter-related objects.<sup>105</sup> UNESCO's selection criteria, in other words, has shifted from primarily aesthetic considerations towards evaluation of a property's engagement with world history or in terms of its extensive natural setting.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, there have been few listings of individual buildings in recent years, while when the programme began there were numerous cathedrals, castles and monuments. This perspective is apparent in the case of Iwami Ginzan, which fits within a narrative of sixteenth century extraction technology and world trade in precious metal, but tends to underwhelm tourists who often come with the notion that World Heritage should have the visual impact of the Pyramids, Machu Picchu or the Eiffel Tower.<sup>107</sup> The effort to

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<sup>105</sup> In fact, ICOMOS recommended that 26 out of 33 applications be accepted for World Heritage designation in 2004, but in 2010 was positive on only 4 out of 19 applications. The Agency for Cultural Affairs is warning new candidates such as Mt. Fuji and Kamakura that their submissions might need to be postponed and that re-submittal might become impossible (*Asahi Shinbun* 2010d). There were 13 Japanese candidates on the Agency's list of proposed World Heritage sites at mid-2010, including the new additions of the gold mines on Sadō Island (Niigata) and burial mound of the Emperor Nintoku (Ōsaka). (*Asahi Shinbun* 2010e). There is little indication that properties compete to achieve recognition by the Agency for inclusion on the candidate list. In fact, the Agency appears to help coordinate area-wide applications that require more than one municipality or prefecture to participate. In so far as gaining World Heritage status is sought for reasons of economic development, direct competition within Japan has appeared on the surface to be relatively muted compared, for example, to the selection of Olympic venues. However, it is acknowledged that World Heritage candidates must exhibit 'distinctive' features that differentiate each site from those that could be considered similar. The Sadō mines, for example, must emphasize their gold production to neutralize the view that Japan already has a silver mine listed (*Asahi Shinbun* 2010f).

<sup>106</sup> Urry (2007: 257-259) describes the development of Western thought on evaluating tourist destinations as having begun in the eighteenth century with a connoisseurship of "ways of seeing", with particular interest in "wild" places which could stimulate unusual visions of the world and train aesthetic sensitivities. Cf. Hanley and Walton (2010), and Buzzard (1993) on Ruskin's influence in forming standards for tourist vision and how this was commercialized. Photography provided a new language for images. It purported to show the 'reality' of a scene which could document details and be kept as a record of experience (Melin 1986: 54 and Burns 1997). Now, however, standards are based on abstract characteristics related to the mobility of tourists rather than any qualities derived from associations made locally by those who dwell there.

<sup>107</sup> In 1979 UNESCO inscribed a large space (16,358 ha) titled 'Memphis and its Necropolis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Dahshur' because it determined it was a single archaeological site. The even larger (32,592 ha) 'Historic Sanctuary of Machu Picchu' was listed in 1983, with the comment from the ICOMOS evaluation that 'the inscription of Machu Picchu is evident and renders a justification superfluous and irrelevant': [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/274.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/274.pdf). The Eiffel Tower is part of a 1991 listing

define larger and larger spaces as cultural property may be justified in the sense that a more extensive network of relationships is being captured. This concept can be identified in some cases such as Machu Picchu, where ICOMOS mentions the need to protect animals, indigenous ways of life and urges the inclusion of even more adjacent lands. But ultimately all acts of definition must disrupt the property as experienced prior to designation when boundaries have not been imposed. Simmel (2007 [1913]: 22) provides an early formulation of this issue: “That one part of a whole should become a self-contained whole itself, emerging out of it and claiming from it a right to its own existence, this in itself may be the fundamental tragedy of spirit. This condition came into its own in modernity and assumed the leading role in the processes of culturalization.”<sup>108</sup> Simmel’s comment is relevant to the production of cultural property and heritage in general; although he was specifically referring to the framing of landscapes, exactly this objectification takes place in the creation of intangible properties as well as objects in the built environment (Skounti 2009).<sup>109</sup>

### **Methods of intrusion: restoration practice**

The other, related concern raised from the case of Hiraizumi is the extent restoration can take place before it has some impact on the evaluation of a property and its perceived ‘authenticity.’ To what extent can part of an object suffice as an icon of some past reality?<sup>110</sup>

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‘Paris – banks of the Seine.’ ICOMOS made the claim that Paris should be evaluated as a river town and vistas along the Seine needed protection from development. The designated space is considered ‘an ensemble.’

<sup>108</sup> This concept -- regarding a part as the image of the whole -- was noted by many philosophers at that time. Bergson (1991: 197), for example, asked “why, in short, do we seek, in the mobility of the whole, tracks that are supposed to be followed by bodies that are supposed to be in motion?” He found an “irresistible tendency to set up a material universe that is discontinuous” even though our perceptions tell us that there is universal continuity.

<sup>109</sup> Efforts to use national living treasures as a means to pass on their skills and knowledge have changed the traditional apprentice system in Japan. In particular, use of modern technology to record their activities has changed their techniques and, many would argue, killed the spirit (*kokoro*, 心) of their art (Bambling 2005: 166). The artists say that trying to make the intangible tangible and compressing the time required to gain skill causes their work to be objectified, standardized and made into models.

<sup>110</sup> Any ruin has this quality. In fact, it is ever-present in the evaluation of antiquities and most works of art. It can be easily seen in buildings left standing after war. In their deformed state, they successfully act as monuments to the war because of very their disfigurement. *Mitate* (見立て) is an old Japanese aesthetic concept of illusory reproduction, correspondence, or allegory, used conspicuously in landscape gardening, but also as a type of metaphor in literature, performing arts such as comic story-telling (*rakugo*), and print-making (Shindō 2008:111-116). It has been referred to as an early type of virtual reality (*kasōgenjitsu*, 仮想現実) (Oh 2007:

What form should the object take to be considered genuine and how extensively can parts be replaced, removed completely or changed before it becomes a replica rather than an original? Is an object considered authentic because of its form, substance, or position within a social network of relationship? This question is a significant philosophical concern for preservationists; is it appropriate to reconstruct a property to what is believed to be an older form, or should work be restricted to repair and maintenance?

On the main street of Ōmori, the largest structure in the Important Preservation District for Groups of Historic Buildings, is the nationally listed important cultural property Kumagai-ke. This was the residence of a prominent local family that began as silver merchants in the sixteenth century and were mine administrators under the Tokugawas. The house itself was rebuilt in 1801 after the great fire (*Kansei-no taika*, 寛政の大火) that destroyed the lower part of Ōmori. After the fire, an official notice prohibited thatched roofs and required shingle or tile roofs in Ōmori (Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai 1999: 54). During the nineteenth century, fireproof storehouses were added and the house itself was expanded.<sup>111</sup> A descendant of the Kumagai family lived in the house until the 1980s and is still well-remembered in the village. After its designation as a cultural property in 1998, work began on its large-scale rebuilding that lasted from 2002 to 2005 and reportedly cost ¥800 million. This included a redesign of the structure to accommodate tourists; for example, the kitchen area had its ceiling raised into a totally different arrangement thanks to computer modelling at the Agency for Cultural

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107), technique of citation (Cox 2008: 257) or ‘ecology of quotation’ (Berque 1997b: 337). It is also the term for medical diagnosis, and thus expresses a seeing beyond superficial details and finding hidden things. The vocabulary can be traced back to mid-eighteenth century printmaking. *Mitate* was used together with *yatsushi*, which was an expression for an old thing no longer seen, as in a series of prints by Suzuki Harunobu (春信) *Fūryū yatsushi Nanakomachi* (風流やつし七小町), which could be roughly translated as ‘things not seen today in Nanakomachi.’ Such indirect reference, or intertextual allusion, to past customs was sometimes a method to avoid censorship related to time, and ironically was demonstrated in a style of print that embraced radically new colour and perspective influenced by Western art (Nishiyama and Groemer 1997: 70-71). Such techniques of allegorical reference are at the heart of appreciation of any cultural object; they relate to the symbolic power expressed by the object to those who are able to perceive the link. As any review of Japanese art or literature shows, they are far from obvious or universal and depend upon shared awareness of the allusion. They remind us of the dialectic between the visible and the invisible expressed by Merleau-Ponty (1968) for figurative meanings that transcend objective signification.

<sup>111</sup> The changes in structure and lot configuration over a two hundred year period are shown at:

<http://ginzan.city.ohda.lg.jp/Kumagai/outline/outline03.htm>.

Affairs (Shimane-ken 2004). The ‘secret hiding place’ under the house was excavated and made apparent to visitors by a floor cut-out covered with glass. A number of old plans were consulted, but the ‘restoration plan’ (*fukugen kōsatsu*, 復原考察) of the estate had to compromise on which model, or combination of features, were relevant. The result is a tourist venue that displays certain aspects of what the residence of an important merchant might have looked like around 1860.<sup>112</sup> This effort, strictly speaking, was never considered just restoration, but included ‘improvement work for usage’ (活用整備事業) and ‘improvement work for disaster prevention facilities’ (防災施設整備事業). Moreover, the extensive document collection found there was examined to provide information on how the house was actually managed during its use, including its ledgers of account. An appeal to local residents for information about the house was combined with general knowledge about the history of material culture to produce displays that show the life of women who lived in the house. Thus, much of the result can be said to have the effect of turning the property into a museum with a specific concept of what features of an imagined past it wants to portray to the public. A much more modest effort of presenting aspects of village life for public view is up the main street at the Kawashima-ke residence, which is a samurai dwelling (*buke yashiki*, 武家屋敷) built after the fire and restored in 1990. It is designated as a historic landmark by Ōda City. Those who knew the former residents of these re-built houses have very equivocal feelings about what has been done to them. In the case of the Kumagai-ke, friends of the last owner are reminded of her and want to talk about the woman rather than her house, which has been converted to a museum that perfectly demonstrates how heritage conflates a long history into a narrative useful for tourists. Even though local people were solicited for information to help re-build the house, their memories are too specific and relate to very personal

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<sup>112</sup> Such an extensive project could be accomplished because Ōda City owned the property and supervised construction. Under the current system of subsidy for historic restoration of cultural property, in the case of private owners, a grant can be made by the city for 80% of repair work up to ¥8,000,000, or for 66% of restoration work up to ¥6,000,000. The nation reimburses Ōda City for 65% of preservation work that the city directly undertakes (Kariya 2008: 70). The same level of subsidy is common for other recognized zones of historic buildings, such as those in Hagi (Hagi-shi 2007). Grants are made primarily for repair of structures which are located within view of the street. The production of uniform façades as the goal of restoration recalls Pevsner’s (1964: 136-139) remark that the limited leisure time available in Victorian Britain meant that external ornamentation of buildings had to conform to certain obvious standards but also required some claim to being special; the architect, therefore, was a “purveyor of façades” that could be easily identified as Gothic, Jacobean, or Italian Palatial. No one cared much for planning or décor.

experiences that cannot be easily conveyed to those who lack the complex knowledge of community life. So much has been changed that old associations have faded away and cannot be generated from the current physical structure.

Reconstruction, which replaces lost parts or qualities, is sometimes termed ‘integral restoration’, while repair is termed ‘purist restoration.’ The latter restricts itself to cleaning or reattachment of broken pieces known to have come from the work, and is ostensibly a technical operation that leaves evidence of any change that could be considered not original.<sup>113</sup> The former always requires significant conjecture on how an object might have appeared at an earlier time based on research, and seeks to conceal changes to improve appearance. Its form is the paramount concern, rather than its historical continuity. The contrast can also be framed as one between valuing an object as an aesthetic experience or as an historical record. If there is no aesthetic difference between a reproduction, or forgery, and an original, why display the original? (Goodman 1988: 99-126).

In practice, the question is usually how far an object can be altered before it is not considered authentic, and who decides (Svašek 2007: 104). UNESCO originally took the position that authenticity does not require a property to be in an original form or material, and will take subsequent modification or additions into consideration in the evaluation of its historical and artistic merit. Determining at what point in an object’s history it is best conceived is another problem. The state of preservation should be judged in comparison to other properties of similar date and category. The view that a cultural property is authentic if it resembles some image of what it should be is a position eagerly propounded by Brandi (2007), yet in total contradiction to the views of Ruskin, who insisted that authenticity depended upon both the materials and the techniques used in conservation (Hassard 2009: 280-281). For Ruskin, it was the grossest dishonesty to hide a repair or replace hand craftsmanship with convenient manipulation of superficial appearance. ICOMOS has tended to insist that the amount of original substance is the fundamental consideration in determining authenticity and property value: ‘the identity of the building is related to the substance acquired through its history’ (Larsen 1992:2). Ruskin (2004: 26) presented the classic statement of this view of

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<sup>113</sup> This is known as compensation for loss and is the prescribed method of conservation of the American Institute for Conservation: <http://www.conservation-us.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.viewPage&PageID=555&d:\CFusionMX7\verity\Data\dummy.txt>.

conservation: ‘...it is again no question of expediency or feeling whether we shall preserve the buildings of past times or not. We have no right whatever to touch them. They are not ours. They belong partly to those who built them, and partly to all the generations of mankind who are to follow us. The dead still have their right in them.’<sup>114</sup>

How then can we accept the fact that probably less than 15% of the wood in the Hōryūji temple (法隆寺) in Nara, which is often referred to as the oldest wooden building in the world,<sup>115</sup> is believed to be from the original seventh century structure (Wendelken-Mortensen 1994:68)? The roof and upper floors were removed during World War Two for preservation. Before they were reassembled the murals inside the main hall (*kondō*, 金堂) were comprehensively destroyed in a fire caused by an electric pillow in 1949 (Hamada and Sakurai 1955), which also damaged most of the timbers on the lower floor. Rebuilding was completed in 1954. The preservation work removed the charred remains of the lower floor and reassembled it with synthetic resin in a concrete warehouse that retained the original form and the burnt remains of the pre-fire structure. The cultural property designation for the site includes both the rebuilt hall that is used for religious services and tourist visits, and the preserved remains of the older form and murals which are not open to the public. The latter has been referred to as the holy grail containing what remains of the origin of Japanese architecture – a secret space that ‘has the quality of an esoteric shrine serving only the initiates of architectural research’ (Enders and Gutschow 1998: 48). The commemorative stamp issued in 1995 to mark the designation of Historic Monuments in the Hōryūji Area as a World Heritage site shows a reproduced part of one of the murals destroyed in the 1949 fire – symbolizing the site on the basis of a piece that no longer exists. Meanwhile, efforts to record

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<sup>114</sup> Proust, who laboured over translations of Ruskin, was deeply influenced by such views. He consistently refers to film and photography in negative terms relative to involuntary memory, which is triggered by all the senses and not just the superficially visual. Mechanical preservation does not, on this view, capture the dynamic past and the ‘psychology of a time’ (Sontag 2001: 164, Mathieu 2009). The narrator’s grandmother thought photographs a particularly vulgar form of mechanical reproduction and sought artistic depictions that carried more layers of interpretation rather than mere accuracy (Proust 2002: 41-42).

<sup>115</sup> This claim is accepted by ICOMOS: [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/660.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/660.pdf). The evaluation of authenticity states that a fundamental principle of the Japanese conservation ethic of historic wooden buildings is their dismantling and reconstruction, which involves ‘a minimum amount of conjecture.’



the details of extant cultural property are accelerating.<sup>116</sup> Are the images or imagined ideals the basis for the determination of authenticity? Or is there a more substantial reality that needs to be considered? Japanese practice tends to approach the Brandi theory – appearance and verisimilitude to a particular model is the goal of most restoration work, particularly on built properties; it seeks attainment of an integral object. This approach ultimately leads to the creation of ‘virtual heritage’ and a blurring of the difference between a historical artifact and reproduction (Dave 2008). But Brandi also insisted that restoration work should be acknowledged and not hidden; while he approved of using any scientific technique available, it should not try to ‘reverse history’ and pretend that change has not occurred.



Figure 3: Mural of acolyte, Hōryūji, Nara, for World Heritage stamp series, 1995

In Japanese, preservation with minimal intervention is usually *hozon* (保存). *Hogo* (保護) is used in legal documents, where care, protection, and guardianship are implied. *Hozen* (保全) usually means the conservation of landscapes. More extensive alteration of property shades into *fukugen* (復元 or 復原), translated as reconstruction with the aim of returning to an original state. *Fukkō* (復興) is also extensive rebuilding, with more of an emphasis on replacing a destroyed object, not necessarily in the same form as it was. The process of technical repair of objects is *shūri* (修理) or *shūfuku* (修復). But there are cases of technical repair, such as *kintsugi* (金継ぎ), or the mending of ceramics with lacquer of powdered gold, that are considered an enhancement of the original value and arts in themselves.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Canon, the Japanese company known for its cameras and copying technology has begun a program to photograph and record Japan’s cultural properties – the project for the future inheritance of cultural property (*bunkazai mirai keishō purojeketo*, 文化財未来継承プロジェクト): <http://canon.jp/tsuzuri/index.html>.

<sup>117</sup> The Korean tea bowl *tsutsuido* (筒井筒), for example, was accidentally broken into five pieces in the sixteenth century and mended with *kintsugi*. The bowl continued to be used and was again repaired from time to time. It is



Replication or copying can be *saiken* (再建), but interestingly in the case of the Ise Shrine is usually phrased in terms of the ritual transfer of the deities (*shikinentengū*, 式年遷宮), or as the neutral *tatekae* (建て替え) when the actual rebuilding is referenced.<sup>118</sup> In addition, there are many specialized techniques of preservation, some of which aim to treat a rebuilt surface so that it appears original. An ‘aging paint’ (*koshokunuri*, 古色塗) can be applied when wooden parts are replaced and new surfaces stand out against the old. This practice has been used for so long that it is considered a part of traditional carpentry.<sup>119</sup> The visible is treated differently than the concealed, which often is open to extensive alteration, such as for earthquake reinforcement (*ibid.*: 35), and can have much cruder craftsmanship.

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now an important cultural property of Ishikawa Prefecture, owned by a private collector in Kanazawa and considered a model of aged beauty (*sabi*, 寂び); the marks of repair add to its character. Such cases are not unusual. See Bartlett (2008).

<sup>118</sup> Isozaki (2006) argues that buildings such as Ise should be seen as performance rather than inert space, or as texts that carry different interpretations at different times rather than permanent spatial constructions. The transitory nature of Ise is also brought out by Ishimoto (1995). Although the regular rebuilding of Ise makes engineers think of the detailed specifications that have been recorded for construction, architects seem more interested in ritual enactment and spiritual elements.

<sup>119</sup> The signing of the Venice Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites in 1964 at the Second Congress of Architects and Specialists of Historic Buildings provided the foundation of archaeological preservation methodology and led to the establishment of ICOMOS in 1965 as a professional association dedicated to the conservation of historic sites and structures. Article Ten of the Charter states ‘Where traditional techniques prove inadequate, the consolidation of a monument can be achieved by the use of any modern technique for conservation and construction, the efficacy of which has been shown by scientific data and proved by experience.’ This has generally been interpreted to mean that traditional methods of construction should be used in preservation efforts to the greatest possible extent, although they may need to be supplemented on occasion (Jokilehto 2002: 289-290). Yet a quick look at any of the restoration projects taking place in Japan on World Heritage sites shows heavy equipment and all sorts of non-traditional construction being used. On a visit to Shirakawa-gō, for example, I watched a farm house roof being re-thatched with the help of chain saws. On the other hand, it has been argued that use of relatively modern methods of rebuilding has long been common in Japan; structural steel reinforcement was used in the Nara Tōdaiji in 1906-1913 (Yamazaki 2000). The degree to which older methods of construction are used in rebuilding seems to depend on the importance of the project. Traditional tools were used in some rebuilding of the Hōryūji .See [http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=6099&URL\\_DO=DO\\_PRINTPAGE&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6099&URL_DO=DO_PRINTPAGE&URL_SECTION=201.html). The practice of demolition and rebuilding is still justified on the basis of it being a traditional method of preservation that preserves information about the structure. This approach is not approved by the UK Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings based on arguments derived from Ruskin and William Morris (Powys 1995).

Another response to this question is shown in the roof tiles of the Gangōji temple (元興寺) in Nara. Part of the temple complex of the Nara World Heritage designation and a national treasure, the main hall was rebuilt and the roof was repaired with a combination of old and new ceramic tiles. The colours and shapes of these tiles can now be easily discerned from the ground: the curved, darker tiles are primarily from the Asuka era (550-710), and the more flat, lighter tiles are younger.<sup>120</sup> This temple fell into ruin from the Meiji era, its pagoda burnt down and after World War Two was in very poor condition. The process of slowly rebuilding the main structures used the old, salvaged tiles partly as an economy measure during the 1950's and 1960's because funds were not available to replace them, but the result is quite striking compared to reconstructed buildings built when more resources were available (Iwaki and Ōya 1991).

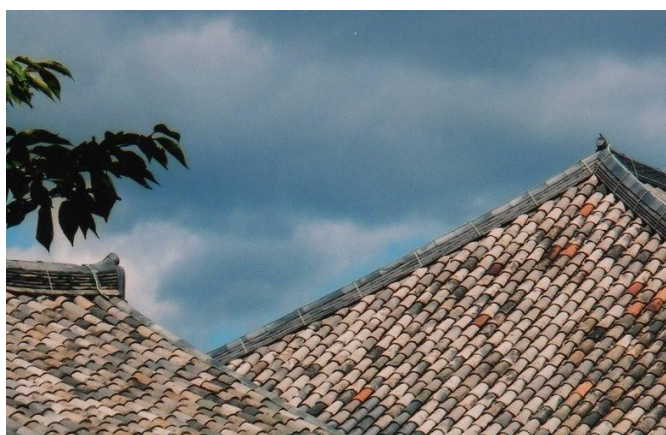


Figure 4: Gangōji roof tiles, Nara

Because overwhelmingly the historical buildings designated as cultural property in Japan were made of wood, the issue of rebuilding is considered to have particular relevance.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> On the history of early temple construction and roof tile supply, see Yamamoto and Edwards (1995).

<sup>121</sup> Over 90% of the structures designated as Important Cultural Property are made from wood; the remainder are mostly castles. Wood preservation, therefore, is at the core of Japanese preservation interest. Many factors determine the rate of wood decomposition caused by fungus and mold, but moisture is key. Dry wood will not rot, but exposure to light will decompose wood fibre. Wood is also subject to insect, bird and animal damage, and fire. As wood decays, it loses weight. This measure is one sign of overall loss of strength. Even at 5% weight loss, which cannot be observed without a microscope, softwoods lose 80% of some impact load capacities (Moavenzadeh 1990: 638). However, when designed and built in the proper manner wooden structures can last for centuries without need for replacement. In fact, there is disagreement whether wood is a fragile or long-lasting construction material relative to stone. The Urnes Stave Church, a World Heritage property in Norway, was built of wood in 1150 and remains in good condition with most conservation efforts

Even the non-wood elements in important structures have tended to be organic (Murata 2006, Miyazawa 1987) and considered susceptible to environmental threats. Views on preservation have changed over time in Japan. In the early 1900's, the prevailing theory of temple and shrine restoration was to demolish and rebuild (*kaitaishūri*, 解体修理) with the goal of reconstructing the original form and achieving 'the truth' (*shinsō*, 真相) (Shimizu 1995). This approach is still followed in most cases of historical reconstruction; additions to structures after what is considered the original form may be removed during subsequent reconstruction to produce a more 'pristine' exemplar of a style. Many castles have been rebuilt in Japan. Osaka, Nagoya and Hiroshima castles were all rebuilt in the last century, so are they less genuine than Himeiji? <sup>122</sup>

The roof of the main shrine (*honden*, 本殿) at Izumo is now undergoing repair for the first time in 58 years at a cost of ¥8 billion (£57 million). This building was designated a national treasure in 1900.

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directed to prevent insect and fire damage (Stubbs & Makaš 2011: 170-172). Wooden farm houses (*minka*) built more than three hundred years ago, which were never given the special consideration of monuments and with lower quality material, remain structurally sound (Miyazawa 1987: 42). These farm houses, however, at a minimum, need to have their roofs re-thatched every forty years. In Shirakawa-gō the roofs are re-thatched every twenty years. Wooden structures are arguably the most efficiently maintained by local, sustainable methods of conservation (Brown 2009), although the skills necessary to do many of the repair tasks are becoming scarce as construction methods have changed and pre-fabricated methods of building have replaced craftsmanship.

<sup>122</sup> Between 24<sup>th</sup> May and 8<sup>th</sup> August 1945, the castles of Hiroshima, Ōgaki, Nagoya and Fukuyama were destroyed in allied bombing raids. At first, only their exteriors were reconstructed, using modern construction methods and reinforced concrete. Some have elevators and air-conditioning. As replicas, they may be granted "registered tangible property - buildings" status (*tōroku yūkei bunkazai*, 登録有形文化財), which gives them some protection as historical landmarks built during the last century. There are more than 7,400 such designations in Japan, including bank buildings, tunnels and lighthouses.



Figure 5: Grand Shrine of Izumo under repair (October 2009)

The deity spirits were moved to a neighbouring building in 2008 in a special ritual (*karidensenzasai*, 仮殿遷座祭) and are not scheduled to be returned until 2013 (Takahashi 2009). Until then, the main shrine will be closed to the public. Although it is known that a large shrine existed at Izumo since at least the seventh century, the current shrine was built in 1744. Remains of an ancient shrine have been found that, together with various old documents, indicate that early forms of the structure were very unlike the modern one. Change appears to have been gradual over hundreds of years, but was considerable during the sixteenth century. It is estimated that the height of the structure in the Heian period was 48 meters, twice the current height and reputed to be the tallest structure in Japan. The entrance was towards the west, rather than the current south-facing entry. The reason the ancient shrine was so tall was that it sat on top of nine composite cedar pilings that lifted the floor itself 30 meters from the ground. The centre piling had a diameter of 3.6 meters. Access was by means of slanted bridgeworks that stretched over 100 meters from the raised floor (Fukuyama 2006). A model of the ancient shrine, along with many other shrine models from around Japan, is located in the Shimane Museum of Ancient Izumo, which is next to the shrine.<sup>123</sup> A visit to this display necessarily will raise questions about the vast changes that

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<sup>123</sup> Model construction is considered an important method of architectural preservation in Japan and significant resources are provided to create these prototypes. On the role of prototypes in cultural innovation, see Schrage (1993).

have taken place in the history of the shrine and continuity with its current incarnation; it would seem to have undergone some radical transformation rather than a gradual evolution.

In the case of a major project involving the restoration of an important site such as the Izumo Shrine, the decision by the Agency for Cultural Affairs to grant subsidies becomes a de facto permit for building. An explicit permit is only required if the external appearance is changed. Ultimately, most decisions on how a project is undertaken at an important cultural property are taken by the owner, which in many cases such as this is a religious institution, in consultation with a supervisory architect.<sup>124</sup> Such special architects enjoy a monopoly of work on cultural property projects overseen by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. They must have certification and a license from the Association for the Conservation of Architectural Monuments (JACAM),<sup>125</sup> and a maximum of about 150 licences are issued; this means that a new license will be issued only after an existing supervisory architect retires, and therefore there are long waiting lists and a type of apprentice program of working at various sites for many years before one can be considered for promotion.<sup>126</sup> This supervisory system is active at as many as 200 projects each year, including work at projects for properties designated by prefectures (Enders 1998: 23). Because the Agency for Cultural Affairs does not have project planning capabilities, it relies on the supervisory architect system to carry out and monitor restoration work. The responsible architect at each project submits a short repair report to the Agency each month concerning progress, and upon completion a lengthy final evaluation of the project is produced and submitted to the Agency for review. These final reports provide a detailed description of the work. They are not available for public inspection and can only be

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<sup>124</sup> This is different from the category of cultural property that represents intangible skills in conservation, which is literally a ‘holder of select preservation skill,’ (*sentei hozon gijutsu hojisha*, 選定保存技術保持者). See Seki (2000).

<sup>125</sup> See: <http://www.bunkenkyo.or.jp/>. An overview of the foundation’s activities for 2010 is at: [http://www.bunkenkyo.or.jp/6.H22jigyo\\_keikaku.pdf](http://www.bunkenkyo.or.jp/6.H22jigyo_keikaku.pdf). The official name is now *Kōeki Zaidan Hōjin Bunkazai Kenzōbutsu Hozon Gijutsu Kyōkai*, (公益財団法人文化財建造物技術協会). The closest UK equivalent, although quite different in its position of monopolizing the provision of supervisory architects for conservation projects, is the Institute of Historic Building Conservation: <http://www.ihbc.org.uk/>.

<sup>126</sup> The professional certification for conservation supervisors is one of a great many specialist qualifications related to construction. Such qualification programs are administered under national programs required by law, and by private professional bodies. So, for example, one is not just a qualified architect, but a nationally certified (grade one or grade two) architect, and may also be a specially certified architect for wooden construction (*mokuzō kenchikushi*, 木造建築士). See: <http://www.kentikushikaku.net/>.



obtained, in some cases, at the architecture departments of certain universities. Therefore, only those with access to such reviews can get a glimpse of the internal workings of how a restoration project is conducted. This system of training and supervision produces a close-knit community of architects who have shared experience and understanding about preservation methods; it is virtually a closed guild with its own esoteric knowledge.



Figure 6: Replica of Ancient Izumo Shrine (Ancient Izumo Museum of History)

Ise, the other great shrine, has had an even more contentious history. Equally old as the Izumo shrine, it was made a symbol of Japanese nationalism during the period of state Shintoism from the Meiji period through World War Two (Koyasu 2004). Its simple lines were praised by modernist architectural historians, such as Itō Chūta<sup>127</sup> (Reynolds 2001: 322-323), who speculated that the rebuilding of the shrine at twenty-year intervals was done to maintain a purity in its materials and that this practice had maintained the structure in its original form from the seventh century along with the tradition of transferring the gods (*sengū*, 遷宮), which he said linked the present in an unbroken Imperial line to the remote past. These features were said to embody an essential Japanese spirit. All this is rhetoric with very little basis in evidence (Inoue 2009). First, there is no way to prove that the current form of the shrine has preserved some original structure. When research was conducted in the

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<sup>127</sup> Itō was the most influential writer on Japanese architecture during the first half of the twentieth century. Earning a PhD in engineering from Tōkyō University in 1901, he became a professor, specialized in religious buildings and won the first Order of Culture awarded in architecture (1943).

eighteenth century, it was concluded that from a technical point of view the shrine resembled houses in the Tanba region, particularly the roof construction, and this vernacular form was selected because of its wind-resistance. Moreover, there are many elements in the shrine that have been compared to vernacular construction elsewhere in Asia, particularly the raised floor that was also observed in Izumo (Asakawa 1994). Kitagawa (1990: 100-102) described the composition of the shrine as related to a blend of Buddhist, Shintō and shamanistic folk practices. Therefore, nativists ignore a complex history when they attempt to promote a “pure Japanese” aesthetic based on Ise, or claim that the rebuilding practice followed there should be considered fundamental in evaluating Japanese conservation methodology. The appeal to an ideal past is a common element in much of Japanese religious publicity; the ‘spirit’ lost in modern life is recovered in the symbolic process of renewal and purification at Ise, as well as through participation in shrine festivals and pilgrimages (Reader 1987: 288-289).

In March 2009, a massive restoration of the Founder’s Hall in the Nishi Honganji temple in Kyōto was completed.<sup>128</sup> This project took ten years. Massive amounts of building material were replaced, including about 80% of the 110,000 roof tiles. The original hall was built in three years and completed in 1636. Cantilevers of curved wooden beams in the roof cracked and broke over the years but the extent of the damage was not realized until disassembly. It took two years just to find suitable replacement trees in Shikoku that had the proper curvature and could support the greater stress of the roof edges. This construction method is believed to have originated in mountain farm houses that were built to withstand snow accumulation. Several other features of the temple also seem to have originated in the snow country of northern Gifu and Toyama prefectures, such as the covered walkways around the structure and the earthquake-resistant technique of using a multitude of small beams to hold up the roof.

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<sup>128</sup> This project had the title: *Honganjigoeidōheiseidaishūfuku*, 本願寺御影堂平成大修復. See: <http://www.hongwanji.or.jp/goeidou/index.htm>. A similar scale of restoration is being undertaken at the Higashi Honganji now: <http://higashihonganji.jp/nikki/nikki.html>. Both sites contain objects designated as national treasures and important cultural properties, and both are part of the 1994 World Heritage designation Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto. See: [http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory\\_body\\_evaluation/688.pdf](http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/688.pdf) and <http://archives.nhk.or.jp/chronicle/B10002200090803230030086/>. There has been continual reconstruction at Nishi Honganji for more than ten years. The statue of the Pure Land sect founder was temporarily removed during this time from the main hall.

The history of how such construction techniques were transferred across Japan is not known, but as we saw in the case of the Ise Shrine, there has been a tradition of borrowing elements of design and solutions to engineering problems from vernacular building elsewhere. Until the Meiji era and the importation of the Western professions of architect and engineer, construction was carried out by carpenters who were experienced in a range of skills. Wendelkin (1996: 28) found that “traditionally trained master carpenters acted not only as craftsmen, but as design professionals and the equivalent of structural engineers. They continued to have an important role even in the construction of national monuments as long as the Meiji government's Kōbushō, or Department of Construction, sponsored traditional wood construction.” There are master builders still active in this tradition, but significant changes have occurred. For example, the highest skilled temple carpenters still undergo very rigorous apprenticeship before qualifying as *miya daiku* (宮大工) (Yamazaki 2008).<sup>129</sup> The quality of materials used was so important that the people selecting the trees and how to cut them (*kobiki*, 木挽き) had even a higher status (Daidōji 2003). One of the most skilled artisans in Iwami Ginzan, now in his 70’s, wanted to be a *kobiki* but the profession died out by the mid-1950s as forestry practices and the processing of timber changed. Such gaps in the process of construction, and the knowledge lost with their elimination, mean that rebuilding and conservation cannot occur in a way that recovers certain qualities in the built environment; restoration effort must necessarily aim to create superficial effects, while at the same time the ability to create new objects that reflect older methods is weakened.

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<sup>129</sup> An example of a temple carpenter in Ōda City, Morishita Takaaki, who began learning about trees and wood when he was nine years old from his father who was a *kobiki* is in *Sanin Chūō Shinpō* (2010b).



To conceive of a piece of ground and what is on it as a landscape, this means that one now conceives of a segment of nature itself as a separate unity, which estranges it from the concept of nature.  
(Simmel 2007 [1913]: 22)

The world has literally been made, domesticated and ordered by drawing lines, distinctions, taxonomies and hierarchies: Europe and its others, West and non-West, or people with history and people without history.  
(Pickles 2004: 4)

It was very strange, but somehow he seemed to be connected to her by fate. It wasn't particularly unusual to have found themselves together on the same route from Ubburui Port to Ichibata-ji, but again to find her in this solitary hot spring lodge, deep in the valley of the Sojiki River near the spine of the Chūgoku Range, was nothing short of amazing, after having travelled for an hour by train west from Matsue, and then going further south of Ōda City to beyond Ōmori Ginzan.  
(Matsumoto Seichō 2007 [1987]: 64)

### **In search of fundamental landscapes**

In 1971, forty-five year old Okuno Takeo, a professor of literature and former Toshiba chemist, wrote a book describing how certain basic, or iconic, scenes (原風景, *genfūkei*) were portrayed in Japanese literature (Okuno 1972). Okuno had grown up in his family home, which had survived the fire-bombing of the war, near the Ebisu railway station in Tōkyō. The neighbourhood was well-settled, in the sense that families had lived there for generations and knew each other on sight when encountered in the street or in local shops. They relied on each other for daily commerce.<sup>130</sup> It was a 'typical, mixed district' (典型的な混合界隈, *tenkeitekina kongō kaiwai*), with diverse kinds of shops, people and buildings. All these comingled in a quiet corner close to the bustle of the Yamanote rail line that circled the centre of the city. Although 'typical' in a sense, the neighbourhood was distinguished as being special because of the specifically human elements present. The 'human feeling' or empathy (人情, *ninjō*) made this a type of elementary landscape. It had a 'constancy' as a dwelling place (恒常的な住居, *kōjotekina sumai*) that residents unconsciously understood while living there. Increasingly they were aware that elsewhere in the city such places were becoming

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<sup>130</sup> Okuno's description of his neighborhood fits consistently with the definition given by Appadurai (1995:204) as "the actually existing social forms in which locality, as a dimension or value, is variably realized.... Situated communities characterized by their actuality, whether special or virtual, and their potential for social reproduction." He uses the term *kaiwai* (界隈) for neighbourhood – a mixture of shops and people, the old and the new. It implies a place with individual character that can be walked. Alexander et al. (1977: 81-83) believed that identifiable neighbourhoods were small, usually with as few as 500 residents, and protected from traffic.

uncommon. Residents felt, and spoke about, the neighbourhood as their own. It had been put together by them and their relatives.

By the time he wrote this book, Okuno recognized his neighbourhood as a rare, miraculously preserved niche in an otherwise quite different metropolis. The Tōkyō he found outside his immediate home area had lost the ability to retain families for their whole lives. Everywhere there was transience, the breakdown of mutual trust, and the spread of massive, concrete structures for mid-rise apartment developments (団地, *danchi*), condominiums (マンション, *manshon*), company or public housing. Living space was organized into tiny, standardized units, which were promoted as ‘modern’ and fire-proof because not made of wood (Waswo 2009). Because people left rural areas to find work in the city, especially during the period of rapid economic growth in the 1960s, they lost their original rootedness -- familiarity and detailed intimacy within a settled community -- and never acquired it again in the urban environment. The human feeling of the old Tōkyō ‘floated away’ (漂う, *tadayou*), and with it the sense of attunement to a basic landscape (*ibid.*: 14).<sup>131</sup> As a result, Okuno claimed, most novels by the early 1970s hardly included any description of external scenery; stories took place in vaguely anonymous locations, usually inside non-descript rooms. This tendency was unlike earlier writing, especially before the 1923 earthquake. Use of neighbourhood scenes in writing now seemed nostalgic. Higuchi Ichō’s story *Takekurabe* (1895) presented a love story in the old Yoshiwara pleasure quarters. This area was not only sanitized and rebuilt by the mid-1960s, but its name erased from addresses. By the Tōkyō Olympics, urban space ceased to have narrative relevance except in writing about foreign locations. Why?

Okuno believed that people in the large cities no longer could relate to any particular place, partly because change was so rapid that memories could never be tied to locations and these changes appeared to be almost random.<sup>132</sup> Every few days, everyone saw a blur of shop

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<sup>131</sup> The sense of lost community from an older time echoes the *kokugaku* movement of the eighteenth century, best known from the work of the nativist scholar Motoori Norinaga (Burns 2003 and Harootunian 1988). It is a recurring theme in Japanese history. Of course, a similar concern for this organic commonality of shared friends, possessions, and ties to a particular place was classically presented by Tönnies (1991: 20-21) as *Gemeinschaft*.

<sup>132</sup> In this way Okuno is interested, as was Simmel (1967), in how the material environment of contemporary cities influences the mental life of individuals. For both, Okuno and Simmel, the physical city now confronts all people with the atomizing and homogenizing effects of modern life due to an ‘intensification of nervous stimulation’ (*ibid.*: 410, originally ‘*die Steigerung des Nervenlebens*’). Simmel believed that these consequences

openings and closings, strangers everywhere, the re-orientation of streets and even the alteration of place names and addresses. The social turmoil of the period, with the breakdown of extended family ties and the increase of isolated office workers, was both reflected and reinforced by the false, mean-spirited and ‘artificial’ space proliferating in the city. Tōkyō had suffered massive destruction in both the 1923 earthquake and during the war, but residents each time rebuilt their neighbourhoods (Gill 1996). This time it seemed different.

In fact, townscape description has become even less evident in Japanese literature since Okuno wrote, while the social relations found in many works have moved further away from the model families of the immediate post-war period, with the isolation of individuals becoming more pronounced. The 2009 winner of Japan’s most important prize in literature, the Akutagawa Prize, *Tsui no sumika* (A final home, 終の住処) by Isozaki Kenichirō (2009), has very limited mention of outdoor space, and what it does have is fairly generic. Most of the book consists of an internal monologue by a husband who wonders why his wife is so cold and incommunicative. From the first day of marriage, he cannot comprehend why she agreed to marriage. This is not a particular worry for him, but he finds it odd. The couple do not speak a word to each other for eleven years, and rarely see each other though living in the same place and raising a daughter.<sup>133</sup> When the silence is finally broken, it is when the husband tells his wife they should build a new house, to which she immediately agrees. If the social relations of a family are reflected in the domestic space partners create together, the juxtaposition of apparently withdrawn family ties with desire for a new, larger house is difficult to reconcile. The new house is conventionally attractive as an object of middle class normality. Yet there is no signal to show that either partner is interested in such status or might be frustrated by their living circumstances, although it could be understood that the wife got married to conform to convention and living in a larger house after several years of marriage would be another example of doing the expected without emotional attachment. It could, therefore, be seen as a story about the hollowness of domestic affairs, in which partners just go through the motions of having a relationship, making a home and acquiring objects although none of these activities carries real meaning for them. The husband

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were compensated for by greater freedom from small town (*Gemeinschaft*) social pressures, and that money coordinated social relations amid urban anomie by facilitating instrumental reason (Simmel 2004).

<sup>133</sup> This is a type of non-sentimental, self-confessional narrative that fits the Japanese idea of ‘pure literature’ (*junbungaku*, 純文学), the origin of which was linked to Western modernism and diary writing (Seidensticker 1966), except that it is difficult to consider it ‘serious’ in that it is politically disengaged. Cf. Treat (1993).

considers the possibility that his wife becomes upset because he has an affair with another woman, but she never indicates knowledge of this nor does the end of communications between them seem to be related to this.

It is sometimes claimed that romance between husband and wife has never taken hold as a necessary part of Japanese household formation, which is still primarily an economic relationship based on an understood gender-based division of labour (Borovoy 2005: 88-89). But the relationship in this novel does not even rest on economics. The relationship is so tenuous that it can barely be said to exist, yet, ultimately the couple decide to build a more substantial home together. Japanese readers have wondered what the lack of communication signifies and whether such a household could exist, but Isozaki has said that he got the idea of this narrative from a friend who had experienced it. His narrator at one point (Isozaki 2009: 89) wonders over the process of buying a suburban home; although the house is the cornerstone of education, economy and local participation in the community, such important matters are facilitated on the advice of young people at real estate companies who have no interest in any of these issues and only think about sales. The main determinant of home price in this story is automobile access. To the homeowners, who may only buy a house once or twice in a lifetime, the process seems slightly illegal or suspicious, with no sense of it contributing to their well-being. So, the meaningless act of acquiring a home now reflects the hollow relations in the suburban family.

Meanwhile, the idea of the ‘most Japanese landscape’ was not urban but still associated with rural life – irrigated rice fields were the model of self-created space and the single most powerful of fundamental landscapes.<sup>134</sup> Key elements in this scene were *adze* (ridges between fields, 畦), dragonflies (*akatonbo*, 赤とんぼ) and fireflies (*hotaru*, 蛍).<sup>135</sup> Pastoral scenery

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<sup>134</sup> There are iconic scenes in cities, but those selected tend to be of places left behind in the rush to urbanize; they often are patches of greenery in a concrete jungle or back streets that somehow did not get developed but fall in the shadows of high rise buildings (Yoshida 2010). In other words, they show the traces of an older way of life with rural elements mixed into the urban environment. Such scenes do not depict ancient times; they are leftovers from the Shōwa era that just ended in 1989. They tend to portray, for example, what is left of the ‘downtown’ (*shitamachi*) neighborhoods in Tōkyō that still reflect bits of their former character, such as old shops (*shinise*, 老舗) and the smells and sounds of life (Ōnishi 2004). On the nature of Tōkyō’s ‘traditional urbanism’, see Bestor (1993).

<sup>135</sup> On the historical symbolism, including relationship to the Emperor, and practical importance of rice, cf. Tokuno (2007), Ohnuki-Tierney (1994) and Shiba (1993).

(田園風景, *denen fūkei*) was not only seen as the most beautiful; it was central to the identity of the nation even at a time when most residents lived in cities, ate less rice and had only weak links with the countryside. But, as a consequence, the rural landscape took on a very different meaning than the neighbourhood intimacy of Okuno's Ebisu. When he, as a city person, looked at rice fields, he felt that the society that produced these landscapes was 'closed' (閉鎖的, *heisateki*) and formed by 'selfless cooperation' (没我的共同性, *botsugateki kyōdosei*) (Okuno: 125). It was difficult for him to connect with local people, who seemed to be mostly inter-related by blood, preoccupied with each other's affairs and harbouring dark secrets. From the late nineteenth century, such rural spaces were described by writers as places that restricted individual freedom, from which creative people wanted to flee to the less conservative cities. Nevertheless, the image of fertile rice fields remained in people's awareness and was associated with the origins of the nation.<sup>136</sup> This image clearly showed the work of man in detail because intense rice cultivation necessarily required a high labour input for both the construction of the drainage system and the annual tending of the fields. Unlike customary Western plains landscapes, the Japanese fields were relatively small, densely packed, contained people, and usually were sculpted into the contours of the place. Although other rural landscapes included mountains and the sea, the ultimately most important of all was that of rice fields, which formed the key component of *satoyama* -- the buffer region between home and wilderness where human activity takes place.<sup>137</sup> By the

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<sup>136</sup> Cf. Appadurai (1995: 214-215): "Locality, for the modern nation-state, is either a site of nationally appropriated nostalgias, celebrations and memorations or a necessary condition of the production of nationals."

<sup>137</sup> *Satoyama* (里山) is literally 'village-mountain' and originally was one of a number of terms that referred to both the cultivated land near villages and the areas where materials could be collected for use in daily life. This zone was considered to be 'managed nature'. Since the 1990s, *satoyama* has come to mean the coppice woodland between countryside and city, under threat of development, and, therefore, a pivotal battleground for ecological conservation in Japan, cf. Doshita (2010) and Takeuchi et al. (2003). This word, although having some older appearances, was only introduced in the *Kojien* dictionary in 1997, having been popularized beginning in the 1960s by the forestry expert Shidei Tsunahide (2009). Imamori (2006) argues that *satoyama* represents the true 'fundamental landscape' of Japan. In 1995, UNESCO inscribed rice terraces in the Philippines on the World Heritage List. Since that time, rural areas all over Japan (and elsewhere in Asia) have attempted to apply the same criteria to their *satoyama* landscapes and qualify for inclusion. See: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/722>. To avoid such arguments over which rice terraces qualify, UNESCO relies on the evaluation of such sites as being 'representative' of a genre in the same way it selects a 'representative' castle. Therefore, the designation of having universal human value as a particular place becomes less a question

1970s, such views were removed from everyday experience for most Japanese, who lived in large cities, and, like Okuno, they treated such space as a part of domestic tourism.<sup>138</sup> And the view of the tourist is directed at places that are considered out of the ordinary, separate from everyday experience – virtually the opposite of the idea of fundamental landscape (Urry 2002: 3).

When literary characters refer to external space, quite often it is to plot it for travel. The space itself has no particular characteristics, but is dissected by timetables and maps that aid the traveller for moving through it.<sup>139</sup> This device was particularly prominent in the detective fiction of Matsumoto Seichō, whose popular novel *Points and Lines* (*Ten to sen*, 1958), influenced by the English author Freeman Wills Crofts, focused on the complication of alibis based on railway travel. One of his last works, *A Landscape of Numbers* (*Kazu no fūkei*, 1987) was written while he lived in Ōmori and concerns, similarly, the detailed navigation of victim, suspect and detective over the landscape of the Sanin region by road and rail. Encounters are portrayed as if the pre-determined routes of characters intersect at map coordinates. Abstract geometry as a narrative element is also apparent in the planning of electric power line construction through the mountains, and although there are virtually no descriptions of the landscape, a social subtext concerns the devastation caused from the corrupt use of public works and development.<sup>140</sup>

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of the specific features of a place and more an issue of fitting a pre-conceived category that UNESCO seeks to fill.

<sup>138</sup> Singh (2009) claims that domestic tourism in Asia tends to be either religious or related to visiting relatives, rather than the type of ‘commercial international tourism’ usually described in the literature, such as by MacCannell (1999), and that ordinary travel mixes tourists and residents in such a natural way that it would be a distortion to consider them as separate groups; in fact, according to her, tourists often do not want to be considered under the label ‘tourist’. This perspective does not apply to Iwami Ginza, nor to World Heritage tourism in general. It is difficult to see how this claim relates to Japan whatsoever, other than for the special cases of pilgrimages and the summer *Obon* holiday. But it does seem to apply to the case of Maoist China, for example, in which tourism was considered part of a bourgeois lifestyle (Nyiri 2006:3). Ryan and Gu (2009) explain the role of the Chinese state in changing these attitudes. Mao could have been thinking of Switzerland (Halliday 1969).

<sup>139</sup> The production and use of maps varies according to culture. In medieval Japan, for example, they were rare and used almost exclusively to record private landholdings (Berry 2007: 55-56).

<sup>140</sup> Azusa Rintarō (2009) has recently added a murder mystery that takes place in a mine shaft at Iwami Ginza to his list of detective novels based in various tourist destinations around Japan. He combines Iwami Ginza with the caves of Akidoshū in Yamaguchi Prefecture as the main venues. Kotani Kyōsuke (2005) has also

## Cartesian plots unfold: print-making and geography

The word *fūkei* itself is quite old but since the nineteenth century has been considered equivalent to the French *paysage* (Tōkyō Bijutsu 1990: 548). It and related concepts slowly became implicated in the technology of government as Japan moved toward the creation of a modern nation-state (Foucault 1994). Moreover, its introduction can be seen as the entry of a particular type of Western reasoning that has been referred to as the ‘cartographic image’ – the map, rather than language, as the key set of symbols in Being (Farinelli 1998: 135-136, Heidegger 1973).<sup>141</sup> Moreover, property is legally regulated in the modern world through mapping and the ‘objective’ measurements that they purport to undertake.<sup>142</sup>

The association of *fūkei* with Western landscape painting extended back to at least the mid-eighteenth century, whereby it became increasingly used to mean a style of naturalism (写生主義, *shaseishugi*) that reproduced the features of an object (Tōkyō Bijutsu 1990: 289). The scale of objects shown in any perspective was expected to be “realistic”, for example; i.e. it was to be clear which items were closer to the viewer and these items could each be separately enumerated (Origas 2003: 122-123). This was not necessarily the case in work until about the middle of the Edo period (circa 1750). Older work tended to focus more on poetic allusions, and often were variations on recognized masters (Cauquelin 2004: 6). In other words, besides the three dimensions used to represent space, which were brought forth in certain accepted styles, an added literary aspect was anticipated. Work produced by well-known *ukiyo-e* print makers, such as Hiroshige and Hokusai, adopted a less obviously

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contributed a volume to this genre that takes place mostly in places related to the Iwami Ginzan highway that leads to Onomichi.

<sup>141</sup> Dreyfus (1991: 11 and 343) boils down the understanding of Heidegger’s concept of being to “background practices”, which amount to everyday skills or customs that are followed in a “cleared out” (*roden*) space that gathers things that belong together (Heidegger 1997). Malpas (2008: 137) discusses how this view relates to mappable space and the functionality inherent in such an approach. See also Okrent (1988).

<sup>142</sup> Maps are a contentious tool in disputes over rights for indigenous peoples. “Maps impinge invisibly on the daily lives of ordinary people just as the clock, as a graphic symbol of centralized political authority, brought ‘time discipline’ into rhythms of industrial workers. While both maps and legal tenure instruments (land certificates) change the character of customary systems, the effects of maps may be greater. Customary rights within a bounded area can be left to the local community to define. But cartographic maps define the boundary of a system and destroy the fluid and flexible character of the perimeter” (Fox 1998:3, quoting J.B. Harley). Cf. Godlewski and Smith (1994) and Sluyter (2001) regarding the history of cartography in imperial expansion and colonial control.

ethnocentric, more Western perspective, and may have been particularly acceptable to the West because of this aspect of their work. These famous print-makers often are not considered ‘realistic’ artists because they used both detail and colour in ways that influenced impressionist painters. Nevertheless, when compared to earlier artists, they tended to show objects in careful proportion to each other and with less cultural presumption.

Western historians, however, while recognizing how foreign and domestic traditions fed off each other, still want to find such examples as exhibiting the strength of Japanese visual culture relative to other parts of the world (Bayly 2004: 381-382). Although Bayly wants to see Hokusai as part of a ‘dynamic and adaptive’ artisan condition which fared best in a world invaded by Western forms during the nineteenth century, he neglects his own theme: “Broad forces of global change strengthened the appearance of difference between human communities. But those differences were increasingly expressed in similar ways’ (*ibid.*: 2). ‘The processes of uniformity worked strongly to produce an international art market, art history, museums, and an international artistic sensibility (*ibid.*: 366). Words were imported from the West to re-conceptualize many fields of activity. The first history of Japanese art, *Kōhon Nihon teikoku bijutsu ryakushi* (1901) was published under the supervision of the American scholar Ernest Fenollosa (Yatsuka 2005: 5). Until the late Meiji period, there was no clear distinction among history, literature and morals. It was not until 1872 that the category of ‘fine art’ for objects that fit this international standard was translated as *bijutsu* (美術) from the German *Kunst* to describe lacquer and cloisonné ware from Japan at the Vienna Exhibition (Yatsuka 2005:3, *Kojien* 1998: 2239). Until then, such objects were included with other crafts. The six recognized cultivated skills in Japan, as late as 1882, were courtesy, comfort, archery, horsemanship, calligraphy, and numeracy (Yatsuka 2005:2 ). Only in the case of calligraphy did any of these produce an object, and all could be considered forms of performance.

Another large group of popular print makers in late Edo created picture albums (*kabu*, 画譜), which usually showed objects from various angles, almost in an effort to understand them from a practical standpoint, such as we might find in encyclopaedias or certain maps. All of these artists, however, tended to exhibit a ‘sympathy’ (愛恋, *airen*) with their subjects, and routinely included the names of specific people, places and things in their work. Interestingly, older people by 1900 often felt that the perspective of such transitional artists as Maruyama



Ōkyo, was the most ‘honest’ (*majime*, 真面目) (*ibid.*: 129, Mitsui Bunko 1988); i.e., a combination of the earlier styles and Western influences. Some elements of this ‘realism’ were also imported from China during the Edo period and influenced Japanese artists to varying degrees from the mid-eighteenth century. (Takeuchi 1989, 1992 and Screech 1993). *Shinkeizu*, (真景図) ‘true’ views, originally were scenes of real, well-known places, visited by the artist, but evaluated by ‘foreign’ criteria.<sup>143</sup> Much older genres, such as *meishōe* (名勝画) had long presented views of famous, beautiful places in Japan, often associated with lines of poetry (Machotka 2009: 191). By the late Meiji period, in works such as Shiga Shigetaka’s *Nihon fūkeiron* (1894), writers attempted to shift attention to the common, rural landscape of irrigated rice fields; such non-famous places were appropriated as the image of Japan that best reflected national values and history. Landscape art populated such scenes with peasants who clearly were engaged with customary Japanese practices (Fujiwara 1979).<sup>144</sup> This was a conscious effort to use landscape framing as a tool for shaping national identity, promoting patriotism related to the Sino-Japanese War, and creating modern governance (Yamamoto and Ueda 1997: 139-147).

While *fūkei* gradually changed in meaning under the influence of foreign models during the nineteenth century, *keikan* was a direct translation from German *Landschaft*, adopted from academic writing on the geography of local places (*Heimatkunde*) (Yatsuka 2005: 182). *Keikan* has always had a somewhat literary and legal connotation pertaining more to a restricted piece of land, while *fūkei* tends to be associated with the perception of a place.<sup>145</sup> During the 1920s a whole series of related geographical terms were introduced in Japanese to

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<sup>143</sup> The classic *shinkeizu* artist is Ike no Taiga (1723-1776), who was also selected by Nagano Kōji as a major example of portraying the beauty of humble things in Japanese art (Nagano 1996, Takeda 1997).

<sup>144</sup> The incorporation of rural life from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> to early 19<sup>th</sup> century English art, such as by Constable, served to remind viewers of local traditions under threat by the enclosure movement, whereas the counter-effort to introduce Palladian styles in architecture, based on models of imperial Rome, was for the benefit of the Whig gentry (Thompson 1993, Turner 1993, Ayres 1997, Lambert 2005).

<sup>145</sup> Like English landscape and German *Landschaft*, however, these two meanings can shift, so that while one may be writing about a particular territory, aesthetic usages, particularly the association of social community, tends to insert themselves. Such association goes back to the Middle Ages in Germanic languages: “The link between customary law, the institutions embodying that law, and the people enfranchised to participate in the making and administration of law is of fundamental importance to the root meaning of Land in *Landschaft* (Olwig 1996: 633).

fill out the semantic field related to landscape. These included *fūdo* (風土, climate) and *fūkei keitai*, (風景形態, morphology). The concepts were based in most cases on the field of settlement, or cultural geography (*Siedlungsgeographie*, *Kulturlandschaft*, *Altlandschaftsforschung*) as developed by August Meitzen, Alfred Hettner and Otto Schlüter. These men basically shifted the focus of geographical analysis from geophysical features to landscapes populated by humans, and from the classification of topography to examination of the process of how landscapes changed over time. They produced intensive local studies that examined “humanity’s cultural imprint on the land” (Livingstone 1992: 264). Schlüter went so far as emphasizing the personality or specific character (*Wesen*) of locality, including invisible phenomena such as wind and temperature (Dikshit 2004:79-83). The social impact of man on the land was traced over time using tools from a host of disciplines from archaeology to the etymology of toponyms, foreshadowing by decades the similar work of W. G. Hoskins in England (1955). The extremely influential contributions of Carl Sauer in orientating academic geography in the United States towards the study of landscape and regional areas can be traced to his exposure to these German theorists.<sup>146</sup> Sauer is cited regularly by UNESCO for his original definition of ‘cultural landscape’: “The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscape the result” (Fowler 2003:22).<sup>147</sup> These ideas

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<sup>146</sup> And, indirectly, to Franz Boas, through his colleagues Alfred Kroeber and Robert Lowie at Berkeley (Livingstone 1992: 291-296). Like Boas, Sauer came to emphasize the particular characteristics of a place, however his path-breaking essay on the subject (1925: 22) presented landscape as having a generic meaning: “the geographic landscape is a generalization derived from the observation of individual scenes”. The result of such thinking can be found in the classification used for the various chapters in Thirsk (2000), where England is divided into wolds, fenlands, frontier valleys, vales, commons, etc. The landscape pattern for each type of land is treated as a separate, historical environment.

<sup>147</sup> ‘Cultural landscape’ is a particular listing criteria UNESCO has used since 1992 to select World Heritage properties. Iwami Ginzan is one of two such listings in Japan, the Koya-san pilgrimage area being the other. Hiraizumi when successfully listed in 2011 did not re-attempt to apply as a cultural landscape that represented Pure Land Buddhist cosmology. There were a total of 66 recognized cultural landscapes for the world in 2010. Officially recognized cultural landscapes are believed to demonstrate a ‘balance’ between nature and human activity that must be protected; the assumption is that because a balance is achieved it reflects a long-standing pattern of living with the land, and that this relationship should not be altered (Aplin 2007: 431). The Lake District in England has not been able to qualify, for example. While it can be easily understood how this criteria would be applied to a pilgrimage route like the one that is associated to Mt. Koya, it is less obvious how it is relevant to Iwami Ginzan or Hiraizumi where whatever balance that once existed has long been broken – both are basically archaeology sites covered with ruins that are no longer in use. The official UNESCO title of the

were brought to Japan by several scholars, one of the more influential of whom was Misawa Katsue (1885-1937). He is now seen as an originator of ‘regional studies’ (地域学) in Japan, and a large series of his writings has recently been re-published (2009). His emphasis on the economic value of the unique qualities and products of rural places has been taken up as a theoretical tool by local revitalization programs. He was an early proponent of finding ways to commercialize country specialties, including a wide variety of agricultural and forest goods.

The much better known Watsuji Tetsurō studied in Germany with different teachers in the 1920’s and only indirectly seems to have been influenced by the cultural geography arguments. His own work tends to be more akin to earlier German authors, such as Ratzel, who were interested in linking behaviour with climate. He is particularly famous as the philosopher who introduced Heidegger to Japan, and for his book *Fūdo* (1931)<sup>148</sup>, which has had continual importance as a text arguing for the particularism of Japanese culture; it is a foundation text for theories of *nihonjinron*, which argue for the primal, cultural uniqueness of Japan. His writing has been immensely influential in framing Japanese concepts of cultural property. Like Heidegger, and particularly Nietzsche, he looked back to the remote past to discover the nature of pre-modern sensibilities, idealizing the older, more creative spirit.<sup>149</sup>

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Iwami site is “Iwami Ginzan silver mine and its cultural landscape”. The striking thing about prescribing the fossilization of a pattern of life in the cultural landscape of Iwami Ginzan is that the pattern was related to mining activity that has not taken place for nearly ninety years. In this case, rather than a landscape that exhibits sustainable land-use, the cultural landscape reference is to a relic that came to an end in the past but still demonstrates traces of that past activity, which represents the real rationale for selection Cf. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/477/>.

<sup>148</sup> Watsuji has a very particular understanding of *fūdo*, here translated as climate. It is not meteorological in a strict sense, although he uses examples from weather that we would certainly think of as such. Berque (1997a) believes *milieu*, even in English, is a better translation. It is sometimes translated as human climate. An example of how *fūdo* is treated by a more recent writer can be found in the work of Shiba (2008: 112-113), who believed that historical continuities in behavior could be discovered in different parts of Japan. In Kochi, for example, he thought that there was a tradition of debate that could be seen even in the layout of pubs, where customers came not to sing or listen to music but to argue. See: Couteau (2006).

<sup>149</sup> This effort to ‘return’ (*kaiki*, 回帰) to a pure life unpolluted by the rationalism, utilitarianism, egoism and technological culture of the West was a central theme of intellectual life from the late 1920s until the end of the war. Harootunian has characterized this as a period when “folk was substituted for class” (1988: 437). The shift from an earlier cosmopolitanism to ‘culturalism’ (*bunkashugi*, 文化主義) was reflected in the work of radical theorists such as Kita Ikki, and a host of writers and academics such as Watsuji, Nishida Kitarō, Kuki Shūzō, Yanagida Kunio and Tanizaki Junichirō (Najita and Harootunian 1988). From the Meiji period, opposition to

Watsuji was obsessed with explaining the cultural difference between ‘Japan’ and ‘the West’ (Sakai 1991: 159). In addition, Watsuji basically equated the Heideggerian notion of ‘world’ with society (*ibid.*: 161), which has the effect of essentializing the experience of a group of people. This was a fundamental misreading that had significance throughout Watsuji’s writings.<sup>150</sup> The key requirement for understanding Japan was, on this basis, its special geographical position at the extreme edge of a monsoon region (Asia) and the historical interplay of resources and limitations that this position entails. The alternation between periods of harsh and calm weather led to a distinct cultural disposition of ‘relationality’ (*aidagara*, 間柄) based on the household (*ie*). Watsuji believed that Heidegger gave too much emphasis to time and not enough to spatiality (Mayeda 2004: 37). Social experience, he argued was experienced spatially through the medium of climate, and the historical dimension of experience was expressed in conjunction with this, but could not be seen to dominate space, which he felt was much more of an independent structure. Whereas Heidegger was more interested, on this reading, in the subjective experience of space/ time, Watsuji can be seen to emphasize the embedded historical heritage in particular places and believed that the physical characteristics of a location helped to determine the general shape of a culture. The corollary to this emphasis was that different places represented different shared destinies. In other words, he projected the historical experience associated with a place into the future. For example, he believed that Japanese vernacular architecture was constructed to minimize privacy, with few room divisions and no locks. This spatial orientation in domestic life, which reflected group relationality, indicated to Watsuji that the

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‘Westernization’ was organized on the basis of aesthetic considerations. The rejection of the values of the West fit the nationalist politics leading up to and during the war, and all these writers have been reproached to varying degrees for providing a philosophical basis for Japanese fascism (Parkes 1997, Heisig and Maraldo 1995, Iida 2008). Note, however, that the actual motivation for many of them, including Yanagida, was to protect the variety of local customs from both the unifying modernism of nation and the West. Maruyama Masao (1969: 73) concluded that most intellectuals before and during the war engaged in passive resistance.

<sup>150</sup> ‘World’ for Heidegger comes close to his meaning of ‘being’, and refers to ‘a background of... primary familiarity, which itself is not conscious and intended but rather present in an unprominent way’ (Clark 2002: 16). The concept appears to be not unlike Bourdieu’s *habitus*, although Bourdieu himself did not acknowledge this connection and, in fact, was interested in Heidegger primarily as an example of how intellectual production fits within a social and political field; i.e., Heidegger as conservative apologist (Bourdieu 1996). The overlap of Bourdieu and Heidegger is brought out by Hubert Dreyfus (1993), who tends to join these ideas under the term ‘skills’. The usefulness of a level of analysis between body and environment is a well-disputed subject (Casey 2001).

Western idea of a “public” space would be difficult, if not impossible, to introduce in Japan. This inclination to using historicity in his analysis was violently in opposition to the work of Heidegger.

Ultimately, Watsuji presented a functional view of how climate affected culture: it presented challenges to society which were responded to creatively by people in different ways but within limits. Whether people tended to eat meat or fish, he thought, was mostly determined by the availability of each food, which over time becomes an unquestioned tradition. Although most comment on *Fūdo* tends to connect it to Heideggerian concepts (Ivy 1995: 23), in fact, its basic claims are better tied to a common strain of thought in nineteenth century geography that routinely discussed issues of climate together with imperial and ethnic judgements. “The idioms of political and moralistic evaluation were simply part and parcel of the grammar of climatology” (Livingston 1992: 221). The ethnologist Yanagita Kunio (2003) held somewhat related views and searched for the origins of the Japanese based on ecological typology.<sup>151</sup> Such environmental determinism is fundamentally different from the Heideggerian view that humans relate to themselves through possibilities rather than necessities.<sup>152</sup> Watsuji is quite careful to say that climate ‘structures’ experience but this does

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<sup>151</sup> For a sophisticated contemporary presentation of how ecology and culture are perceived in the origins of Japan, see Yasuda (2009). He argues that mountains and forests are the key elements, representing zones of common hunting and gathering. Yanagita in his later work believed the source of Japanese culture could be traced to the tropical seacoasts of Okinawa, which he determined based by examining folklore and material culture. Such a search for homeland is theoretically possible based on linguistic evidence. Proto-Indo-European, for example, can reconstruct vocabulary for items such as wagon, domestic horse, plough and yoke, which help to situate it both geographically and chronologically (Mallory 1989: 158).

<sup>152</sup> There is a behavioral theory of landscape, most forcefully presented by Appleton (1996 [1975]), which claims that socio-biological response mechanisms exist when humans see landscapes that derive from their evolutionary experience. So, the ideal landscape will provide both a place of refuge and a good prospect over the surrounding country. Views over land signify control of habitat territory, etc. Berque (1990: 16) says such prototypical elements in the landscape have primal, universal meaning, regardless of culture or history (元風景, *genfūkei*): “this *proto-paysage* is the visual relation that must exist (*hitsuzentekini sonzai suru*, my emphasis) between humans and the environment”. Cf. Sahlins (1976: 93): “Since Hobbes, at least, the competitive and acquisitive characteristics of Western man have been confounded with Nature, and the Nature thus fashioned in the human image has been in turn reapplied to the explanation of Western man.” This confusion of the physical properties of a location, as determined by modern science and mathematics, with ‘nature’, ‘space’, and ‘landscape’ is a common legacy of Cartesian metaphysics that was specifically challenged by Heidegger, particularly in his work on dwelling: “a space is something that has been made room for, something that has been freed, namely, within a boundary... from which something begins its essential unfolding.” Cf. Ingold

not imply that the natural environment determines human life.<sup>153</sup> Watsuji elsewhere argued, as a professor of ethics at Tōkyō University from 1934 into the post-war period, that the state was the absolute embodiment of human values (Bellah 1965: 589). Although well aware of Heidegger's work, Watsuji's own arguments and conclusions were different. His positions changed considerably after the war and were not necessarily consistent, however the view that Japan's greatest mistake was to close the country off in the seventeenth century, thereby restricting bourgeois reason from expansion, seems remarkably unlike anything in Heidegger (*ibid.*: 590). Although he used ideas from German philosophy as a starting point for his own work, Watsuji's conclusions, perhaps paradoxically, tended to be more positivist than the phenomenology of Heidegger or Husserl.

In any case, Watsuji's writings on these subjects have had great effect in directing concepts related to landscape, and identity, in Japan, and were considered so relevant to Japan's image abroad that *Fūdo* was translated into English in 1960 under the auspices of the UNESCO publishing program aimed at furthering international understanding. It may be symptomatic of how the official concept of space and human relations in Japan has changed in the subsequent thirty years that Japanese embassies were distributing copies of Yoshimoto Banana's *Kitchin* (Kitchen, 1987), a work inspired by *manga* and television, that portrays a schoolgirl whose identity is described in terms of her consumption of commodity products and whose 'family' consists of a "half-sibling/ half-boyfriend" and his "transsexual surrogate mother/ father" (Treat 1993: 363).<sup>154</sup> The relevant, mass-market representation of the society

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(2000: 190) and Heidegger (2009: 356). The Heideggerian concept of time, which is fundamental to his analysis of being, contains the belief that the past always helps to organize the actions of an agent in the present and, therefore, has influence on the future (Taylor 2006: 464). The 'clearing away' which results in a space opens it up for future use, and thus spatial boundaries are not limits but more like horizons. These views appear to agree with some ideas about the nature of historical change found in Collingwood (2002: 140-141), who wrote that any process of change leaves an "uncovered residue" that is encapsulated within the new state of things which superficially appears altogether different.

<sup>153</sup> Berque (2004: 389). Nevertheless, it is clear from his examples that environment in a broad sense was seen to produce certain results in human life, and he has routinely been read that way. He says climatic phenomena are subjective experiences different from the objective environment, but these phenomena somehow produce the mostly similar outcomes for everyone exposed to them. This approach is opposed to that of Ingold (2000: 191), who rejects, as did Heidegger, the distinction between inner and outer worlds, and the arguments in Sahlins (2008) that in many societies the other is considered part of the self.

<sup>154</sup> The disintegration of family in contemporary Japan is analyzed by Saitō (2010). On the idea that Japan represents an 'image-oriented' culture, see Richie (1997: 67), who relates the rise of *manga* and television in the

that this promotes has, therefore, switched from one focused on rural production to one of urban consumption. Climate has been replaced by central heating and air-conditioning. This is Walter Benjamin's (1999) phantasmagoria of commodities gone wild; the density of artificial consumer products engulfs the earlier, natural environment to the extent that only the phantasmagoria itself, a type of simulation, is recognized. But the picture of the country presented by the central bureaucracy is just one landscape, although it has powerful implications for those living under very different circumstances in the countryside.

### **Making a safe and convenient life: contested visions**

The stated goal of most landscape regulation in Japan is to create a safer environment. Safety concerns are usually cited in the promotion of public works and real estate development. Crisis management (*kiki kanri*, 危機管理) is presented by Ozawa Ichirō, one of the main leaders of the Democratic Party of Japan, as the most important job of the state (Ozawa 1993: 91). Okuno (1972) emphasizes that when Tōkyō was being converted from a city of primarily wooden housing to ferro-concrete, post-war blocks of flats, a primary explanation was that the new buildings would be fire resistant. Since most of the city had just been destroyed by fire after having only recovered from a massive earthquake twenty years earlier, this argument carried weight, and was added to the already high sensitivity that residents had to natural and man-made disasters that afflicted Japan. Similar concerns, on a smaller scale, can be found to lie behind many details that impinge on the daily life of citizens: public works are justified because they claim to make life safe and convenient.

A large proportion of the Japanese coastline, for example, is clad in concrete tetrapods, because of 'safety concerns' over *tsunami* and land erosion (Kerr 2002:15). By 1993, it is estimated that only forty-four percent of the coast remained natural, decreasing at a rate of one percent annually (Koike 1996: 301). Japan has been described as being "surrounded by an invading army of giant tetrapods that cover more than half the coastline and actually accelerate the problem of erosion they were intended to arrest" (Kingston 2004: 41). They often have been used to create seawalls that purport to shield stretches of land from typhoons and tsunami, but this function has been seriously called into question by the Tohoku earthquake of March 2011 in which such structures failed to provide protection; it has even been suggested that they cause a sense of complacency to danger that increases risk (Onishi

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high-growth era with the desire for visual stimulation as replacement for thought and a preference for verbal imprecision as a means of conciliation.

2011). These four-legged armour blocks, sometimes weighing eighty tons and five metres in height, can be seen in many places along the Sanin coast when riding along the main railway line. The contrast of such artificial constructions on the deserted seascape with the forested hills is striking. In some sections of the coast they are built in the vicinity of wind turbine farms, and both types of industrial structures dominate the land out of all proportion to its other features. In several small harbours, the entire area is built up from sunken and exposed tetrapods that form the breakwaters and jetties. When introduced on a vast scale into such landscapes, they virtually blot out everything else when seen for the first time.

Some, however, find the tetrapod an example of good modern design. Matsumoto Bijutsukan (2004: 100) presents the tetrapod along with steel H-beams, plastic fasteners, and sheets of plate glass as exemplars of simple forms used in industrial design. Their design quality is treated as comparable to priest begging bowls from the Edo period. There are tetrapod lover clubs in Japan. People write poems about them.<sup>155</sup> And some like them precisely because they stand out from the surrounding landscape (Wijers-Hasegawa 2007). This is an example of ‘constructivist’ modernism, whereby people adapt to the introduction of new objects in their environment and ascribe their own meanings to them. While tetrapods could be considered as monstrous carbuncles perpetrated by the public works lobby, they also are appreciated because of their strange ubiquity and are incorporated into people’s daily lives with meanings far different than those originally held by engineers and bureaucrats. Because they seem to be everywhere, they can be judged friendly helpers and a protective feature of everyday life. Viewed in this way, spectators are also participants and should not be denied their own agency (Silverberg 1992a: 32 and Miller 2010). It is often the case that dubious eyesores can be reevaluated later and reconfigured to provide a different local meaning.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, tetrapods are an unambiguous mark of government public works configuring the landscape in the name of safety. They are not found in the tourist literature, which selects very different images of ‘unspoiled’ coastal beauty.

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<sup>155</sup> For example, 夏の海テトラポットが威張ってる (*Natsu-no kai tetrapotto-ga ibatteru*) “The tetrapods stand proudly in the summer sea,” a *haiku* by Nochi (penname) with the Ginza Haiku Forum at: [http://www.hb-arts.co.jp/haiku\\_html/010910kekka.htm](http://www.hb-arts.co.jp/haiku_html/010910kekka.htm).

<sup>156</sup> Cf. van der Hoorn (2009), regarding the Berlin Wall, and Buchli (2000) on the effects of history and changing memory for the perception of material culture in the Soviet Union.



Another ubiquitous public works object in the landscape is the telephone pole. In cities, these are normally made from reinforced concrete, but in rural places, such as Ōmori, old poles are wooden. These are fast disappearing. There is an on-going project in Ōmori to bury all power and telephone lines running through the village centre, and since the designation as a World Heritage site construction has been nonstop, with much of the main street being dug up for extended periods. This project, which is the largest single budget item in the Iwami Ginzan town 'improvement' plan at a cost of about £5 million, is related to an up-grade of Internet access in the area which will eventually be provided through cable television lines that are also being installed in the construction. It will also erect more powerful street lighting. The purpose, therefore, of the line burial activity is to improve communications and, at the same time, to 'beautify' the village by removing items that planners consider unsightly traffic hazards and 'make the landscape easier to see' (*Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2010c). The burial of 'unattractive' utility lines has been pursued vigorously in 'heritage towns,' such as Tsumago-juku in Nagano Prefecture, where the goal is to make the townscape resemble as much as possible an imagined pre-electric order by adopting locally enforced landscape ordinances and a town charter that asks residents to pledge not to sell, rent out or destroy their property (Wendelken-Mortensen 1994: 221, Tsumago-juku 1976). The only superficial concession to modern life is street pavement.

While it might seem that the removal of telephone poles on this basis is reasonable, and some urban visitors complain that the position of poles in narrow streets makes driving difficult and dangerous, many people in Ōmori told me that they would prefer to keep the old poles. As in the case of tetrapods, when you live with objects long enough, they become a part of everyday life and their absence is felt. There are people in Tōkyō who feel the same way and resist the massive burial of wires that has been underway there for years (Morimoto 2005: 232-233). Residents say that once all the poles are taken away, people will miss them; the poles will become one more item that existed in their lives that has been removed and afterwards there is an empty space. Moreover, because some of the poles are old and wooden, they blend well with the old, wooden buildings in the village and have the requisite patina of age. Because there are no sidewalks in Ōmori and the poles may be placed in the street itself, rather than off the edge as we might expect, people must walk around them and negotiate the poles, as well as the water-filled drainage ditches next to them. At night, on the dark street, this navigation is a matter-of-fact part of street life in the village. Adding greater illumination

is expected to ruin the night atmosphere of shadow on the street. It has been dark and narrow for as long as anyone can recall and they have not complained.

The local people do not care about improving traffic flow on their main street. In fact, they would rather have less traffic and if the poles block it, all the better. Also, almost no one seems particularly concerned with improving their lives with enhanced Internet/ cable television connections; it is almost a joke at which they laugh. This is not just because they are elderly; such networked access to more information is not relevant even for the young. The contrast to urban habits is perhaps best demonstrated by the lack of mobile phones in the village. The construction in the street is seen as an unnecessary extravagance, as is virtually all public works and utility-related activity in the village.

Yet the widening of streets and removal of telephone poles is considered a relatively non-contentious issue accepted in Japanese urban planning texts which show before and after scenes of how removal of ‘clutter’ improves neighbourhood scenery, stimulates the local economy and gives better access for fire and ambulance services; i.e., makes the place safer especially in case of earthquake relief (Nishimura 2008: 10-11). Japan ‘lags’ other countries in burying urban power lines, and officials see this as a measure of appalling economic backwardness comparable to the relative lack of flush toilets in rural areas. In 1998, for example, only about 3 percent of the total length of power lines in Tōkyō was underground, whereas London and Paris had their entire network underground by 1977 (Matsubara 2002: 177). Power lines in Japanese cities are considered a real danger and can often be seen in amazing overhead jumbles that remind one engineering professor of descriptions of Manhattan one hundred years earlier (*ibid.*: 187). He notes with horror that in his Tōkyō neighbourhood there are nice tree-lined walks that are disrupted in autumn when the leaves fall from the *zelkova* and expose the tangle of electric wiring (*ibid.*: 162). How unsightly and ‘unnatural’ when one is out to experience a pleasant landscape! Mather et al. (1998: 75-78) conclude, however, that power lines are normally considered functional in Japan and too expensive to bury. They believe that, unlike the West, Japan is not concerned with the aesthetics of display, which is ‘outside’.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> On the argument that perception of inside versus outside concerns the distinction between intimacy and authority, self and society, see Bachnik (1994). The classic statement is Doi (2002: 40-44), who applied this distinction to social behavior when restraint (*enryo*, 遠慮) is judged to be necessary or not, and concluded that the difference was similar to the notion of public versus private. This is the precise opposite of the



Figure 7: Tetrapods, Sanin Coast, Shimane



Figure 8: Sanin Coast for tourists, Uradome, Tottori.<sup>158</sup>

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understanding applied by Mather et al. (1998) who believe that private behavior is restrained while public actions can be disordered. The concept of inside/ outside in Japan, while considered a native meaning that is difficult to translate because of specific associations in the culture, is both relational, in that the frame of reference can shift, and fundamentally structural: the inside allows the creation of the outside and vice versa (Martinez 2006: 32). When compared to many seaside towns elsewhere in the world, Japanese towns along the Sanin Coast, for example, tend to lack houses with windows facing the sea. Although traditional Japanese homes are famous for their blurring of the boundary between inside and outside, views toward some natural scenes, such as the sea, appear to be less valued and the relative importance of windows in modern Japanese houses seems to be low. People in Ōmori have told me that the sea is scary and violent, and therefore nobody wants to look at it.

<sup>158</sup> [http://www.west-japan-travel.com/theme/outline/landscape.html?p\\_breath/](http://www.west-japan-travel.com/theme/outline/landscape.html?p_breath/).



Figure 9: Coastline in Iwami Ginzan cultural landscape (UNESCO photo)



Figure 10: Burying utility lines, Ōmori

### **Orientation in the village space**

When tourists visit Ōmori, they enthusiastically consult maps. Although the village is small and there are really only two roads, which are parallel to each other, it can nevertheless be confusing, and tourists are usually concerned that they may miss an important site. The standard printed maps distributed for free at various locations are notoriously difficult to read, partly because they contain so much unrelated information, but also because the orientation of north-south is reversed so that although most people think of the Sanin region as facing towards the coast, the Iwami Ginzan maps orient the user towards Hiroshima and the mountains to the south, possibly because the entry to the village and the mines is from the north where all routes leading to the outside world originate except for mountain footpaths.

Ostensibly to aid tourists, Ōda City commissioned a moulded metal diorama of Iwami Ginzan and made it the centrepiece of a new ‘park’ at the southern end of the town just before the World Heritage designation was obtained in 2007. The site had previously been rice fields and was one of the only relatively flat places in the village. This area was sufficient for all visitor parking before the designation, but now is used only by special permission since a park-and-ride scheme was introduced in 2008. The main parking lots are about a ten-minute drive by bus to a staging location outside the village. When most tourists arrive, therefore, they park in the main lot by the new ‘World Heritage Centre’ and take a bus into the village that lets them off near the diorama.

This metal relief of the area strikes residents as rather bizarre. It does not reflect people’s concept of place, partly because there are so many mountains in it; residents spend nearly all their time in the relatively narrow confines of the village not trudging over the mountains, but also the materials used and the style of the diorama has nothing in common with village aesthetics. People go out of their way to cover objects in public view with wood, stone or earth, and this expensive, artificial piece of metal has been inserted into their midst. It also seems to confuse most tourists who look at it and then walk across the park to consult yet another large metal map implanted next to the information office. Nevertheless, they then walk back to the diorama for group pictures because it is the closest thing to a recognizable landmark that represents for them the place they are visiting. When I asked why the diorama was built there, residents said it was just another example of bureaucracy without sense, public works gone mad. But it turns out not to be just the brainchild of a random engineer.

I attended a conference in Tōkyō in which the success of Iwami Ginzan in obtaining World Heritage status was explained to interested parties who also wanted to gain this recognition or develop their tourist business. One of the prominent sponsors of the event was a Shimane metal mould company that was introduced as having made the diorama and several other items used to display the site. This conference was a political gathering attended by the Governor of Shimane and various officials from the Ōda City Board of Education, Agency for Cultural Affairs and several local corporations. The metal mould company was connected to these regional political decision-makers as part of the public works lobby. The company later was contracted to produce a large replica of a silver ingot from Iwami Ginzan, which is on display at the entrance to the World Heritage Centre. It is the only object at the museum for which photographs are allowed. Such shiny metal objects as the diorama and ingot replica appear suitable to tourism promoters who, at the same time, produce guidebooks titled



“Iwami Ginzan – glittering once again” (Mokuji 2007). But Ōmori residents did not acknowledge this glittering and gleaming new image; they noted that it was not that the diorama was metal that conflicted with local values, but the fact that it was shiny and would not show age. Also, they generally do not think of their village as something seen by a bird from the air; it is much more intimate, enclosed within small, partly lit space. A local sculptor has his iron creations placed throughout the village, but these are accepted partly because they rust. The Ōda City government, however, has questioned the purpose of these sculptures and has considered whether they are appropriate under the various preservation requirements. One of their concerns was precisely the fact that these objects rust and are, therefore, unattractive. This contrast between wanting to present the place as shiny and new versus worn and old reflects a deep division in the understanding of place and how it should be expounded.



Figure 11: World Heritage Centre, Iwami Ginzan



Figure 12: Diorama, Ōmori (note the metal guards near edge)



Figure 13: Rusted sculptures, Ōmori

Maps and signs, therefore, not only convey information based on different narratives about place; their materiality itself reflects attitudes and values. Posted maps and directional indicators are another type of signage found in the village that is now outside the direct control of individual residents. They preferred to mark location or publically present information in considerably more subtle ways in pre-World Heritage days. Even now, they will sometimes use a handwritten paper sign to indicate a shop is open and hang this on a chair in the street. Such modesty was unusual in Japan, and the intentional reluctance to display commercial messages now seems quaint. The lack of signs was certainly due in part to the fact that people in the village did not require indicators about places they already knew.



Indeed, the contrast can be seen at many temples, shrines and well-known tourist sites in Japan, where corporations such as Hitachi supply signs that both identify a building and advertise the company. In other words, the identification of national cultural property has been made into a commodity. One local company now sponsors a large Iwami Ginzan display-board on the Ōda City train platform, and virtually all government offices in Ōda City still hang huge banners proclaiming their pride in World Heritage several years after designation. In general, there is concern that visitors need more information and the impulse at most tourist locations is to add more signs, displays and advertisements. There are temple gardens in Kyōto where every plant and tree is labelled, including tiny sprouts in moss gardens.



Figure 14: Protected cultural property sign sponsored by Hitachi Corp., Takayama City

Until World Heritage, there were few exterior signs at shops in Ōmori, and those that were hung advertised products that had not been on sale for thirty years. The old, weather-beaten signs for school uniforms and mosquito coils added to the sense I had, at least, that the entire village was one great antique shop. They no longer functioned as advertisements but were maintained for aesthetic reasons. They were additional reminders of earlier times, and there



was no particular reason to remove them. In the middle of the main street there are several old newspaper advertisement boards, but no newspapers can be bought anywhere in Ōmori.<sup>159</sup> Gradually, however, as the tourist flow has increased, the recognition of what is appropriate is changing, to the point that the local community association (*jichitai*, 自治体) has issued non-binding ordinances to regulate signage in the village. On the face of it, there seems to be a welter of sign regulations for a place such as Ōmori, which theoretically is subject to inspection from officials from UNESCO, the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Shimane Prefecture, the Ōda City Board of Education and local community groups.<sup>160</sup> All have legal documents regulating signage, in some cases very detailed ones.<sup>161</sup> These documents appear, however, to be enforceable only in extreme cases. I was told, for example, that if a *pachinko*

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<sup>159</sup> Newspapers are, however, delivered to subscribers at their homes. There is also a “wired radio” (*yūsen*, 有線) broadcast that occurs automatically three times a day over a speaker installed in the telephones of residents. This system has existed in various forms for over 50 years and covers all of Ōda City. It now contains advertisements, but is mostly public affairs, such as death notices. It sometimes reports bear sightings. This is such a part of daily life, like the siren at 6AM, noon and 5PM, no one seems to realize it is happening – a good example of Heidegger’s *Dasein*. Within each ward of about twenty homes in Ōmori, there is a rotating circular notice system (*kairanban*, 回覧板) that informs residents of local meetings, events and dues. This notebook/folder also contains some advertisements. Each household, most of which consist of a single elderly person, pay ward dues of ¥1,500 per month. A glance at a list of ward members makes one wonder whether anyone will be left in 20 years time.

<sup>160</sup> Municipal regulation of outdoor advertisement signs in Japan has tended to require official approval when their size or location meets certain standards. The result has been that shop owners display a greater number of small signs rather than file for permission for one big one (Murakami, Y. 2008: 95-96). The enabling national legislation, originally written in 1949, is the Outdoor Advertising Sign Law (*Okugai Kōkokubutsuhō*, 屋外広告物法); details concerning its implementation are allocated to the prefectures: <http://www.houko.com/00/01/S24/189.HTM>.

<sup>161</sup> The Ōmori town council rules on storefront signs are noted in *Sanin Chūō Shinpō* (2009a). They propose, for example, that there be a limit of one sign per shop and that it be made from wood or bamboo. There is a restriction on new vending machines and calling out in the street for customers (*yobikomi*). These rules are not observed in practice by several shops on the main street, and are not legally binding; they are ‘local agreements’ (*chōnai-no mōshiwase*). On certain busy days, street hawkers have appeared in town and without any permission set up food stands (*yatai*). It is quite a shock now when one is solicited from new shops that have imported the customer calling practices of the city. Such issues are considered indicators of bad manners by outside people. These encounters are minor annoyances, however, and are taken with relative good humour, almost with the attitude that you could not expect it to be any different.

parlour tried to open in the village it would have legal difficulty.<sup>162</sup> Even in the special street preservation zone, there is very little that can be done legally in this regard and ultimately enforcement depends upon self-restraint. There have been certain disturbing cases and the trend is definitely moving away from the traditional subtlety. When asked about these problem cases, I was told that if the people putting out the new, garish signs are long-time residents, nothing can be done and the change is accepted as unavoidable (*shikata ga nai*, 仕方がない). This attitude – that long-time residents should be allowed to do whatever they think is best with their property, no matter the consequences – is strongly held locally. But it assumes that actions will always take into consideration others. The policy worked well in the past. In the past, decisions on what to do were made slowly and there were not the issues of development related to tourism, nor the layers of outside bureaucracy. The real fear, however, is how to regulate newcomers to the village who do not have the same ‘common sense’ about community manners. The conventional illustration of this fear would be a used-car dealer from Nagoya who decides to retire in Ōmori. How could you begin to explain the local sense of propriety to such a person? The sense of tradition conveyed by material objects in the built environment reflects what Becker (1998: 44) refers to as “congealed social agreements.” Environmental elements display publically certain attitudes and the character of place. These attributes have been accumulated over time through local practice based on a relatively stable population. Greater mobility threatens the consensus by introducing disjunctions in practice and cooperation. Moreover, Japanese property law allows owners great latitude in the use of their land, even when it happens to be located within a cultural property zone. There is enormous flexibility built into the system, so that if a regulation appears to be broken, it is settled by long negotiations rather than adjudication. There is always a large gray area.

The entire issue of how to achieve cooperation in collective action to produce a suitable lived environment relates to what Ostrom (2000: 137) refers to as the “zero-contribution thesis.” This staple of public policy textbooks rests on the argument that in certain circumstances individuals are incapable of long-term cooperation to their mutual benefit because short-term personal advantage outweighs common concerns. In other words, zoning can be considered a form of prisoner’s dilemma in environmental resource distribution that can only be solved by more powerful government regulation (the Leviathan) or instituting a stricter private property

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<sup>162</sup> Even in this case, there is serious doubt about whether development could be blocked. In Hagi, which has three zones of historic preservation and great awareness of landscape regulation, there are enormous *pachinko* halls in the midst of old neighbourhoods. This is also the case in Kyōto.

regime, such as in residential associations (Ostrom 1990: 8-12). But since Japanese case law has consistently ruled that citizens do not have a right to any particular form of environment, how can greater regulation be sought? The case of self-regulation through social suasion and multi-generational concensus as achieved thus far in Ōmori is another instance where free-riding has been successfully monitored as a spirit of cooperation evolved. The small size and relatively stable population base of the village undoubtedly were important in achieving such mutual understanding.



Figure 15: Old signs, Ōmori – mosquito coil advertisements



Figure 16: New signs, Ōmori -- cafe and gift shop on main street, mid-preservation zone

### Phantom visions

Although visitors, even from nearby towns, are amazed at how ‘well-preserved’ Ōmori seems, it is by no means frozen in time. Old photographs demonstrate that during the past

fifty years substantial changes in the village have continued to occur. Some of the largest structures in town, such as the Meiji-era wooden police station and the Ōmori-za theatre, have been torn down. When the population was larger, just forty years ago, the main street was lined with specialty shops that sold everything from *geta* (wooden clogs) to electric appliances and dry goods to the local residents. There were several inns and places to eat in the 1950s. There is now really only one small shop, Tamaruya, which supplies some daily needs and stocks frozen food, a few pieces of fresh meat and fish. These sell out quickly and rarely are available late in the day. It is supplied by a small grocery delivery van that makes stops in the mountain villages. Another small shop delivers beer, but the owner is so old that people hesitate to ask for this service and usually pick it up themselves. Virtually all other shops in the village cater to outside visitors, although there are a couple shops that have specialties such as sesame tofu and baked goods. For anyone used to the commercial frenzy of Tōkyō or Ōsaka it is almost an empty space.

In the early post-war period there was a community museum (*kyōdokan*, 郷土館) which exhibited photographs and pottery. Several temples and shrines that now are overgrown or abandoned were still well used fifty years ago. Automobiles were only evident from about twenty-five years ago, but bus-related infrastructure and bicycles were manifest. The road that runs parallel to the main street past the Rakanji temple was National Highway Nine until about 1960 and carried the main traffic from Ōda City to the interior and to coastal villages such as Yunotsu. A tunnel was dug into the mountain behind the town to direct the flow past town. This greatly reduced the passage of vehicles through the centre. Photographs showed many children in the streets. But perhaps most striking is the photographic evidence that there were extensive terraced rice fields (*dandanbatake*, 段々畑) in the hills around the town that now are dense forest.<sup>163</sup> The space once covered by these fields is now virtually impenetrable

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<sup>163</sup> This situation is more advanced than captured in statistics. The government measures the amount of ‘abandoned fields’ as a percentage of fields available for use (*kōsaku hōkichiritsu*, 耕作放棄地率). This rate is increasing dramatically in recent years throughout Japan; it more than doubled between 1995 and 2005. Shimane Prefecture, by this measure, tripled its amount of abandoned land and in 2005 had 22.5% of available farmland deserted (Chūgoku Keizai Rengōkai 2010: 20, MAFF 2010). The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries describes this as an urgent problem, and has devised various schemes to use such land for grazing animals, etc. The Ministry promotes a policy of ‘separating ownership from use,’ because owners will not develop their land nor sell it, the fields lay vacant when large, agri-business concerns would exploit them, particularly if they could assemble large contiguous plots (Tashiro 2007:114-119). Most abandoned fields in Ōmori have reached the stage that they no longer can be identified as fields and even in the last few years some

because of bamboo thickets and there is little indication of how people climbed the steep slopes to reach these fields. All these changes have occurred within the last several decades.

If we look back one hundred years to when the mines were still operating, the landscape near them appeared industrial; there were refinery operations with very large structures in the vicinity of the mine mouths where now all is forest. The land surrounding Ōmori is covered with extensive bamboo groves which, in the spring, are dotted by pink clouds of cherry blossoms. The presence of these trees demonstrates that in the past certain areas were used by residents in more intensive ways than now. Walking into the forests in any direction uncovers other signs of older habitation, including stone stairways, foundations (*soseki*, 礎石), rock walls and abandoned graves. A group of archaeologists from Tōkyō University is slowly exploring these ruins. They have excavated trenches in several of the most prominent spots scattered around the area, but much is not known about what lies beneath the forest cover.<sup>164</sup>

All of these older landscapes are still retained, to varying degrees, in the memory of residents. When asked about the local landscape, residents mention the sorts of images that refer to lost visions and historical imaginaries, haunted with the ghosts of departed friends and relatives. The place for them does not feel deserted but has a ‘thick presence’ (*jūkōna sonzaikan*, 重厚な存在感). These impressions imply a more populated and active community, with children, that was synchronized by a cycle of annual rituals, ceremonies and festivals.<sup>165</sup> The

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fields near the village have been allowed to grow fallow. It cannot be emphasized enough that the Shimane hinterland is gradually being released to wilderness.

<sup>164</sup> The investigation of the material remains at the site is performed under the auspices of a committee (*Iwami Ginzan iseki chōsa katsuyō iinkai*, 石見銀山遺跡調査活用委員会) formed by the Ōda City Board of Education. It consists of fourteen academics from several disciplines, including history and mining. The only local representation has been by Nakamura Toshirō, president of Nakamura Brace.

<sup>165</sup> Bell (1997: 815) argues that ghosts make a space into a specific place because they connect the history of individuals to a particular location and provide a ‘felt presence’ that makes a place socially alive in spite of the reference to the dead. The ghosts impart Benjamin’s (2002) ‘aura of the original’. Ghosts also play a central role in the nativist discourse of Yanagita Kunio (1991), the founder of Japanese ethnography, who collected legends about rural ghosts and the supernatural to describe the pre-modern world (Ivy 1995: 64-65). This sort of spectre awareness is related to the ideas behind the use of disorienting phantasmagoria in Benjamin’s *Arcade Project* (1999), which describes false consciousness materialized in space, objects and processes that combine nostalgia with interest in the new, transferring the aura to modern copies and concealed labour in the dream marketplace. Derrida (1994) also introduces haunting as a post-modern reflex to amend materialist concepts so that the past is more fully appreciated as incorporated in the present.

perception of what is physically absent, like the sense that removal of telephone poles will leave empty spots in the familiar village, relates to what Merleau-Ponty (2002: 93-94) called the unclear consciousnesses of ‘ambivalent presence’ for phantom limbs: “The man with one leg feels the missing limb in the same way as I feel keenly the existence of a friend who is, nevertheless, not before my eyes; he has not lost it because he continues to allow for it, just as Proust can recognize the death of his grandmother, yet without losing her on the horizon of his life.” The visible and the invisible are intertwined to make vision, “reaching beyond the ‘visual givens,’ opening up a texture of Being of which the discrete sensorial messages are only the punctuations or the caesurae. The eye lives in this texture as a man lives in his house” (Merleau-Ponty 1964: 166). Ruins are a perfect example of sites where such intertwining of the visible and invisible occurs. Architects refer to the layered traces of older building as palimpsests which contain the shadows of past life and design activity. When larger spaces are considered from the complex viewpoint of their historical accumulation of such layers, extending into the present, the collective project forms the “imaginary” of the landscape (Corboz 2001). This submerged evidence of past activity is what UNESCO refers to as the ‘relic landscape’ (*paysage culturel relique*). Each blemish is a mark of the object’s life and scars indicate character rather than a lack of symmetrical excellence. Commonly, the expression for this ‘character’ is said to be *aji* (味), which can also mean flavour, implying that it has been stewed or marinated unhurriedly over time to develop special unexpected qualities. When pressed on this view, some people will say that the used, old objects littering the landscape retain part of the spirit of those who lived with them in the past. This is particularly the case with buildings and ruins, but also applies to smaller objects and pieces from such sites. Objects have spirit (*kokoro*, 心) which is hidden, just like the heart of people.

Such dynamic landscapes are usually tied to seasons; the landscape can be identified as being in a particular season because of the activity taking place, such as rice planting, the drying of radishes (*daikon*) or by the vegetation present (Imomusu 2009).<sup>166</sup> There is sustained interest in measuring time on the basis of seasonal signals, such as those related to food preparation

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<sup>166</sup> A local women’s group published a collection of old photographs showing many of these lost visions, which often are described as ‘landscapes of nostalgia’ (*natsukashi fūkei*). This term is applied, for example, to the rice fields that are now covered by the diorama and parking lot, and rows of tile roofed tenement houses (*nagaya*, 長屋) which no longer exist. The Ōda City Board of Education keeps an archive of old Ōmori photographs that go back to the Meiji period and are used for benchmarking purposes in preservation.

according to the old Japanese lunar calendar (Iikura 2007: 20).<sup>167</sup> Such seasonal signals were a vital part of most landscape visions; a great many old photographs recorded community gatherings, particularly school graduations, which punctuated the annual schedule of life. Some of the food-related cycles would be familiar to most people in Japan, so that, for example, seeing persimmons drying in the autumn is ubiquitous. But some things like the elongated, red *gumi* berries that ripen in the forest in June are obscure. Because dwellings are porous to the outside world, perception of the sounds, smells, weather and light filtered through the surrounding fields and forests is heightened, at least for a city person. Certain natural occurrences, such as the peak period of firefly activity, arouse the interest of everyone, but frog croaking is hardly noticed.



Figure 17: Mountain stairway and grave marker, Ōmori

### **Disciplining perspective**

Since 1993, Shimane Prefecture has awarded annual Landscape Prizes.<sup>168</sup> These fall into various categories, which have changed over time. As in the case for any such award, the selection criteria and how they are applied is a contested subject. There are many different interpretations of what exactly deserves to be recognized as a model for landscape consideration. Several awards have been given in Ōmori, including to the owners of the Gungendō company for their efforts to preserve a section of the main street, including their shop,<sup>169</sup> and their company headquarters (Bura House Workstation). It comprises a complex

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<sup>167</sup> (*Ibid.*: 20) “In the days before electricity and weather forecasts, people understood how time passed based on the changes in seasons and their daily life amid nature.”

<sup>168</sup> See: [http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/environment/nature/keikan/keikan\\_sho/](http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/environment/nature/keikan/keikan_sho/).

<sup>169</sup> See: <http://www.gungendo.co.jp/honten/>.



of buildings erected behind a rice field on the 'new road' in the village. It includes a thatched-roof farm house moved in pieces from Hiroshima Prefecture and reassembled. The primary office is a rectangular warehouse with high ceilings, sheet metal siding and old tiled roof. I was told that the tiles came from an abandoned temple. There are many details built into the headquarters complex that, depending upon one's viewpoint, are creative and appropriate to the setting, or difficult to understand. Much of the material used in its construction has been recycled from other places, for example, and the juxtaposition of many pieces of modern sculpture with traditional motifs demonstrates that the desire for renovation in this case does not simply mean a return to some imagined state. Renovation here implies a re-imagining of space and design.

The owners have certain ideas about how such buildings should incorporate elements from different time periods, their inspiration includes a strong sense of enjoyment in creating a pleasant place that hints at playfulness and individuality, rather than formal seriousness built to an artificial type. The incorporation of a variety of design features underscores the point made by Harootunian (2000a:111) that the sediment of past everyday activity leaves visible traces, and, therefore, the modern always is imprinted with "the difference between the demands of capitalism and the force of received forms of history and culture." There is a tendency to imagine this as just another modernist pastiche, demonstrating individual will – what Tönnies (1991: 90-91) termed *Kürwille*, the apparently calculated choice that modern people make in both ends and means that could not occur in an imagined community. But it is more complex than that. The blending of historical elements, together with their transformation through memory and creativity, produce a specific form of localized 'modernism' that is not necessarily nostalgia wishing to return to lost community, nor the inevitable outcome of a universal process that leads to commercial rationalization.

The Landscape Prizes tend to be given either to model reconstructions of old buildings, or to completely modern architecture and public works. Architects have been taught to look for a recognizable pattern language in the structures, not a creole dialect (Alexander et al. 1977). The Gungendō buildings, however, do not fit any prescribed standard; they cannot be easily categorized as modern or traditional. The grand prize has been won by the modernist Shimane Prefecture Museum of Art in Matsue, a concrete clad river in Izumo (Naitō 1994), as well as terraced rice fields and a renovated farm dwelling. One of the Gungendō owners served on the selection committee for a short time, and resigned when it became clear that members, who were primarily architects, had limited interest in old buildings, which they felt



presented the prefecture in a backwards-looking light. They wanted the prize eligibility limited to modern designs for structures built within five years. Older buildings and materials implied a conservative, tradition-bound view of space. The desire to reconfigure such space in a more deliberate way and put their own stamp on how people lived was one of the reasons they became architects. The list of winners includes a wide assortment of landscapes, reflecting a range of views on what constitutes a good landscape. While recognizing that history, human activity and nature all can play a part in forming such landscapes, the published guide to the awards is suitably vague in explaining how these can be evaluated. The only agreement is that there are many such places in Shimane Prefecture.

The information pamphlet distributed by Iwami Ginzan Tourism Association, UNESCO documents and the website of the Gungendō company all use aerial panoramas of Ōmori nestled in the mountain valley as their primary landscape image. One study of historical villages describes the Ōmori townscape as “retaining its ancient form at the floor of the valley.”<sup>170</sup> The iconicity of this image is similar to the most frequently published photograph of the village of Shirakawa-gō taken from a nearby hill, showing the thatched roof farm houses surrounded by a few rice fields and enclosed in a forested valley. The Shirakawa-gō view is so iconic that the spot to take the photograph is fixed, and tourists line up, each waiting to take almost exactly the same picture. This cannot be done in Ōmori so easily because it requires a strenuous climb into the mountains on poorly cleared trails, but a lower altitude version can be taken from a hill shrine in the middle of the village. A few other details differ between these two World Heritage vistas; Ōmori has primarily tiled roof *machiya* (merchant housing) and is in a more constricted space, Shirakawa-gō usually is shown blanketed with snow.<sup>171</sup> But the meaning of a closely-knit community surrounded by nature is similar, at least for those who do not live in the village.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Nihon Kenchiku Gakkai (1999: 55) states that as population declined, the village became empty during the post-war period of high growth; only the old shape of the main street stayed in the valley (*machinamidake-ga taniai-ni ōji-no sugata-wo todometeita*, まち並みだけが谷間に往時の姿をとどめていた).

<sup>171</sup> Cf. the town website at: <http://shirakawa-go.org/>. Its association with ‘snow country’ (*yukiguni*, 雪国) is frequent and houses are shown totally covered in snow. The central tourist district, Ogimachi, is usually referred to as a hamlet (*shūraku*, 集落), which implies a small, isolated community. Ōmori is never spoken of this way even though it is smaller and less developed.

<sup>172</sup> Alexander et al. (1977: 316) claim that “the instinct to climb up to some high place, from which you can look down and survey your world, seems to be a fundamental human instinct.” People in Ōmori did not climb

Contrast these scenes with what Katō Norihiro (2000: 290) considers the prototype landscape of the post-modern world: “*fūkei* (landscape) has come to mean an artificial, man-made creation; not a total desert, but without people. The closest likeness to this basic landscape is the empty prairie with a single telephone pole. This is a global image, but is most closely identified with the American West of the 1950s and ‘road movies,’ such as Wim Wenders’s *Paris, Texas* (1984), or Jim Jarmusch’s *Stranger than paradise* (1984).” A small, solitary object placed in a vast expanse attracts our attention, reflecting our feeling of isolation in the world.<sup>173</sup> This type of landscape is ubiquitous in travel advertisements and films. Like the opening shots of the Wenders and Jarmusch movies, the view is framed in wide panoramas to emphasize the size of the space in the Ōmori and Shirakawa-gō examples. Man is alone surrounded by wilderness. Baudrillard (1989: 63) writes that (American) deserts “denote the emptiness, the radical nudity, that is the background to every human institution,” and coupled with the highway represent a movement in space and time on a liminal journey to new identities and the reinvention of self.<sup>174</sup> There are no deserts in Japan that quite resemble such a landscape of possibility; in fact, post-war literature tends to depict wastelands of superficial materialism in cities, such as the brand-obsessed Tōkyō of Tanaka Yasuo’s 1980 *Nantonaku kurisutaru*, which has been described as a novel where “high-tech Japan reduces human intercourse to a commercial transaction and human existence to a marketplace” (Miyoshi

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up into high places, nor did they seem to look up at the mountains for orientation, but that could be because of the particular geography of the location; because a high place to survey the village was not very convenient, tourists tended to get lost even though the village itself was quite small.

<sup>173</sup> Although note the evolution of the solitary person, isolated on a road in America; this figure has come to be considered a threat when not in an automobile: “No one who could avoid it would want to be on foot on a typical collector road. Any adult between eighteen and sixty-five walking along one would instantly fall under suspicion of being less than a good citizen.” (Kunstler 1994: 117). Smith (1998: 195-196) remarks that “the open road becomes an increasingly distant dream confined to the virtual reality of the cinema and the distorted lies of the advertisement.” The regulated use of automobiles on roads is a form of Foucauldian discipline under surveillance, and the notion of an ‘open road’ or walking individual violates this construct. Landscapes are increasingly experienced as moving, such as from the vantage point of an automobile passenger or movie viewer: “whereas the landscapes of extraordinary pictures and ordinary geographies encase and uncover the past within them, moving landscapes customize the past as technological perceptions” (Schwartz 2003:98) and disconnect the objects viewed from their place of viewing.

<sup>174</sup> The dual nature of highways and automobiles to both liberate and obliterate is captured by Alexander et al. (1977:64): “Cars give people wonderful freedom and increase their opportunities. But they also destroy the environment, to an extent so drastic that they kill all social life.”

1994: 26).<sup>175</sup> The Japanese landscapes of rural communities are the optimistic alternative, representing a return to the simpler past rather than a self-reinvention to a new life. The rural panoramas match Appleton's (1996) 'prospect' category of landscape type, and the Japanese cases also fit his 'refuge' category. Viewers are able to survey territory and have a place to retreat if attacked; they draw you in to a comfortable place where you can relax. Such empty scenery (*karappo-no fūkei*) could be anywhere -- although it happens to depict unique locations recognized by UNESCO as having universal human value.



Figure 18: Shirakawa-gō, the view

### **The forces of change**

These examples give some indication of the contentious nature of configuring, and imagining space, even in regard to relatively minor details, in Ōmori and its adjacent region. The suitability of placing objects in the environment, their appearance and location, is a constant subject of discussion for residents. Partly this is due to the fact that there have been significant and increasing changes to the lived environment since inclusion on the World Heritage list. These changes, just as in the case of most public works projects, often are explained as being necessary for the comfort and safety of tourists. The road from the village up to the Ryūgenji Mine entrance has been widened, the forest cut back and concrete embankments built up the sides of the mountain. This work continues. A network of access pathways have been opened in this area. Hillsides around the Gohyakurakan temple are reinforced with more concrete, as are river banks throughout the area. These are all necessary 'improvements' from the viewpoint of various parties who do not live in the village, and are

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<sup>175</sup> Cf. Hara (2006) on the materialism of the 1980's 'bubble' period as depicted in literature and art.

carried out without advance notice or consultation; these projects, like many of the building renovations underway, begin without warning to residents, who seem constantly surprised at the suddenness of construction activity. The ‘organic’ elements in the village, which have been added slowly over many years, did not occur in a rush; they accumulated by small accretions in an unpretentious way. They have been allowed to fit into the landscape as if there was a unifying consciousness selecting them. As we have stressed, however, different people have different opinions on to how to coordinate elements in the landscape. Some believe that too much coordination of a certain type results in bland standardization while others may not feel as strongly.



Figure 19: Protecting against dangerous rockslides by removing the trees, Ōmori

There is a contradiction between the wishes of people to be in an environment that is safe and convenient and, at the same time, aesthetically pleasing, familiar and peaceful. Concerns over the former values appear to have been less apparent fifty years ago, and in places such as Ōmori they are far down the list of priorities for most people; in fact, places such as convenience stores are held in mild contempt by many residents. The dangers that residents fear tend to be social disintegration emanating from the urban centres. Meanwhile, for the sake of safety and cleanliness, water courses are clad in concrete and forced to flow in straight lines (Torigoe et al. 2009: 19). Tunnels are decorated with mock castle embellishments. In fact, mock castles are built in the middle of towns (Onomichi). The thoughtful touches of colour tended in miniature gardens by old women in front of their homes get lost in the proliferation of less individual features, many of which, in the case of public works, are planned with mechanical precision and have no human appeal. The

bureaucratic aesthetic is based on a conception of being neat, tidy and snug (*kogirei*, 小奇麗).<sup>176</sup> The result, as this goal is pursued through landscape planning. The locations with a heavy public works element in Japan tend to look the same yet somehow unsuitable. Such ‘imitation landscapes’ (*ruiji keikan*, 類似景觀), made of artificial substance and in a simulated style, are becoming more common. Resistance to this trend, although by no means negligible, must overcome arguments concerning safety, convenience and commercial interest. There is a long history of using safety as the wedge to redevelop land in new ways. After the 1923 earthquake, a series of disaster relief laws led to the establishment of centralized planning programs for the Tōkyō metropolitan area, for example (NTHK 2003: 80-84).

The legal regime put in place in recent years promotes ‘rational’ planning and, ultimately, encourages development, even in the guise of preservation of the natural and man-made environment. Legal regulation does not serve the interests of local residents to maintain a pleasant and peaceful environment, but frames landscapes for the commercial market of tourism and investment by standardizing their contents, thereby making them less threatening to the urban class. Although there is much effort on the prefecture and municipal level to enact landscape plans, and in theory this is coordinated nationally through the Landscape Law, many people feel that there is not much public administration can do to contain development when there is rapid socio-economic change, such as currently forecast in Iwami Ginzan. Without concerted local action to recognize which features to protect and an understanding of their historical background, residents focus on immediate detail rather than long-term strategy. The rapidity of change in Ōmori is driven by the World Heritage designation. In other places, certain types of development have been successfully resisted for many years because relatively long-term programs of resistance could be mobilized. Such resistance is possible because its target is a single big project, such as a bridge or dam. Public works, in theory, should be the most difficult type of development to stop because eminent domain can be exercised when the public interest is at stake. However, it is really private development that is almost impossible to block. ). In Ōmori there is an encroachment of small changes instigated by private individuals, each one of which seeming trivial and not worth a

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<sup>176</sup> This approach echoes the attack on London’s Green Belt by New Labour described in Sinclair (2002: 86): “Wilderness was abhorrent. Rough pasture must be rationalized into Best Value recreation zones, retirement homes for happy butterflies. Farm animals were dirty, smelly, unreconstructed: cull them.”

major confrontation, but in aggregate amounting to a massive re-working of the landscape in and around the village, especially when added to the public works projects that include the rebuilding of houses under the auspices of Ōda City.

In the case of Tomonoura, hometown of former Prime Minister Miyazawa Kiichi, local resistance to a bridge across its historic harbour and waterfront has dragged on for decades. Resistance has been backed by academics and even ICOMOS. There have been some efforts to achieve World Heritage status in order to impede development, but when I questioned some local people about this they generally seemed to think that World Heritage might be a worse fate than having the bridge and recent efforts to designate the town centre as a preservation zone have led to requirements for building permits that were never before necessary. A large sign has been in place on the west side of town for some time which reads *seikatsuken yūsen* (生活権優先). This is ambiguous. It literally means ‘priority to rights of living.’ It is hung directly over the place the bridge construction would terminate, and seems to be related, but its message is so equivocal it could be understood to support either side in the dispute. When I asked people about it, they said either they did not notice the huge sign or that people opposed to development did not use such signs. One person said it was totally unrelated and had to do with the rights of old people. In 2008 when I visited the Civil Engineering Department of Fukuyama City, I was told that the bridge project was no longer an issue and all required approvals had been obtained. This clearly was not the case. He said construction would only affect the view of the harbour from one direction and when viewed from a particular angle, which is not even the important view since one harbour is just like any other harbour and the ‘good’ view was actually towards the national park on the Inland Sea in the opposite direction. This explanation was the standard line; I was told exactly the same thing in the town office in Tomonoura.<sup>177</sup> Although the final outcome is still in doubt

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<sup>177</sup> This bridge project has had such a contentious history that the last thing bureaucrats wanted to see was a foreign academic asking questions. When investigating the bridge project, I simply walked into various municipal and prefecture offices without introduction and asked to speak with the relevant officials. They were not happy to see me but did explain why they thought the construction was necessary. The reception at Tomonoura was unlike my experience elsewhere in Japan, where I was not, for the most part, intruding into a very contentious issue and usually just wanted to understand planning procedures or cultural property-related policy. Ōda City officials were particularly helpful, but in that case I had strong introductions. Such introductions cut two ways, however, because they restrict the kinds of questions that can be asked as well as easing the formality of meetings. There are some useful suggestions on how to handle such situations in Becker & Meyer (1974-75), although I never felt that there was information I had to obtain at any cost and it was a win



and could always be subject to a change in elected officials, a compromise plan seems to be nearly agreed which would re-route road construction and spare the historic area, possibly by digging a tunnel. The prefectural government has always insisted that this project is necessary for better road safety and sewage facilities, and refers to its plan as ‘maintenance’ (*seibi*, 整備), whereas, in fact it would entail an enormous transformation of the central part of the town. The government always wants to expedite agreement, while local people opposed to the effort keep prolonging negotiations with the aid of lawyers who seek “a deeper understanding for those who will be inconvenienced by the project” (Hiroshima-ken 2006, Maeno 2008, *Mainichi Shinbun* 2011, *Asahi Shinbun* 2011c).

Meanwhile, on the south side of Fukuyama station, there is another sign that reads ‘Please don’t destroy out cultural property – tell the major.’ Asking around, it seems that people who work or live on the south side feel that the north side, which already has a castle, gets all the best facilities and the south side is discriminated against by construction that does not help the area but only uses it to locate unsightly utilities such as the bus depot. The ‘cultural property’ in question is old stone walls (*ishigaki*) that are buried beneath the station plaza but were part of the castle network of moats. To enlarge the bus/taxi parking space, the city is excavating the area. Residents want a park with the stone walls to be made in the middle of this. Protests such as this can be identified all around the country, and ‘cultural property is often used as a trump card, almost in the same way as finding an endangered species in environmental debates.

### **Adventures in planning**

Centralized control over landscape planning is a relatively new phenomenon in Japan. In the past, patterns in the landscape were formed as part of everyday life. A clear case of such ‘spontaneous development’ can be seen in the blocks of ridge-and-furrow markings visible from the air in parts of the English countryside that indicate ancient strip agricultural

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or lose situation; I was always concerned primarily with learning the viewpoint of officials. I took the aggressive posture advocated by Becker & Meyer (*ibid.*: 607) of walking directly into the bureaucrat’s office as if I knew where I was going and telling them I was doing research on cultural property This method works remarkably well in Japan, even at the Ministry of Finance, although it requires a lot of time to explain motivation whereas with an introduction such issues are secondary I do not agree with Campbell (2003: 231) that introductions make all the difference; they provide certain sorts of access but can be restricting and are not necessarily the best way to probe attitudes in official contexts.

organization (Hoskins 1955: 28). These are rapidly being obliterated by levelling and the undulations removed because field size for mechanized agriculture requires larger, flat spaces. Each configuration of space can be related to certain social and economic conditions. Likewise, the long, narrow shape of Japanese *machiya* (merchant houses) was the consequence of the method of property taxation in towns, which from even before the Edo period levied tax on the basis of street frontage for commercial buildings (Yoshida 1998: 5-6). There were standard units of measurement for this purpose, which usually resulted in shop fronts being uniform multiples of these unit lengths. The nature of such townscapes can be imagined today from the shape of well-preserved historic shopping zones in some towns, such as Takayama in Gifu Prefecture. This system made sense because the tax was used specifically for the maintenance of the street. Merchants would build their premises with the minimum number of frontage units and extend the work and living space, including storage, far to the rear, thereby optimizing their land usage relative to tax obligations. Although most old *machiya* have disappeared and the tax regime has been different for a long time, property boundaries often still reflect the original plot shape.<sup>178</sup> The relative wealth of past owners can be quite exactly judged by considering the length of property frontage.

One of the consequences of this ‘unplanned’ distribution of space is that commercial districts often seem packed with many small shops. This is even the case in underground passageways such as those that honeycomb Ōsaka. A closer examination will usually reveal that only the front of these shops is small and that each is much larger when you enter. The general shape of plots in Ōmori reflects some of these patterns along the main street. However, Ōmori did not segregate merchants from samurai administrators, whose homes reflect other considerations and were usually built behind a wall back from the street. The Abe-ke layout, for instance, sites the construction in a narrow winding maze that stretches far behind a small garden and well that fronts the street; the building and internal gardens are more than ten times longer than the street frontage. Therefore, the sequence of buildings along the street can be irregular in places where the homes of different classes mixed and in many cases properties interlock, twisting around each other in odd shapes. The contrast is evident when streets are examined in castle towns such as Hagi, where long streets of former samurai residences only display continuous walls to public view and there was not a mixing with merchants (Katō and Ishii: 1986). These patterns of land use were only ‘planned’ in an

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<sup>178</sup> Property tax, as we shall see, is still calculated according to street frontage zones – the so-called *rosenka* system of ‘street valuation.’



informal manner. They tended to develop spontaneously, reflecting certain conditions in society, although in Edo there was strict segregation of living quarters by class and relationship to the Shogunate (Sorensen 2004: 11).

Such 'organic' organization of land use was still the dominant form found throughout Japan until the Constitution of 1947, which under American guidance asserted strong rights to private property. Owners of land are guaranteed the right to use their property for their economic self-interest in all cases except when in conflict with 'the public interest,' which is interpreted as when public works infrastructure is built. Residents have no standing in court to block neighbours from development of private property, yet also cannot sue to stop public works projects. Because legal recourse does not exist, protest is directed into political action. This was most dramatically demonstrated in the construction of Narita Airport from the mid-1960s, when local farmers who opposed the forced seizure of their land were joined by radical groups in protest (Bowen 1975 and Uzawa 1992). For decades, the perceived threat of these disenfranchised residents led to intense security measures around the airport.

In 2009, one of the policies of the Hatoyama administration and the Democratic Party of Japan was to reduce public works programs, partly as a fiscal budget measure but also in reflection of many local protests to the impact such construction projects have on the life of communities. There has been an on-going issue concerning hydro-electric dam projects which force the relocation of whole villages (Ōnishi 2009). A small, but demonstrable shift can be detected in the attitude of the central government from the long-standing idea that the destruction of landscape is an unavoidable necessity in the face of public works. The key site where the administration began to attempt cut backs in public works spending was the Yanba Dam in Gunma Prefecture, where construction was halted after ¥900 billion (£6 billion) had been spent over a fifty-eight year period (*Nihon Keizai Shinbun* 2009).<sup>179</sup>

Protest over the destruction of the natural environment began in the 1960s and grew during the 1970s together with concern over industrial pollution. No 'right to the environment' (*kankyōken*, 環境権), however, has ever been recognized by Japanese courts. In the early 1960s, for example, protests over plans for Kyōto Tower, a 130 meter-tall tourist observation

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<sup>179</sup> However, one year later the National Land Agency announced that the decision to stop construction on the dam would be reconsidered (*Nihon Keizai Shinbun* 2010). After his resignation in June 2010 and replacement by Kan Naoto, there has been a backpedaling from many of the attempts by Prime Minister Hatoyama to reduce public works. Current status of the project is unresolved, although national funding has been discontinued.

platform in front of the main rail station, failed to halt its construction.<sup>180</sup> Kyōto ever since has been ground zero for concern over Japanese urban planning. For the most part, the results have been startling for those familiar with the city where until 1978 trams ran down many city streets. The situation in that city, which is filled with temples and gardens that are recognized as part of a World Heritage designation and, together with neighbouring Nara, has half the structures designated by the Agency for Cultural Affairs as National Treasures, has gotten more contentious over time. Brumann (2006), describing how the economic surge of the 1980s disfigured many neighbourhoods, concluded that it was partly the weakness of the

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<sup>180</sup> Like the Eiffel Tower, the conspicuous exception to municipal height restrictions in Kyōto had to be rationalized on utilitarian grounds. The Kyōto Tower was originally proposed to improve the city's image as an 'international city of culture and tourism' (国際文化観光都市京都). But as Barthes (1997: 6) notes, the utilitarian excuses for such monuments seem quite ridiculous in comparison to the human meanings they convey. In retrospect, the Kyōto Tower can rather be seen as the Japanese equivalent, in much less distinguished architecture, of the violent symbolism of modernism imposed on the landscape by Beaubourg in Paris. Kwinter (2010: 7) describes the latter as a "harbinger of cultural and especially economic processes that were then (the 1960s) remotely and invisibly preparing themselves" and today are plainly apparent in the neoliberal regime. Chevalier (1994: 210-216) and Fermigier (1991) provide a critique of the political background, and describe the role of bureaucrats, in the destruction of Les Halles, which were the celebrated markets destroyed to make way for the project in 1969. As in the case of Paris, the shock of the initial construction in Kyōto was because it represented a complete departure from what appeared to be an environment devoted to tradition and memory. The construction of these monuments, in both cases, prepared the way for much greater infrastructure rationalization, such as the main Kyōto Station building in 1994, which is an enormous, modern structure of glass and steel built at a cost of £840 million to 'commemorate the transfer of the capital to Kyōto in 794' (Arakawa 2008). Kwinter (2010: 9) writes that the ultimate acceptance of such a change signalled the triumph of computer software (*logiciel*) as a technology to promote rationalization and communication; as in the case of Japan, the physical grid of the traditional landscape has become unrecognizable because of its merger with the software-driven communication/ transportation system. In other words, these have become 'cyborg cities' (Gandy 2005) that recall Haraway's (1991) hybrid of organism and machine, a political as well as intellectual project. A similar proposal to construct the Gazprom 403-meter tower/office building, the "Okhta Centre," in the centre of the St. Petersburg World Heritage zone has been approved by the city council to go ahead in 2011, despite opposition from UNESCO, the Russian President Medvedev and existing height restrictions limiting structures to 40 meters. One of the possible sites for the building would be opposite the Smolny Institute, which was the Bolshevik headquarters during the October Revolution. For those aware of the carefully built environment created in that city over the centuries by prominent architects, this project is no less an unimaginable outrage than that of the Kyōto Tower and Beaubourg. It clearly symbolizes an attempt to transform the urban landscape from its earlier historical associations, including both those of the Imperial and Communist state, into a more modern form by "corporate ego run amok" (Ouroussoff 2006, Pushkarskaya 2010).

municipal government, which was primarily interested in easing restrictions on development, especially near the rail station, that led to this outcome.<sup>181</sup> Elsewhere, Brumann (2009) has found the use of cultural heritage designations to have had a positive impact on the preservation of certain historic townhouses in Kyōto. Each act of construction is a very local event. Neighbours may negotiate with one another, but the city does not want to supervise this, and ultimately cooperation depends, just as in Ōmori, on the self-restraint of owners. In cases of extreme conflict, especially in the case of public works, meetings are held that are carefully orchestrated by the owners/developers to present a façade of agreement. The lack of such cooperation is visible in the chaotic jumble of buildings on every street of Kyōto. This is not to say that there have not been zoning plans, building ordinances and extensive debate about the way Kyōto should organize its townscape (Fukushima 2006).<sup>182</sup> Recently, Kyōto City (2009) produced a plan to ‘maintain and improve the historical beauty’ of the city.<sup>183</sup> For nearly the last twenty years, the basic plan has divided the city into three areas: a

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<sup>181</sup> Deregulation of building restrictions was a nationwide trend from the 1980s onwards (Igarashi and Ogawa 2003: 83-130). The public relations department of the most prominent property developer during this period is now publishing glossy books on landscape gardening (Mori Biru 2006).

<sup>182</sup> Legal regulation has failed to stop commercial development and the destruction of public space throughout the world. The rhetoric of growth requires a vision of the future that prescribes safe, clean and predictable space which is suitable for the performance of a particular lifestyle geared toward consumption. Writing in 1987 about New York City, for example, Huxtable (1987) commented that “zoning controls developed and tested over 70 years no longer have credibility or support; their exploitation is active policy. The city is wide open. Greed has never been so chic. The public interest has never been so *passee*.” There are always legal technicalities to challenge regulations, such as on the grounds that historical preservation laws only concern external appearance even when internal elements are integral to a structure’s design (Huxtable 2010). More recently, Zukin (2010: xi) finds “the fertile urban *terroir* of cultural creation is being destroyed by the conspicuous displays of wealth and power typical of private developer and public officials who build for the rich and hope benefits will trickle down to the poor, by the promotions of the media who translate neighborhood identity into a brand, and by the tastes of the new urban middle classes who are initially attracted to this identity but ultimately destroy it.” Shopping and security are the driving values behind global urban planning.

<sup>183</sup> Preservation planning has broadened its scope in Kyōto from the original mission of overseeing major temples, shrines and monuments to a comprehensive consideration of how the urban space is used, particularly by tourists. The latter have diversified their own activities, and no longer just visit religious sites but increasingly want to become engaged in some activity when they come to Kyōto, such as participating in a tea ceremony or flower arrangement class (Kyōto City 2009: 49). The plan, therefore, must go beyond the physical preservation of monuments and consider the intangible ‘attraction’ or charm of the city. The plan aims to maintain and improve this quality, which is best expressed by the term *fūchi* (風致). As can be seen from the characters used for this word, it refers to a quality related to that in landscape or scenery (*fūkei*, 風景) but with

ring of conservation (*hōzon*, 保存) around the outskirts that should maintain its historical and natural landscape; the central city that should be harmoniously ‘reclaimed’ and revitalized (*saisei*, 再生); and a block running south from Kyōto Station that should ‘create’ (*sōzō*, 創造) a space in which new urban functions are accumulated. Among the numerous problems this outline presents is the fact that many properties of recognized historical value, such as Nijō Castle, Nishihongan-ji and the Gosho (imperial palace), are located in the reclamation zone in the centre of the city.



Figure 20: Backstreet scene, Kyōto, Nakagyō-ku, 2009

In 1995, a real estate developer, in violation of its municipal construction permits, levelled the top of a small mountain in the northern part of Kyōto so drastically that it became known

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the added sense of causing it to be complete. It concerns appearance, but also ‘taste’ (*ajiwai*, 味わい) and ‘elegance’ (*fūshu*, 風趣). The word’s use in planning regulation dates to the 1870s when it is found in restrictions on tree cutting and the maintenance of gardens on temple grounds (Nishimura 2004: 54). Kyōto City established ‘zones of scenic beauty’ (*fūchi chiku*, 風致地区) around the edges of the city in 1930. It has greatly expanded these zones since that time, to the extent that the entire city is now considered to be affected in some way and the types of zones have increased to five: three concerning the built environment and two the ‘natural’ environment of forests and mountains (*ibid.*: 353-354). Each zone places restrictions on use, such as building height, plot ratio, vegetation cover, and set-back distance from roads and neighbouring property. The design and form of each building is expected to conform to aesthetic features of its surroundings. Article 58 of the Urban Planning Law delegates the regulation of such zones to local public authorities (*chihō kōkyō dantai*, 地方公共団体). The entire Japanese system of scenic zoning was suspended during the war, and in many places great changes in the landscape were caused by bombing and fires. Kyōto was spared these disasters, which has meant that the dramatic transformation of urban Kyōto in recent years is startling.

as ‘Mohegan Mountain’ (Torigoe 2009: 24). Hundreds of residents protested, but the city argued that it was too late, the mountain could never be restored to its prior condition, and the developer had rights to use the land for its own economic benefit without consideration to the other residents. By flattening the mountain, everyone agreed that the landscape was worsened, but residents had no legal right to any particular kind of environment. Residents can sue the city for mismanagement of public land, such as parks, but have no ability to affect private development. Nevertheless, residents organized through their local community associations and continued to protest. In 2001, there was an agreement with Kyōto City and the developer whereby many terms of the original permits would be honoured. Brumann (2008: 215-216) demonstrates that when development takes place on public land, local protest can block even fully-funded projects, but when a property is privately owned the only recourse is moral suasion.<sup>184</sup>

Before 2004 and enactment of the national Landscape Law (*keikanhō*, 景観法) over five hundred local public bodies had written their own landscape ordinances. Tōkyō and Ōsaka promulgated regulations regarding landscape quality before World War Two. Kyōto, Kamakura and Takayama began to regulate the preservation of historical and natural zones in the 1970s. In the 1980s, more bodies produced such regulations as part of the town revitalization movement.<sup>185</sup> But by 2000, only about ten percent of public bodies had landscape-related ordinances (Nishimura 2008: 178).<sup>186</sup> When challenged in court by

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<sup>184</sup> Brumann’s Kyōto examples are the successful protest against a copy of the Pont des Arts footbridge (the Paris ‘original’ dates from 1984) over the Kamogawa in 1998, versus the total inability of the city’s cultural property office to preserve the façade during demolition of the Dai-ichi Kangyō Bank Kyōto Branch. In the latter case, the bank, which refused to agree that the building was a cultural property, argued that a copy would be better than the 1906 original in any case. Cf. Parry (1997).

<sup>185</sup> Ōda City (2009b, 2010b) produced landscape regulations in 2009 and a landscape plan in 2010. These documents primarily concern Iwami Ginzan.

<sup>186</sup> Meanwhile the Urban Planning Law (*toshi keikakuhō*, 都市計画法) was being used to facilitate development. As described by Igarashi and Ogawa (1993: iii): “It is not too much to say that for many readers their lives have revolved around the little understood ‘Urban Planning Law,’ and in the post-war period their company, their shop, and Japan itself have depended on changes in this law. This is reflected in the destruction of Kyōto’s landscapes and traditional streets, in the rise in land prices during the bubble period, the destruction of the environment caused by the development of golf courses and ski resorts, and the hidden assets in land value caused by the growth of Japan’s economy.” The history of urban planning especially during the 1980s is grim. From the early part of the decade there was a period of privatization and a lifting of restrictions on development. This neoliberal program, together with low interest rates after the Plaza Accord (1985), did an

developers, such regulations have only been upheld in extraordinary circumstances and the legal basis for their enforcement has had to be found in local specifics rather than any basic right to protect the environment. Manazarū, a small town on the coast of Kanagawa Prefecture, was overrun by developers in the 1980s. In 1990 it began to control development by denying water and sewage connections to projects that violated its ‘beauty regulations’ (*bi no jōrei*, 美の条例) (Matsubara 2002:150), which were highly unusual at the time, ran counter to accepted practices, but have become reference points for other cities. These included such controversial propositions as ‘buildings should be sized in proportion to people’, ‘decoration is necessary in buildings’ and buildings should conform to the rest of the town. The denial of utility services was legally upheld because the town could demonstrate that additional water and waste treatment facilities were not possible in its confined location. Attempts by other towns to do this have not been so successful, such as the case of Zushi’s attempt to restrict development of U.S. military housing in the late 1990s (Ruoff 1997). The chaotic state of legislation regarding landscape regulation was demonstrated in 2002 in the case of a fourteen-storey apartment complex built on a street in Kunitachi known for over eighty years for its trees. A protest movement led to a quick response by the city to enact ordinances restricting building heights. On review, the Tōkyō District Court ruled that the city had no ability to pass such regulations, but that protest groups had standing to request removal on this particular street of the tops of buildings that were over 20 meters tall, effectively reversing the initial verdict but on confusing grounds (Nishimura 2008: 8-9, 70-72). Normally, if apartment complexes are not in violation of the basic building law, in spite of the existence of any local landscape regulations, the building will be allowed. In this case, a court for the first time ruled that residents had created an economic value by respecting certain practices over a long period of time that could not be destroyed by a single property owner without approval from the other members of the community. However, on appeal to the Supreme Court, the Kunitachi verdict was reversed in 2006.

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amazing amount of damage in ten years. According to Ōno and Habe-Evans (1992), even Reagan’s America was more restrictive and included more input from residents in decisions on community planning when there was aversion to intense use. Japanese policy encouraged dense development and the concentration of people in large urban areas, especially Tōkyō. One of the many symptoms of the policy was crowding on trains; when physical limits were reached on certain lines, more trains were added, and then more train lines were built. Tōkyō had the highest urban housing costs in the world at the peak in 1991.

The National Land Agency (MAFF 2003) published a report on beautifying Japan in 2003<sup>187</sup> that began a slow process of reviewing landscape legislation on a comprehensive basis. This seems to have originated because of the uncertainty developers were expressing about their right to build in the face of decisions such as in Kunitachi. The Agency report stated that beauty had been sacrificed on the altar of economic requirements, efficiency and functionality, with the result that Japan's landscape was becoming more uniform and losing its distinctiveness. It proposed a series of evaluative concepts for the future, such as emphasis on local character, integral beauty in landscape planning, long-term planning involving all interested parties, and appreciation of the market value of beautiful landscapes. These propositions did not clarify the overall situation, but mass media focused on the proposal to establish a landscape assessment system for public works projects.

The discussion resulted in passage by the Diet of the Landscape Law (*Keikanhō*, 景観法) in 2004.<sup>188</sup> The core of the law is the encouragement of local participation in landscape decisions, particularly in addressing such issues as apartment development, but it hardly touches on the issues of public works that were being highlighted in the media. Instead, it details guidance on the form and placement of billboards and electric wires. It is mostly an urban planning document that does not deal directly with rural concerns. As in the case of the Kyōto master plan of the early 1990s, the Landscape Law attempts to isolate special preservation zones that would restrict development, while leaving the vast majority of land in Japan outside such zones and open to economic exploitation. In effect, legislation has worked to assist development and the implementation of public works programs by clarifying the basic stance that these are a priority everywhere except in very special, separately designated places. In this regard, it supports the Kunitachi verdict that, in principle, landscape regulation cannot be enforced as a general policy that hinders the economic interests of land owners, but

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<sup>187</sup> See: <http://www.maff.go.jp/j/nousin/nouson/bi21/index.html>. This publication, supplied with a full selection of images of irrigated rice fields, is almost exclusively devoted to rural concerns, such as the removal of junk yards that have been allowed to mar the agricultural vista. Aiming to promote the creation of villages with individuality and charm, it is titled 'Beautiful Villages of Water and Greenery: A Plan for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,' and provides "concrete quantitative targets to help achieve landscape formation in rural districts while emphasizing proper consideration of the landscape in relation to the agriculture, forestry and fisheries industries." The targets included items such as having all fences and railings at MAFF construction sites built from wood by 2004. The intention of many of these measures was to use more forestry products in public works activities; rather than reduce such plans, the Ministry sought to make them appear superficially more 'green.'

<sup>188</sup> See: <http://law.e-gov.go.jp/htmldata/H16/H16HO110.html>.

shall only be applied in locations that can demonstrate unusually compelling histories of preservation.

At the same time, such ‘cultural landscapes’ were further recognized by a revision of the Cultural Properties Preservation Law (*Bunkazai hogihō*, 文化財保護法).<sup>189</sup> This revision was aimed to coordinate the treatment of ‘outstanding’ landscapes preserved in accordance with the Landscape Law and in the recognition by UNESCO in 1992 of cultural landscapes as a category of World Heritage. One of the aims of the revision was to ‘realize a level of higher quality economic activity’ by utilizing cultural assets. Thus, the ghettoization of particular places devoted to tourism was complete.

Planners could now map these special zones and pick out which features needed protection under a hierarchy of recognition that stretched from World Heritage down to local curiosity. The latter, however, if in an isolated spot, falls mostly outside the realm of protection, and in all cases the most important aspect of landscape that people tend to emphasize when discussing how to recognize a special space – the historically-formed ‘human disposition’ (*ningenteki seishitsu*, 人間的性質) associated with a community -- is not only absent but excluded from the concept of what constitutes a definable place. One tactical response to these trends has been to try to present larger areas as ‘cultural landscapes,’ such as the Shikoku pilgrimage route and the entire city of Hagi (Hagi-shi 2006).<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> See: <http://www.houko.com/00/01/S25/214.HTM>, and [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/bunka/toushin/020401.htm#a13](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/bunka/toushin/020401.htm#a13), concerning the aims of the Agency for Cultural Affairs in marketing Japan’s cultural assets. On the nationalism behind recent legislation and the public works lobby, cf. Igarashi (2006: 43-53.)

<sup>190</sup> Hagi City has adopted a plan to make itself into a ‘city-wide museum’ (*machijū hakubutsukan*, まちじゅう博物館) because its important cultural properties are spread out over the entire town and the level of preservation is thought to be high enough that the city can present itself as shown on a map from 1604 (Yama-to Keikansha 2004, Nishiyama 2004: 23). It supports a non-profit organization for the promotion and planning of this scheme: <http://machihaku.city.hagi.lg.jp/>. It certifies residents for three degrees of knowledge of the city’s cultural property: ‘special commentator on cultural property,’ ‘commentator on street-corner assets,’ and ‘treasure master.’





Figure 21: Enseiji, Hagi – a few helpful signs at the entrance

### Community improvement: *Machizukuri*

‘What we like determines what we are, and is the sign of what we are; and to teach taste is inevitably to form character.’ (Ruskin 1997b [1864]: 235)

‘You can design Utopia, and many have tried and failed. No one, from Tony Garnier to Patrick Geddes, knew that shopping would be the glue to hold it together.’ (Huxtable 1997: 103)

One type of town planning (*toshi keikaku*, 都市計画) can be translated as “community improvement” (*machizukuri*, まちづくり), although there really is not a good equivalent in English for this expression. *Machizukuri*, literally “town building”, originally in the late 1960s, began as local protest movements by residents to various conventional aspects of planning as implemented by official bodies. It still retains the nuance of grass-roots activism. However, in recent years it has become much more a part of official governance in towns and cities across the country, and in this century has taken on added importance because the weak state of public finance has led to greater reliance on cooperation with local private and semi-private organizations. *Machizukuri* is the ever-present companion to discussions of cultural property. Often there are *machizukuri* sections in municipal offices, which undertake various programs that aim to stimulate local economic activity. Attaining World Heritage status, for example, is sometimes delegated to *machizukuri* officials. There is always a tension between *machizukuri* as economic stimulus and as something valuable in itself. Ōkawa (2006: 41-42), for example, provides four reasons to repair and put to practical use ‘historical heritage’: it is

an economic stimulus to the local area, reduces the economic burden of maintain such property thanks to government subsidies, saves energy by reducing waste, and is a ‘rich source of pleasure for daily life.’ Note that only the last reason relates directly to the ‘spiritual value’ he posits for such work. In rural areas, *machizukuri* tends to imply revitalization; because of economic stagnation and depopulation, residents seek to mobilize local resources, whatever these may be, to invigorate their community. Putting items to ‘practical use’ (*katsuyō*, 活用), which is the common expression of what *machizukuri* does, implies that these items previously were not productive. Such efforts start with an evaluation of what is considered special in each place and how it can be presented to both residents and outsiders as worthy of attention. Each town, in effect, seeks to establish some claim to a uniquely important status based on its location, history and distinctive features.<sup>191</sup> The ultimate goal of *machizukuri* activity is to produce satisfaction among residents with their town.<sup>192</sup> It is understood that such satisfaction comprises more than physical infrastructure; it should include various, less-tangible qualities that make daily life pleasant. In this regard, *machizukuri* has an aesthetic dimension that can make it mean beautification, in certain contexts. But place status can be distinguished by many cultural features, just as people strive to position themselves in the dimensions of Bourdieu’s (2002: 262) social space. As different classes in France position themselves by preferring to eat fish over pork (*ibid.*: 180, 186), places can present themselves by emphasizing their ancient history or their modern history. While it might seem that the choice of what to emphasize in any particular place is obvious or that the best strategy is to use all available resources, this is not true – a narrative is chosen to appeal to specific tastes, which could be broad or narrow, popular or elite, depending upon

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<sup>191</sup> In the United States, such local boosterism produces claims to being the capital of some product. Akron, for example, has named itself, among other things, the Cereal Capital, Sewer Pipe Capital, Clay Marble Capital and Rubber Capital, based on prominent local business (Pierson 2006: 22). Des Moines, Iowa, is the test-marketing capital because it is considered the essence of Middle America. Such claims to fame are normally posted on signs around the town in the United States. In England, there are shops that advertise themselves as having ‘arguably the best curry in East London.’ I have never seen equivalent advertisement in Japan. It is rare that any place in Japan will publically state it is the best or biggest. The Ginza shop of the artist Kitaoji Rosanjin famously displayed a large sign in English after the war claiming that he was Japan’s greatest artist, but this was almost a joke and posted for foreign consumption. There is, however, great interest in “world firsts” (*sekai ichi*, 世界一). The establishment of such claims, even when more restricted in scope, can be traced to the lists of famous places of beauty (*meisho*, 名所) from the Edo period.

<sup>192</sup> Tamura, (2007: 28). The aim is to make residents feel that their town is “good”, that living there is good, safe, secure, and that these qualities can be passed on to succeeding generations.

the goal of the program, and focus usually is better than a wide spectrum of possibilities. In the attempt to distinguish itself from other locations, a town planning its *machizukuri* strategy is, in effect, engaging in place branding. It is important to distinguish whether the effort is aimed at economic development, such as attracting tourists, capital investment or immigrants, or whether it is aimed to improve the satisfaction of residents and make it a more attractive place to live. These goals are not mutually exclusive, but usually they lead to different policies. The national government has extended the concept to ‘country improvement’ (*kunizukuri*, 国づくり), and linked this together with policy to upgrade Japan’s landscape.<sup>193</sup> It is no coincidence that the tourist promotions described by Ivy (1995: 29-39) for ‘Discover Japan’ in the 1970s occurred at the same time that the *machizukuri* movement took root.

Identifying the special features of a place is not always obvious or successful. Near Ōmori is the town of Nima, which is administratively also a part of Ōda City. Being a seaside town with a few beaches, Nima decided in 1991 that it could promote itself on the basis of its sand and constructed the Nima Sand Museum, which houses the world’s largest sand-filled year timer in a modern structure with six glass pyramids jutting from its roof.<sup>194</sup> Its design is so unlike anything else outside the prefectural capital of Matsue, which has a few strange modern buildings of its own, it is considered by some to resemble a spaceship that by mistake landed on the Shimane coast. Takamatsu Shin, an architect originally from Nima who now has a worldwide practice specializing in “buildings of the future,” was responsible for this project.<sup>195</sup> It houses an exhibit of Bohemian glassware and is sometimes used as a

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<sup>193</sup> MLITT (2003). This publication, which preceded enactment of the Landscape Law, also refers to ‘improvement of the country’s land’ (*kokudozukuri*, 国土づくり), and ‘regional development’ (*chihōzukuri*, 地方づくり). We, therefore, find a full set of concepts that have been introduced in recent years to refer to the improvement of different size spaces, from the town to the region and, finally, the entire country. These concepts interlock with the management of cultural property at the various levels by both defining the important features of each space and how they should be developed.

<sup>194</sup> <http://www.sandmuseum.jp/kannai/museum0.html>. “The Nima Sand Museum was built as a symbol of the Nima-chō Silverland Plan and established as the main facility for the promotion of town improvement (*machizukuri*), tourism, and economic development.” The Nima Committee to Promote the Silverland Plan won the Director’s Prize of the National Land Agency in 1991 for its excellence in “regional improvement” (*chiikizukuri*, 地域づくり) MLITT (2008). The annual subsidy from Ōda City for operating expenses of the Nima Sand Museum is about £300,000. See: <http://www.city.ohda.lg.jp/files/20090323171815.pdf>.

<sup>195</sup> [http://www.takamatsu.co.jp/en/project\\_detail.php?id=149](http://www.takamatsu.co.jp/en/project_detail.php?id=149). The pyramid design is attributed to the mayor of Nima.

venue for public concerts and movies. It violates nearly every principle of organic architecture and sustainable design.<sup>196</sup> The project was publically funded, and is sometimes used as an example of public works spending gone mad (Fackler 2009). But it was based on local efforts by the mayor to help his community, while taking advantage of the availability of government finance. Other than the symbolic connection to sand, which does exist in Nima, how does this effort at community improvement help establish the town's identity or increase the satisfaction of residents? What message does it convey to residents, who in their daily life encounter very different types of space? Does it represent local notions about the outstanding qualities of the place? The effort to project a place away from its roots and forcefully into an imagined future, rather than build on existing tradition and history, is part of the modernist mission which many academic architects and urban planners still support. It is not the only means of community improvement.

The hot spring town of Yunotsu is part of the Iwami Ginzan World Heritage area. It was one of the ports from which the Iwami silver was shipped in the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> century, but virtually no trace of the early harbour facilities remain. Before listing, the town was such a backwater that it was a feature location in a Tora-san film.<sup>197</sup> Improvement planning by the early 1990s aimed at removing what were, by some, considered old eye-sores and 'up-grading' the surroundings. This policy's most notable accomplishment was the demolition of a Meiji-era hall in the middle of town, replacing it with a parking lot. The World Heritage listing, however, led to a total about-face in planning, whereby instead of removing the traces of the town's historic past, efforts to rehabilitate and emphasize these features of the town were implemented. The main street of the hot spring, for example, which runs through the new

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<sup>196</sup> <http://www.mcdonough.com/principles.pdf>. For example, compare one of William McDonough's Hannover Principles of sustainable design: "Those who create and plan should practice humility in the face of nature. Treat nature as a model and mentor, not as an inconvenience to be evaded or controlled." Or Alexander et al. (1977: 883): "The perfectly crystalline squares and rectangles of ultra-modern architecture make no special sense in human or structural terms. They only express the rigid desires and fantasies which people have when they get too preoccupied with systems and the means of their production."

<sup>197</sup> *Otoko-wa tsurai-yo: Torajirō koiyatsure* (Yamada Yōji, Shōchiku). 1974. Each of the episodes of this long-running series had at least one location that the main character visits as a representative of 'traditional' Japan, selected by director Yamada. The Yunotsu rail station has a picture of Tora-san from thirty-five years ago when the film was shot. Kondo (1990: 67-68) has a note about Tora-san as the embodiment of *shitamachi* (working-class Tōkyō) values. See Kiridōshi, R. (2004) on the imagined landscape of illusion created by the director of this series to represent 'traditional' Japan and how locations were selected.



parking lot, was designated an Important Preservation District for Groups of Historic Buildings, and in 2009 applied to extend its scope to include the harbour.<sup>198</sup> The goal of these developments was to attract tourists to the inns clustered around the two bath houses in the



Figure 22: Preserved main street, Yunotsu, public bath on right



Figure 23: Yunotsu harbour, fishing co-op buildings

hot spring. Yunotsu has experienced a boom in tourist business since the 2007 listing of the area as part of the World Heritage district. Its fifteen inns are now mostly filled during the warmer months, mostly because they are the only places to stay within a forty-five minute drive of the silver mine site. JTB tours (the largest tour operator in the country) use the

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<sup>198</sup> See: [http://www.bunka.go.jp/oshirase\\_other/2009/pdf/dentouteki\\_kenzoubutsu\\_091016.pdf](http://www.bunka.go.jp/oshirase_other/2009/pdf/dentouteki_kenzoubutsu_091016.pdf). And: *Sanin Chūō Shinpō* (2009b). Yunotsu now bills itself as the first hot spring in Japan with an Important Preservation District.

Yunotsu inns or hotels in Matsue for their programs to Iwami Ginzan. New restaurants and shops have opened, and a Buddhist temple has renovated an Edo-period residence on the main street as a lodging for those who want to experience something slightly different from the more expensive inns – a “pilgrim’s lodging in an old house” (*kominka shukubō*, 古民家宿坊) that was built 300 years ago by a carpenter from the Iwami mines.<sup>199</sup> Thus, *machizukuri* in this small town comprises a range of activities, and has changed its focus dramatically to respond to perceived opportunities in presenting itself as a unique destination for tourists; rather than destroy historic buildings to present a more modern façade, residents are actively searching for the old in order to recreate an environment with more evidence of the town’s history.

Yunotsu is the envy of many small towns in Japan because it has the premier tourist brand of all – it is inside a World Heritage district. Like Ōmori, it was bypassed when economic development changed the landscape of more accessible places, and, as a result, retained many old structures which can now be utilized for tourist promotion. Signs of modernization have been removed and the central tourist area has been renovated to look older. Because new buildings should meet the standards set for the preservation zone, the distinction between new and old is blurred. This is a characteristic of all preservation work that attempts to hold the appearance of all objects in an area to specific standards of ‘harmony.’ The aim of creating a preservation zone is to achieve maximum visual homogenization in the townscape with all contemporary architectural elements eliminated.

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<sup>199</sup> See: <http://www.visit-ohda.jp/657.html>. Yonagoya is a member of the Shimane Inaka Tourism Association, an organization sponsored by the prefecture to enable tourists to visit farms and small villages through a network of bed and breakfast-type facilities: <http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/chiikiseisaku/inaka/kenoutiku.html> . The temple head priest has discovered two other Edo-period houses in Yunotsu that currently are occupied but are in poor condition and might eventually be renovated in a similar manner. His aim is to provide interesting and affordable lodging, while at the same time saving old houses in the town from demolition.



Figure 24: Yunotsu renovation, before and after<sup>200</sup>

The Important Preservation District recognition is another tourist draw, but unlike Ōmori, Yunotsu is well situated to accommodate the new wave of tourists because of its long history of welcoming guests to its inns and bath houses. There is so much demand to get a piece of any World Heritage application to UNESCO that Japan has grouped increasingly disparate locations within each candidate. So, for example, prior to the Iwami Ginzan case, the preceding successful designation in 2004 was for the “Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in

<sup>200</sup> From: <http://www.denken.gr.jp/>. The photo shows a building for which the concrete facade has been replaced with wood and its windows with sliding doors – a process of removing modern elements. Signs and air conditioning have been hidden. The National Council of Important Preservation Districts refers to such work as ‘improving the landscape’ (*shūkei*, 修景). This term, originally from landscape gardening, is now applied to town planning activities that harmonize the design features of a space. If buildings in a preservation zone are expected to convey the particular features of a region or display an ‘old condition’, those neighboring structures that do not fit the required model must be suitably aged in appearance. In practice, this means the roof, walls and openings should conform to certain traditional standards. This reversal of building trends is related to what Ōnishi (2004) terms ‘reverse urbanization’ (*gyakutoshika*, 逆都市化); he argues that as Japan’s population declines and economy stabilizes there is less need to build or live in dense urban environments and people can return to patterns of living that were common before the high-growth era. Preserving façades is an example of what Huxtable (1997: 2) referred to as a central part of creating a ‘surrogate environment,’ analogous to a theme park that provides a ‘surrogate experience,’ in which the entire motivation behind manufacturing a visual image is to promote consumption. “The art of architecture as packaging or play-acting is,” she says (Huxtable 1992), “a notion whose time, alas, has come.” She traces the American effort to define ‘place’ as image to the intentional confusion of real and unreal in the late 1920s restoration of Colonial Williamsburg (Huxtable 1997:15, Handler & Gable 1997:44-45). In the terms of Lefebvre (2001b: 337), this concept characterizes abstract space built to reproduce capital by means of homogeneity. An effort to inscribe ‘personality’ to a place actually removes it by substituting an artificial standard for an organic manifestation of local life.

the Kii Mountain Range.”<sup>201</sup> Many people in Japan would struggle to understand what this designation refers to since most famous sites can be envisioned as a specific structure or scene. It is a large area spread through the mountains of Mie, Wakayama and Nara prefectures focused on the centre of Shingon Buddhism at Mt. Koya.<sup>202</sup> By UNESCO definition, it is a “cultural landscape” that comprises many related temples, shrines, the routes that connect them, and the forested mountains that surround them. It is such a diverse grouping that prefectural tourist promotion still struggles to find a way to convey what this important “place” is. Similarly, a candidate from Japan now on the tentative list at UNESCO is “Modern Industrial Heritage Sites in Kyūshū and Yamaguchi.”<sup>203</sup> This group includes sites in six prefectures that are associated with the development of modern heavy industry in Japan prior to the Meiji Restoration. One place, for example, is the location of a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century shipbuilding yard in Hagi which has no visible trace of anything remaining.<sup>204</sup> With cases

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<sup>201</sup> See: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1142> .

<sup>202</sup> But containing many Shugendō (修験道) sites related to pilgrimage as well. Reader & Tanabe (1999:29) define Shugendō as a ‘common religion’ involving mountain deities. Hori (1968: 73) says it is a ‘mixed school or sect of Shinto, religious Taoism, and Buddhism’ that began in the ninth century as a form of positive magic to ward off the spirits of the dead (*goryō*, 御霊).

<sup>203</sup> See: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5399/>. At March 2008, there were eight candidates for World Heritage listing from Japan, including Hiraizumi, Fujioka Silk Mills, National Museum of Western Art, Kamakura, Fuji-san, Nagasaki churches, some Fujiwara buildings in Nara, Ogasawara Islands, and Hikone Castle, cf. Mori, K. (2008). In addition to the sites in Kyūshū and Yamaguchi, additions in 2009 were Jōmon sites in Hokkaido and Tokoku and Okinoshima and related sites. (China has 51 tentative sites awaiting approval.) Japan successfully recommended Hiraizumi and the Ogasawara Islands as its primary candidates for approval in the 2011 UNESCO meeting. See: *Asahi Shinbun* (2010c).

<sup>204</sup> See: <http://tenjin.soreccha.jp/e8166.html> . The only object at the site is a modern breakwater. However, it is a recognized practice in the designation of heritage sites that no physical trace of history needs to be visible if an important event occurred there. Battlefields, for example, often show no sign of the event for which they are remembered. The selection of industrial heritage frames the narrative of historical perception in Japan in the same way US selection of Civil War battlefields emphasize a certain heroic interpretation of national history over other possibilities. Because the Japanese sites are presented for review as World Heritage, they assert the relevance of Japan’s industrial development within a narrative of world history and for the shaping of collective memory (Barthel 1996). The salient characteristics of the people in each nation are imagined as being represented in its selection of heritage sites. So, for example, Australians place Bondi Beach on their national heritage list alongside the Melbourne Cricket Ground, because the former reflects ‘relaxed hedonism’ and the latter prowess at sport (Marks 2007). Australians have been taught that no battles have ever been fought in the country, and sport could be therefore considered a surrogate, but such a reading of history ignores large exterminating battles fought against black Australians (Grassby and Hill 1988).



such as this, heritage is being retrieved from beyond its physical representation. UNESCO has tended to discriminate against such places in the past, and has required that a substantial part of any site be original and not a recreation. It was for this reason that Himeji Castle, which has survived relatively well over the years, was listed, while arguably other castles in less well preserved states, such as Ōsaka Castle,<sup>205</sup> are better examples of fortification architecture or were more important historically. Meanwhile, other mega-site applications are being prepared. The four prefectures of Shikoku are promoting the candidacy of the entire 88 stages of the Shikoku pilgrimage route – a total length of 1,400 kilometers (*Asahi Shinbun* 2009a). If selected, this would encompass most of the island. Since the current state of the route in some places is undeveloped, the impact of designation could be substantial on rural communities on the island. Some parts of the course are so remote that one pilgrim told me he was afraid of being attacked by bears when it got dark. I can attest from personal experience that this is one tourist route in Japan with poor course-markers. Perhaps this is because most ‘pilgrims’ take tour buses and do not walk it. On the other hand, if you do walk the course, in many spots it is so easy to get lost you meet many people who try to help and draw maps with interesting local perspectives (Reader 2006, Ishikawa 2007).

The solicitation of World Heritage recognition is the strong form of appealing to external forces to undertake community improvement; obtaining a brand stamps a place with tourist appeal (Nishimura 2009). It is analogous to economic development strategies that attempt to attract industry to an area. Preservation of historic objects may occur as a result of this process, such as the Edo houses in Yunotsu, but this is subsidiary to the main goal of economic stimulus, and when such efforts are found it is often the case that they really were undertaken because of other motives. It is more likely that historic objects are destroyed by recognition and the tourist influx.<sup>206</sup> One of the best-known examples of using heritage symbolism in community improvement with the goal of economic development is the town of Tōno in Iwate Prefecture (Kikuchi 2007). This town has used the fame of being the location of Yanagida Kunio’s (1991 [1910]) rural folk tales to galvanize a tourism industry.

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<sup>205</sup> Most recently rebuilt in 1931, but somehow not destroyed in World War Two.

<sup>206</sup> Every location can provide examples of this, but perhaps the most notorious case in Japan is Yakushima National Park, a World Heritage site, where the daily tread of tourists through the delicate environment, and the waste they deposit, is killing the foliage they come to view ( *Asahi Shinbun* 2009a).

Such a strategy is described as “activating the historical capital” of a place.<sup>207</sup> Every sort of souvenir and contrived entertainment venue has been provided, yet the actual stream in which Yanagida’s famous *kappa* (河童, water sprite) was said to live is tucked between fields of hops and a 15<sup>th</sup> century temple, far away from the tourist route.<sup>208</sup> There are no longer any craftsmen in Tōno who are able to make or repair the thatched roofs of the *minka* they have assembled in the tourist parks; these workers must be hired from Aomori. Tōno is the site selected by Ivy (1995: 98-140) as the “meta-*furusato*” of lost tradition and its re-imagining as tourist destination. The town refers to itself as “Japan’s eternal *furusato*” (Tōno City 2006).<sup>209</sup>

The opposite extreme to this approach is community improvement from strategies that promote self-sufficiency and seek to make residents more satisfied with their hometown life. While the first approach assumes that outside assistance and resources need to be attracted to a place to improve it, the latter assumes just the opposite: it views non-local ‘solutions’ as a threat and relies on grass-roots initiatives to isolate a place rather than invite new problems. Because the object of this kind of *machizukuri* is to produce greater satisfaction in a community, preservation of objects with historic value and their appreciation by residents outweighs their economic exploitation. The promotion of self-sufficiency entails a re-positioning of priorities. Instead of encouraging the consumption of tourists, it seeks to enhance local contentment by drawing the community together in projects that build bonds of cooperation and insulate it from risks that may threaten it from the outside. Security and safety, in the sense of insulation from external shocks and unwanted pressures, are large concerns for this type of community improvement, and far overshadow commercial considerations of growth (Okuno 2008, Shiratori 2009, Seki 2009, Ōe 2008).

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<sup>207</sup> Other examples are the traditional main street in Hizenhamajuku in Kagoshima City, the post town (*shukubamachi*, 宿場町) of Kumagawajuku in Fukui Prefecture, the old textile city of Kiryū in Gumma Prefecture, and mining ruins of Ikinochō in Hyōgo Prefecture (Nishimura 2009:114-152).

<sup>208</sup> Tōno has paid particular attention to cleaning up any disturbing rural image of being dirty or smelly. Special emphasis is placed on maintaining immaculate toilets, for example (Kikuchi 2007: 87). Tourist information, including a proliferation of signs, is considered essential in making guests feel comfortable.

<sup>209</sup> Tōno aimed to register 10,000 supporters of its community improvement program by 2010. These “*furusato* citizens” include those not living in the town of 30,000 residents (*ibid.*: 24). Such membership promotions are a common method of gathering resources for community improvement. In this case, it extends the community to include tourists. The town recorded about 1.9 million tourist visits in 2006 (Tōno City 2008: 7).

Shikano-chō (鹿野町), Tochigi Prefecture, is an example of efforts to attain self-sufficiency and is a model for “regional studies”.<sup>210</sup> This town of about 4,000 people was incorporated into Tottori City in 2004, and thus lost its independent administrative control in the same way as many other small towns due to the merger drive to reduce government costs (Fujita 2003). Local residents began to organize a series of projects to improve the general condition of Shikano. For example, a farmers market was established to sell local produce. All other local grocery businesses had closed and residents had to go into Tottori City or to shopping malls to buy their food and household items, whereas previously there was a shopping street in the town that provided for daily needs. Such traditional shopping streets (*shōtengai*, 商店街) and their locally owned shops are rapidly disappearing throughout the country, being replaced by national chains which sell imported products at lower prices. Shikano residents wanted to support local farmers, and at the same time hoped thereby to encourage economic self-sufficiency. Farmers receive a better percentage of the sales than when they distribute their produce through the Japan Agricultural Co-op network.<sup>211</sup> They began a restaurant that uses only local foods. Workers from the restaurant, for example, bring back mountain vegetables and mushrooms when they go for walks, and whatever they find is put on the daily lunch menu, which consists of a lunchbox (*bentō*) of about dozen seasonal delicacies made from traditional recipes and served for ¥1,200 in a straw rain-hat. They have developed a plan for street beautification, renovated old houses and established a community hall and craft centre in the former town office for the sake of residents (*ōraikōryūkan*, 往来交流館). Vacant houses are being rebuilt. The former high school has been turned into a theatre. There is very little effort to attract tourism, although there are resources, such as a castle ruin, that might be of value. Community improvement is for the direct benefit of residents who want to retain as

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<sup>210</sup> Examples of regional development in Tottori Prefecture are provided in Fujii et al. (2008), including efforts to promote self-sufficiency through the issuance of local currency and local exchange trading systems. There is some controversy over whether ‘regional studies’ (*chiikigaku*, 地域学) is sufficiently local and considers problems enough from the grass-roots level. This is particularly the case in regards to agricultural policy. See Yūki (2001), who prefers the term *jimotogaku* (地元学), or ‘home town studies.’ He provides the story of a lady who considered her most valuable treasure to be the pickled plums (*umeboshi*) that her grandmother made 40 years ago. She would never eat them. Homes in Ōmori also retain jars of very old pickled plums that represent for residents a connection with the past that they do not want to sever. These are displayed in kitchens almost like photographs as reminders and images of friends and relations.

<sup>211</sup> On the policies and problems of the Japan Agricultural Co-op system and agriculture in general, see Godō (2006), and Tokuno(2007).

much as possible the valuable items that they themselves produce and consume. A resident explained to me that the merger with Tottori City made people realize they had to rely on themselves if they wanted to retain a separate identity and not be totally amalgamated into an uncaring municipal entity. There is strong local pride, reflecting the fact that 400 years ago Shikano was once a castle town (*jōkamachi*, 城下町).

Tamba-Sasayama (丹南篠山), in Hyōgo Prefecture, is a mixed example of community improvement for both local residents and visitors. This is another castle town, with a population of over 40,000, located near an area famous for its pottery. It is much closer to urban centers than Shikano, being within one hour driving distance from Kyōto, Ōsaka and Kobe, and at a major highway interchange of the Maizuru-Wakasa expressway. Nevertheless, drawing visitors has become increasingly difficult and improvement aims as much toward making life attractive to residents as it also hopes to impress tourists. Renovation of old *minka*, for example, is undertaken to teach young people traditional building skills and as a social activity, while at the same time creating places for tourists to gather. Among the numerous local improvement projects underway, there is the development of the Maruyama hamlet located about ten minutes by automobile outside the town proper. This hamlet is the site of a very ambitious *soba* (buckwheat noodle) restaurant, Roan Matsuda, which was opened several years ago because the owner believed there was a demand for high-quality cuisine served in a local setting; he successfully fills the restaurant with urban customers who drive out and pay a fraction of the price a comparable meal would cost in the city, but they experience something quite different because of the natural surroundings. Nevertheless, by local standards prices are high and particularly difficult to understand because the *soba* noodles in Japan are generally thought of as fast food rather than sophisticated cuisine. When Mr. Matsuda arrived from Kyōto, he was the first person to acquire land in the hamlet for hundreds of years. Everyone else in the approximately ten households was a descendent of many generations living in the same location. A couple of the inhabitants on a part-time basis still maintain rice fields near the hamlet, but most of those living there are retired professionals, such as doctors and teachers. Because no property transaction had occurred for so long, when Mr. Matsuda wanted to purchase a site it was not clear where the land boundaries were, but he eventually acquired land to build the restaurant. Later, a non-profit organization was formed to develop the hamlet as a tourist destination. This required the renovation of several large *minka* and their conversion into lodging facilities which are now available at the price of ¥30,000 per night (including breakfast and dinner). The marketing

brochure of the hamlet invites guests “to experience for a moment the good old days, living in an old farmhouse that has rejuvenated a marginal village.”<sup>212</sup> The Maruyama project illustrates the difficulty of determining appropriate pricing for such luxury destinations that offer a special experience for urban visitors but not in a famous place that is known for its exclusivity. This is a good example of how the place branding has been skewed towards a status dimension that was not obvious given local resources. It is not clear how conscious the hamlet was about the marketing implications when they decided pricing. Visitors here, as in Ōmori, are sometimes perplexed at the cost of food and lodging when it is not provided by a well-known establishment, and is in an obscure location. At both Maruyama and Ōmori, pricing is based on the value which the local owners perceive, rather than on a marketing strategy that seeks to build reputation or compete with other venues. In both cases, because local businesses believe their place is unique, they cannot compare its price to those in other locations. People in Ōmori repeatedly say they have no clue on how to price goods and services for outside consumption.



Figure 25: Maruyama, Tanba-Sasayama, Hyōgo

Ōmori is considered a model “success” in the *machizukuri* literature (Tamura 2007: 99-100, Tōhoku Denryoku 2004). As mentioned, local people were active in preserving the main street many years before World Heritage designation, and also began projects that opened up

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<sup>212</sup> The model for such high-end rural tourism is the hot-spring resort of Yufuin in Ōita Prefecture. This place comes up as a success story in all discussions of *machizukuri*. Its building ordinances are particularly noteworthy. See Ueda et al. (2005: 122). Yufuin has managed to build a high-quality image that justifies its high prices, although it has taken about thirty years to do so.

parts of the silver mining area in the mountains behind the village for hiking. Nearly all these activities were undertaken for the sake of local residents. When they look at vacant houses, people do not so much see development potential as a way to express themselves artistically while at the same time producing something that might be of value to others. Rebuilding old houses was at the core of Ōmori's revival in the 1980s as slowly a group of buildings was remade. Many of these buildings were changed to provide new functionality, so that former shops were converted into dwellings and vice versa. Gradually the main street took shape as a continuous promenade that maintains a unifying design sense. While not exactly the shopping street it once was, the main street is the centre of public life and the place in which neighbors meet to exchange greetings, although it is losing this status as many of those now occupying the street during the daytime are not residents.<sup>213</sup> The success of Ōmori in the pre-designation period was based on an ability to preserve a sense of intimacy and organic unity.<sup>214</sup> These values had strong appeal to residents, but were also qualities that some visitors could appreciate, especially if they spoke with residents about the village. Customers who came to Gungendō were especially seeking these qualities and many old customers no longer come because of the changes brought by the tourist influx. The changes in Ōmori since designation have tended to threaten this intimacy by providing ever increasing modifications for the sake of visitors who do not necessarily share local values or understandings. The greatest "success" of achieving World Heritage, an achievement that many other places in Japan would dearly wish to accomplish, has weakened community to a certain extent while not necessarily providing better economic conditions. On the other hand, identification of Ōmori with what now is a famous rural setting has opened up opportunities to capitalize on the new brand name which extend beyond the local experience and project a rural imaginary into the urban centers.

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<sup>213</sup> The main street served, until World Heritage designation, much like a Mediterranean promenade on which "people with a shared way of life gather together to rub shoulders and confirm their community" (Alexander et al. 1977: 169).

<sup>214</sup> Bachelard (1994: 202) notes that "whenever space is a value – there is no greater value than intimacy – it has magnifying properties." Given the proximity of so much meaningful detail in the Ōmori main street, it is revealing that tourist and planning images tend to show the wide landscape around the village as seen from a mountaintop.

Living culture (*seikatsu bunka*) is traditional, but this does not mean it is past; it is alive because we make it so. (Miki 1967 [1941]: 385)

As a thing the way is  
Shadowy, indistinct.  
Indistinct and shadowy,  
Yet within it is an image;  
Shadowy and indistinct,  
Yet within it is a substance  
Dim and dark,  
Yet within it is an essence.  
This essence is quite genuine.  
(Lao Tzu 1985: 26)

In...an economy of universal printers, printing out a rhetoric of expressions and of things, all goods would be essentially intellectual goods (that is, embodiments of intangible designs) and all property, excluding space and the self, would be essentially intellectual property (as it is already in virtual worlds, though there including virtual space and possibly also the virtual self). (Beebe 2010: 836)

### ***Seikatsu bunka* – genealogy of a concept and the lifestyle business**

In January 1941, the philosopher Miki Kiyoshi<sup>215</sup> published an article in the woman's magazine *Fujin Kōron* entitled *Seikatsu bunka-to seikatsu bijutsu*, thereby introducing the term *seikatsu bunka* to the public (Miki 1967). I have translated this as 'living culture'. But the term has a complex history and meaning that leads to opaque English. 'Living culture' is a direct translation of the two words and emphasizes its everyday nature (Harootunian 2000b: 380). This expression is awkward, but has the advantage of calling attention to the special meaning associated with it in Japanese. Miki mentions that *seikatsu bunka* was used, possibly in academic circles such as the Shōwa Research Association, before his article. He did not invent it, although he did introduce it to the public. After his article it was adopted by the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (*taisei yosankai*, 大政翼賛会) as a governance principle of the new order (*shintaisei*). The Cultural Section of this political organization aimed to unify opinion on a wide range of subjects concerned with language, students,

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<sup>215</sup> 1897-1945. Miki studied philosophy under Nishida Kitarō at the University of Kyōto and with Heidegger at Marburg. He was imprisoned in March 1945 for housing a suspected communist friend, and died while still captive in September 1945 during the Allied occupation.

children, women and local culture (Kitagawa 2000). Political control was to be asserted over all aspects of people's lives, from economic to cultural, and a coalition for national unity would circumvent the Diet and have direct access to the Cabinet (Berger 1977: 301-302). This effort has been described as "a fascist vision of social and cultural transformation" that was part of an ideology used to legitimate war-related privation (Brandt 2007: 146-47). In fact, there is considerable disagreement over the disposition of both the Imperial Rule Assistance Association at its inception and its precursor the Shōwa Research Association.

Fletcher (1982) and Harutoonian (2008) argue that all intellectuals who participated in the Shōwa Research Association and Imperial Rule Assistance Association were fascist enablers. A more nuanced history can be found in Parkes (1997) and Harrington (2009). There is a strong tendency among Western interpreters to conclude that no matter what Miki's intentions might have been, the result of his philosophy was to provide an intellectual support for Japanese imperialism. Miki was not one of the Kyōto School contributors to the 1942 Symposium "Overcoming modernity" that Harutoonian (2000b) sets as the key source of justification for war, fascist theory and the East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (Koyasu 2008 and Takeuchi 1993). At the root of this project, according to Harutoonian (2000b: 48), was "an overwhelming desire to bring an end to reliance on Western industrial life, with its laws of endless specialization and division, and as a preparatory move to envisaging a time for restoring cultural wholeness." Miki's thought certainly fits within this description, but so does the writing of nearly all intellectuals engaged with these subjects during the pre-war period.<sup>216</sup> The work of those associated with the University of Kyōto philosopher Nishida Kitarō during the inter-war and wartime period was to consider a particularly Japanese form of modernity situated in Asia, rather than one dependent upon the West. (Arisaka 1996:82). Nishida's own writings are so elusive on political subjects that he has been classified as everything from ultranationalist to anti-nationalist liberal, and he has been continuously attacked from both left and right (*ibid.*: 87).

The original Imperial Rule Assistance Association, formed in 1940 by Prime Minister Konoe after the dissolution of all parties in the Diet, while initially reformist in intent, was quickly purged of all non-conservative members, such as Miki, and converted to a party of national

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<sup>216</sup> As Jameson (1971: 82) notes, "if nostalgia as a political motivation is most frequently associated with Fascism, there is no reason why a nostalgia conscious of itself, a lucid and remorseless dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of some remembered plenitude, cannot furnish as adequate a revolutionary stimulus as any other: the example of Benjamin is there to prove it."



unity that aimed to tighten control over public life and prepare Japan and its East Asian bloc for economic self-sufficiency (Berger 1988: 146-147 and Colegrove 1941: 8, 14-15). *Seikatsu bunka* as a concept was transformed from its original aim of using state authority to help workers and peasants into a tool for war mobilization, and thus became a taboo expression until the 1970s.

In Miki's formulation, *seikatsu bunka* had three essential elements: it implied active, creative engagement; it was not just for the elite; and it was concerned with everyday matters. Miki contrasted this view with ideas about culture that were associated with civilization – something passively transmitted in the work of genius artists who engaged in fine arts. These ideas were expressed in a number of popular articles, such as *gijutsu to bunka* (1937), *bunka taisakuron* (1940), *iei tabigokoro*, and *tensairon* (1941).<sup>217</sup> Miki saw *seikatsu bunka* reflected in the items of daily life that were actively used and produced by ordinary people – food, drink, tableware, furniture, clothing, colloquial speech, and “the landscape you can see out your window” (Miki 1968: 16-18). Like many others, he was concerned with the aspect of modern society by which “the natural and cultural landscape is replaced by a mechanical one” (Uchida 2004: 105) and how this was related to the development of creative individuals. He argued that genius was a universal possibility in man and could be brought forth, depending upon the socially and historically determined environment. Technology was not just something for the elite; it was developed on the basis of community activity (Hatsuyama 2004). The development of technology arises from distress (*kyūhaku*, 窮迫); it is a lack of things that enables technology to progress and people with knowledge about things become creators (Miki 1967: 396-397).<sup>218</sup> Democracy consisted in the creative activity of individuals (*seikatsusha*, i.e., people making a living), supported by their society, and was not just a political system. The introduction of mechanisms of mass production obstructed people's access to knowledge from direct contact with the material they worked with, isolated them from society, and, thereby weakened their creative potential. Miki published a series of articles on Marxism and historical materialism in 1927-1928, and in 1930 translated *The*

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<sup>217</sup> These can be found in vols. 13, 14 and 17 of Miki (1967-68). The above titles translate as ‘Technology and culture’, ‘Cultural policy’, ‘Travel while staying at home’, and ‘Concerning the notion of genius’.

<sup>218</sup> Note how close Miki comes to the argument in Heidegger (2009 [1954]:318-319) about technology being linked to a bringing forth of truth (*alētheia*) enabled by the expert knowledge of the artisan. Although Heidegger wrote his article after Miki's death, his approach is grounded in the much earlier concern for being-in-the-world, with which Miki was familiar (Heidegger 2005 [1927]: 78 passim).

*German Ideology*, which established his reputation as one of Japan's leading Marxist theorists (Tairako 2008: 14) His passages on the relation of people to productive processes are consistent with arguments from *The German Ideology* (Marx and Engels 2004: 42): "As individuals express their life, so they are. What they are, therefore, coincides with their production, both with what they produce and how they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production." Like Marcuse (2006 [1928]) writing at roughly the same time, Miki believed that praxis was at the core of Marxist ontology, and that Marxism was a theory of historical action (Tairako 2008: 18 ).

In contrast to *seikatsu bunka* was the slightly older term *bunka seikatsu*, which can be translated as cultured life. The contrast is not equivalent in any way to the high culture/popular culture views of Gans (1999). *Bunka seikatsu* represented Western modernism. It was socially exclusive, and in Miki's view somewhat useful, but not superior to *seikatsu bunka*. The latter is not 'popular culture' in the sense it does not necessarily imply mainstream (vs. elite), and it is the opposite of mass production; it emphasizes local difference and particularity, and unlike the concept of popular culture in Miller (1991), it is not consumption-based. It does not directly relate to media or entertainment. Definitions in this semantic space are problematic in English as well. Ivy (1993:239) says that many consider popular culture as a spontaneously arising, communally-based culture of 'the masses.'

The concept of *bunka seikatsu* was introduced during the Taisho period (1912-1926) as a marketing term for certain Western products and design elements, such as 'culture home' or 'culture food.'<sup>219</sup> These were promoted as offering possibilities for "rational, efficient living" (Harootunian 2000b: 98). Miki referred to these as "imported fashion items that smelled of butter like the foreign devils", which were considered good because they were novel curiosities, but certainly not things that developed from roots in the daily life of Japanese people (Miki 1967: 387). *Bunka seikatsu* involved the consumption of luxuries, while *seikatsu bunka* concerned the production and use of essentials. Miki notes that the proliferation of objects associated with 'culture' occurred in the Taisho period almost in response to the concept of 'civilization' (*bunmei*), which was frequently used in the Meiji

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<sup>219</sup> Morimura Kōichi, who was active in the 1920s in founding women's schools, was particularly influential in promoting interest in Western construction methods and building design (Terade 1987). He established the *Bunka seikatsu kenkyūkai* (Cultured Life Research Society) in 1922 and began publication of a monthly magazine, *Bunka seikatsu* that ultimately aimed to teach efficiency to housewives on the basis of Western models of living.

period (1868-1912).<sup>220</sup> Morris-Suzuki (1997: 66 and 76) asserts that the Japanese idea of culture during this pre-war time oscillated from being imported novelties to the everyday way of life of society. But this is far too simple; the concepts used here were grounded in semantic fields that did not isolate ‘culture’ by itself as an independent thing and there were multiple, overlapping references. Morris-Suzuki uses culture as we would in contemporary English; it can be, as Williams (1983) showed, either ideal or ordinary, an object for the elite or a way of life for the masses. But the word *bunka* tended to be used more like an adjective – a quality, which implied newness, Western origin and efficiency. Sand (2000: 99) claims that ‘culture’ as a prefix to various goods was seen often as a reaction to the Meiji-era, state-centred ideology in favour of individual lifestyle choice during a time when middle-class consumers emerged with a taste for cosmopolitan modernity. The Taishō and early Shōwa era, somewhat like the Weimar period in Germany from the World War One until the market crash, was a relatively liberal interlude between an authoritarian period of state-formation and a totalitarian period geared for war. While the earlier Meiji era stressed industrial production to catch up with the West (*seisan*), middle-class, urban consumption was a feature that appeared in late Taishō and attracted much comment at the time. The new style, which indicated a greater propensity to consume ‘luxury’ items, included elements that cannot be considered Western; polished white rice, for example, became a required item in everyday ‘civilized’ diets throughout Japan from the late Meiji and Tashō periods, although it had been increasingly important from even before the Tokugawa era (Francks 2009: 90 and Hanley 1991:683). The new urban styles, which were exhibited theatrically on the streets of Japan’s major cities particularly after the Kanto earthquake of 1923, were catalogued by the architect Kon Wajirō in a form of study he termed ‘modernology’ (*kōgengaku*, 考現学). This was conceptualized as an archeological folklore of contemporary urban life (Kon 1986 [1927]). His patient investigation of new styles, mixed together with older ones in everyday public view, is the basis for Harootunian’s (2000a: 118) claims about the uneven industrialization and different ‘modalities of time’ evident then. Modernism as a concept of order and rationality took an aesthetic turn in the Taishō era, where people were envisaged moving in orderly ways through “bright, clear, neat, artificially controlled spaces” (Narusawa 1997: 236). Kon was very concerned with the particularities of place and time as materially expressed in the details of style and fashion, including dress, buildings and objects of daily

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<sup>220</sup> Gluck (1987: 254-255) notes that the concept of ‘civilization’ began the Meiji period as an unusual, foreign word, but had become part of the ruling ideology of progress by the end of the period.

use (*shojihin*, 所持品), which he inventoried. The ‘order’ he found was complex. The penetration of new styles of behaviour as expressed in the details of consumption reminds us of the somewhat similar Arcades Project of Benjamin, although Benjamin did extensive digging in printed text while Kon limited his work to observation and drawing.<sup>221</sup> Both were interested in cafes as places to watch for the details of urban fashion and believed that these were established partly for the viewing of street theatre (Kawazoe 1994). The consumer society with concern for novel luxuries was not overturned by wartime policies that attempted to encourage savings and define the ideal relation between gender and nation (Garon 2000 and Wilson 2006). Like *seikatsu bunka*, *bunka seikatsu* was aimed, not exclusively, but primarily at women. *Bunka seikatsu* was promoted in women’s magazines, notably *Shufu no tomo*.<sup>222</sup> It was seen at the time as a threat to gender roles (*ibid.*: 114)

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<sup>221</sup> Exhibitions of Kon’s sketches and drawing of these objects, and his work on farm houses, have been popular in recent years (Kawazoe 2009). His field notebooks are held at Kōgakuin University Library, Shinjuku:

<http://www.lib.kogakuin.ac.jp/collection/kon/kenbunyacho.html>

<sup>222</sup> ‘The homemaker’s friend’ magazine (主婦之友), begun in 1917. There is now an enormous publishing industry devoted to housewife/ woman’s lifestyle, with specialized magazines that focus on particular details of taste. The market has fragmented to a large extent and general magazines for women on the old model have mostly gone out of business and have been replaced by specialized publications. For example, *Shufu no seikatsusha* publishes twelve different magazines for women, including *Nachurira*, a quarterly for adults who want to dress naturally: <http://www.shufu.co.jp/magazine/naturela/index.html>. Probably the magazine closest in tune to the Gungendō lifestyle concept is the very specialized *nid*. Its objective is to ‘cherry-pick the best of Japan, particularly domestically produced crafts and foods that are not so well known these days’:

[http://www.nidnet.jp/about\\_nid.html](http://www.nidnet.jp/about_nid.html)

Tanaka (1998: 117) finds the tone of all women’s magazines to be prescriptive to the point of condescension; popular magazines tell women bluntly what to do and what not to do. Silverberg (2006: 143-144) finds the same tone even in the early issues of *Shufu no tomo* and writes that it was specifically aimed at telling the housewife-consumer what to do. Frederick (2006: 84) says it was filled with “stifling prescriptions” and gave unqualified support to fascism. Although magazines have changed over the years to emphasize enjoyment rather than responsibility and technical efficiency, they still can be seen as promoting the basic idea that being a housewife should be a full-time profession and knowledge of how to consume is a fundamental part of this job (Hendry 1993). Several people in Ōmori told me they believe women can ‘destabilize’ bureaucracy; administrators feel so uncomfortable in dealing with women on civic issues that they cannot act in their normal manner and lose the ability to get their agenda’s accepted. For this reason, women are seen as potentially powerful weapons in contentious negotiations with public bodies, such as the Ōmori school and the regulation of the World Heritage site. There have been certain narrow areas of activity where local women have acted to provide decisions on the disposal of Iwami Ginzan, but a review of the numerous committees formed to promote, organize and manage the property shows that overwhelmingly participants are male. The sprinkling of a few women is conspicuous.

because it encouraged the female pursuit of handcrafts (*shugei*), made home decoration an object for female distinction and, at the same time, occurred with the appearance of the liberated ‘modern girl’, classically portrayed in Tanizaki’s novel *Chijin no ai* (1924) (Teasley 2005 and Silverberg 1992b). However, magazines such as these were politically quite conservative and supported state policy throughout the period up to and including the war.

After the war, *seikatsu bunka*, because of its association with the government’s authoritarian policies, was a proscribed expression. In the 1950s, other programmes were established, such as the ‘New Life Movement’, which aimed at coordinating the home activities of women with the corporate work ethic for men (Gordon 1997). But by the mid-1970s, *seikatsu bunka*, with a meaning similar to Miki’s original usage, began to creep back into certain prefectural efforts to stimulate local activities. By the early 1980s, it was widely used by corporations and administrative bodies, which began to write about ‘the *seikatsu bunka* industry’ and established many *seikatsu bunka* research institutes (Saitō and Itō 1996: 303). From the late 1980s, local governments began to introduce legislation to promote arts. This movement was aware of the *Soziokultur* concept in Germany. This was a social reform movement in West Germany that began in the late 1960s and is best known from the work of Glaser and Stahl (1986 [1974]) and Hilmar Hoffmann (1984), the former Frankfurt City Councilor (Klein 2009: 179-180). One of the features of *Soziokultur* is to provide support for local arts and culture, and make such activities available to a wide range of people.

Local governments took the lead in developing *seikatsu bunka* programs. These were often coordinated with activities at public halls (*kōminkan*) in each town, and later would be the subject of public works investment in ‘culture centres.’ In 1997, Dazaifu City, for example, passed an ordinance for the promotion of culture which set forth a program of cooperation between government and citizens, explicitly stating that “the government should not intervene in the cultural activities of citizens, but should broadly support such efforts” (Itō 2001: 193). By 2001, *seikatsu bunka* was incorporated, in a limited way, as one of many items which the nation pledged to support in the Fundamental Law for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts, although here the direct reference in the Law was to the tea ceremony, flower arrangement and calligraphy.<sup>223</sup> These were activities that Miki purposely excluded from *seikatsu bunka* because, for him, they were cultural forms related to the liberal arts

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<sup>223</sup> 文化芸術振興基本法, Article 12. See: [http://www.ron.gr.jp/law/law/bunka\\_ki.htm](http://www.ron.gr.jp/law/law/bunka_ki.htm).

(Uchida 2004: 366). The restriction to traditional arts in the Law is idiosyncratic, and other governmental bodies tend to redefine the term to cover a much broader range of activities. Hyōgo Prefecture, for example, writes that *seikatsu bunka* comprises “all the necessities concerned with improving the quality and manner of life” (Hyōgo Prefecture 2004: 29). The idea of “necessities” is here expressed as *ishokujū* (衣食住), which literally means clothing, food and shelter. This is the standard referent for the contents of *seikatsu bunka* and harkens back to Miki’s original usage. The national government’s extreme sensitivity to the use of words related to cultural policy still reflects the wartime experience. In most official documents, there is a tendency not to use terms such as ‘cultural policy’ (*bunka taisaku*), and the preferred expression is ‘promotion of culture and the arts’ (*bunka geijutsu shinkō*) and ‘artistic life’ (*geijutsu seikatsu*) (Fujino 2002: 67).

During the 1980s, while *seikatsu bunka* took on a new prominence in policies aimed at organizing local home life, a parallel concept of ‘corporate culture’ (*kigyō bunka*) began to appear in regard to life in the business world. The former Ministry of Trade and Industry (MITI) was a proponent of both concepts (Saitō and Itō 1996: 305). Corporate culture was envisaged as something that could be promoted by the establishment of unique identities reflected in products that were differentiated from those of competitors, and as a management strategy that could energize the workforce (Umezawa 1990). Management strategy books from the early 1980s emphasized how ‘excellent’ companies used and created organizational cultures that gave them competitive advantages, and Japanese companies were often given as examples (Alvesson 2002). Moreover, at the same time, it was realized that corporations could use the idea of *seikatsu bunka* as an area for business development; MITI even established a statistical category to track growth in the ‘*seikatsu bunka*-related industries’ (Saitō and Itō 1996: 308), which included an interesting assortment of product fields and was planned to be one of the leading industries of the twenty-first century. These fields included “craft designs and interior furnishings that derive from traditional or local culture but blend well with contemporary lifestyles; creative apparel and fashion; products that promote health and safety by being ‘kind to people’ (*hito-ni yasahii*); leisure businesses that aimed to create new value and satisfy individual needs; ‘soft’ industries that allow people to enjoy arts and culture locally; family services that promote participation in sports, arts and the realization of a gender-equal society; and lifetime learning that meets the needs of the elderly for self-development” (MITI 1994: 19-23). MITI believed that such domestically based industries

were appropriate for the changing structure of Japan's economy, with factors such as the aging of society, strong yen, and public finances given a prominent part in these considerations. MITI aimed to stimulate the economy (*keizai-no kasseika*) by helping to promote new businesses, products and services that would be both useful and attractive. In this respect, *seikatsu bunka* came to represent innovation, creativity, and new activities, while in some ways also recalling older traditions and ties to local places. This idea of a more local orientation for the economy, emphasizing home life in rural areas, has been contrasted with the globalization of major cities, especially Tōkyō, since the late 1980s by the Economic Planning Agency (1989).

This was a vision of Japan's post-modern economy and society as made up of a fragmented demand pattern for items originating from various times and places, and associated with diverse interests, rather than one based on a mass middle-class society, which, for example, was overwhelmingly oriented to the acquisition of televisions, washing machines and refrigerators during the late 1950s and early 1960s. These were the 'three sacred treasures' (*sanshu-no jingi*, 三種の神器), a reference to sword, jewel and mirror, which were the Imperial treasures (Takeda 2008: 104-106, 98). The second wave of demand, starting in the mid-1960s, was for colour televisions, air conditioning and cars. Diffusion of these products grew explosively, from single digits to over 90 percent of households within five years of the upswing's start. Unlike the United States, however, the increase in consumption during the high-growth years was accompanied by higher savings as well in Japan, even though there were warnings that the country was 'flaunting its consumption' (見せびらかし消費) and should not take American practice as a model (Garon 2006: 191, Horioka 1993: 259). There was wide agreement that balance between savings and consumption was the best course. The idea of balance is found throughout textbooks on home economics – women are encouraged to keep records of income and expenses and balance their household finances the way companies do, and provide balance in diet, etc. Political wrangling over the savings and consumption policy balance was complex, and from 1960 succeeding prime ministers seemed to alternate in their emphasis (Heim 2005: 162-165). Encouragement of consumption only became official policy in 1986 and the release of the Maekawa Report, although even at that time the intent was lukewarm and only set forth because of foreign pressure (Takeda 2008: 235). Consumption was not directly targeted; the goal was to expand domestic demand (*naiju kakudai*, 内需拡大) (Yamamura 1987: 431-438).

Garon (2006) argues that the idea of frugality has persisted since the Edo period and is constantly invoked to offset the rhetoric of consumption. Francks (2009), on the other hand, emphasizes a powerful urge to consume and circumvent official policies since the Edo Period. One of the examples she gives (*ibid.*: 45) is the ‘chic’ eighteenth-century trend known as *iki*, which was partly based on the practices of certain geisha and connoisseurs (*tsū*) in the pleasure quarters of the time, who revealed signs of fiscal improvidence in the semi-concealed details of their clothing.<sup>224</sup> Such behaviour can be observed in woodblock prints, but, otherwise, the sensibilities related to *iki* were considered long lost until some modern efforts at linking it with trends in today’s fashion.

### ***Seikatsu bunka* as gendered domain**

A review (Saitō and Itō 1996: 310) of the current status of *seikatsu bunka* states that it is ‘regulated’ (*kitei*, 規定) by the corporate culture, i.e., Japan is still governed by ideas from male-dominated corporate hegemony, but *seikatsu bunka* can provide relief and, potentially, an alternative. On the other hand, it has become useful to encourage a rival, female-oriented realm of activity that is partly appealing because it is a counter-culture that deflects attention. Part of this counter-cultural programme incorporates concern for the environment and extends, for example, into products such as organic foods, which are said to provide a healthy and rich (*yutakana*) life. Ultimately the division of labour supports roles whereby women are tied to the home and men to their companies. This is particularly the case when the prevailing image of *seikatsu bunka* becomes effectively a full-time occupation that precludes activity away from home and consumption. And the gender division of labour between home and work is a central factor behind gender inequality, both in economic and identity stratification (Cohen 2004: 239). In cross-nation comparisons, Japan is an extreme case of gender stratification, where the state promotes the role of women as wives and mothers who remain at home, and is unresponsive to gender equality concerns. Chang (2000: 1665) categorizes Japan as ‘traditional family-centered’, implying relatively low levels of state intervention for equal access to work or substantive intervention such as services for working mothers, although there is evidence of minor change. Unsurprisingly, more gender equality occurs in

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<sup>224</sup> The classic text is Kuki (1967 [1930]). Since Kuki, *iki* has been used as an example of an untranslatable and uniquely Japanese aesthetic, although his inspirations for the study were Parisian fashions and Heidegger (Ōkubo 2008: 139).



Japanese families where women work full-time. The urban middle-class wife/mother is a stereotype of a woman in Japan, but a statistical sample tends to confirm this stereotype.

Girls are trained in the basics of *seikatsu bunka* from an early age, and this programme is continued through their lives. It is revealing that *seikatsu bunka* has become an academic subject overwhelmingly for female students at junior colleges, often within home economics departments (*kaseigaku*, 家政学), which began in the 1970s in Japan as ‘domestic science’, or as ‘human science’ (*seikatsu kagaku*, 生活科学). Elias (2008) gives a positive view of the intentions of the origins of home economics in America. Some supporters believe a women’s enclave within academics is worthwhile, that home economics is more than glorified housekeeping and devotees should not be seen as victims (Vincenti 1997: 318). Similarly, opinion is divided over what kind of role model Martha Stewart represents.<sup>225</sup> Does she encourage the spending of all one’s time cleaning the house and baking cookies, or is she primarily a successful corporate entrepreneur (Cohen 2005)? In either circumstance, she provides an argument for the penetration of corporate control of the domestic space through popular media and entertainment. Matthews (1987: 171) notes that home economics put the home back into the cash nexus and by celebrating the marketplace actually lowered the status of (middle-class) women when compared to the Victorian cult of domesticity. The latter, representing an extreme gender division of labour, was described by Veblen (2009 [1899]: 230): “the good and beautiful life then, assigns to the woman a ‘sphere’ ancillary to the activity of the man; and it is felt that any departure from her assigned round of duties is unwomanly.” McCracken (2000: 249-251) writes that originally home economics in the United States was considered necessary because women were no longer learning how to cook, garden and sew by their mothers, and the loss of domestic skill, which was accompanied by mass produced household goods, undermined her moral authority. However, the methods advocated by the new discipline were modeled on industry and increasingly made the housewife into the domestic equivalent of a factory worker.

Home economic programs include such subjects as nutrition, psychology, and family studies. In some respects, this course is a continuation of a home economics (*kateika*, 家庭科) component that has been part of the compulsory school curriculum since 1947. Classes in

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<sup>225</sup> The Japanese counterpart of Martha Stewart and Delia Smith is Kurihara Harumi (Barton 2004). See: <http://harumi.fusosha.co.jp/>. For a neo-Weberian analysis of celebrity status and its relation to capitalism, see Kurzman et al. (2007).

sewing (*saihō*, 裁縫) for girls had been introduced in primary school in 1879. This was later expanded into ‘home sewing’ (*kaji saihō*, 家事裁縫) in advanced primary and middle schools.<sup>226</sup> Today, beginning in the fifth grade of primary school, home economics is required for both boys and girls. This subject is split into a technology tract and a home economics tract in middle school, and into technology, home and life tracts in high school. Although since the 1989 curriculum reforms the goal has been to treat this course on a gender neutral basis, in fact, division by gender from middle school with boys in technology and girls in home-related tracts is extreme, although not automatic placement as it was before the reform.<sup>227</sup> Home economics is not a subject for university entrance examinations, is considered practical or vocational, and in high school is non-academic. For that reason it has relatively low status, although some of the curriculum is equivalent to material also found in social studies. Textbooks tend to emphasize the practical application of skills in making food and clothing, rather than more abstract consideration of how one should live.<sup>228</sup> However, a part of the curriculum can best be described as teaching ‘proper manners’ (*seikatsu shūkan*, 生活習慣) for living at home. This means, for example, how to arrange slippers when going in and out of the toilet, the safe use of knives, or the details of recycling. But it also can concern how to organize items in a kitchen, including some historical background on how the room in which food is prepared has changed in Japan, or why Japanese chopsticks are different than those in China or Korea (Hirai 1996). The latter topics, in particular, are considered to fall within the current understanding of *seikatsu bunka*, but the more prosaic matters of how to act in relation to the home are also relevant. These subjects are normally presented as models of the traditional way to behave in Japan; there is a correct form of behaviour that should be part of everyone’s common sense (*jōshiki*, 常識). Such advice on

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<sup>226</sup> ‘Home sewing’ in the more advanced sections included instruction in domestic hygiene, finance, childcare and the necessities of clothing, food and shelter. During the war, home sewing classes taught the virtues of thrift and how to economize on resources.

<sup>227</sup> See the Ministry of Education outline of the history of home economics courses in primary and secondary schools at: [http://www.mext.go.jp/b\\_menu/shingi/chousa/kokusai/002/shiryu/020801ef.htm](http://www.mext.go.jp/b_menu/shingi/chousa/kokusai/002/shiryu/020801ef.htm).

<sup>228</sup> Gender bias has been found to be much stronger in the images in these textbooks than in the text (Onda 2001).

the techniques of living at home is sustained after and outside of formal education through various media, and is comprehensively tied to the retail industry.<sup>229</sup>

### **Commercial organization**

When you visit any large shopping centre or department store in Japan and consult the store guide, there is usually a category for ‘daily goods’ (*seikatsu zakka*) or sometimes ‘lifestyle goods’ (*seikatsu yōhin*). This is a category that encompasses every type of product not clearly belonging to other specialties, such as women’s clothing. *Zakka* means ‘sundry goods’ for daily life. Before the 1980s, such items were normally sold in hardware stores or kitchenware shops (*kanamonoya*, *aramonoya*). But the nature of ‘sundry goods’ has changed when applied to today’s merchandise, because, when you look more closely, the life-related shops sell women’s clothing as well as many other things. Usually, each shop has some organizing brand strategy that positions it within the retail space. It is the strategy and how it presents a brand image, rather than the goods themselves, that distinguishes such shops. All make an explicit appeal to some clearly defined lifestyle image or distinction (*shumisei*, 趣味性). Perhaps the largest company representing *seikatsu zakka* is Mujirushi Yōhin (branded as ‘Muji’, literally ‘the no-brand,’ outside Japan), which sells everything from clothes and electronic products to home furnishings and prefabricated houses<sup>230</sup> as simple, basic goods of reasonable price and quality, and minimalist design (Limnander 2008). The strategy is said to be somehow inspired by Zen Buddhist concepts of less-is-more and understatement (Hall and Woyke 2007); owning a product that is unlabeled and logo-free presents the status of a ‘secret brand’ (Gogoi 2005). But Muji fits well with the idea that there is a contradiction within Japanese consumption; there is guilt associated with the acquisition of new things and a balance between consumption and frugality is moral, while waste of any kind is not.<sup>231</sup> The

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<sup>229</sup> See Zenkoku (2007) for a typical home manual, produced by the Japan Association of Consumer Affairs Specialists. It explains the techniques (*waza*) for maintaining proper form in daily life as if described in high school home economics textbooks.

<sup>230</sup> Modern two-story homes with 109m<sup>2</sup> floor space can be bought on-line, including assembly, for about ¥20 million (about £150,000): <http://www.muji.net/store/pc/user/ie/kinoie.jsp>. The holding company for Muji is Ryōhin Keikaku: <http://ryohin-keikaku.jp/>.

<sup>231</sup> Moral aspects of Japanese aesthetics are explored by Saitō (2007), who emphasizes two design principles: concern for the innate properties of objects and responding to human needs. These are obviously quite broad principles, but she stresses that they are of overriding importance through Japan’s history. She does not deal with waste specifically. However, concern for the properties of objects has implied that care should be taken in both their creation and use. In the American context, McCracken (2000: 22-23) writes that the domestic

exploitation of natural resources, and the related consumption of their product, has long been an ecological consideration in Japan for economic, political and, ultimately, religious reasons (Suzuki 1999).<sup>232</sup> *Mottainai* means both wasteful and profane. However, we should not necessarily believe that Muji satisfies a particularly Japanese desire for consumption that appears frugal or caters to cryptic status awareness. The company has successfully opened shops around the world. Moreover, both Japanese (*ibid.*: 163 ) and non-Japanese (Frank 1999) writers have argued that there is a fundamental human motivation to consume based on comparison of goods with things in the past and owned by others.<sup>233</sup> Novelty and envy may drive the modern selection of purchases, but this can take the form both of complete disregard or obsessive concern with price and functionality.

Muji is just one of a great many offerings, however. In a large mall such as the AEON Aruru near Nara, there are 21 different shops under the daily goods listings, including, besides Muji, Mamaikuko (products to wear, eat and make from the daily life of Parisians)<sup>234</sup> and Çayhane (a Turkish tea house-style shop, originating in Yokohama Chinatown, with ethnic clothes and folklore items imported from around the world). All of these are parts of retail chains attempting to carve a niche in a competitive marketplace at a time when consumer spending is weak and deflation persists. Such Japanese lifestyle businesses did not really proliferate until the 1980s. Probably the first one was Sony Plaza, which opened in the Ginza district of Tōkyō in 1966 as an ‘American drugstore’ that sold imported items for daily use. Meanwhile, Habitat opened its first shop in 1964 in London with the idea of selling good quality modern furniture at affordable prices. Terence Conran did this because he could not find shops willing to sell the furniture he designed (*Architecture* 1997). As the market for foreign

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aesthetic is a kind of decorative art applied to life, such as in “the skillful making and judging of food, clothing, shelter and other basic human necessities.”

<sup>232</sup> And psychologically, on a more general level it can be associated with the death drive of modernism. Cf. de Lauretis (2003: 548) and Rieff (2006).

<sup>233</sup> Gross (2002: 31-32) describes how every man-made object moves steadily towards the status of junk unless some external consideration of value intervenes, such as rarity or sentiment. The values can either be determined by the market or by an individual’s relationship to an object, but normally nearly all objects lose their value within a generation, are considered worthless rubbish, and reach their terminal state as waste. In pre-modern times, effort was made to extend the life of objects, not only to prolong their use-value but because sentiment adhered to each item and disposal as waste in effect cut the relationship with those who made and used it.

<sup>234</sup> The holding company for Mamaikuko is Ōsaka-based System 14, which says its shops will create ‘living culture’ (*kurashi bunka*, 暮らし文化): <http://www.system14.jp/index.html>.

houseware and furnishings gradually expanded in Japan, several new retail formats that derived some of their strategy from Habitat were introduced. In 1978, the Tōkyū Corporation opened its DIY shop, Tōkyū Hands, in Shibuya, Tōkyō. Many larger formats followed in the late 1980s, such as Loft, and, from the 1990s, foreign brands such as Williams-Sonoma and Pier 1 Imports, which both failed and left Japan, and Ikea. In recent years, there have been a number of companies entering the field of ‘Japanese daily goods’ (*wazakka*, 和雜貨), such as ape japanesque,<sup>235</sup> as formats have become more specialized and contained in smaller outlets. The objects sold by such shops provide interior design accents for urban customers. These include, for example, hand towels (*tenugui*), small boxes, and especially ceramic tea cups. Ikiya, a company based in Tōkyō, has tried to avoid such common items and attempts to sell things that convey the “iki” style (chic and refined, 粋) represented in Edo and made famous by Kuki (1967).<sup>236</sup> Both of these companies target female customers in their 30s.

Such customers have grown up by associating imaginary characters and lifestyle.<sup>237</sup> Sanrio began to sell ‘Hello Kitty’ character goods in 1975 (Belson and Bremmer 2003), which was

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<sup>235</sup> This retail venture is a combination of some products that use recognizably Japanese design and European imports that are presented as representing an ‘organic lifestyle’: <http://www.ape-style.com/index.html>.

<sup>236</sup> It is the subsidiary of a slipper manufacturer and tends to offer a large selection of footwear, but also has seasonal products and character goods that use images by the artist Takehisa Yumeji (1884-1934) and Snoopy. The removal of any distinction between fine art and commerce has been vigorously promoted by Murakami Takashi, who has churned out ‘superflat’ brand designs for Louis Vuitton, written a book on art entrepreneurship, and sees himself as an Andy Warhol for the digital age, although also claiming to be heir to a tradition of representation in printmaking and painting that stretches back from before the Edo era into *anime* (Murakami 2006, 2000, and Nagae 2003). Murakami points out that craft and vocational skill (*shokunō*, 職能) are old concepts in Japan but the distinction between applied and fine art was introduced from the West in the late nineteenth century, and therefore his work of commercial craft is well within the national mainstream (Lucken 2005: 303). Kelts (2011: 209-210) argues that Murakami is the brand impresario for the city of Tōkyō; his images are what come to mind for people when they think of the city and his image of the city as two-dimensional superficiality captures its essence, effectively making it a place populated by cartoon figures. Part of the meaning of superflat is the levelling of taste that occurs when various items are presented together. Thus, superflat can be seen to operate in the built environment of Tōkyō when a jumble of old and new structures are found on the same street; any value judgement about one type of building is diluted by its juxtaposition with different historical styles and designs. Such combinations may be even more prevalent in smaller cities where land prices were not as high as in Tōkyō and less systematic development has occurred.

<sup>237</sup> As have nearly everyone, thanks to the global commercial reach of the Disney Corporation. The reproduced cartoon image has been used as a marketing tool since the 1930s and is now ubiquitous, but probably best

the peak of the interest in ‘cute’ (*kawaii*) things (Kinsella 1995). The company began by designing small gifts and by now has moved into the decoration of trains and buses. The importance of the aesthetic concept of ‘cute’ cannot be overstated even now. It is debatable whether in the form of Hello Kitty goods it is a model for female passivity and compliance (Choi 2010), or an anti-social response to the requirements of adulthood, including a rejection of self-discipline, endurance, responsibility, hard work, cooperation and obligation (Kinsella 1995: 221).<sup>238</sup> While the extremely frequent use of the word *kawaii* has diluted its meaning to a vague notion of approval in many cases, virtually any product aimed at female consumers in Japan must be considered in relation to how it positions itself vis-à-vis judgements of ‘cute.’ When combined with a character brand item, ‘cute’ has been compared to a totem for the fantasy family one never had (Allison 2006: 89-91). The internet has spawned an entire industry of cute personification avatars that have been applied to everything from fruit to Twitter icons. These are female in appearance and take the suffix *-tan*, which is a term of endearment and a familiar title used for ‘cute’ characters and pop stars (*aidoru*) that are not necessarily young, and therefore not necessarily those to which *-chan* could be applied although it is related to this children’s word (Asupekuto 2006). Such characters have features

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represented by the ‘fast food toy’ (Phoenix 2006: 32-33), which would seem to be the antithesis of ‘iki.’ Japanese manufacturers have surpassed Disney in bringing their characters out of the movies and triggering “the fantasy of enveloping them into everyday life” as pocket monsters (Allison 2004: 37).

<sup>238</sup> The realm of cuteness in Japanese cultural identity is very complex. Since its beginnings in the 1970s, the meaning of ‘cuteness’ has been transformed, partially through *manga* and *anime*, and it has generated fashion sub-cultures such as Gothic Lolitas, which can look something like Victorian children (Winge 2008 and Yomota 2008). The apparent ‘cuteness’ of Beatrix Potter’s Peter Rabbit has made the English Lake District, his home, so popular with Japanese tour groups that a surcharge is being considered, and the most popular British fashions for Japanese visitors are said to be Laura Ashley and Burberry (because it is promoted by Harry Potter) (Adams 2010). Morris-Suzuki (2005: 183) notes that “the expansion of Japanese tourism to the capital cities of Europe went hand in hand with the fashion for teenage girls’ comics set in the age of the *Ancien Régime*, the French Revolution or the Napoleonic Wars” which offered enormous scope for adventure and glamorous romance. The entire point of such fashion whirl is that social reality has become entirely commoditized and fanaticized. Such style management recalls Eagleton’s (1985: 62) point that “the commodity is less an image in the sense of a ‘reflection’ than an image of itself, its entire material being devoted to its own self-presentation; and in such a condition the most representational art becomes, paradoxically, the anti-representational artifact.” In Japan, Lolitas are an important part of a much wider fascination with male cultural production and consumption of rebel schoolgirl characters, which have dominated the media “to such a degree that it is not possible to separate the epochal expansion of the media industries in the 1980s and 1990s from the driving attraction to these cultural caricatures” (Kinsella 2006: 65), which she considers emblems of the threat of modernization.

in common with figures in comic books (*manga*) and are thought to have originated in the *otaku* geek creativity of the computer district of Akihabara, which is also the centre of “pirated” software (*kaizokuban*, 海賊版) and illegal copying of all kinds (Etō 2008). It is said to epitomize the “culture of reproduction” (*fukuseibunka*, 複製文化) (Endō 2009). *Shimotsuma monogatari* (Takemoto 2004) is the novel, and later *manga* and film,<sup>239</sup> that captured nearly all of these elements: the ‘cute’ Lolita’ style, supported by the sale of counterfeit designer goods, comes into contact with a motorcycle gang.

Apparel is an important constituent of the specialty retail business and merges into product lines of lifestyle companies as part of the standard offering of clothing, food and shelter-related goods. But the manufacture of textiles that supports this industry has virtually collapsed in Japan during recent years as production has increasingly been outsourced to elsewhere in Asia. Ancillary businesses, such as textile machinery, have also suffered, moved overseas or drastically changed their production processes. Natural fibre production, in particular, has fallen in absolute and relative terms.<sup>240</sup> Partly this is due to the rise of synthetic textiles, but it also has to do with the displacement of domestic supplies with imported material. High-tech synthetics are a particular Japanese area of expertise, and although still a relatively small part of the total market, they offer an alternative to older materials. Latour (2005: 39-40) uses the contrast between natural and synthetic textiles as an example of social

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<sup>239</sup> Released with English subtitles as *Kamikaze Girls* in 2006. The ‘Lolita’ heroine dreams she was born in Rococo eighteenth-century Versailles, but unfortunately finds herself in surreal twenty first-century Ibaraki Prefecture and confronted by a masculine female stereotype from the gang, who becomes her best friend. The heaven and hell described here is highly stylized. Outlaw motorcycle gangs and the ‘*yankii*’ fashion they pursue from the 1950s are just as much a consumption selection for a nostalgic lifestyle now as lace-covered Lolitas. On the evolution of biker style as a subculture of consumption, see Schouten, Martin and McAlexander (2007), and Igarashi (2009) for ‘*yankii*’.

<sup>240</sup> Production of natural fibres in Japan fell from 758 million tons (60% of total textile output) in 1960 to 194 million tons (10.6%) in 2000 (Kohama 2007: 39). The continued reduction in the production and demand for natural fibre relative to synthetic is unusual among developed countries (Schneider 1994). The American middle class, for example, has been in virtual revolt against synthetic apparel for some time, although as recently as the 1970s nylon and colourful, permanent-press fabrics were considered technological miracles. Very high-end Japanese synthetics still project this image (Handley 2000: 128). The numbers of workers employed in the Japanese textile industry fell proportionately, and the entire textile industry has been undergoing a process of structural adjustment under government supervision for a long time (Ike 1980). Demand for textiles and apparel collapsed during the 2009 recession, with sales in most categories falling by 20%.

mediators, which for him means substances that transform the meanings they are supposed to convey because of the physical nature of their composition; without differences in touch, colour and sheen attributable to their chemistry and manufacture, social differences associated with the different materials would not exist. Because it is now possible to produce textiles in an enormous range of qualities, the social consequence is the generation of extreme fragmentation of social distinction and taste.

Product design, such as for apparel in post-modern Japan, does not focus on older notions of demographic market segment based on age, gender, class, or other traditional categories; it attempts to link the physical materiality of the product with social groups that can cut across those categories and are assembled by an aesthetic response. However, since the mid-1970s, geodemographics has used computer analysis of social data to map space to class based on hundreds of variables. Even very fragmented data on lifestyle can be discriminated to fall in clusters that have identifiable characteristics (Weiss 2000). Software can now be used to detect relatively subtle patterns in the data and marketing demographers speak in terms of ‘automated spatiality’ (Burrows and Gane 2006). This analysis is used by marketing consultants to find correlations between location, as small as the average 14 houses in a UK post code, and consumption trends. Housing type is one important variable. Microarea marketing tools are available in Japan, both in the form of standard global packages, such as MOSAIC and Chomonicx, and in domestically developed programs which are connected to geographic positioning software. Japanese locations are said to be less homogeneous than in the US or UK, i.e., there is less correlation among the social variables defining each consumption type.<sup>241</sup> And Japanese postcodes are not as finely defined as in some markets, i.e., they lack ‘granularity.’ One salient feature in this analysis for Japan is the divide between rural, self-sufficient groups and urban flat-dwelling commuters.<sup>242</sup> Japan is considered relatively undeveloped for this process.

One of the common uses for geodemography is to find locations for shops that will have surrounding consumers interested in a particular product. In the case of Gungendō, shop location is determined by whether a neighborhood feels comfortable to people visiting from Ōmori; the environment should reflect values from the base village and not just be positioned

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<sup>241</sup> See <http://www.intage.co.jp/service/theme/retail/>.

<sup>242</sup> For discussion of problems of applying geodemographics in various countries, see Harris (2005: 187-205).



close to a customer demographic. Their original attempt to have a shop in Tōkyō was a disaster because the location, Roppongi, an area of flashy nightlife popular with foreigners, was the worst possible in terms of its conflicting image. By positioning their shops away from such urban glitter, Gungendō hopes that customers will make an effort to travel distances to experience something different than their own daily routine. In other words, the strategy is almost the opposite of the common marketing wisdom of finding sites close to customers; being in a hard to reach location with limited access is actually preferred by Gungendō (Newman and Cullen 2001: 218-219). This policy worked well with the initial shop in Ōmori, which was so far off the normal tourist routes when it was established that only by word of mouth and special arrangements could customers visit. Since World Heritage, the original shop has suffered a loss of those customers who wanted to go to a special place away from crowds. Similarly, the company located its Kyōto and Tōkyō branches in non-commercial districts that retain many older buildings. Plans are underway to open a café and shop at the Takao railway station, a place on the very edge of the Tōkyō metropolitan area next to a famous temple and forest. This response can be further organized when the materiality is tied to the genealogy of production – when the appearance of a product is a metaphoric reference to features of its history.

### **Making a business out of a lifestyle**

Iwami Ginza Seikatsu Bunka Kenkyūjo, based in Ōmori, Shimane Prefecture, should be viewed in the above context. It is a company that designs ‘lifestyle goods’, including apparel, accessories, sundries, food items and home furnishings. The source of its creativity is said to be the deep roots it has in the rural community from which most of its employees come, the knowledge they retain of traditional craft practices and daily exposure to the natural world. They design products for themselves and hope others will like them. There is a substantial disconnect between the ideals of the company’s designers and their awareness of how these designs are perceived by customers; there is a constant refrain that customer feedback is lacking and the success or failure of products is considered a mystery, particularly when related to price – the company managers claim they have nearly no sense of how price might influence buying decisions and they are repeatedly surprised when high-priced items sell well or low-priced items sell poorly. While they understand that their values as reflected in their products seem to appeal to certain types of customers, exactly how this works is considered peculiar because customers are primarily living in a very different (urban) environment than

the rural one that the designers feel connected to. Unsystematic efforts are made to question customers about their purchase decisions, and good customers are given special attention, but it should be noted that customer perception of the Gungendō products is considered by the company as virtually unknowable. This divide between fashion production and consumption reflects the independence of consumer tastes from corporate manipulation as found in Miller (2010:33): “Most theories of fashion, most studies of fashion, look to the fashion industry, its organization, pressures and patterns to account for fashion. But actually there is good evidence that most people choose their clothing as much despite as because of that fashion industry. If one glances across the range of clothing actually worn on London underground trains or on the street, things look very different from the fashion magazines that those same people are reading.”<sup>243</sup>

The name of the company -- Iwami Ginzan Seikatsu Bunka Kenkyūjo -- is important. It situates the business in a particular place, Iwami Ginzan, says that it is engaged in the ‘life culture’ field, and is a research institute. The last designation specifically distances the organization from the world of corporate values. This title is quite a mouthful, yet all employees use it when answering the telephone, even though the unusual combination of references sometimes leads to confusion. The brand used on products designed and sold by the company is Gungendō (群言堂). This is also the name used for their twenty-seven shops, although all of these prominently display Iwami Ginzan signs near their entrance. The company makes a virtue out of being located in a ‘depopulated place’ (*kasochi*). As mentioned above, such rural backwaters are negatively portrayed in Japanese media as

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<sup>243</sup> Moreover, as Miller (2001: 111) states, the idea that one’s possessions, such as home furnishings or clothing, are a direct expression of one’s taste is false. We live with all sorts of things that we simply tolerate or may even dislike. The expression of identity is a process rather than an integrated fact that can be precisely defined and appealed to by marketing, although we do tend to be more concerned with things that are intended for public display. Bourdieu (2002: 416) found clear cases in which subjects refused to be classified or defined by the parameters of his questionnaires. Such evidence only emerges when the subjects are allowed to discuss the appropriateness of the question, and shows that they may view themselves as in flux or undecided on many issues. Very often they think it is inapplicable or irrelevant because, as Miller says, the process is ongoing. Nevertheless, Bourdieu used possessions as symbols of social capital that had fairly fixed positions in French society between 1963 and 1968, linking statistical preference to education and social origin. He did, however, recognize that the snapshot he took at that time was contingent on freezing many moving parts: “Principles of division, inextricably logical and sociological, function within and for the purposes of struggle between social groups; in producing concepts, they produce groups, the very groups which produce the principles and the groups against which they are produced” (*ibid.*: 479).

plagued with problems and in need of some form of policy intervention in order to survive. Ōmori, in spite of the thousands of tourist flocking to its World Heritage site, is still considered a ‘depopulated place’ because of its remote location, vacant houses and potential loss of public facilities such as the primary school.<sup>244</sup> It also has a demographic profile that projects at best a stable level of residents over the coming years. The Gungendō company, however, has turned these characteristics around and finds in them the special creative impulse that enables it to succeed; it links the isolated village life of Ōmori to the source of Japanese creativity and contrasts its style with that of urban Japan and cosmopolitan fashion (Ogiwara 2009: 40).

This strategy of ‘selling the countryside’ and surviving on the basis of a ‘depopulation brand’ is being followed in many other isolated villages in Japan. By being isolated from the pace and pattern of urban living, the ‘authentic’ or ‘primal’ elements of domestic life can be appreciated and translated into products that are consumed in the cities. The rural-urban divide is thus breached by consumption preference; urban consumers seek an alternative to the types of products they otherwise have available. This process can be seen, to an extent, as the reverse of the penetration of digital information networks to the countryside that aims to bring it into conformity with urban market requirements. Because rural access to urban-based communication networks is limited, this is considered as evidence of urban dominance, but it only can be seen this way from the viewpoint that having such access provides some (economic) advantage (Grimes 2001). This is not necessarily the viewpoint of those in the rural areas. However for them to engage in the urban economy and take advantage of what Harvey (2000: 26) terms the ‘spatial fix’ to capitalist over-production, rural enterprise does require the use of urban tools, and thereby becomes implicated in metropolitan practice and

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<sup>244</sup> Although most residents in Ōmori blame the policy of the Board of Education and Ministry of Education for the pressure to close small schools, this may be because the bureaucracy is seen to implement the policy. A different opinion I heard was that the Japan Teachers Union was behind consolidation because it wanted to standardize class size at thirty-five pupils. This forces small schools to close, is accepted as part of the post-war goal of ‘equal access’ to education and allows the insertion of a native English speaker in every school across the country. The Ōda City (2007c: 4) plan for school consolidation calls for a minimum of fifteen students per grade and ideally twenty five students for the first six years; Ōmori Elementary School has a total of fifteen students in 2010. The Ōda Board of Education aims to cut the number of elementary schools in half from the current twenty-two. The school closing issue is the single most salient concern of the village. There are signs on notice boards which say that the children and the local school are the real cultural property of the village and the true treasure in Iwami Ginzan.

value structures. Thus, the flow of products between countryside and city forms a dialectic cycle, ultimately co-opting those in the periphery who engage in such traffic in a manner similar to the creolisation described by Hannerz (1992).<sup>245</sup>

Another term for this type of business is *ikikata sangyō* (生き方産業), or ‘lifestyle industry’ (Inatomi 2006: 183). It is generally believed that the reason Ōmori has retained its attractiveness was exactly because it was left behind as a depopulated village; the road from Ōda bypassed the town, but that allowed the main street in Ōmori to remain narrow, thereby helping to preserve the old buildings along its sides. By not getting developed, it could maintain its traditions and incorporate them naturally in the way people lived. This integrated lifestyle, particularly in its close association to the natural environment, is often considered rare by urban residents and is sought after by some consumers, who seem to have lost what Kwinter (1996: 86) describes as the ‘existential dimension’ of connection to the material and built environment, without which both pleasure in form and an instinct for freedom are weakened.

Since 1991 the Gungendō company has produced an annual ‘spirit’ calendar that features a wide-angle photograph of most of the residents of Ōmori gathered in front of a local landmark. It has a title in English -- “We are here!” The original idea was to refute the image of small rural villages as dying places; i.e., we are proud to live in a small, beautiful village, very happy and healthy. The goal is also to commemorate a piece of history – to use the photograph, as once was done, to mark a special occasion or accomplishment, a rite of passage in which the documentation itself is the ritual (Ben-Ari 1991). The Ōmori tradition has continued long enough that those who were children in the early calendars are now college graduates with their own children. The representation of Ōmori frames a community of people situated in a particular place and time. This strategy of highlighting many aspects of the place and its internal coherence makes the ‘brand’ appeal of Ōmori signify far more than its slogan.<sup>246</sup> These calendars are distributed in town and around the country to friends and

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<sup>245</sup> Hannerz (*ibid.*: 264) describes creolisation as “the confluence of two or more widely separate historical currents which interact in what is basically a center/ periphery relationship” producing a hybrid culture of intrinsically mixed origins. He is primarily concerned with the process on the global level, but it also applies to domestic situations.

<sup>246</sup> Ashworth & Kavaratzis (2009) emphasize that attempts to brand cities often end at selecting a logo or slogan; it is much more effective if there is a comprehensive evaluation of the features of a location and all of the most significant positive aspects are presented.

relatives at New Year's as a greeting and reminder of village life, which persists alongside the new realities of the World Heritage designation and its different definitions of cultural property. The calendar has purposely been designed to present a community identity, where members gather together for both formal and informal socializing.



Figure 26: We are here! Ōmori 2010 calendar photograph

This activity of making a group photograph and emphasizing the daily life of the community does not fit well with official views of village revitalization and tourist promotion. It does not enquire much capital or planning, and is not intended to attract others to the place; it is for the benefit of those who live in the village and as a gift to their friends. Like the New Year's custom of exchanging greetings with *nengajō*, it is an expression of connection and personal relationships. People in the village see the calendar project as an example of how they can derive enjoyment out of little things; there is a belief that lack of resources in a small village is a benefit that enables such group efforts, which would be impossible to organize in cities where everyone is too busy for community engagement. Other trade names used by the company reflect the same sensibility. *Gungendō* is taken from a Chinese expression that refers to an assembly of people that through open discussion are able to determine the best course – grassroots democracy. An earlier name for their main shop in Ōmori was *Bura House*, which came from the Fijian *bula*, used as a greeting such as hello or welcome. The selection of foreign expressions to convey their message was done because it was felt that no

suitable phrase in Japanese held the same sort of nuance. The heavy interaction of the company with village social life blurs the distinction between Ōmori and Gungendō. The two are not quite synonymous, but the overlap of activity is large.

The genesis of the lifestyle business now under these various names began when in 1981 Matsuba Daikichi, who grew up in Ōmori, returned to his parent's house with the wife he met while a student in Nagoya. Daikichi had graduated with a degree in electrical engineering and worked in sales for a confectionary company but he hated the urban life. His family dry-goods business in Ōmori had shrunk together with the village's population. In fact, the shop was really a general store that sold everything from bedding to salt, stamps and cigarettes. A shop in Ōmori still has this characteristic of selling many different products for daily life and carrying tiny inventories of each. There are similar small stores like this throughout the mountains. They are the remnants of family businesses conducted in their spots for generations but now giving way to national chain stores in the larger towns which are reached by automobile. There was no hint in the early 1980s of World Heritage and the fame and popularity that would later descend on the quiet village. In fact, the timing of his return was at the very bottom of its economic fortune.

In order to survive, Daikichi began to collect small craft items made by village women and peddled these at railroad stations in Matsue and Hiroshima. He sold mostly "patchwork," pieces of old rags (*boro* and *hagire*) sewn together and *waraji* sandals. These hand-made products have gradually become rare, as the women who knew how to make them have aged and died out, although a few slippers made from blue and white *boro* occasionally appear at souvenir shops in Ōmori on sale for ¥200. *Boro*, which was primarily made from indigo-dyed cotton fabric but could be from bast fibres collected in the forests such as hemp or wisteria, is still a key material for the aesthetic sensibility that the company purveys because it represents beauty that can be crafted from what many would now treat as waste (Saji 2006 and Koyama 2009). Peasant textiles made from *boro*, such as *sakiori*, which is woven from strips of *boro*, and *sashiko*, which is reinforced work garments that are made from stitched together patches of *boro*, inform the design sense of much of Gungendō's clothing lines, particularly the older ones (Yoshida & Williams 1994: 25 and Koide & Tsuzuki 2009). Straw and bamboo items are another example, where all the by-products of agriculture were used and reused before modern abundance and urbanization. Shreds of cloth were valuable even until the 1950s, and represented the end of the line in textile use, from kimono to apron, wrapping, patching

material and fuel (Brown 2009: 139).<sup>247</sup> Some of the early Bura House brand cloth drink coasters made from *boro* are still used in a coffee shop in Oda City, demonstrating that the concept of reuse virtually until disintegration is still alive in the region.

Craft products were not made originally for sale, but were created to supply the necessities of life and one's own needs. Any available material was employed. Certain types of folk craft became enshrined by the *mingei* movement as art, but this did not extend, until recently, to *boro*, which was considered too much a symbol of the poverty of Japanese peasants (Brandt 2007, Hamada 2006). Gungendō has continuously been interested in finding ways to use discarded items and resurrect older ways of making things -- particularly things that could not be mass produced. The result is best exhibited in the original shop, in Ōmori, which is filled with a playful, Dadaesque assortment of *object trouvé*. Hanging over the main shop's sales counter is a large, weather-beaten board that shows the partial name of an Iranian ship that was washed up on a Shimane beach and found by Daikichi. He named a few retail experiments 'Beachcomber' to highlight the found nature of treasure. He believes that serendipity and accident are important parts of the creative process; too much deliberation leads to formalism. The main shop has grown and evolved as a space to display products designed by the company mixed together with old, discarded objects collected from the village and surrounding region. These things could be considered 'antiques' (*kottōhin*), except most are not that old and were rescued from the rubbish pile. 'Vintage' might be closer in meaning.

Gungendō owns two very large warehouses filled to the rafters with such things and continues to collect anything being discarded that has been used in daily life. Much of the collection is building material, including wood, tile and stone. From this inventory, the company stages its shops and renovates houses in Ōmori. There is always a combination of old and new elements, but, to the extent possible, the desire is to make space with things that have already been used. By doing this, both the space and objects are reenergized.

For example, *susudake* is bamboo from the ceilings of kitchens in old farm houses which has been smoked naturally into a dark red-brown colour over a hundred years. This is no longer produced because kitchen hearths and bamboo ceilings hardly exist in daily use. Gungendō has accumulated this very special material, prized for basket-making (*chikukōgei*, 竹工芸),

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<sup>247</sup> See Satō (1995) for a survey of recycling and waste management practice in the Tokugawa era.

from old houses that were demolished, and used some of it to make hand-carved knives. They do not want to become a purveyor of folk-craft objects, but mix original work like this with larger production items. Other examples include hollow stone garden lamps and hand-made charcoal air-fresheners. The latter are made by an old man that lives outside the village with an amazingly primitive kiln and labour-intensive process. The company is constantly searching for such interesting items throughout Japan. This ‘slow living’ approach is particularly true in their sourcing of textile materials. Nearly all merchandise is made in Japan. The only exception is a small amount of hand-woven and dyed cotton from Laos, but this source is quickly disappearing as Chinese companies have industrialized the few remaining villages that produced the cloth. Yet another example of their attention to material is the use of a coarse cotton cloth called *garabō* (ガラ紡).<sup>248</sup> This is woven on mechanical looms using technology from the late nineteenth century. Only a handful of these still operate in Aichi Prefecture. The machinery is literally something displayed in museums and listed by the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry as an important industrial heritage item (METI 2007: 73-75). Gungendō can source limited amounts of the cloth from a company managed by an old man who refused to replace these looms when MITI promoted newer electronically controlled machinery in the 1950s. The mechanical process results in a cloth that has bumps and irregularity. Each piece, therefore, is visibly different, and the output quality is somewhat unpredictable. This kind of anti-standard is difficult to find in a world of efficient production where quality is digitally monitored.

The same kind of unpredictable, yet aesthetically pleasing, production occurs in the traditional ‘climbing’ kilns used to manufacture roof tiles along the Shimane coast. These are mostly closed now, but the wood-fired process results in tile colours and textures that cannot be easily duplicated. Gungendō always uses old tiles in its buildings, and is particularly interested in collecting the discarded tiles from temples, some of which are hundreds of years old. They are always amazed that such material is routinely thrown into land fill. While I was there, Gungendō employees learned of a temple in Kamakura that was being re-roofed. They sent a truck the 830 kilometres (roughly twelve hours one-way) to collect the old tiles.

A rich source of all kinds of interesting material is the constant stream of old schools closed in the countryside as Japan depopulates. Not only are there fewer students, but in recent years there has been a policy of building modern concrete structures to replace the old, wooden

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<sup>248</sup> The name refers to the noise the old machines make – it sounds like *gara gara*, or clatter.



ones, which are then scrapped unless salvage operators such as Gungendō learn about it. The floor boards, and even the tables, in many of the buildings renovated by the company use material recovered from old schools. Until World War Two, nearly all school buildings in Japan were made from wood.<sup>249</sup> Usually this wood was from the local area and very often the schools were built by local people. A common practice in Japanese schools was the polishing of the wooden floors (*zōkin-gake*, 雑巾掛け) by the pupils as part of their daily group chores/exercise, and when such wood is examined it shows the marks from long years of regular contact with children's hands and feet. There is a belief that wood needed to be regularly handled to maintain it. Such places, therefore, are storehouses of memories and have deep roots in their locations because of their use by previous generations. However, they are now usually torn down and disposed of in landfill unless by chance a salvage operation can be organized.<sup>250</sup> Gungendō sees such salvage work as equivalent to finding buried treasure – they are in the business of recovering discarded cultural property and re-animating it. This is slightly different than the *machizukuri* notion of putting things to practical use; in the case of Gungendō the emphasis is on bringing things back to contact with people so that their inherent qualities can be experienced and appreciated even when only pieces of the original item are retrieved.

Similarly, when the aged die, their belongings are often considered worthless because they are old. These things often include all manner of interesting items that can be incorporated in vintage decoration schemes, especially wooden furniture (*tansu*), which may not be of antique quality but have parts that exhibit attractive features of age and design. A characteristic sink basin found in many renovated buildings in Ōmori is made from the cut out section of a large, locally-made ceramic pot. When I expressed interest in this design, I was shown an enormous collection of these old pots that Gungendō has accumulated. Like *tansu* parts and sliding door frames, these are elements of the design language they

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<sup>249</sup> The NHK arts program *Bi-no tsubo* (美の壺) covered wooden schoolhouses as file 133 on 5<sup>th</sup> June, 2009: <http://www.nhk.or.jp/tsubo/program/file133.html>. Even when schools are closed, communities wish to save the buildings. One member of a local preservation committee in Ibaraki Prefecture says “schools have a symbolic meaning to an area and when they are gone the area is no longer whole.”

<sup>250</sup> Since the mid-1950s, schools were increasingly built as ferro-concrete (鉄筋コンクリート) structures. Not only the material, but the entire design of the buildings changed. Wooden schools extensively used sliding doors (*tategu*, 建具) between posts, as was standard for most Japanese vernacular construction. The wooden schools had many windows that let in large amounts of light, and they smelled of wood.

incorporate in their spatial configurations and displays. All kinds of old things are accumulated. Daikichi has a thirty year old BMW that he takes on trips as far as Hiroshima. He feels that there is no other car like this in all the nearby prefectures because he always draws attention and older men come up to talk to him when he parks. There are virtually no old cars on the roads in Japan due to the costs of the *shaken* (車検) vehicle inspection system.<sup>251</sup>



Figure 27: Arya Shahab nameboard above sales counter, Gungendō, Ōmori

Another way to energize life is to use organic materials. With clothing, this means natural fibre and colour from organic dyes such as indigo. Gungendō has done research into the history of indigo in Japan as a dyestuff, the variation in colour that used to be achieved before the standardization of indigo source plants in the Edo period,<sup>252</sup> and the medicinal use of

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<sup>251</sup> Passenger cars must be inspected every two years at a cost of ¥60,000 (£475). Most of this represents road tax and insurance.

<sup>252</sup> On the monopolistic policies of the Awa domain to standardize indigo trade, and the accepted colour of the plant dye, in their capital of Tokushima, see Nishikawa and Amano (2004:255-257), and Ravina (1999: 181-184). They were able to wrest control over this product's distribution from the Ōsaka wholesalers in the early nineteenth century by providing better financing terms, shipment infrastructure and cartel trading through a national system of guilds. Francks (2009: 72), citing Ravina (1999: 8), however, says that Tokushima indigo became the standard because of consumer perception that it was of superior quality. This claim does not seem to be supported by the evidence; in fact, it is hard to understand how a colour preference can be judged objectively

indigo. The ‘research’ in the official name of the Iwami Ginzan Research Institute of Cultural Life, therefore, does have meaning. Traditional colours, patterns and foods are all researched. Their clothing colours tend to be dark, with a few brighter items added simply to make store displays appear more attractive. Because the company does not directly manufacture anything, there is always experimentation with samples. Indigo is a particularly interesting substance because it becomes a live emulsion that must be carefully tended like a compost pile to maintain its chemical reactions. It has insecticidal properties; hundred-year old samples of *aizome shibori* (tie-dyed indigo) exhibit a pattern where insects eat away the parts that did not receive the dye. I was repeatedly shown a small patch of old *aizome* that was found in this condition. People were in wonder over such a treasure. The interaction of nature, weather and the environment on materials over time is a treasured quality. For this reason, substances that can exhibit traces from their history are special. They seem to expose the memory of a better past, such as that searched for by Benjamin (1999: 4-5):

In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history – that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society – as stored in the unconscious of the collective – engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashion.

When I asked in Ōmori about the philosophy behind this interest in traces of the past, I was told by several people that it does not have any conscious connection to Buddhism or the concept of *wabi sabi* imperfection and transience which is so often held up as a Japanese aesthetic characteristic. In fact, they said, people are always asking that question and they find it humorous that what they consider a fundamentally creative impulse is analysed in terms of philosophy; organic things simply have more character and what some consider imperfection can be seen as charm. “The charm of Ōmori cannot be expressed in words or explained with logic; it is something that you can feel when work is over and on the way

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superior. Rather, it appears that this is a case where commercial practices related to mass production worked to standardize hitherto locally specific differences, which only now are being revalued. Ravina (*ibid.*) says the prosperity of Tokushima came to depend upon “the quality control of indigo exports”, i.e., their ability to enforce an orthodoxy.

home you see the sun setting on the quiet mountain ridges” (Inatomi 2006: 77).<sup>253</sup> There are certain sights, sounds and smells that you cannot find elsewhere, or cannot find in the same exact combination at a particular time. So, for example, it is easy to be unconscious of the undulating buzz of cicada (*semi*, 蟬) in the summer heat, frogs croaking at night, or the tranquil silence of the forest, until these sounds are replaced with urban traffic noise. And although we have been focused on visual images of place, observation tends to distance one from a location while sound ties one to it as a participant (Ingold 2000: 244); it provides rhythms to which the body responds.<sup>254</sup> Sight provides a structure for memories, but sound, smell, and taste connect deeply to emotional response and involuntary memory, such as in the particular epiphanies regained by Proust (2003: 178), whose narrator believed that “between memory which suddenly comes back to us and our current state, even between two memories of different years or places or times, the distance is such that it is enough, apart from any specific originality, to render them incomprehensible to each other.”<sup>255</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> The experience of seeing the landscape described by residents as one of the bases for enjoying the place has nothing to do with the legal understanding of property. For something to be considered property under law, it must be capable of appropriation; it cannot consist of clouds, spirits, and certain qualities of light or sound, although rights to sunshine exposure and unobstructed views are legal issues (tort as a form of trespass) because they are subject to injury from others. The human body is usually not considered property under law, i.e., slavery no longer is legally accepted and ownership of one’s own body and labour is considered an absolute liberal right (Ellickson 2008: 16). However, property law is extended to immaterial things that cannot be perceived by senses, including such intangibles as goodwill and milk quotas (Lawson and Rudden 2002: 20). On application of property law to the body in cases in addition to slavery, see Davies & Naffine (2002).

<sup>254</sup> Merleau-Ponty (2002: 210) classically captures the relationship between bodily perception and memory: “the part played by the body in memory is comprehensible only if memory is, not only the constituting consciousness of the past, but an effort to reopen time on the implications contained in the present, and if the body as our permanent means of ‘taking up attitudes’ and thus constructing pseudo-presents, is the medium of our communications with time as well as with space.”

<sup>255</sup> Hegel (2010: 73-75) grouped sight and hearing together as senses that present the ‘abstract ideal,’ while smell and taste determine difference, and feeling presents concrete reality. He writes that hearing serves to direct time inward by way of vibration in the corporeal body. Of course, this division into five senses, and their analysis, gainsays other possible phenomenologies. It has been argued (LaMarre 2000: 138), for example, that Heian (795-1185) period texts exhibit that “at some fundamental level there is an intersection of various registers of sensation, as if seeing, sounding and feeling were somehow interchangeable ... a multisensible figure.” Billeter (1989) has compared the performance of Chinese calligraphy to the reading of notes on a musical score in which the body, sound and sight must work together seamlessly, and this description reminds us of the combination of sensory stimulation in magical ritual where words and music are crucial (Tambiah 1968).

Living in the country, residents experience nature every day and are inspired by it; urban people do not appreciate how regular exposure to such an environment fuels creativity. In fact, professors of design who visit them often remark that urbanization has killed the creative impulse in Japan and students are not as original as they used to be when they grew up in the countryside. Nevertheless, they do admit that the imperfection stamps each thing with a particularity that reflects its history, and therefore it becomes almost like a living object with its own spirit, particularly when made from organic material like wood. In this respect, rather than Zen, they think their ideas come from Taoism and Lao Tzu. Of course, Taoism forms a core of values adopted by Zen (Grigg 1994).<sup>256</sup> But I think what people in Ōmori mean is that there is no association between their ideas on design and daily life with organized religion, such as Buddhism, although they will admit that such ideas probably have had some influence. They imply, like Zen and Heidegger, that analysis obscures true understanding; being-there, experiencing a place or feeling a material gives a true meaning not from the perception of its objective nature but by being present at a specific space-time that contributes to a very specific mood. The subject they are concerned with is creativity, which is tied to the concrete details of making things. But these things are made from materials that contain a less tangible spirit. Once, at the morning meeting (*chōrei*, 朝礼) of Gungendō, Tomi launched into a speech on the relevance of the Heart Sutra (般若心經) to their creative activities. She had been reading it before breakfast and was struck by the idea that objects have spirit (*kokoro*, 心) which is hidden, just like the heart of people. Expressing the individuality of this essence was part of the artist's job. Such discussions of aesthetic theory and sources for inspiration are a regular feature at the morning meetings, and included evaluations of the avant-garde artist Okamoto Tarō's idea of a mystical force (*juryoku*, 呪力) in Jōmon (Neolithic) pottery (Okamoto 2004 [1971] and Yajima 2003: 31-34).

The Gungendō concept of apparel retailing is nearly the opposite in every detail from the largest and most rapidly growing apparel firm in Japan, Fast Retailing, which sells basic, colorful clothing in Uniqlo shops (Kawashima 2009). Moreover, Gungendō consciously aims to follow strategies that distinguish it from Fast Retailing. Fast Retailing sources all of its products directly from outside Japan, with about 90 percent coming from China. It has consistently focused on low prices driven by this sourcing strategy and economies of scale in

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<sup>256</sup> On the danger of attributing all Japanese aesthetic concepts to Zen and natural harmony, see Tucker (2004).

its expanding network of 800 shops in Japan and 140 shops abroad. In this regard its marketing strategy is similar to Primark, although originally it consciously copied the Gap and Benetton. It does not emphasize brand as logo, and tends to focus on wardrobe standards, such as socks, casual shirts and jeans, which have global appeal. It positions itself as ‘anti-fashion’, ‘post-logo’ and is a contrast to relatively higher-priced brand-oriented department stores because it does not follow a seasonal rotation of styles and keeps its inventory turnover relatively low. Despite the company’s name, it is not engaged in ‘fast fashion’ in the sense that it attempts to deliver quickly and adjust its product to whatever the current hot design might be, as does, for example, Zara or H&M. It has occasionally introduced low-priced clothing in popular materials, such as fleece and body-shaping synthetic underwear. Future growth is expected to come primarily outside Japan and it has adopted a policy of using English as its main language of business inside the company. It expects to grow also from internet sales.<sup>257</sup> The president of Fast Retailing is now Japan’s richest man.

Because of the influx of tourists after World Heritage designation, many people at Gungendō are concerned that their connectedness to nature is under threat. When the village was unknown and isolated, there were fewer distractions and life could proceed without outside pressure to perform for tourists and ‘clean up’ homes as exhibits for others to observe. Living in a natural cycle with nature, they did not worry if buildings aged, fell apart or might be considered distasteful to others, and since nearly all members of the community were in the same economic situation, there was little noticeable difference in how people lived. Even now, most residents are quite self-sufficient, in the sense that they make or grow whatever is needed for their daily life and only have limited exposure to the market economy. They build and repair their own homes, or work together with neighbors on heavier projects. As newcomers have entered the village and capital has been invested, these things are slowly changing. There are still a great many abandoned houses. In one case, a friend said he had been trying for over ten years to get a neighboring family, who now live at the other end of Japan, to cut back some vegetation that was emerging over the wall between their properties. He did not care so much that their abandoned house was also deteriorating, but was worried that a tree would fall into his garden. Such patience and understanding is the normal way when there are long-standing village relationships. However, there is worry that the drive to ‘develop’ facilities will change these attitudes. In another case, a family has been watching

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<sup>257</sup> <http://www.uniqlo.com/jp/>.

the neighbouring house fall apart for decades after abandonment. They investigated the situation and located the relative who inherited the property many years ago. She had donated the property to Ōda City, which has done nothing to maintain the old house. The relative was unaware of anything in Ōmori, but when she learned about the neglect of her family's home she was upset and said she would find out whether her donation was revocable.

People will say that Ōmori has become so tourist-centred that 'normal' life is difficult. To witness the 'real' organic village life it is necessary to go up into the more remote mountains, where entire villages are fading away, yet still are allowed to maintain their own ways of life. I was told to visit the hamlet of Itaibara in Tottori Prefecture to understand what Ōmori used to be like and what true natural living is. Visitors from Tōkyō may think Ōmori is idyllic, and to a large extent it still is, but the real utopian model is Itaibara. This hamlet is in a mountain pass that during the Edo period was busy with traffic. Now it is several kilometers away from a main road. A tunnel was built on the connecting road in 1967 that made it slightly more accessible, but it is very secluded and somewhat difficult to find even with a global positioning system. On arrival, it is hard to figure out exactly how to enter the hamlet because the 'main street' is really an overgrown footpath. Houses, gardens and forest all merge together. It is difficult to distinguish which houses are lived in from those that have been abandoned. Over half the structures are over fifty years old and some are hundreds of years old, including one remaining farmhouse with a thatched roof. If electricity and the use of sheet metal and aluminum sashes on a few houses prevent the place from seeming completely out of the Edo era, there is nothing to indicate that it is not frozen in the 1950s. Several large residences with earthen-walled warehouses (*dozō*, 土蔵) attest to the prosperity of the hamlet when it was a transit point through the mountains. Virtually all the roughly twenty residents are over the age of seventy and subsist by growing their own vegetables, such as *daikon*. This is very much a place in which everyone is self-sufficient and mostly disconnected from the cash economy, although until recently there was charcoal-making and other forest-related cottage industries there. Snow is heavy during the winter, so most residents move down the mountain until it thaws and return in spring. So far, they have successfully resisted attempts to turn their hamlet into a tourist destination. Tottori Prefecture thinks it offers good potential for development, but has not been able to convince people there that any change would be to their benefit. Nevertheless, the prefecture has designated the village a preservation zone of traditional buildings. Given the state of disintegration, it is difficult to determine what effect



this has had. Residents say it became too expensive to re-thatch roofs several decades ago, and the general impression is that the forest is gradually engulfing the place.



Figure 28: Main street, Itaibara, Tottori

### Local rootedness as a brand

One of Gungendō's brands is 'Roots' (*nene*, 根々), which is designed for 'the younger generation that is putting down its roots in life.' Matsuba Tomi's book is titled 'Gungendō: a life with roots' (*ne no aru kurashi*) (Matsuba 2009). She says "I still remember when once I attended a very basic wedding ceremony in Ōmori one of the relatives said 'if a seed of grass happens to fall on top of a rock, it has to plant roots.' Certainly Ōmori seemed like a desolate rock, but I never felt lonely or sad because of the kindness of local people and the beauty of nature" (Matsuba 2009: 3).

Tomi is the head (*shuchō*) of Gungendō, but titles are a tricky issue because no one seems to want to use them, or be referred to in relation to their position in the company's hierarchy except when visitors do not understand. Her husband Daikichi is the 'representative' (*daihyō*), but both Tomi and Daikichi are names used as company brands themselves. The daily life of this couple provides a familiar narrative to customers who receive the company's newsletter, or read their blog, which uses even more informal names such as Daikkichan. The introduction of family pets and local characters in their publications makes the whole enterprise even more casual and inviting.





Figure 29: Handmade *waraji* still for sale, souvenir shop, Ōmori, 2008

Conviviality is also encouraged through food. Gungendō has run a café in its main shop for many years and use their samurai residence for regular feasts and events, in addition to guest meals. The object is to provide local ‘home cooking’ (*katei ryōri*), but they are experimental and like to create new dishes. Most of the rice they use is grown in a nearby hamlet by one of the employees in his spare time. They make pancakes with rice flour, tiny shrimp and leeks. They offer a beef *shabu-shabu* from local meat. They grow many of their own vegetables and collect items such as mountain potatoes, watercress, bamboo shoots, persimmon, plums and *gumi* berries. The ethic of ‘just enough’ is not applied at these meals, which are extravagant in the variety and quantity provided, always with plenty of beer, sake and *shōchū* spirits. However, there is never waste because left-overs are reworked into other dishes for later meals or given to friends. Meals require hours, sometimes days, of preparation, and further hours to consume. There is no fast food in Ōmori; practice unconsciously follows the principles of the slow food movement and is aware that this cannot be achieved in the same way in cities. When businessmen visit from cities and compare their diet with the food in Ōmori, they often remark that they have not eaten home-made cooking since they were children and survive mostly on the offerings of convenience stores and alcohol. Gungendō wants to show such people alternative values and teach them about a different way to eat. “Slowness can become a deliberate subversion and form a basis from which alternative

practices of work, leisure and relationships may be generated” (Parkins and Craig 2006: 39). To advance such subversion, the company invites selected customers for all-expense paid visits to Ōmori, in which they tour the town, eat meals and exchange views on urban versus rural life. While this program, which brings several guests a week during good weather, is a form of loyalty marketing, the purpose is partly educational. The company believes customers must experience the local life, even if only for a few days, in order to understand the possibilities of doing things a different way.



Figure 30: Mixing indigo dye for *aizome* (藍染め)

The creation of an image of life at a particular place, with distinctions of clothing, housing, food and other daily activities, provides the basis for Gungendō’s brand identity. It is a type of ‘place branding’ (Govers and Go 2009, Seki 2007), with the village of Ōmori as the primary site and Iwami Ginzan as the more familiar backdrop. Iwami Ginzan actually has its own detailed branding strategy formulated under the auspices of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism’ City and Regional Development Bureau (MLITT, 国土交通省都市・地域整備局) (MLITT 2007), and in conjunction with the 200 member public- private body established to coordinate planning for World Heritage -- Iwami Ginzan Action Council (IGAC 2006). The latter group aimed both to preserve a ‘symbiotic life

culture' (*kyōsei suru seikatsu bunka*)<sup>258</sup> in the community, and, at the same time, a regional branding strategy based on the idea of “creating people, things and structure” (*hito-zukuri, mono-zukuri, shikumi-zukuri*). In other words, planning aims at attracting a flow of people and investment, valuing the historical and natural environment, and protecting the traditional lifestyle of the region. Such plans fit within a larger context of tourism promotion by Shimane Prefecture, which has made “improving awareness” (*rikaido kōjō*, 理解度向上) of Iwami Ginzan a top priority in its economic planning during the 2008-2011 period (Shimane-ken 2009a: 14-16).<sup>259</sup>

### **Place branding – image and reality**

Place branding “is all about attracting people – visitors. People who want to experience a place in order to be inspired through being relaxed and absorbed in its culture, or to determine whether they would want to live there, invest there or trade products from there” (Gowers and Go 2009: 5). A place brand identifies and differentiates a destination to which it desires to attract these flows of people and investment by projecting an image through communications and experience (*ibid.*: 25). ‘Brand stories,’ or narratives of place, are put together with visuals to create the desired images, which are projected through the media and linked to service and product offerings, such as tourism. This process is heavily influenced by the ideas of Urry (2002), who argued that consumers look for confirmation of images they

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<sup>258</sup> This expression refers to the well-matched environment of people living together with nature and historical relics in Iwami Ginzan. This claim was part of the World Heritage application; the silver mines were relatively non-polluting, and therefore environmentally advanced for their time. The slogan also means that various interests will benefit from cooperative effort – local residents, visitors, and public officials. However, we are deeply into bureaucratic jargon here and the exact meaning of these marketing slogans is subject to various interpretations.

<sup>259</sup> The main items in this plan are to deepen tourist understanding of Iwami Ginzan through a permanent guide organization, establishing greater connections between Iwami Ginzan and other tourist sites in the area with the cooperation of the Iwami Ginzan Tourism Promotion Council, and extend the coordination of publicity regarding World Heritage with the other two designated sites in the Chūgoku region (Hiroshima Dome and Itsukushima Shrine). Shimane Prefecture’s tourist industry is relatively small in terms of both its contribution to the prefecture’s economy and in absolute size within Japan. It grew slightly for several years, but has recently lost momentum, with, for example, a roughly four percent decline in estimated tourist numbers in 2009 (Shimane-ken 2009b: 3). This may have been an abnormally poor year because of the flu outbreak, but, on the other hand, there were some compensating special events such as the Hōran Enya Boat Festival which takes place in Matsue once every twelve years, and reductions in highway tolls.

have already formed of a place. Consumers interact vicariously with the images and through perception of the products to form their own concept of the destination, drawing on their own background and situational influences. Place branding, therefore, is a process by which both the inputs of the brand producers and consumers come together and may or may not accord with each other in various respects (Gowers and Go 2009.: 41). The effort to engage with this is considered very valuable for both parties. In fact, this process of engagement is seen by some as the very basis for an ‘experience economy’ in the contemporary world, in which we no longer consume objects, but sensations and lifestyles (Klingmann 2007). Being able to access consumers and begin the process of engagement, including particularly over the internet, is the key to contemporary marketing strategy, since the massive amount of information flow into the typical household drowns and dilutes previous types of advertising messages (Gitlin 2007).

The Iwami Ginzan branding plan (MLIT 2007: 18) recognizes many of these issues. It posits that the sense of value in Japan has shifted from an ‘abundance of things’ to an ‘abundance of spirit,’ for which a lifestyle engaged with health and environmental sustainability (LOHAS) is primary (Wenzel et al.: 2008). The keywords of their plan are historical culture, nature, World Heritage, health, Japanese spirit (日本の心), environmental concern, and food.<sup>260</sup> Products and services linked to the Iwami Ginzan brand should emphasize these words in their presentation and attempt to connect with consumers interested with the LOHAS lifestyle. Because World Heritage is presented as a preservation program, it is said to fit well with this branding approach. Visuals should be selected on the basis of content that conforms to the keywords; i.e., they should contain pictures of historical landmarks and the natural environment. The place branding is for the entire region surrounding the World Heritage site and includes not only the villages of Ōmori and Yunotsu, but also Ōda City, which is the administrative centre of the region, has most of the population, but does not directly contain any of the World Heritage property or the historical landmarks and natural environment highlighted in the strategy. It even encompasses ‘related areas’ such as Hiroshima, Matsue and Izumo.

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<sup>260</sup> One common marketing tool in brand analysis is automated text reading software such as Catpac, which can be used to determine the frequency of words used in relation to a particular place, for example, in survey or media data. It uses multi-dimensional scaling and perceptual mapping algorithms on any language. Text, by these statistical measures, is a function of repetition. See [http://www.galileoco.com/N\\_catpac.asp](http://www.galileoco.com/N_catpac.asp).



The fuzzy borders of what constitutes part of the Iwami Ginzan place brand are due to political concerns for the incorporation of as large an area as reasonable to marshal support for the project. But in economic terms, such expansion dilutes the brand image; it becomes less focused in terms of destination and product offering, and the fit between the images of these and consumer expectations becomes more difficult to manage. In addition, by permitting the use of the Iwami Ginzan brand on all sorts of items produced from outside the region, the authenticity of experience is threatened and the value of the brand as a mark of exclusive status is corrupted. When World Heritage began in Iwami Ginzan, there were no souvenirs available that actually had the place name on them. The Ōda City Chamber of Commerce hired a consulting firm to organize tourist product offerings. The result is that shops in Ōmori with Iwami Ginzan souvenirs sell items made in Ōsaka, Hiroshima and Korea. There is very little for direct sale that is made locally. However, officials in Ōda City think that tourists require material evidence of their visit that clearly states where they have been, even though the items come from somewhere entirely different. Many people in Ōmori find this introduction of foreign products deceptive and unscrupulous, but the issue still arises about what can be offered that is really from Iwami Ginzan. The products of Gungendō are inspired by Iwami Ginzan and designed there, but they are entirely made elsewhere in Japan. The products are not labelled Iwami Ginzan but the company shops and marketing publications make reference to this place

### **Intangible property as a validation tool – geographical indicators and the new sumptuary law**

The definition of what constitutes an ‘authentic’ good is a complex issue for intellectual property law that is assuming mounting importance. Ultimately, it concerns ownership of branding rights. Historically, brands were a type of trademark that could demonstrate ownership and responsibility; i.e., they were a method to track property (Diamond 1983). This has been legally understood in the West to mean that brands identify or attest to the origin of a product for the sake of the consumer, and thus provide a guarantee of consistent quality and differentiation (*ibid.*: 246-247). Brands associate a name with value by providing a ‘personality’ to a commodity.<sup>261</sup> Their treatment is part of the law of unfair competition.

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<sup>261</sup> The brand can be a valuable intangible asset for the producer of a product; for listed companies a financial present value of cash flow attributable to brand equity can be calculated, in one method, as the residue after deduction of tangible and measurable intangible assets from market capitalization, or, after several adjustments, this number may be supplemented with inputs from customer behavior. In one survey of 638 US listed firms in

Today, however, the ability to copy makes the determination of origin nearly impossible for virtually all material goods.<sup>262</sup> ‘Super copies’ of fashion goods can be rapidly produced that are so close to originals that the manufacturers themselves cannot determine origins (Scafidi 2007). And consumers often wilfully purchase non-deceptive counterfeit goods (Penz et al. 2009:68). Because such copying and acquisition are now increasingly easy, materiality no longer functions to moderate the velocity of fashion and a stamp of authenticity increases in significance. The consumption of differentiating goods, which Simmel (2000[1905]) noted both helped to identify groups and set apart individuals, has become increasingly problematic. This is yet another problem for Bourdieu’s classification system; how can material objects be symbols of social capital when their identification becomes impossible? While the proliferation of urban fashion in Simmel’s time already had produced a blasé response to most efforts at style innovation, this overload of style genres and the signals they attempt to issue has now only gotten more extreme.

There is increasing consumer awareness of the importance of origin in the selection of products in Japan. Discrimination on the basis of origin tends to permit Japanese products to sell at higher prices because of the assumption that quality and safety standards are higher than elsewhere. This sense has grown as more imports come from China, where a series of

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1985, brand equity was found on average to be equivalent to 19% of tangible assets, with consumer brand-based companies being much greater – sometimes exceeding tangible asset value (Simon and Sullivan 1993: 39). There is evidence that in certain competitive situations brand equity is almost a zero-sum value in which increases in brand equity are proportionate to market share gains (*ibid.*: 45-46). Opinion survey data can present quite different results; products are valued differently under different competitive situations. So, for example, a brand such as Honda may have no value in Thailand when consumers are questioned (Thanasuta et al. 2009). Global branding calls for local adjustments to central marketing strategy (Aaker 2010). By some measures, brand equity is declining for firms that fail to satisfy the “post-modern craving for creativity” (Gerzema and Lebar 2008: 77). There is increasing interest in quantifying the long-term value of brand equity. See Aaker (1991).

<sup>262</sup> Synthetic diamonds, for example, cannot be distinguished from natural diamonds without reference to micro indicia implanted in the diamond, such as De Beer’s Forevermark. In Japan, the *koshihikari* variety of rice, which commands a premium price, is being produced outside its original area of cultivation with cross-breeds that are sold as *koshihikari* and cannot be visually distinguished. Methods of introducing genetic markers to trace origins are being investigated. Copying has traditionally been defined in property law as the making of tangible, persuasive copies of an intangible design. The persuasiveness was determined by visual inspection, but this test no longer can be applied to most cases of modern copying because the quality of external reproduction is so exact. Because the likelihood of confusion in the general public has increased, courts around the world have tended to apply trademark protection more aggressively (Beebe 2010: 852).

product quality scandals have drawn attention.<sup>263</sup> Because of the stigma associated with Chinese origin, some Chinese companies have virtually colonized other places, including Italy, where they can benefit from a reputation associated with higher quality and the expectation that something made in Europe falls under European Union standards. Here they produce low-price goods termed “*pronto moda*” (Donadio 2010, Pieke et al. 2004: 121-123, Piariccini 2008).<sup>264</sup> Because of such practices, as dilution of origins spread, the desire for more finely categorized and regulated brands had increased.

Products sold at the retail level in Japan usually have a barcode identifying the country of origin, and it is common knowledge which numbers on these codes signify Japan and China.<sup>265</sup> Some consumers have extensive knowledge of such codes and routinely examine

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<sup>263</sup> On toxic Chinese drywall, see Martin (2010).

<sup>264</sup> The *New York Times* article about the Italian town of Prato states: “Enabled by Italy’s weak institutions and high tolerance for rule-bending, the Chinese have blurred the line between “Made in China” and “Made in Italy,” undermining Italy’s cachet and ability to market its goods exclusively as high end.”

<sup>265</sup> The Japan Article Numbering barcode (JAN-13) consists of a two-digit country code, five-digit manufacturer code, five-digit product code, plus a single-digit check sum. The country code for Japan, indicating a domestic product is 45 or 49. An add-on for supplementary information can have from two to five digits to the right of the main code. In the United States, barcodes have been legally acknowledged to provide protection from counterfeiting for manufacturers. They can produce their own unique symbology, which uses unique numbers for each item, so that they cannot be modified or repackaged by retailers. Cf. *Zino Davidoff S.A. v. CVS Corp.*, 571 F.3d 238 (2d. Cir. 2009). Barcodes typically are generic, however, and do not identify products individually. Therefore, there is a problem that even barcodes cannot provide accurate information about product origin.

Electronic product code standards are being developed that could uniquely identify and track any object or person. These are of particular interest to the healthcare and pharmaceutical industries. Because such tags use radio frequency identification technology rather than the optical scanning used with printed barcodes, each country can regulate their use through spectrum allocation. The tag consists of a silicon-based semiconductor, which has been processed to store a unique code, and therefore it is much more expensive than standard barcoding although prices are falling rapidly and now are roughly twenty pence for high-end items. The control, production and receptor systems for these tags require significant investment (Hunt et al. 2007: 101). Japan began to issue its passports with such devices in 2006. This is basically the same technology used by Transport for London Oyster cards and Suica smart cards in Japan. There are concerns, however, that the data bases containing tag identity keys and tracking information are vulnerable to attack and privacy can be compromised, or used to obtain minutely detailed inventories of an individual’s actions and possessions. (Boggan 2006). Van Eecke and Skouma (2005) state: “The processing of information relating to a product identifiable through an RFID solution is theoretically unlimited. Thus, the creation of a database with product-related information which, in turn, can be associated to the users of such products is a realistic risk.” The paranoia engendered from

the barcode rather than any printed claim on the package about source. The interpretation of what constitutes origin is constantly in the news, as companies import materials from elsewhere and assemble them or package them in Japan. Even in rural Shimane Prefecture, the food sold in local grocery shops conspicuously label the origin of most products, and some surprises appear, such as shrimp from Saudi Arabia and fruit from South Africa.

To combat the melting of distinction, the use of trademarks and other legal devices to insure provenance is a growing area of technological innovation and intellectual property dispute. From the viewpoint of trademark owners, there is an effort to protect trademarks from ‘anti-dilution’ (Beebe 2010: 815). This is a technical concept in intellectual property law that goes back to Schechter (1927), which argued that the utility of certain goods is exhaustible; i.e., the reproduction of some items dilutes the brand because rarity and distinctiveness are sought after qualities. Dilution occurs not only because of copying by those trying to replicate the appearance of a high-value object; it results from the proliferation of items marked with a particular brand, resulting in ‘mass luxury’ consumption (Thomas 2008). It also occurs when product labels do not identify an object clearly.<sup>266</sup> Intellectual property law cannot limit consumption directly, but it can enable control over production by restricting the use of trademarks. A second area of concern is ‘authenticity protection,’ which attempts to ground products in a geographical or historical origin. Unlike a patent or copyright, a trademark used to protect design features from imitation has no duration. This is potentially a great advantage if the trademark can be recognized as providing equivalent protection, and increasingly it is

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such ubiquitous surveillance and how it might be used in future fashion branding is one of the themes of Gibson’s (2010) *Zero history*.

On the development horizon are nano carbon-tubes infused with ink that would serve as radio frequency emitters at very low cost and size. These are not that far off; somewhat similar technology is already used in marking DNA strands, viruses and other very small objects in laboratories for genetic testing, such as in the well-known use of DNA fragments called expressed sequence tags (ESTs). In fact, DNA itself appears to be a possible substance for certain kinds of barcode-like industrial identification beyond its already common forensic use. And, of course, genes themselves can be patented, although legislation in this area is trying to catch up with new technology. For a while in the early 2000s, it was possible to use ESTs to lay claim to entire DNA sequences even when the function of the sequence was unknown (Westhoff 2008).

<sup>266</sup> This mislabeling is at the core of unfair completion law and often not treated as dilution but as outright fraud that deceives or confuses the consumer. However, its result is dilution. Seafood is a product area in which labeling is notoriously misleading. Not only are items not what they claim to be, but the words used to describe products have been changed many times by producer groups to obscure origins or promote better sales, i.e., ‘slimehead’ is renamed ‘orange roughy’ (Jacquet and Pauly 2008).



(Beebe 2010: 874). Beebe (*ibid.*) argues that greater use of intellectual property law to enforce trademark protection is effectively the institution of a structure to regulate the sumptuary code and reinstate the possibility of material goods to offer social distinction – to assist rights over intangibles to enhance the value of tangible property.

One area where ‘authenticity protection’ is being aggressively applied is the law of geographical indication (GI) (O’Connor 2004). Raustiala and Munzer (2007: 339) note “to assert the necessity of GI protection is, in part, to assert the importance of local culture and tradition in the face of ever-encroaching globalization.” Such designations, which are still used primarily for wine and spirits in Europe, make the claim that place is essential to product and specific locations yield qualities that cannot be replicated elsewhere. GIs assert the value of traditional knowledge as the consequence of old creativity and community ownership, rather than the typical interest of intellectual property law in new knowledge and individual ownership (Echols 2003: 199). The European Union has been actively seeking extensions of such indications for its agricultural products under the auspices of the World Trade Organization and the TRIPS Agreement (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) negotiated as part of the 1994 GATT Uruguay Round.<sup>267</sup> The European concept of such indications arises from the French concept of *terroir*, which has had legal status for wines and certain other products since 1824. Non-European countries have also begun to use GIs to protect their domestic agricultural industries in products other than wines and spirits. India, for example, has tried to limit the use of ‘Basmati’ to certain rice varieties grown in India. This designation is particularly broad because ‘Basmati’ is not a place but refers to a type of rice typically associated with a place (Addor and Grazioli 2002).

Japan has no specific law to protect geographic indications, however there are certain relevant protections provided by the Prevention of Unfair Competition Act, provisions of the Commercial Code, and the Trademark Law (O’Connor 2004: 284). The use of marks by regional collectives and cooperatives to rejuvenate the agricultural sector is now being promoted under a registration system (Tessensohn and Yamamoto 2006). This appears to be somewhat similar to the use in the United States of certification marks to validate compliance to some defined standard as determined by private bodies (O’Connor 2004: 246-247). Consumer response to geographical indications has been shown to operate differently in Japan than in the United States, however. For example, domestic country of origin indicators

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<sup>267</sup> See [http://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/trips\\_e/trips\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/trips_e/trips_e.htm).

in Japan tend to be viewed as superior to foreign ones for most products, whereas consumers in the United States tend to be indifferent (Gurhan-Canli and Maheswaran 2000).

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To say that the Japanese are romantic – imaginative, sentimental, individualistic, passionate! – might earn one strange glances in much of the world. Izawa (2000: 138)

Not knowledge of values, but their creation is what men achieve. You create values, you create goals, you create ends, and in the end you create your own vision of the universe, exactly as artists create works of art. Berlin (1999: 119)

An adequate sense of tradition manifests itself in a grasp of those future possibilities which the past has made available to the present. MacIntyre (1981: 207)

It is the deepest enchantment of the collector to enclose the particular item within a magic circle, where, as a last shutter runs through it (the shutter of being acquired), it turns to stone. Benjamin (1999 [1939]: 205)

### **Dreams come true**

心想事成 (*shinsōjisai*) is a Chinese expression that comes close to the core belief of the German Romantic movement described above by Isaiah Berlin.<sup>268</sup> It also happens to be the motto of Gungendō. A hanging scroll with these characters is given the main place of honour in their guest house (Matsuba 2009: 63). The words mean that you can achieve your hopes if you feel them in your soul. This gets translated in English into a mental operation of dreaming or imagining, but the original Chinese/Japanese understanding refers to heart, or spirit, not mind, and thus again is close to the Romantic conception of how creative activity occurs – as a lived, embodied experience. A dream or goal is an abstract representation towards which one might aspire, and can imply impossibility. But the creative impulse

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<sup>268</sup> Berlin emphasizes the importance of a core of German romantics – Herder, Hamann, Schiller and the Schlegel brothers. See also Oestele (2005) and Safranski (2007). Wellek (1949: 147) also says German literature presents the clearest case for a romantic sensibility, although he finds a much broader range of contributors as important. Borneman (1992: 78) believes that this history persisted to form the aesthetic basis of East Germany; a romantic self-image that is tied to a utopian fantasy transfiguring the everyday into something beyond the anxieties of reality. This romanticism, common for all the socialist republics, was in contrast to the satiric narrative promoted by the capitalist states. The dissolution of the GDR state and its romantic utopian visions is mirrored in the physical deterioration and ‘dangerous’ image of the Alexanderplatz today (Weszkalnys 2010: 70-81).

expressed by this motto implies the position of will as part of an individual's physical presence; by sincerely living according to your own sense of value, you fashion a world to your own sensibility. Life is a fundamentally aesthetic activity, not determined by utilitarian structures of rationality as claimed by science and the Enlightenment. The Romantic impulse, which has unconscious resonance even in today's Japan, is only an escape from reality if one accepts some form of objective determinism that constrains behaviour absolutely, or even probabilistically. Schiller (1982 [1795]), for example, linked aesthetic subjectivity with political utility: the aim of creating the beautiful was, for him, freedom from state control. By rejecting such constraints, creative action is released.<sup>269</sup> Identity is not found or determined; it is created and can be based on the local, the particular, and the historically associated.

The Chicago sociologist W. I. Thomas (1917: 159-160) wrote that he believed there were four fundamental requirements for human life beyond those of mere physical existence: security, new experience, recognition, and affection. This became known as the 'four wish theory' of social behaviour. His colleague Park (1925: 675) elaborated on these by saying that security tended to mean a home, new experience often meant recreation, recognition referred to status in a social group, and affection was intimate association, where affection is returned, with someone or something, even a cat or dog. While the number and nature of these values has been disputed over the years, the listing of multiple norms or standards of action that formed a system outside the actors themselves has been a useful part of social theory since Thomas (Parsons 1950: 9). It is noteworthy that none of such sentimental norms are economic, and while the original formulation was somewhat deterministic, it allowed for reinterpretation of the values and partial adherence.<sup>270</sup> The wish for new experience could even be seen as positing a requirement for creative activity, although its analysis has tended to be done in terms of group creativity rather than that of the individual artist.<sup>271</sup> These were

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<sup>269</sup> On the modern concept of romantic individualism, see Eberlein (2000).

<sup>270</sup> Parsons explicitly developed a theory of voluntaristic action in opposition to utilitarian approaches and, particularly in his early work, emphasized the importance of will and creativity in social action, cf. Parsons (1982). His approach echoes the arguments put forth by Karl Polanyi (1957: 153): "though human society is naturally conditioned by economic factors, the motives of human individuals are only exceptionally determined by the needs of material want-satisfaction...Purely economic matters such as affect want-satisfaction are incomparably less relevant to class behavior than questions of social recognition." Said in another way (Bourdieu 202: 177), taste cannot be accounted for when "the same income is associated with totally different consumption patterns;" it only explains the limit instance when necessity dictates the choice.

<sup>271</sup> Cf. Shils (1980: 27), Joas (1992), and Becker (1982).

very much romantic norms, in the sense that they tended to refer to local, community-based values.

Although Romanticism is recognized as a European cultural movement that flourished between 1790 and 1830, its parallels to certain features of belief found in contemporary Japan is striking. In both cases, we find a reaction to belief in deterministic structure and a desire to counter this with reliance on action based from internal feeling. The contrast is presented as between logic and emotion, culture and nature, realism and fantasy. In the European case, the transformation of consciousness occurred in opposition to the Enlightenment. In Japan, it is an anti-modern, anti-rational reaction to urban values. In both cases, those who support the dominant discourse have attempted to close off, co-op or “balance” alternative views by creating distorted myths about contrary exemplars, emphasizing their irrationality (i.e., lack of fit with accepted understanding) or danger.<sup>272</sup> The latter is said to result when established categories are ignored or replaced. This threat strikes at the heart of any attempt to impose a dominant discourse that uses mechanical taxonomies to make sense of organic processes (Foucault 2005: 245). There is usually an undercurrent of argument that associates the dominant discourse with progressive economic necessity versus the impractical idealism of romantic views which are said to yearn nostalgically for an unobtainable past or a time that never was. Sentimental longing for a lost place or time, though widespread, may be portrayed as politically reactionary, a (feminine) weakness, or post-modern escapism (Jameson 1992: 221).<sup>273</sup> Such condemnation today unites Marxists with post-structural critics of consumption (Felski 1995: 58-59).

The evils of anti-rationalism united with ultra-nationalism and German Romanticism are typically proven by the example of the Japan Romantic School (*Nihon romanha*). Led by Yasuda Yujurō (1919-1981), this group of writers and literary critics yearned for a return to pre-modern traditions and hoped that World War Two would bring a rebirth of individual

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<sup>272</sup> The famous example of balance is Austen’s *Sense and Sensibility* (1811), but many other efforts along these lines occurred during this period. See Brown (1991: 98-99) and Mahoney (1978: 62). On the mythologizing of Beethoven, see Comini (2008). On the association in England of town with improvement and the future versus the countryside with the past, see Williams (1973).

<sup>273</sup> On *enka*, an entire Japanese music genre based on longing (*akogare*) for lost loves and hometown, see Yano (2003), which argues that the object of longing is gender-dependent; men, for example, seem to yearn more for hometowns. But note that an interest in the intimacy and safety of home itself is considered more of a feminine characteristic in the West (Price 2002).

commitment. Such ideas played into the hands of military mobilization efforts by, for example, making death an aesthetic ideal (Ohnuki-Tierney 2002: 265-267 and Hashikawa 1977).<sup>274</sup> The dark side of the romantic vision has tended to obscure some of its more positive aspects, which Berlin (1999:146-147) notes stem from the demonstration that because different human ideals may be fundamentally incompatible, absolute answers are not possible and compromise and toleration are required.

History plays a vital part in romantic perspectives on life because it can demonstrate that progress is not necessarily the by-product of modernity; in fact the notion of progress itself is interrogated. Other ways of living from the past provide examples that deny claims of improvement due to rational management towards general ideals. Thus, Ruskin's (1997a) interest in the Gothic was in part a demonstration that aesthetic principles, such as the grotesque, totally at odds with modern practices of standardization and rational beauty, could be appreciated as worthy alternatives, which when understood within the singular context of their application appeal to us even now and should not be rejected out of hand.<sup>275</sup> Modernization is not, on this view, an objective process, but a cultural choice (Taylor 1995). Why would an historical novelist such as Scott be considered romantic? Because, says Berlin (1999: 136), by creating a picture of a past age and place that could be compared with our own he challenges the assumption of progress and provides alternative sets of values that could be rated as equally good if not better. In short, romantics are cultural relativists and use historical examples to argue against evolutionary development and absolute morality. Many romantic artists were interested in classical Greece because it provided a model of a profoundly strange and contrasting world of behaviour in which even things that we may think we know, such as friendship, were very different (*ibid.*: 4). The result of such historical investigation is to find many possible, conflicting worlds of sensibility that cannot be reconciled; they are by their nature simply unlike each other to such an extent that ideas cannot be translated among them without serious loss of meaning, and beyond the ideas

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<sup>274</sup> Although the most famous work of the Romantic School was the essay *Nihon-e no kaiki* (日本への回帰, 1938) by Hagiwara Sakutarō (1886-1942), which described a return to a whole aesthetic self and re-attainment of spiritual values uncorrupted by the materialist West. This was accomplished by going back to a small, quiet home in an obscure part of Kyōto where days passed to the strumming of the *biwa* (lute) in the company of a kimono-clad woman – not exactly a militant call to action. Cf. Iida (2001: 43-44) and Okaniwa (1974).

The text of this work is found at: <http://saitohope.sakura.ne.jp/0904nihonheno.pdf>.

<sup>275</sup> See Jameson (1989) on how modern Gothic concerns a fantasy of evil and sheer otherness lurking outside one's sheltered world.

themselves the feeling of each time and place is unique and evanescent. Action is motivated from internal feelings, myths and spontaneous emotions, rather than objective premeditation. As Geertz (2000: 44) has remarked, such relativism is inherent in anthropological data and to link such views with twentieth century nihilism misses both the empirical and historical point. Harris (2010) provides a long list of twentieth-century English ‘romantics’ in the arts, such as John Piper and John Betjeman, who lived in rural villages and sought inspiration from historical creations in much the same way as Ruskin.

### **Consumption perspectives**

It is sometimes argued (Ivy 1995: 54-58) that for young, urban Japanese the notion of nostalgia has become disconnected from any experience of another time or place; recent generations have been so steeped in Western ways of thinking that reference to an older Japan is just another marketing strategy which presents the exotic as a different style or adventure.<sup>276</sup> Advertising has collapsed the present with the past so that it is already an object of history. The ephemerality of the present is underlined by these techniques and the velocity of fashion enhanced; memory of the past is no longer necessary<sup>277</sup>. Clammer (1997:30) claims that a “common culture of consumption” is at the core of Japanese social action. Francks (2009:35) finds such a culture to exist as early as the start of the nineteenth century, at least among the urban merchant class engaged in the cash economy. Such views frame purported romanticism and nostalgia from the perspective of those who receive commodity images with no particular relevance to their own lives. The products of such an exchange have no substance or inherent value; they are merely substitutes for many other styles in post-modern fashion and only support the illusion of difference. According to this view, nostalgia is a broad marketing concept consciously promoted in Japan that can reflect a wide range of tastes expressing ambivalence to modernity, consumerism and community (Sand 2006: 85). Because of the loss of historical awareness, it can attach itself to all sorts of imagined times and places.

Certainly, there is a disconnection between the creative activity of the rural romantic artists at Gungendō and way their products are consumed by their urban customers. Members of the

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<sup>276</sup> Shunya (2006:63) says that by the 1960s America was not necessarily a cultural model for Japan, but politically the balance between pro- and anti-American influence was problematic, see Shunya (2007).

<sup>277</sup> Jameson (1989) discusses how the present is historicized to the point that it seems already past. Eagleton (1985: 63) finds the modern a permanent disruption of all historical periodization.

company often remark that they do not understand why customers buy certain things or how their customers perceive value. They have a very persistent and strong sense that urban people, especially the young, have a different perception of the world, move at a different speed and are unfamiliar with the rural commonplace of living amidst nature. And, in fact, it is easy to separate certain visitors to Ōmori from local people by their clothes and behaviour. Local people look comfortable outdoors, for example, and are dressed to move well in bad weather, while the urban young appear in high-heels, short shirts and are ostentatiously equipped with personal electronics that restrict their action. This is particularly the case with young visitors from Tōkyō and Ōsaka. Of course, men in suits also look out of place, yet they consider tourist visits relatively formal occasions or travel with colleagues from their office. For such tourists, there seems to be such a large disjuncture between their own experience and the rural old as represented in Ōmori that nostalgia and romanticism are not applicable concepts; these people appear to be in search of the strange and the exotic, rather than connecting with their roots. For the most part, they are not Gungendō customers. The gap in awareness is so large that communications is intricate.

Much about the “Japanese” notion of nostalgia is written from the viewpoint of affluent youth from Tōkyō and Ōsaka. But the nucleus of Gungendō customers tend to be women in their 50s to 70s who indeed have direct experience of older and more rural lifestyles which they continue to appreciate. Nostalgia can be quite important for some people (Tannock 1995). Many of these people, while living in cities, still recognize certain values which can only be described as anti-consumption or oriented towards the frugality practiced in earlier times. For them, the taste for certain traditional goods is not just a transitory style, or the expression of ambivalence towards modern life; they remember things from their childhood, which aesthetically resonate today as a compliment to their altered environment and they incorporate these items as appropriate. Often they will comment on the comfort and functionality of older designs. Their interest in the acquisition of objects does not appear to be part of Clammer’s “common culture”; their motivation and understanding is distinctly different from those who lack historical memory in the same way that connoisseurs collect items based on an appreciation of qualities not perceived by those less experienced. Some people simply believe that older objects and designs are better, and they are said to have a taste for old things or be antiquarian (懷古趣味, *kaiko shumi*). There is certainly an aspect of this pattern that relates to collecting hobbies such as stamps, coins and antiques. Some only collect original objects, but others will collect objects that appear old (懷古調外觀, *kaikochō*

*gaikan*) or are facsimiles. The revival or restoration of old things (復古, *fukko*) is a related urge. Ōmori and Gungendō represent a mixture of all these things. By its nature, collecting removes old things from their original context and function, and ultimately re-categorizes them into a new system of knowledge that is a form of “practical memory” (Benjamin 1999: 204-205). Collected objects are souvenirs which “envelop the present with the past” (Stewart 1993: 151) and have a magical quality of seeming to transform space, but the shredding of context means they always represent a failed magic.

The products of Gungendō relate to such sentiments, but are never expected to be removed from use; they anticipate heavy usage in new contexts. Unlike the objects preserved in collections, the output of Gungendō is expected to gain value from incorporation in daily life and the consequent wear and tear that necessitates. This is most easily seen in the construction of their shops and office buildings, which combine older used objects with certain features of modern practicality, such as plumbing. The hybrid character of these settings is conspicuous, and often the “older” elements span a range of eras, so that the historical reference is more to a generic past than to any specific time. However, when asked about the older objects, there is a tendency to connect them with village life in the immediate post-war period when Ōmori still had a growing population and is said to have followed many patterns of behavior close to those of the Tokugawa era. The big change, according to this view, came in the Showa 30s (1955-1965), when the population began to contract and urbanization destabilized many rural values. To some extent, changes are seen as due to Westernization, and therefore a return to an earlier time implies a rejection of non-native influences. People in their late 50s and older remember Ōmori in terms that are reminiscent of Suzuki Eitarō’s (1953: 81) ‘natural village’ (自然村, *shizen mura*), which was a self-sustaining community strongly tied together by family and religious bonds. Nostalgia for the imagined past, therefore, refers to a time still in living memory that was experienced by most current members of the village and many of the customers of Gungendō, no matter how distorted that memory may be. Sand (2006: 105) believes nostalgic consumption for the 1955-1965 period is associated with the uncomplicated optimism, successful growth and unquestioned national purpose of that time, but his is a very urban-centric view; high growth, national purpose and the changes wrought during that time were traumatic for villages such as Ōmori. It is the time before the high growth transformation that rural memory reflects upon.



## Retro-chic

Being serious about the values of a past time, while rejecting modernity, implies a reactionary impracticality or delusion, but a playful attitude that adopts current technology to recreate a period look while remaining thoroughly grounded in the present is the basis for retro-chic fashion (Samuel 1996: 83). The trend in Europe was a 1970s offshoot of the counter-culture, which, making a fetish of the vernacular, presented a commodity that purported to be an alternative to consumerism and a return to the simple life (*ibid.*: 91). Advertising that evoked a past community was used to humanize the present and substitute the personal for the corporate image. The Ridley Scott 1973 commercial for Hovis Bread, which portrayed wholesome village life in sepia tones to the strains of Dvořák's New World Symphony, is probably the model retro commercial.<sup>278</sup> But the message of that ad, which is that the bread quality has remained the same for one-hundred years, is quite the opposite of today's presentations; they tend to use the inversion of old objects with modern technology to emphasize that the best of all times and places can be combined, particularly where convenience and time-savings are concerned.

Again, such concerns are primarily urban ones, which appear extravagant and wasteful when transposed to a rural setting even when they are promoted as ecologically advanced and beneficial to the environment. There is an obvious incongruity when electric illumination is promoted with an image of farm houses designed to be used with candle light and hearth (see figure 31). Chūgoku Electric Power, for example, converted an old house on the main street of Ōmori into a model all-electric dwelling after the World Heritage designation (see figure 32). They have taken a five-year lease from the owner for a vacant building for their showroom in the middle of the historic protection zone and named it the "Iwami house of tomorrow" (*Iwami asumikan*, 石見あすみ館). Advertised as having the most up-to-date energy-saving technology, it has radiant heating installed under the floorboards. Residents I spoke with tended to see such a display as bizarre. It is not a shop, no one lives there and the combination of the latest electric appliances with the reworked vernacular construction is beyond anyone's imagination about how tradition can be blended with convenience. Or at least that is the reaction from long-term residents. Such interior remodelling of vacant houses is considered a reasonable compromise by architects when the old structure itself is not protected by historic designation but exhibits exterior design elements that are considered

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<sup>278</sup> <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFLBvLxLJMI>

worth saving.<sup>279</sup> A French family has rebuilt an old house in Ōmori with somewhat the same sense as the all-electric model (figure 33). In addition to up-to-date appliances, particularly in the kitchen, they have installed radiant heating under the *tatami* mats and have a heat pump that is one of the most advanced systems in the Sanin Region. They have oriented their house so that the floor-to-ceiling back windows face a large bamboo grove and Zen temple, and at considerable expense can control the interior temperature at least as well as their apartment in Paris. The owners were particularly worried about the harsh winters in Ōmori, where other than a couple office buildings there is no central heating. They also felt that living directly on the (heated) *tatami* mats would be too uncomfortable, and therefore introduced chairs and tables that raise the body to their own normal, Western levels from the floor. But they have collected several pieces of Japanese wooden furniture that serve partly as room decorations. The combination of local traditional accents with the latest, high-tech appliances is a common style technique promoted in many books on interior decoration. It is much rarer to extend the traditional to the point that comfort is compromised. Craftsmanship is of a high level.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> Hasegawa and Matsushima (2006) detail the remodel of a 150-year old house in Gifu Prefecture, for example, which they convert from a vacant residence to an architect studio and art gallery/ study space. They intentionally want to contrast the ‘traditional’ exterior with interior ‘foreign elements’ (*ibutsu*, 異物) that represent high technology and European design. They do not explain why this contrast is necessary, other than to say it is not just ‘physical preservation’ but ‘psychological preservation’ (*shinriteki hozon*, 心理的保存).

<sup>280</sup> See Brown and Cali (2001) for examples of high-tech traditional homes in Japan.



Figure 31: Matsushita Electric poster about lighting, Shirakawa-gō

Attitudes towards temperature, lighting and wild things tend to differ remarkably between urban and rural residents. Kon (1999: 29-30) begins his classic book on Japanese vernacular architecture with the statement “people who are used to living in cities really cannot imagine the homes of country residents.”<sup>281</sup> This is true nearly ninety years after he wrote it. Although technology allows the construction of uniformly bright, heated, antiseptic space, this is not a priority for those accustomed to relatively cold, dark places that merge seamlessly into the natural surroundings. Urban guests staying at the French family note with dismay that the bamboo grove attracts wild boar (*inoshishi*) who noisily root around in the early mornings.

<sup>281</sup> He lists many reasons for this, including the separation of home from workplace and the purchase of building materials on the national market rather than from completely local sources. He wrote this description after extensive ethnographic investigation of rural farm houses from 1917 to 1919.



Figure 32: Chūgoku Electric Power model kitchen in Ōmori

While corporate appropriation of certain design features of vernacular building is blended with modern technology to update retro style, Ōmori residents, rejecting modern values, have returned to the opposite extreme in a small renovated house on the main street, from which they have removed all utilities. The “candlelight house” (*rōsoku-no ie*, 蠟燭の家) is used for community socialization and entertainment. Using a few strategically placed candles, its intimacy is profound. It evokes the image in Tanizaki’s (2007 [1933]: 7) essay *In praise of shadows*: “Today, when profligate builders make homes to live in contrary to the Japanese manner, they take particular care in how electricity, gas, and plumbing is installed. When they try somehow to find a way to harmonize these installations with a formal Japanese room (*nihon zashiki*, 日本座敷), even people who themselves have never built a home always tend to notice the difference when they enter a traditional inn or eating place.” Uniform lighting, in particular, “destroys the social nature of space, and makes people feel disoriented and unbounded” (Alexander et al. 1977: 1160) when contrasted to the pools of light produced by candles. The bright lights of Japanese cities are a fairly recent phenomenon, only becoming prominent from the 1980s (Ishii 2008: 108). But having gotten used to full urban illumination both inside and outside buildings, it is an adjustment when energy-savings programs dim lights or when visiting a dark rural village.





Figure 33: Remodelled home, heat pump behind wooden grill; bamboo grove to right

True retro, therefore, is always a blend of elements. It may not be possible to recreate entirely the former world, nor is it desired. The idea of what represents an older tradition can be contested or misunderstood. Baudrillard (1994: 44) underscores the mixed nature of retro, but associates it with the longing for something real even as it drains the subject of meaning. As can be seen from the above examples, the “real” part of a retro presentation may be a very superficial gesture overwhelmed by other considerations and thoroughly de-contextualized. The “real” tends to be related to the immediately preceding era, and therefore, when retro-chic became a common fashion movement in the late 1970s, it was perceived as a (hostile) response to the counter-culture of the previous decade. Lippard (1996: 12) argued that it was closely related to punk, and both styles represented a sexist, racist and classist turn in US culture that coincided with the Regan era in politics. Retro-chic at this time was an attempt to be outrageous and to shock with excess. This excess of fashion represents the textbook case of victimization when adopted unconsciously (Schiemer 2010: 86), and ‘bad taste’ as something that obviously lacks proportion or is out of place (Eco 1989:180).

### **Home improvement and land valuation**

The Gungendō company and its associates were actively remodeling and rebuilding homes in Ōmori many years before World Heritage and the Board of Education got involved. They saw such efforts as creative acts that allowed them to express interest in the old things around

them. There was always a practical angle to doing such work, whether it was to make a more enticing shop or to provide accommodation for employees. But the derivative consequences of rebuilding have been unexpected; the huge store of old material that has been accumulated is re-worked into the design of their shops and exhibitions outside the village and the organization of converting vacant houses to useable space has been so successful that they are called upon to advise other municipalities and planning committees. There is enormous interest in rural Japan on the issue of vacant houses and how to reactivate them. This is partly because livable housing might attract new residents, which would justify the maintenance of public services. There is also a feeling that the unused buildings instill a sadness to a community because they were once lively with friends no longer there.<sup>282</sup> Nearly all rural towns have their own “vacant house counter-measures” (*akiya taisaku*, 空家対策). According to government statistics (Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku 2010:1) since 1968 the number of housing units in Japan has exceeded the number of households. The gap between these has continued to increase and with the current decline in population is expected to widen significantly in future.<sup>283</sup> One policy response has been simply to remove the old, empty

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<sup>282</sup> There is no evidence in rural Shimane that such signs of dereliction breed crime. Rural prefectures have less than half the incidents per capita of crime than is found in the large cities, and Shimane has one of the lowest rates (Keisatsuchō 2009). This is a major concern in the United States, where studies show that as property falls into disrepair it tends to draw criminal activity because it signals a lack of social control. Efforts to improve the appearance of US neighbourhoods have been shown to reduce crime: “healthy daffodils in a sidewalk planter, it appears, may help deter armed robbery” (Ellickson 1998: 79).

<sup>283</sup> In the October 2008 national housing survey (Sōmushō Tōkeikyoku 2010: 1-3), the number of housing units was calculated at 57.59 million and the number of households at 49.97 million. These figures represented a 6.9% and 5.8% increase, respectively, since the 2003 survey. Thus, although household formation has continued to occur, it has not kept pace with new home construction. It is estimated that in 2008 vacant homes represented about 13.1% of total housing stock (7.6 million units). Slightly more than half the vacant units were potentially available for rent. One of the more striking statistics in the government survey data is that homes are now nearly entirely used for residence, while in 1958 almost 40% of units were considered combined use in which shops, farms or other activities were also included in the structure. This loss of the practice of living in the workplace (*shokujū*, 職住), or at least having zones of mixed use, is considered a key factor behind the decline of old vernacular architecture (Aoyama 2002). The isolation of residential from non-residential zones is one of the sins of modern planning (Alexander et al. 1977: 256-258). The ratio of vacant homes to total units in Shimane Prefecture has been slightly lower than national averages, but it is estimated currently at about 12% and rising. (Shimane-ken 2007: 7-13). In general, prefectures with the greatest decrease in population also have the greatest rates of vacant housing (MLITT 2009: 17). The most recent data show that in 2003 an estimated 19% of Shimane housing was built before 1960 and for these older units almost 60% did not have flush toilets. The

buildings, but in rural areas this entails a permanent decrease in population that is difficult to accept when public services are based on population statistics. However, when we look at specific situations such as in Ōmori, the vacant house issue becomes complicated; it is not simple to either remove the old buildings or improve them. Because absentee owners still feel a deep connection with the village, they do not wish to sell their family property. At the same time, they have little incentive to maintain or improve the homes, and have no desire to manage them as rental units. Japanese farmers have been remarkably reluctant as well to sell their property to developers (Sorensen 1999: 2336). When residents want to buy, rent or improve vacant property, negotiations drag on interminably and have little to do with market factors, although until recently the demand for space in Ōmori has been relatively weak; it is easy and affordable to live in the middle of Ōda City and commute to Ōmori. Ōda City also has high vacancy rates. There is little legal recourse to government action such as in the United Kingdom or the United States where municipalities can intervene when property has deteriorated to the point it attracts anti-social behavior or is considered a nuisance (Mallach 2006). In a village such as Ōmori, neighbors will try to persuade absentee owners to maintain their houses but this is a very slow process usually measured in years and often when neighbors become old they simply do not worry about such things. Ōda City will take ownership of property when it is given to the city or if the sales price is very low. Several vacant homes in Ōmori have been ceded to the city, which does not always respond by maintaining these or removing them. In some cases on the main street the city has owned houses for many years and not acted in any way. Its planning documents indicate that the city finds houses in the preservation zone to be generally well maintained and monitored, but that in the surrounding area there is danger that the buildings might collapse (Ōda City 2005a). There is no specific policy by the city for vacant houses.

The effort to put vacant houses back into use on the community level, therefore, is not coordinated. In Ōmori, Gungendō has directly remodeled homes and also participates by

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prefecture's percentage of wooden homes is over two-thirds of total units, which is more than twice the national average, although both ratios are falling because fewer new units are made from wood. The prefecture's master plan for housing (*ibid.*: 7) specifically states "the rise in vacancy rates is due to a deterioration in living environment caused by the aging (*kōryōka*, 老朽化) of housing." Vacancy rates differ markedly by neighbourhood. It appears that typically there are relatively empty spots and relatively full spots in any detailed survey. In Matsue City (MLITT 2010b:7, 10), for example, block surveys show that rates vary between 2% and 46% and rise generally as distance from the town centre increases.

supporting the non-profit organization Nōsen-no kai (納川の会)<sup>284</sup>. The company often presents itself as a non-profit organization and sometimes considers whether it could become a religious foundation. Nōsen-no kai arranged for the refurbishment of a small house near the Gungendō head office in December 2008. It required three months of work with local builders and cost roughly ¥6 million (£47,000), ¥2.8 million of which was subsidized by Ōda City and the remainder provided by Gungendō because Nōsen-no kai itself has very little in the way of financial resources and is constantly trying to find new opportunities to generate revenue. The absentee owner leases the building and land to Nōsen-no kai for about ¥37,000 (£292) per month. Nōsen-no kai then sub-leases the house to two married employees of Gungendō, who pay about ¥29,000 per month. The land is divided into seven parking places, each of which is leased for ¥1,000. As can be appreciated, even when all parking spaces are under contract, this arrangement does not quite break even for the NPO, and it has proven difficult to find people interested in all the parking spaces. Such slightly loss-making propositions, such as sponsorship of village musical events, are the main activity of the NPO and its meetings are always reviews of how it might be made to breakeven financially. Its primary utility is to coordinate local village promotion and serve as a vehicle for obtaining municipal subsidies. Another of the properties it rehabilitated in the village is rented to a young couple for ¥25,000 (£200) per month. In considering how empty houses can be converted to use, priority is given to such candidates that might produce children for the school and to employees of Gungendō. Resources, however, are very tight and rental terms reflect the low cost and income in rural Shimane. I was able to rent a large house in Ōmori, utilities included, for ¥20,000. It was only available for one month. The people who helped me arrange this apologized profusely about the poor shape of the house and the expense. At the time, I thought this was simply standard politeness, but, in fact, somewhat similar accommodations can be found in Ōda City. Absentee owners who mostly live in urban areas might look at the low yields of potential rentals for their properties in Ōmori and find it difficult to justify any improvement work. The Watanabe-ke, an enormous historic property in Ōmori, was rebuilt by the owner Ōda City at a reported cost of ¥100 million (£790,000) and is being leased for ¥40,000 (£315) per month to a new restaurant.

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<sup>284</sup> Nōsen refers to an old Chinese phrase about a place which by attracting many streams and rivers becomes the sea (納百川於海). This concept seemed appropriate for Ōmori; although it is isolated and until recently it was relatively unknown, by bringing together many different kinds of people it grows into a powerful presence.



Whether vacant houses are disposed of depends upon application of the tax system, particularly the inheritance tax (*sōzokuzei*, 相続税).<sup>285</sup> Land for inheritance and gifts<sup>286</sup> is valued on the basis of a calculation made by the National Tax Agency (*zeimusho*, 税務署) – the *rosenka* (路線価)<sup>287</sup>, or ‘route valuation.’ It is known by this name because any investigation of the *rosenka* consists in locating a property on detailed taxation maps prepared by the Taxation Bureau in each city. These are organized by ‘route’, or street zone, which is associated with a valuation multiplier. To obtain the *rosenka* valuation of a property, you take the value shown for a road that has lot frontage to the property, apply various adjustments and multiply it times the square metres of the property. What this means in practice is that land values by this measure do not directly reflect improvements but are derived from the general valuations along a particular road. There are three other bases for valuing land: the market price (*jika*, 時価)<sup>288</sup>, the officially declared price (*kōji kakaku*,

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<sup>285</sup> A National Trust foundation was established in Japan in 1968 modeled on the British National Trust. Donations of property are exempt from inheritance tax. However, the Japanese body is quite small and its national funding is being cut. Each project has its own fund-raising campaign. It received contributions of ¥23 million from about 2,000 members and government subsidies of ¥14 million in the year to March 2010 to manage nine properties, as compared to the British institution which had operating revenues of £406 million, 3.6 million members, managed over 200 properties, six world heritage sites, forty-three pubs, 150 museums, and 250,000 ha of countryside: <http://www.national-trust.or.jp/rinen/archive/H22syuushiyosann2.pdf>.

<sup>286</sup> Gifts are exempt from taxation up to ¥20 million in value if couples are married up to twenty years.

<sup>287</sup> *Rosenka* lists are announced annually by the National Tax Agency. They are one measure of the overall health of the real estate market. Their average, however, can move differently from other price indices for land. The prices are determined on the basis of market transactions, official prices and ‘other factors.’ Mortgage lending tends to be based on a percentage of the *rosenka*. For a general overview of the Japanese property tax system, see Suwazono (2010) and Ishihara (2007: 201-237). Remarkably little is written on this subject in western languages, and even in Japanese it is very specialized knowledge. I have mentioned only a few of the issues involved. It is very difficult to get an accurate understanding of land valuation. The details of how taxation and urban planning merge to obscure property disposal is summarized by Igarashi and Ozawa (1993: ii): “How many people know the planning zone and plot ratio specified for their home? If these change, all kinds of other changes will affect daily life; a large co-op apartment building could arise in your neighbourhood, office building might start appearing, or 24-hr convenience shops could open next door. If an office building is constructed, it could include a fast food restaurant on its first floor. Land prices could rise as commercialization takes place, and as a result you will have an inheritance tax that cannot be paid without selling your property.”

<sup>288</sup> This is an actual transaction price for the sale of land. A review of the National Land Agency data base for Ōmori reveals one transaction in the past year. This occurred in early 2009 for a 430 m<sup>2</sup> plot of vacant land that sold for a total ¥3,300,000, (£26,000) or ¥7,100 per square metre: <http://www.land.mlit.go.jp/webland/top.html>.

公示価格)<sup>289</sup>, and the valuation price for fixed asset taxation (*kotei shisanzei hyōkagaku*, 固定資産税評価額)<sup>290</sup>. The market price is always the highest of these valuations, and the other measures derive from various adjustments to the transaction data for comparison. The officially declared price is intended to reflect these transactions and act as an approximation of actual prices. As a rule of thumb, the *rosenka* is about 80% of the official price on average and the fixed asset tax is about 70% of the official price.<sup>291</sup> Developers in the big cities will buy certain parcels of land at multiples of the *rosenka* in order to assemble larger plots, however regional activity has always been more muted. When applied to the situation in Ōmori, these figures tend to indicate that both the annual tax and inheritance tax burdens for owning land are extraordinarily low on valuation bases. The rate of inheritance tax on smaller amounts is also relatively low: 10% on the first ¥10 million and 15% on the next ¥20 million after a ¥500,000 deduction. The highest rate of 50% is applied to inheritance amounts over

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This does mean there were no other transactions. Although property transactions must be registered with the local legal affairs bureau (*hōmukyoku*, 法務局) for it to be eligible for subsequent transfer to a third party, the transaction details are not included, and some property may not be registered.

<sup>289</sup> The National Land Agency data base has no valuation point for Ōmori since the World Heritage designation: <http://www.land.mlit.go.jp/landPrice/AriaServlet?MOD=0&TYP=0>. Because information on actual transaction prices is considered confidential and not generally known to the public, the National Land Agency has been charged under the Land Assessment Law (*chika kōjihō*, 地価公示法) with determining official land prices, or what they believe is reasonable value for property. Certified real estate appraisers (*kanteinin*, 鑑定人) inspect samples of cases around the country and provide regular updates. The trends in these land price estimates have been alarming in recent years. The data announced by the National Land Agency in January 2010 showed that 99.6% of the valuation points had declined from the previous year, after 96.9% showing decline in 2009. Prices for commercial land average one-quarter of their peak in 1991 and residential averages are equivalent to those of 1983. The largest declines have been in Tōkyō (*Sanin Chūō Shinpō* 2010a).

Prefectures also produce reference prices for land (*kijunchi hyōjun kakaku*, 基準値標準価格). The Shimane listing for 2010 shows reference prices for residential properties in Ōda City centre to average about ¥30,000m<sup>2</sup> and ¥20,000m<sup>2</sup> in the outlying Nima district:

[http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/infra/toshi/tochi/chika\\_chousa/heisei22nendo/kakakuitiran\\_h22.html](http://www.pref.shimane.lg.jp/infra/toshi/tochi/chika_chousa/heisei22nendo/kakakuitiran_h22.html). The national average of the prefectural land reference prices continues to fall; in the year to July 2010 it fell 3.4% for residential land nationwide, after a 4% decline the previous year:

[http://tochi.mlit.go.jp/chika/chousa/2010/gaiyou\\_1.html](http://tochi.mlit.go.jp/chika/chousa/2010/gaiyou_1.html).

<sup>290</sup> In other words, the value used in the annual tax payment on property and real estate related fees. This is calculated by municipalities.

<sup>291</sup> For Ōmori, the *rosenka* is 1.1 times the fixed asset tax. A selection of detailed *rosenka* maps of Ōda City are at: [http://www.rosenka.nta.go.jp/main\\_h22/hirosima/simane/prices/h21501fr.htm](http://www.rosenka.nta.go.jp/main_h22/hirosima/simane/prices/h21501fr.htm).

¥300 million.<sup>292</sup> The Ōda City rates for fixed asset tax are 1.6% for the main city and 1.4% for the Nima district, with a 0.2% planning surcharge applied for certain areas.<sup>293</sup>

Consideration of such details of land-related economics is necessary when evaluating the ability to develop property in a place such as Ōmori. The fear that outside interests will be drawn to a World Heritage location and change the nature of the community is not irrational – it has happened in other cases in Japan. What would such a business calculation entail? So far, this has been very difficult for anyone to determine because land has simply not been available, or when it has been the transactions have not been recorded in a way to establish baseline values. Like real estate elsewhere in Japan, there is much more involved in a transaction than buying a property at a fixed price that is public knowledge. When I first began looking at property values in Ōmori, I was told that none was available, so there was no price, but if something ever was available it would be cheap. I continued to ask people this question and got various vague answers. Eventually, many months later when I had become acquainted better with most of the village, I was asked whether I personally would like to buy a property because one might be available if I met certain people, and it would be cheap. My conclusion about this experience is that the ‘market’ for property in Ōmori operates like a system of reciprocity based on human relations rather than in standard economic terms. It is very personal. Attempts to apply normal yield calculations miss the point that land has other meanings here and, since each parcel has unique symbolic references, can never be exchanged as a commodity valued by measures such as price per square metre. Ōmori is an extreme example of how real estate works in the countryside, and has relevance even for urban situations – there is a strong cultural bias that makes communal sentiment part of property relationships.

### **Counter-culture**

Finally, such attitudes call to mind certain times and places that may seem removed from rural Japan, but have a real resonance with people in Ōmori who often were influenced by foreign ideas. When I explain details of the romantic/ retro-chic elements I have found in Ōmori, I will be told that I am dealing with just a bunch of old hippies. But there seem to be a lot of such old hippies in the countryside, and they laugh when I tell them that foreigners

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<sup>292</sup> See: <http://www.nta.go.jp/taxanswer/sozoku/4155.htm>.

<sup>293</sup> See: <http://www.city.ohda.lg.jp/684.html>. Adding a planning surcharge is normal practice for Japanese municipalities.

might see them in these terms. There is no question that their self-perception involves them in an effort to form a counter-culture that rejects much of the urban economic model more normally associated with Japan. But, at the same time, engagement with metropolitan materialism necessarily draws them into relationships that are compromised. Of course, this was the fate of the Western counter-culture as well.

The fact that retro-chic could be conceived as a negative response to the counter-culture shows how an association with some past time or place shifts its referent and need not be sentimental or necessarily a longing to return; the counter-culture itself was seen at the time as a romantic appeal to the America of Thoreau's *Walden* (1854), simple living, self-sufficiency and populist communes of the nineteenth century (Alsen 1996: 35 and Gair 2007: 23). Lippard stressed how the values of the earlier period were systematically rejected by retro-chic's aggressive materialism. And even now in Europe, the most common period correlated with retro style is the commercial, pre-counter-culture 1960s of 'swinging London' (Jenß 2004). But these concerns are of only indirect interest in Japan, where retro fashion can refer to a wide variety of times and places, but probably the largest category is Shōwa retro, or the period around 1955 when the great economic transformation became noticeable. Products can be those found either before or during this transformation, and as mentioned, Gungendō is interested in the earlier period. The immediate post-war time is particularly appropriate because it was a time of shortages when every usable item needed to be conserved. This ecological orientation, of not wasting anything, is a strong part of the company's frugal aesthetic, but is also part of a long heritage in rural Japan. While the counter-culture in America is related to post-materialism born from a growing affluence in the middle class, the impulse to live simply in rural Japan is partly from necessity; the Japanese situation appears to have parallels to the American case because of an overlap of values that reject the outcome of modern industrialization and materialism, but the romantic roots of these movements are different and the details of their pursuit quite dissimilar. To take just one example, the counterculture was a youth movement, while the urge for rural self-sufficiency in Japan concerns mostly the old. Politically, the counterculture was implicated with the New Left, the anti-war and civil rights protests, while in Japan rural concerns, though typically affiliated with the conservatives, do not have a national agenda now and are much more interested in local affairs. There is no perceptible connection with the Japanese

student protest movement of the 1960s.<sup>294</sup> Nevertheless, environmental awareness, the cluster of attitudes mentioned above regarding romantic creativity, self-realization, a search for authenticity, alienation and communal spirit are just a few of the common features shared by both.<sup>295</sup> The counter-culture, after all, does concern culture, or a whole way of life, although this sometimes leads critics to limit their perspective to artistic creations such as literature, film and music (Gair 2007). But this is understandable in view of the romantic impulse concerning creativity and artistic action that lay behind the movement.

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<sup>294</sup> See Suzuki (2009) on the history of the 1960s student movement in Japan and its subsequent dissipation into the 'lost generation'.

<sup>295</sup> On the central concern with authenticity as a moral quest in the counter-culture, see Rossinow (1999). Most histories are careful to distinguish the New Left politics from the counter-culture, although there were crosscurrents. See Jones (2002) and especially Gitlin (1993). On alienation, see Ford (2008). On the importance of passionate commitment to notions of authentic selfhood, see Zimmerman (2001). However, see O'Brien (2002) for an interpretation that emphasizes attitude towards space, consciousness and the rejection of material property.

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