



## Durham E-Theses

---

### *The travelling orchestra: toward a understanding of Japanese identity*

White, Bruce

#### How to cite:

---

White, Bruce (1998) *The travelling orchestra: toward a understanding of Japanese identity*, Durham theses, Durham University. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/4761/>

#### Use policy

---

The full-text may be used and/or reproduced, and given to third parties in any format or medium, without prior permission or charge, for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes provided that:

- a full bibliographic reference is made to the original source
- a [link](#) is made to the metadata record in Durham E-Theses
- the full-text is not changed in any way

The full-text must not be sold in any format or medium without the formal permission of the copyright holders.

Please consult the [full Durham E-Theses policy](#) for further details.

# The Travelling Orchestra



*Towards an Understanding of Japanese Identity*

1998  
Department of Anthropology  
DURHAM UNIVERSITY

BRUCEWHITE

**The  
Travelling  
Orchestra**

*Toward an Understanding of Japanese Identity*

Bruce White

**A copyright of this thesis rests  
with the author. No quotation  
from it should be published  
without his prior written consent  
and information derived from it  
should be acknowledged.**

1998 MA Thesis (By Research)

Supervised by Professor Michael Carrithers

Department of Anthropology UNIVERSITY OF DURHAM



04 NOV 2005

*for Yumi Yoshimoto*

## *Acknowledgments*

This thesis would not have been possible if not for those people who offered me help, advice and financial backing over the last two years. Thanks must go first of all to my mother and grandparents, who assisted in paying my university fees and living costs from October 1996-1997. This allowed me to spend a year in Durham learning Japanese and reviewing literature. It was during this time that I met Hiro, a Japanese exchange student whose friendship subsequently prevented me from feeling completely isolated when I arrived in Tokyo in October 1997. It is thanks to Hiro and his network of friends that Tokyo became an enjoyable place to live. If not for Hiro's generosity - introducing me into his world - I doubt I could have begun to see Japan through the eyes of young Japanese.

A Japanese government scholarship (Monbusho) made my Japanese fieldwork possible, and my thanks go to those who continue to see a real value in further pluralising Japanese society by funding foreign students to do research in Japan. My deepest thanks also to Ines Sanmiguel who continues to represent me in my dealings with Monbusho and whose friendship has helped make me feel at home here in Japan.

My move to the village of "Sweetwood" on Kyushu island would not have been possible if not for the overwhelming generosity of Jun and his family (I call them the Tanaka's). Not only did they seek out accommodation for me, but also made sure that I had the connections and opportunities to make my time in Sweetwood as worthwhile as possible. I can only hope I have the chance to offer them such kindness in the future. My thanks go also to all those people of the Sweetwood community who continue to welcome me into their lives and share their thoughts on their country. Special thanks must go to Serita-San and Kawai-San who both ensure I do not go without drinking partners here in Sweetwood.

Back in the UK, my supervisor, Professor Michael Carrithers, has endured my initial rantings on way-out research proposals, (which in retrospect I myself see as totally mad), and has helped keep the basics of interpretive anthropology in view. His advice back in 1996, (when I informed him I would like to go to the States for post-graduate fieldwork), was that I should take the opportunity to learn another language. It was this advice which eventually lead me to Japan. I thank him for going through drafts of this thesis and offering me feedback - without which this paper would not read as it

does - and most of all for the support and advice which has, quite literary, broadened my horizons.

The countless Japanese who have spent time with me in conversation really make this paper what it is. Without the openness and goodwill of so many individuals who were keen to talk to me, my own perspective on Japan would have remained a static image built up from the literature. Thanks to all those who have, through their conversations and personalities, brought my Japan to life.

Lastly, my girlfriend Yumi has offered support and friendship throughout my time in Japan. Not only has she shared her life with me - her family and friends - but has always been interested in discussing and criticizing my work from the point of view of a Japanese national. It is to her kindness and generosity that I owe a great deal of my peace of mind and quality of life, and it is to her I dedicate this paper - with my love and thanks.

## Introduction

### *The Perspective*

In the summer of 1995 I conducted research in Canada for an undergraduate dissertation. I examined the phenomena of Generational Change and how the Canadian identity has transformed from a community defined against the Civilized/Savage fulcrum of English, French, and Native interaction, to a more multi-cultural collective which deliberately counters such divisions. Young urban Canadians, I asserted, see their world as existing between the two extremes of isolated, historically defined categories, often perpetuated by older generations, and the multi-cultural realities in which they find themselves. Such cultural transformation I see as the result of changes in the historically defined positions of Self (English/French Canadians) against Other (Native peoples). I concluded that the spread of cultural diversity always occurs in response to such changes in our identities. More precisely, that any change in the relationship between *us* and our *significant other(s)* requires further diversification of our cultural identities.

I saw Canadian urban youth as existing at the forefront of such cultural diversification. Their generational position allowing a variety of themes to underpin their identities as Canadian. They had 'moved on' to see their social worlds as complex and diverse and were unable to exist wholly in the dialectal Us and Them relationship with Native and/or French communities which had traditionally characterized the Canadian national identity. Through this unfolding diversity in the way that Canada is imagined, I advocated that youth had become *an agent of cultural change* - the new diversity inherent in their national identities breaking down traditional relationships between Self and Other.

It was this research which led to my interest in examining the way that cultures change from one image of themselves to another through successive generations. It is this interest which has led me to study Japan, and more broadly, how a culture's transition from an agrarian to modern state is a process which can be 'measured' by plotting changes in the way that people imagine themselves as part of a collective. Because this focus comes out of my Canadian research, I am also interested here to understand how Japan's youth has come to be an agent of cultural change - how the diversity present in the cultural identities of young generations contradicts and

opposes the dialectical divisions which prop-up the traditional identities of their elders.

This examination hopes merely to briefly glance at the complex systems of change which occur in the Japanese culture. I use the word 'toward' in the title to give an idea of the limitation of space and research time with which I am bound here. This paper is the first of two planned works on examining Japanese identity and cultural change, and therefore can be seen as a kind of extended introduction to the subject (I have mentioned within areas which I hope to expand in the next thesis).

The fieldwork I make reference to in this paper is the result of six months I spent in Tokyo conducting research with young Japanese, and a further six months I spent in a small town on the island of Kyushu attempting to observe the ways in which a variety of generations imagine themselves as Japanese. My fieldwork has involved informal discussions, life stories and a variety of observations on the methods of constructing group identity.

Because the themes discussed in this paper are drawn partly from previous research, I have approached Japan with an interest in showing how, although unique in the processes through which the nation has passed, Japan exists within an interconnected world of cultural progression and development. If the reader receives some notion of this interconnectedness of cultural change from the argument presented here, then the paper, at least for me, has been a success.

Bruce White  
*Kyushu, Japan*



## Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	
<i>Introduction</i>	
<i>Chapter One</i>	
Social Life	1
<i>Chapter Two</i>	
Horizons	16
<i>Chapter Three</i>	
Orchestral Manoeuvres in History	21
<i>Chapter Four</i>	
Sweetwood and Bitter Branches	38
<i>Chapter Five</i>	
Generations of Change	54
<i>Chapter Six</i>	
The Common Symphonies	64
<i>Bibliography/References</i>	72

*To see ourselves as others can be eye-opening. To see others as sharing a nature with ourselves is the merest decency. But it is from the far more difficult achievement of seeing ourselves amongst others, as a local example of the forms human life has locally taken, a case among cases, a world among worlds, that the largeness of mind, without which objectivity is self congratulation and tolerance a sham, comes. If interpretive anthropology has any general office in the world it is to keep reteaching this fugitive truth.*

Clifford Geertz, 1983

## Chapter One

### *Social Life*

*... at the seaside*

I don't much care for British seaside towns. It is not so much the smell of urine that wafts up from beside fish and chip shops as the smell of the fish and chip shops themselves, which pile another greasy layer onto an already well-oiled atmosphere. Add to this the heat of a summer's day and you have a cheap, fully microwavable, 650W=2mins environment. So it still confounds me that, despite such unpleasantness, hundreds of thousands of people flock to these towns in the summer to 'enjoy' the seaside; and even more so that I, on a hot August day, found myself attending an event featuring the Bay City Rollers and a local comedian in one such British seaside town.

When we arrived, the grassy area in front of the obligatory line of amusement arcades was already full of shuffling people. Families and old age pensioners made up most of those struggling to set up camp near the stage in order to get the best view of the show, which, by the way, showed no signs of setting up. The stage, a large temporary structure with a banner welcoming the audience to the biggest event in town, was empty. My friends and I decided to go and have some fish and chips, buy some beer and urinate in a public place. This we did and returned an hour or so later to what had become, at a stretch of the imagination, a gathering of people, who had now almost obscured the grassland underneath with their rugs and litter.

We worked our way mid-field and found an area where we could sit. A glimpse around the area revealed other groups of young men sitting and drinking warm lager, families with young children, pensioners (who had by now had enjoyed an hour staring from the best vantage point at an empty stage), and, of course, the intermingling mass of teenaged tracksuited boys and girls who approached the audience with ever-increasing regularity asking for 10p for the phone. (They probably made more money that day than those billed to perform).

As I was rummaging in our bag for another beer in this somewhat chaotic atmosphere with children challenging themselves unsuccessfully to run as fast as possible through



the sitting masses without causing accident, the brave Brian Kenner finally took to the stage and welcomed us all to this prestigious event with a series of jokes which my brain refused outright to commit to memory. Each was followed by a spattering of drums and symbols which served to embarrass rather than fulfil their original purpose (which I assume is to emphasize that which there was not - a punchline). The children, to their credit, laughed, more out of empathy with Mr. Kenner's efforts it seemed, than the wit of his jokes. After electrifying the audience with the stage equivalent of ECT treatment, Mr. Brian Kenner then moved forward to address us as follows:-

"Welcome to this wonderful town!" His attempt to whip up local identity into enthusiasm was a bit misguided after such an appalling start and the splattering of hands again served to emphasise the embarrassment of a 'lost' audience.

"We have some very special guests coming later and I'm sure you are all waiting to welcome THE BAY CITY ROLLERS!!!" This of course was poor Brian's only sure way of inspiring a certain excitement in his audience. Unfortunately for him, however, although the comment brought applause it also brought impatience; and when he began speaking again, telling another few jokes, the reaction was a blatant "We are just waiting for you to finish so we can see the band, mate".

For the time being, however, it was obvious that we were going to have to endure Brian Kenner's particular form of entertainment, and, some of the audience pulled their children up above their heads as a show of good will ("it's for the kids") so that they might catch a better glimpse at Brian Kenner, dressed in a ostrich costume, running back and forth performing apparently sexual movements with a false pairs of legs. Brian Kenner then announced that the next act would be a sumo wrestler "all the way from Japan". I was faintly excited at this until Mr. Kenner just "popped back to see where was" and returned to the stage dressed in a sumo wrestler's costume, lumbering to front stage with a "Ho ho hoi yoo yoi yo - hah - so wo wah yahh". Things weren't improving but the children, at least, were responding with some enthusiastic noises.

When he had finished milking every last giggle from the children and had attempted a comical Japanese accent to announce he was very happy to be here in this town having come... yes, yes Brian... "alru zya way furom zyapan" he paused momentarily. It was clear that he was going through some angst, finally realizing perhaps that the majority of the audience were utterly uninspired. We all reflected too for the few seconds, and I

noticed a large gray cloud making its way inland, and then in the most down-to-earth voice I had heard since his appearance forty-five minutes before, Brian Kenner remarked,

"I know what you're all thinking..."

Silence.

"It's crap but it's British."

There was a split second of silence as the entire audience marveled at this man whose comment managed to sum up the event, the day, the British seaside, the tacky organization, and why the hell we were here in the first place. The moment passed and we fell about with laughter. Faces all over the park broke into smiles and fathers exchanged glances with their wives, lads with their friends, old age pensioners with each other. In a moment of absolute genius Brian Kenner had united his audience in one truly happy moment. Suddenly it all seemed worthwhile:- the smells, the kids, even the ostrich costume and the bad jokes. Brian Kenner, we all concluded, was just one element in all the crap things that brought us here in the first place - and yes! - he should be celebrated for this - for this was true Britain, and for that one moment at least, we all knew it.

*... and its improvisation*

I don't think I have ever had the good fortune to be involved in such a wonderful display of contradictions, shifting identities, national and local memberships, or indeed a genuine open display of belonging as took place on that hot August day. Brian Kenner, sweating inside a sumo costume, had just presented a series of essentially racist impressions of the Japanese and then suddenly turned our attention to the fact that he was merely playing the role of a completely ignorant British entertainer for an audience who expected such rubbish and could identify with such low-level entertainment.

What he gave us in that moment of pure improvisation was the ability to see ourselves as involved in a tradition, indeed, a way of life which had permeated British culture for at least a century - the seaside, the entertainment, the family day out. In the same instant, he also gave us the ability to free ourselves from such identifications - the

ability to see ourselves firmly positioned in the present - a people continuing a tradition that no one particularly enjoyed but which provided some intangible connexion to those around us. The fact that such a contradiction was announced with such economic eloquence (five words) almost instantly brought us together in acknowledgment not only of our own existence as a group, but through the use of the word 'British' a notion that we were a people, a community, in a world of others.

It may at first seem contradictory that such a shift from one image of ourselves in the world to another allows us to feel part of a collective. A closer analysis, however, reveals that it is precisely this ability for us to 'improvise' our communities according to various situations, (to behave and subscribe to one set of values or opinions at one time and to customize and modify them with regard the people around us), that makes our social identities a mix of the products of history and tradition with present and particular circumstance. It is precisely how we go about *improvising our communities* which is the subject of Machin and Carrithers (1996) paper. Much as I have taken Brian Kenner's improvisation at the British Seaside to introduce the subject, Machin and Carrithers examine the improvisations of Ignacio, a Supervisor at a Spanish factory, to investigate further the creative machinery of our social worlds.

*...according to Ignacio*

Ignacio along with friends (and Machin the anthropologist) are discussing a series of murders brought to their attention by a Spanish newspaper. Several conversations take place over a period of 24 hours, where Ignacio begins by calling the murderer "a bastard... worse than (an) animal... not satisfied with living by society's laws so we should... give them the laws of the jungle... give them to the families of the (victims)". Later the same day, however, with a different friend, the murderer becomes the victim of an unequal society: "...the whole thing is shameful... just a chance for (the newspapers) to make money... these underprivileged people are always involved in such things". In two further conversations, Ignacio proceeds to alter his stance twice more. First he moves back to the less tolerant stance and then returns to blaming the institutions of media and the state.

In attempting to explain such inconsistencies, the Machin and Carrithers, (1996), state,

People just do change in their attitudes and expressions from moment to

moment and from setting to setting... On the other hand, people conduct their improvisations in the light of a rich sense of each other, and by using common tools... these changes (of attitudes and expressions) do (however) sum up to much larger changes as well, amounting to the sheer historicity, the continual historical change, which is so deeply part of our national character... by describing this Spanish material as emanating from a community of improvisation we assert that this social world, like other social worlds, is composed of such change" (ibid.: 1)

In other words, although Ignacio appears to be altering his views considerably, he is doing so with a developed sense of the others around him and how they will respond. Also, rather than a random selection of opinions, Machin and Carrithers argue that the choices available to Ignacio are limited (and even created) by the history that bore his nation into existence. Thus although Ignacio certainly does 'improvise' a community, like a jazz musician, his improvisations have established chords around which these improvisations occur. The chords of our social worlds, then, are the threads of history and national character; they are learnt and become our common experience.

*... and the way we do it*

In order to further dissect this notion that we have an underlying common basis around which our improvisations are played, Machin and Carrithers turn to a discussion on 'landmarks'. Landmarks, they assert, are the manifestations of historical factors showing themselves clearly through ones particular improvisation. Or, in other words, they are the themes or ideas from which an improvisation occurs - the underlying chord or chords being improvised around. In Ignacio's statement that "you can't believe a word that the newspapers say anyway... them and the politicians, what do they care?", Machin and Carrithers see a "...well-worn conversational manoeuvre, echo(ing) much historical experience of power and its abuse around the Mediterranean" (ibid. 10). The use of landmarks, then, helps the observer to see what the improviser is calling his participants to share in.

So if we can detect through one's attitudes and expressions the chord (or landmark) which is at the root of such improvisation, then we can decipher a considerable amount not just of that person's place within his or her community but also that community's place within much broader national and perhaps even continental histories. Seeing

landmarks, then, is rather like training one's ear to pick out the root chords in a particular musical improvisation. Again, however, the improvisational 'styles' (the chords that are used, or the landmarks that are improvised around) are particular to sets of people sharing in common social histories. Indeed they distinguish our relative traditions from one another, giving us that combination of historical 'ballast' and present 'freedom of improvisation' that, in keeping with the music analogy, creates our own particular *styles*.

Brian Kenner's improvisations, for instance, relied on an in-depth knowledge of his fellow participants (the audience):- Firstly he sdermised that we had been exposed to the images of the traditionally British forms of entertainment - Blackpool, Punch and Judy, Butlins holidays - and this meant that we could relate to his performances with the ostrich, the jokes, the by-the-seaside environment and the laughing at the Chinese/Japanese (traditionally there seems no distinction between the oriental appropriations). Secondly, however, when it was obvious that he was not benefiting from improvising around these former themes, Brian Kenner turned to a more contemporary landmark. This was the idea that we had all seen programmes such as Holiday, where people go off to beautiful resorts, dine in restaurants, relax on the golden beaches and traditional British entertainment represented the constrast in the present world - what you would settle for if you couldn't afford the fare to Florida. He knew all of this because of his "rich sense" of the opposing and interwoven threads of history, tradition and present common experience. "It's crap, but it's British", then, didn't so much cut through a common knowledge of British tradition and present social life, as much as bring the two realms into collision; forcing his audience's focus from the performance of tradition to the shared knowledge of their actual social experience (which, of course, is what made it funny - see Wagg; 1998).

So we see with both Ignacio and Brian Kenner, improvisations which have as their core knowledge or landmarks which relate directly to the audience's social experience. The improvisation may suddenly change, reflecting the drawing upon different landmarks, but the landmarks remain familiar to the participants. Again, this process of 'improvising communities' can be seen to be a fundamental method by which we imagine ourselves positioned in the present in relation to the past - as we contrast and play at the boundaries of our culture's collective knowledge, drawing from the past in order to accentuate our place in the present.



It is in this way that our social occasions - our conversations which each other - reveal the blueprints of our histories. By using landmarks particular and familiar to our fellow participants, we draw upon the "raw material" which our cultures provide, to literally create *community* (see Benedict, 1935). Brian and Ignacio, then, are individuals caught in moments of interaction with their fellow participants - in moments when they draw upon known landmarks to generate a collective. That they both are concerned with the production of such a collective - of such community - represents their normal functioning as social animals; that their improvisations revolve around the use of 'localized' landmarks (which would not be understood if transplanted to another group) represents their respective places in an unfolding of cultural traditions and histories.

*... and what makes it possible*

One of the most powerful factors which influences both Brian and Ignacio's use and choice of landmark, is that they assume their participants are part of a collective exposed to similar sets of improvisational material. Broadly speaking we can see this as an acknowledgment and utilization of the notion of National Collective. The assumption that such a collective exists becomes the style to which the improviser abides - a rich pool of assumed knowledge from which to select landmarks for improvisation. We seem to be able to assume that an overwhelming percentage of people in our respective countries will have had heard the various rhetorics of Nation - the landmarks which have been used to generate its existence as a community of improvisation. It is a pretty safe bet, then, that landmarks relating to notions of Nation will be understood, our improvisations familiar and a collective easily imagined. Using landmarks with nation as their key theme is the beginners' guide to all-round adeptness in social life.

So improvisations commonly revolve around such 'safe-bet' landmarks as those related to common experiences within nation. And, to repeat, such improvisation can give us vital information about the development of national character and the historical place of a particular nation in a more continental or even global set of processes. But, interestingly, the concept of nation itself as a movement, or as the raw material from which to create landmarks, is a relatively new tool by which we generate or improvise community. Gellner suggests that it has taken widely different shape throughout the world as our cultures have begun (and continued to be) victims to all kinds of social and

economic transitions.

Gellner postulates that in our movements from agrarian to modern industrial society we have gone through several key transitions in the relationship between social organization and culture. These transitions, by their very dependence on the relationship between culture on the one hand and state on the other, have, to different degrees, engendered nationalism in the modern world. Gellner points out, however, that the agrarian world did hold the ingredients for the development of nationalism, but largely because of its primary function to maintain 'place', 'rank' and a hierarchical status system, it could not "at the same time perform a quite different role: namely, to mark the boundaries of the polity" (Gellner, 1997:20).

Agrarian society, he argues, "encourages cultural differentiation within itself". Its dependence on the maintenance of a complex hierarchical system means that the differences between people should be

...both visible and felt. If they are clearly seen in all external aspects of conduct, in dress, commensality, accent, body posture... this eliminates ambiguity and thus diminishes friction. If a man's station and its rights and duties become part of his soul, his pride, this, once again, helps maintain social discipline (Gellner, 1997: 20).

We could reflect how, in this world, a group of people may improvise their community, and question what would make this world distinct from the communities which Brian and Ignacio belong. Indeed, as Gellner's argument asserts, it is difficult to imagine that a notion of national collective could be improvised around in agrarian social life. One would imagine that concern with forever increasing one's position within society would occupy the social space of people's contacts with one another. These notions of social standing and station would replace that of collective nation as the 'beginners' guide to adeptness in social life'. Here, again, it would be a pretty safe bet to assume that the person you were talking to was familiar with such rhetorics of place and station. To put Gellner's argument in terms of my own, then: the agrarian world had not the concept of nation as a tool to allow a standardization of national collective improvisation; its improvisations depended upon the notions of hierarchy and common 'place'.

If the agrarian world had certain features of social organization and culture which allow us to imagine it as markedly different from the modern, then what can we see in modern society which has facilitated the development of nationalism? Certainly, that the industrial civilization came to be based on economic growth, and economic growth which (frequently) outstrips population growth, allowed the removal of modern society from the agrarian dead-lock. In turn, the modern concern with *growth* triggered mobility - as innovation became a force which created new jobs - and thus the modern occupational structure became both unstable and meritocratic. Because of this need for innovation and growth, an agrarian strata system merely leads to conflict -

...far better to embrace a theory of a kind of baseline equality. All men are equals: differences linked to their occupancy of posts... do not enter their souls, or not too much... a man cannot take his professional status with him and invoke it outside the workplace. Status operates in office hours, so to speak (Gellner, 1997: 27).

This equality, then, represents a fundamental departure from the agrarian world of rank and status, and it is here that history, as it were, allows the existence of Brian and Ignacio's improvisations. Without the departure of the agrarian systems and an entry into a world in which equality makes economic sense, they would not have been able to make their comments, or if you like, their comments would have made no sense to the participants. Indeed, it is in the transition from the agrarian to the modern that allows a quantum leap in our abilities to relate to one another:

The mobility and anonymity of modern society are very marked features of it. Members relate to the total society directly, without mediation, rather than by first of all to one of its sub-groups (Ibid, 1997: 28).

This is an extremely important notion which represents the last thread in Gellner's logical outline of the development of nationalism in the *modern world* rather than the common (nationalist's) view that it is a phenomena forever present in mankind's sociality. Indeed, Brian and Ignacio's ability to draw in their participants' into a collective seems entirely dependent on their participants ability to imagine themselves directly connected to a vision of themselves within a much wider collective. Although it is not my intention to reiterate the remainder of Gellner's reflections here, some parts of his argument provide some key building blocks for my own, particularly his ideas of

how our cultures exist in moments of transition between the agrarian and the modern world models.

*...and its comparison across time and culture*

As we read Gellner's argument we could be forgiven if initially we considered it simplistic. Indeed, (as I have outlined), it presents a view of society as at first agrarian, and then, through some 'miraculous' departure from an apparent deadlock, modern. With patience, however, we are rewarded by Gellner's usual clarity of vision.

We have put forward two extreme and simple types, one conducive to nationalism, the other averse to it. The two types of society could hardly be more different. It is hard to conceive a direct, immediate, single-step transition from the older form to the contemporary one. This being so, what are the intermediate stages through which a given society is liable to pass on its way from one form to the other? The stages will not all be the same in all places and circumstances... (Ibid, 1997: 37).

And so Gellner proceeds to give us a 'five-stage' graduated history of the political organization of central and eastern Europe which illustrates the course from a pre-nationalist to the fully-nationalist condition. Very briefly, he takes us from the Vienna Congress after the Napoleonic wars - where "the peacekeepers and mapmakers of Vienna went about their task in total disregard of ethnicity" - to Balkan agrarian world fringes where a religious and rebel mix stirred the nationalist cocktail - to the Age of Versailles - to an age of ethnic cleansing where one culture means one state - and finally to a world where ethnic movements are effective political devices but where the future of nationalism is in doubt.

Again, it is not necessary for me to summarize his analysis any further here; suffice it to say that he demonstrates how, in theory at least, we can chart the development of social organization and culture from an agrarian state to the modern across a series of regionally relevant conditions and cultural encounters. However, in doing so, Gellner's outline gestures to the unimaginable diversity of transitional 'stages' that the world, as a mix of geographical locales, has and is experiencing. Indeed he points out that:

The... five stage scenario presented one possible sequence, but the world is more varied than that. Even within Europe alone, ignoring the complexities of other cultures, the patterns are more diversified. In fact, in Europe, one can discern three or four time zones, rather like (those on) world maps at airports (Ibid: 50).

These 'time zones' represent "belts of territory running from north to south, within which the pattern (of change) is roughly similar, but which differs from one zone to another". Gellner presents the analysis within an analogy of a *marriage* between state and culture present in the different locations in Europe. That is to say that as he moves through the various zones he demonstrates how the power bases inherent in the agrarian world (the dynastic states) either did or did not correspond to cultural-linguistic zones. If from agrarian times, they did indeed correspond with one another, then Gellner suggests that with the coming of the Age of Nationalism no great changes were required to align the two *partners*. Indeed, according to Gellner's Zone 1, (corresponding to Europe's Atlantic coast and the societies spread out along it), "the couple were living together in a kind of customary marriage for ages... long before the internal logic of modern society decreed that the couple were meant for each other" (Ibid: 51).

Not so with Zone 2 (immediately east of zone 1) where the "bride had been ready, all tarted up for the altar, for a long time, but, but... no groom!" - i.e. a high culture and an identifiable peasantry, *but* a political fragmentation which meant no state protector. Also not so with Zone 3 (Eastern Europe) "where the trouble really starts" - there being neither bride nor groom - neither states or national cultures. As such, they had to be created and because of the "appallingly complex patchwork of linguistic and cultural differences, interspersed both on the map and in the social structure...(the) combination (was) a recipe for catastrophe" (ibid: 54). Zone 4, again positioned in Eastern Europe but representing countries under Communism, illustrates how defeat in the cold war benefited nationalism and helped to break-up the empire, only to leave the future development of the region uncertain and in fundamental transition.

Gellner's entire argument, then, allows us to visualize not only a historical series of events which preceded the development of nationalism, but also the localized examples of how these wider occurrences affected particular places at particular times (within Europe). Or to put it another way, how the tidal waves of industrialization and nationalism swept through our communities, aligning state and culture at different

speeds and degrees. This graduated geographical and chronological map, then, provides us with a tool for understanding how our present improvisations are set into the clay of our histories (and to what scale we are able to improvise community). Indeed, Machin and Carrithers used such a tool (such a map) when they related Ignacio's improvisation to the historical abuse of power in the Mediterranean - they took a present improvisation and linked it through many generations of cultural development to a set of historical processes.

With Ignacio, though, we can see that although his improvisations reflect a position in Gellner's Zone 1 (the extreme West of Europe), we see his as a partially self-critical stance - he *blames* agents of the state for the murders. At first glance, this improvisation technique would seem to go against that *comfortable* relationship between state and culture with which Gellner characterizes this geographical area. However, it is important to see that just as in the relationships between individuals, the relationships between individuals and their wider collectives are in good shape if a certain amount of self criticism is allowed to enter. The opposite type is clearly seen in the dictatorships of history where words against the state could result in execution - where one is permitted to criticize, the roads of conflict have already been well-trodden.

Thus, we can perceive the criticism inherent in Ignacio's relationship with his culture and state as a relationship which resembles Gellner's analysis of the 'happy marriage' which the two have had in Western Europe from agrarian times. Likewise, we can also suppose that Brian Kenner's comparatively outrageous improvisation "It's crap but it's British" also represents the same peace of mind in playing with the relationship between state, culture and the participants. Indeed, one would find it difficult to imagine the words in the mouths of a group of nationalists - "It's crap but that's Serbia" - or, indeed, in unstable states - "It's crap but that's North Korean". It is not that the words could not be uttered, but they would certainly not inspire a *collective*. Again, as with people, a relationship which permits teasing and play is one built on strong foundations; one which is always cautious and uncertain represents a lack of familiarity with the participants.

So we can see how improvisation in our social groups reveals our respective places in a stream of unevenly spread but universal world transitions, and by focusing on particular improvisations, we can also see how our interaction with each other can pinpoint our culture's position within its particular dynamic - its position on a virtual

chart between agrarian and modern industrial society. Of course, although improvisations allow us to 'plug in' to the abstract developments related to these particular transitions, the concrete existence of patterns of social organization (family units etc.) can also allow us access to the histories which manifest themselves in our perceived present(s).

However, as Gellner put forward, cultures are never truly in the modern or agrarian state, but somewhere in-between. In this way, we can see modern cultures suspended in both the improvisations which they create and the real social structures which survive from agrarian times. Indeed, with some cultures, the divisions may be entirely visible in the guise of class divisions or family organizations while with others they may be hidden under many layers of social transformation. What's more, internally the cultures may (and almost always have) developed at different stages, dividing the people living within them. It is in this way that the notion that our cultures are at a *particular* point along a line of social transition doesn't seem as powerful as the notion that our cultures are *at several points* along such a system of measurement, being as they are composed of *many* ways of life rather than one, and of many interpretations of self in the present and in history rather than the unified national whole that is often assumed to be the by-product of the Age of Nationalism.

*...and how we live it*

But the relationship between real social organization and the improvisations which take place within such structures provide us with the ability to position ourselves in our respective cultures (and always have done). The relationship between the actual family and community organization provides the raw material onto which the ingredients of improvisation with our fellow participants are sprinkled, creating, if you like, our individual social cakes - our respective abilities to imagine and form social community. But such a relationship between real social organization and the improvisations which form the perceived social fabric also inspire change - the kind of change which facilitated the social transformations from agrarian to modern society in the first instance.

This change, then, is an ongoing negotiation of continuity on the one hand and the improvisation of community, or change, on the other. Indeed, as our improvisations change to adapt to new and up-dated visions of ourselves in the world, so our social

structures represent the continuity of place, of cultural tradition. Thus, our cultures are complex patterns of continuity and change, the very interaction of which creates a kind of *life* - or more specifically, *social life*.

What continuity and change both have in common, however, is that they both seem to wish to lead the way to what we may consider to be the 'interiors' of our social selves. We draw upon both to position ourselves in our particular present. Indeed, the notion that we are somehow positioned in both the cultural tradition (the continuity) and the improvisation (the change) simultaneously, gives us a complete social package with which to relate to our fellow participants. The interior, then, is a position occupied when the forces of continuity and change meet in negotiation - it is where Brian Kenner is when he calls his audience into improvisation around the notions of traditional English seaside entertainment and how crap it is. It is where Ignacio is when he shifts from one position to another, reflecting various typified voices from either the tolerant perceived *now*, or the historically represented intolerant *then*.

For us as social animals, then, the notion that we are free to negotiate continuity and change in order to plug ourselves in to a social network, is our most human ability. And as we negotiate our positions within, we reveal the strands of tradition and improvisation which bore us into the present. Social life, then, becomes a kind of travel dialogue between fellow negotiators, fellow participants. The roads of continuity and change are well-traveled as we walk toward a horizon which represents the merging of the two - a point at which we can improvise community and thus participate in social life. Listened to from a position which considers improvisations over many years and many generations, this travel dialogue becomes a kind of symphony - a orchestra of people improvising their communities across time within the same culture - the sound of social life in motion.

*back at the seaside...*

As I exchanged glances with my friends, it was clear that the day was going to cheer up from now on, despite the advance of a large gray cloud moving inland. And as if to enhance the mood which he had so cleverly created, Brian Kenner raised his voice to proclaim:-

"Well ladies and gentlemen, this is the moment you have all been waiting for... I'd like



you all to welcome... the BayyyYY CITY ROLLERS!!"

Everyone jumped up and applauded as a seemingly familiar guitar riff blew from the speakers. Women began swaying their arms from side to side above their heads, while their hardened husbands stood with their hands firmly in their pockets nodding their heads to the music (Later, after several lagers, they would turn into frenzied laughing idiots). Children ran around their parents in a frenzy of excitement and the pensioners began packing up their belongings.

And I watched, thinking how well I knew the people that I was with, how I understood so well the variety of opinions and conversations into which we could enter. I had spent most of my life amongst them, these people of Britain, and I had shared and participated in an unquantifiable number of collectives. I knew the histories which are spoken and those written in books, the identities which are sought and those which are disputed. I participated in life with these people, and with them I have and continue to live through our commonality.

I looked behind me, to where the large grey cloud mass was making its way across the North Sea. I was to leave the roads to this familiar interior, to travel to another place where improvisations were tied to unknown traditions. I would have to meet and understand the musical language of unfamiliar travellers. I would soon see another horizon.

## Chapter Two

### *Horizons*

*...as seen from the air*

A wall of moving grey and white sped past the window. I sat with my face pressed against the glass, watching, waiting for my first sight of land. Suddenly it came, emerging from the dense wall of cloud, soft greens and browns melting into a watery sky - a Japanese morning. As we descended, details gradually emerged from the dullness. The farmlands, houses and roads were all organized in patterns which were new to me and I thought about how much agricultural development over the centuries affects the structure of a landscape. It was the first time I had seen paddy fields nestled into mountain sides, roads weaving about chaotically and then heading off in straight lines, and the houses, at the centre of each little plot - the nuclei of production.

Over a year of preparation had gone into my arrival and my next 18 months' existence in this unknown world. I had read books and articles written by trained observers, novels from various periods, seen films and talked to Japanese people residing in the UK. I had studied the spoken and written language, the customs and the geography of the nation. I had spent drunken nights in Japanese bars in the North of England. I had cooked Japanese noodles in my kitchen and listened to traditional and popular music on my stereo. I had even - and this is embarrassing to admit - bought an add-on for my computer which allowed me to fly around the archipelago in a single-engine aircraft, and yes, even buzz Mount Fuji's impressive crater while performing a stall at 20,000 feet!

*...from the ground*

However, after the plane touched down on Japanese tarmac and I retrieved my hand-luggage, disembarked and strolled along the terminal through the immigration and into the sprawl of people awaiting passengers from the flight, it became clear to me that I knew absolutely *nothing* about this place. People were moving fast, speaking fast and loudly across one another. Girls at car hire booths were clinical and clear cut in their English, which drifted from across the hall. Families with babies and children shuffled

endlessly with bags and baby chairs and amongst the bustle, a camera crew raced past Security. I felt like a character in a film when the camera zooms onto his face, distancing the background at the same time.

All that I had learnt, all the views I had read and all the images that I had developed came falling down in one almighty realization that I was in a country composed of millions of people living millions of different lives and with complex of ideas about themselves. If I were to survive in this world I would have to find my feet amongst the various negotiations of past and present. I needed to understand how these individuals related to their society and how they saw that society positioned in a world. To do effective social research my interpretations of this culture would have to come from its people; no books, films, or blinking pixels would help me here!

"Oh, hello and welcome to Japan; what's your name please?" The young girl had recognized the tag on my jacket which I was told to wear on arrival by my grant awarding body to wear on arrival.

"It's Why-i-toe," I replied in the first Japanese I had uttered in its native land.

She found me on the list. "We'll just be a moment; we have to get you registered, give your arrival allowance and get you on a taxi to your accommodation." She rushed off, leaving me standing with my luggage and returned some moments later with the news that we might be here for half an hour or so as there were others arriving on the same flight who would have to be dealt with as well.

We waited together and she told me that she was soon off to Spain for a few months to study. She was going to Barcelona where she had friends. It happened that I had a friend there as well and we talked of how beautiful the city appeared in the postcards and pictures we had seen. She had lived in Tokyo all her life and told me that there were a few good Irish and English pubs which she knew around the area. She went there often with her friends; a couple were English girls. Apparently the guinness at The Dickens was good and I should definitely pay it a visit; she gave me directions from the nearest station. We talked also of recent and upcoming concerts, life in the big city, her friends, and how much she was looking forward to Spain.

And as we talked it seemed to me how similar our worlds were; indeed, how we improvised our community around the same familiar landmarks. Although we were from opposite corners of the world, we were not making any cross-cultural connections when we spoke; we occupied the same position in a set of traditions and imagined present(s) - we were negotiating the positions of continuity and change against the same horizon. It did not really strike me at the time but I suppose one could say that we improvised around generational themes which crossed the borders of nation - themes and landmarks which could be shared by someone from any country, with similar lifestyles and communication networks.

After all I had read on how Japan had particular views of itself in the world which often excluded other peoples, as well as the mass of literature stressing Japan's uniqueness and/or exotic qualities, it was surprising that my very first interpretation of the young generation here made me think how outdated all those concepts were. Indeed, I was disappointed with those who had failed to emphasize how modern Japan seemed as connected to the outside world as anywhere else. It was two days later when this naiveté began to wear off.

\*

"Ah, Mummy, Mummy, it's a *foreigner!*" cried the young boy, as he clung in fright to his mother's side. I was exploring the city on my second day, trying to get to grips with the rail system and receiving a fair amount of attention about the fact that I was a *gaizin* (foreigner). It wasn't just the looks, but the whisperings of *gaizin!* which caught my attention on my way about town. It was clear that to some people, at least, I was not occupying the same world. I was a very clearly defined Other in their perception; something to be defined against, an object of interest, or a even a threat.

"Careful!" warned a girl to her friend, as I strolled past them both on my way back to my accommodation, "There's a white-man heading back the same way as you!"

Within 48 hours of my arrival in Japan, it was clear that I was dealing with an extremely complex society where the views of one's Place Within may or may not depend on particular views of *the foreigner* as an Outsider. This seemed a society where one had the ability to relate to a wider world - as the girl who met me at the airport demonstrated - or to society where the views of self (Japanese) and other (foreigner)

were locked in a dialectical definition.

*...as seen from inside a 2DK (two bedrooms and a dining-kitchen area apartment)*

A few days later, still in the midst of a kind of constant experiential flux, I visited Nobu, Hiro, and Hiroko, who would be my first informants and friends in my eighteen months of Japanese fieldwork. I had met Hiro while at university in the UK and this was the first time I would see him since his return to Japan over a year before. He had found a new girlfriend (Hiroko) and was spending almost all his time with her, a situation which Nobu found inexcusable,

"Me and Hiro have been good friends for over three years and this is just bloody typical of him, finding a girlfriend and forgetting about his mates," Nobu confided in me when Hiro and Hiroko were upstairs arranging drinks together.

Nobu, in his early twenties, reminded me of a typical North American from the West Coast. His jet black hair ran to his ears in curly twists and his rounded healthy looking face coupled with a confident, street-wise demeanor gave the impression of a surfer-dude/dope-smoking-climber. He had that attractive quality of asking questions with apparently genuine interest in the answers and seemed to have a real desire to empathize with his new acquaintance. Indeed, as we talked, I could almost feel him attempting to align himself with my way of seeing the particular topic.

"Yeah, well, my Mum hates foreigners. I don't know what she'd say if she knew I was hanging around with you. I dunno; it's something to do with the war and her folks or something. Anyway, I don't give a shit, she's a silly cow anyway - lost in her own world..." Nobu is talking, pausing for sips of whisky and drags on his American cigarettes; "Of course she's a bit of a special case - most Japanese have this kind of positive image of people from Europe or the States, but I can see how you feel self-conscious, can see how you feel like there is some kind of racial discrimination going on when you walk around - people staring and commenting on you and that..."

During the six hours or so which we spent in each other's company, we covered many topics from his relationship with his parents to views of the world and my interest in Japan. And as with the young girl at the airport, I had the distinct feeling of occupying the same world as Nobu; our differences were cosmetic, the kind of differences that two

children talk about when staying up late at each other's houses - the domestic routine and their lives. Our houses were our respective nations but our neighbourhood was very much the same in terms of the way we imagined our place within it and the landmarks we used to position ourselves in our common world.

*...after a night drinking whisky*

I was tired and hungover as I took the twenty minute walk back to my accommodation the next day. I was also overwhelmed by the presence of two completely contradictory feelings: the re-exposure to a world where I was strange after a night in a world where I felt I belonged, and an excitement about just having participated in my first real social exchange in a new, increasingly familiar world.

I remembered how last night, Nobu had revealed his world as composed of competing visions, of perceived histories and personalities. In his conversations describing his fellow countrymen, Nobu drew on a historical, cultural and experiential map which allowed him to interpret and improvise with the personalities which surrounded him. I did not have such a map, at least not one which helped me here in Japan. I had little in the way of Japanese historical or cultural perspective, and experientially, I had roughly six hours of whiskey-induced conversation!

Still struggling with the thumping pain that came with every step, I thought it was time to develop a historical map, a template that I could at least fit with my experiences - to relate people's improvisations, behaviour and social structure to the histories from which this culture had sprung. I needed to catch up (as best I could) with native people's interpretations of their lives in related to their histories, to understand the variety of landmarks and their origins, to facilitate my socialization and observation into this world.

## Chapter Three

### *Orchestral Manoeuvres in History*

*...and where we join the score*

Saigo Takamori had balls. I don't just mean courage to help forge the way for a new government for Japan in 1868. Nor do I refer only to the bravery which he displayed when he saw that his new government would abolish the Samurai class of which he himself was a member. He would then have the courage to embark on a tangled path to civil war which would cement him in legend for centuries. Oh no, Saigo Takamori had huge diseased testicles which impeded his escape from the imperial armies, and which remain to this day one of the more intimate elements of Saigo's history - often discussed when mixing beer and history conversation with the Japanese (see also Booth, 1995).

It is during the years of Saigo's life (1828-1877) that Japan went through one of its most concentrated processes of social and cultural change. Many see the period as a move which facilitated Japan's entry into the modern industrialized world of the 19th century. That the Meiji restoration (as this transition of government is called) began a process of events and organizational changes which would alter the cultural and economic domain beyond recognition, is historical fact. It is the more subtle transitions in the way that ordinary Japanese perceived and improvised their communities - their voices throughout this period into the present - to which we now attune ourselves.

*...one hundred and fifty years ago*

The social lives of ordinary Japanese in the mid eighteenth hundreds were very much the same as they had been for the previous two and a half centuries. Successive *shogun* from the Tokugawa house ruled the land as they had done since 1603. The emperor was visible as a reminder of the much depleted Chinese-derived imperial system, but he had little power. Much larger than the English knights of the round table, the rigid hierarchy which stemmed from the shogun encompassed 6-7% of the population in a warrior class known as the *Samurai*. Approximately 12% of the population consisted of artisans and merchants; the remaining 80% made up the peasantry. This was very

much a feudal, agrarian society.

The differences between people were not only "visible and felt", but were "clearly seen in all external aspects of conduct", including language, conduct, dress and commensality. The hierarchical system was such that men of wealth and power were assumed to be morally superior to those of lower status; bowing and the use of humble language were part of daily life (see Waswo, 1996). If our friend Saigo Takamori had been walking along a road, for instance, you would have seen the peasantry draw aside, kneel down and bow, with their heads to the ground. (Just seeing a superior would encourage such a response - the bulge in Saigo's trousers may or may not have had an effect!)

We can suppose, then, as others have done (see Stronach, 1995), that the vast majority of Japanese identified and improvised around the notions of place, station and rank; "...few would have considered themselves to be tied to part of a greater whole..." (Ibid;31). Their positions within their social worlds were determined by such 'root chords' of hierarchy; their patterns of social organization were structured by the economic condition of their station. There was little or no improvisation around landmarks which related to a national collective in the minds of the peasantry who formed the overall majority.

These feudal social conditions were enhanced by a philosophy of Neo-Confucianism which came to underpin and justify the hierarchical structure with a collective morality. Obedience to one's superiors, in a *natural social hierarchy* was the ethical premise here; "with subjects obeying rulers, sons obeying fathers, wives obeying husbands, and younger brothers obeying older" (Waswo, 1996;16). The prevalence of such a doctrine, did not, as we might expect, exist as a spiritual remnant of Japan's contact with China centuries before. Although Neo-Confucianism was a reformation of Chinese Confucianism, its presence in the nineteenth century was a result of its deliberate *implementation* by the Shogun and his direct retainers in order to quell the plotting against higher members of state: "by making loyalty to one's superior a living ideal, (they could) forever eliminate the threat of treachery from below" (Waswo, 1996;16).

To what extent these values permeated the peasant majority of the mid-nineteenth-century is questionable, directed as they were towards the warrior-class Samurai. The values certainly would come to represent the majority in the years ahead as they moved down and across the hierarchy. Likewise, the feudal family structure of the *ie* or



'house' (a series of first sons, their wives and minor children - see Hendry, 1995), was, in the mid-nineteenth century, characteristic of the upper strata of Japanese society (see Kumagai, 1996). Within fifty years, however, this family structure would too come to influence the majority of Japanese.

Mid-nineteenth century Japan, from the cursory presentation it has received here, shows little or no sign of emergence from a feudal deadlock. All the characteristics of Gellner's agrarian society are visible:- hierarchical social organization, notions of place and social standing entering the hearts and minds of men, the value attributed to male offspring. And as is the overriding universal feature, to varying degrees, in all feudal societies: "warfare was a quicker as well as more honourable route to riches than trade" (Gellner, 1997;18).

However, no society is held in a particular configuration, since all societies lie at some point along the feudal/modern continuum. Therefore, within nineteenth century agrarian Japan, we suppose that the relationship between social organization and culture - as improvised by the people who comprise it - would be in constant negotiation at many levels. New configurations of cultural identity, brought about by such negotiations, would be appearing like the chords of another age amongst the ensemble which represents the present. These new chords would then slowly come to form heard and unheard phrases within the whole, as the society travels through time. As I move forward through this portion of Japan's cultural history, it is the new negotiations of cultural identity, emerging from within a predominately fixed feudal whole, which shall be examined. As we shall see later, such processes are still very much in existence today.

#### *...echoing perceived change*

The past does not automatically dissolve into phases or eras; nor does the present necessarily represent an improvement over what has gone before. To divide time is to interpret it, and in most of the literature on Japan, scholars have used great events to divide Japanese history into 'meaningful' segments... the second world war... division by imperial reign (Waswo, 1996;6).

Historians do not often pay attention to the subtleties involved in a particular society's movement through time. In order to chart such a movement, we need again to be

aware of the dominant chords underlying the improvisations of the people in question. We need to be aware of how new combinations are found to reproduce more effectively the resonance of the social and cultural climate of the time. These new styles appear in the background of a relatively homogenous orchestral piece - the dominant view of the relationship between culture and state as 'heard' by those who place themselves within. These new sounds slowly gain purchase in the whole arrangement and with the tick of the generational metronome, seem to blend to the point at which their absence cannot be imagined. The previous sounds may still exist - the ever present violins and double bass - but amongst the whole, a new set of voices can be heard and will continue to sound the note of cultural identity until the next unseen transition. Such is the invisible process of cultural identity through time, and as an invisible process, it is one that cannot be seen as a set of obvious events but must be heard through an in depth-examination of history, by an ear tuned to the inter-disciplinary.

As such, Waswo's concise history of modern Japan emphasizes that the transitions which have occurred over the last two centuries have been brought about not just by a series of four or five important events, but by the presence of many factors which have combined over time to bring about an historically *obvious* event. In the standard writings on Japanese history, no two events are more exaggerated in the importance of Japan's move from feudal to modern society than the Meiji restoration, and the Coming of the West by opening Japan to *The World* - a criticism to which Stronach, 1995, amongst others, falls victim. Waswo's treatment puts Japan's historical transitions into the complex contexts in which they rightfully belong, bringing into consideration anthropological perspectives - the *ongoing* participation, negotiation and transformation within dynamic and often multiple social worlds.

#### *...aligning culture and state*

We already see, in the mid-nineteenth century, that organizational changes implemented by successive shogun over the centuries had produced a "stimulated commerce to serve the capital," as well as "at least one urban center in even the most remote corner of the country (which) stimulated commercialization of the local economy" (Waswo, 1996;15). By this time "almost every one of the roughly 70,000 rural villages in Japan (though not every villager) was producing some sort of handicraft item for commercial sale" (Ibid;15). These factors, coupled with the movements of high-ranking *daimyo* officials to and from the capital, began the "first step in the diffusion of...

fashions and entertainments to the provinces (from the capital) and the creation, despite political decentralization, of a national culture" (Ibid;13).

In the midst of an apparently complete feudalism, then, we hear perhaps one of the first obvious notes of modernity: the notion that the local, in a predominantly agrarian society, was somehow connected to a larger system, indeed *part of it*. Such notions were entering conversations and facilitating new improvisations of community as created by *ordinary* people. The importance of this for an expansion in the diversity of ways a particular group could now imagine themselves positioned within a collective, was profound. That this new diversity came about hand in hand with a considerable redistribution of wealth - peasants and townsmen benefiting from the new commercial activity - is very significant. That such a re-balance of wealth came to be a concern to members of the warrior class, and contributed to the overthrowing of government, emphasizes the inability of an increasing proportion of this social and economic modernity to exist alongside a predominantly agrarian system of organization.

*...beyond the shores*

*If we listen closely to the sound of nineteenth century improvisations, we will catch another transposition of key, another entrance of as-yet-unheard music - in the guise of the notions of self in the relation to other - the sound of Japan as a country within the world. A sound of voices enter the whole and become increasing prominent, increasingly necessary for the conduct of the whole piece.*

Gellner suggests that we can imagine ourselves as part of a national collective even if our society is wholly agrarian. However, this ability is dependent on the notion that the society will have at least a basic knowledge of the other civilizations which surround it - ie. there will be cultural differentiation (see Gellner, 1997;16). Japan had perhaps less capacity, in comparison with the feudal ages of the industrialized countries of the time, to generate such 'us and them' improvisation, since it was under a policy of seclusion of trade and contact with other countries, effective from 1641. By the time Saigo Takamori turned 13, two centuries had already passed without any foreigner being admitted or any Japanese being permitted to leave Japan's shores.

This climate of isolation helped not only to protect internal economic systems from outside influence (as was the intention), but also to create a virtual boundary around

the land which prevented the exchange and penetration of information from the worlds beyond. Such seclusion assisted in maintaining this primarily feudal society by limiting economic expansion and preventing cultural diversification. Indeed, it was not possible, at least with any basis of fact, to compare one's cultural way of life with another's, and thus the landmarks available for improvisation remained local, and like the economic climate, confined to the interior.

Such was the lack of information about lands beyond Japan's shores that even Saigo Takamori's Samurai class - the most educated of all Japanese - long held the belief that "The West" were barbarians who must be quelled; indeed, such action was the recognized task of the Shogun. Statements such as "Wipe out the beast-like ugly barbarians [the Westerners] in the world" made by high ranking Samurai (Yokoi Shonan in 1849), illustrate the extent to which mid-nineteenth century attitudes of the outside world echoed and indeed were shaped by those of the seventeenth century. In two hundred years little had changed in Japan's concept of itself in relation to the outside world - the landscape of social improvisation remained unchanged.

Again, however, within this symphony of agrarian deadlock we see the first notes of modernity appearing from within. Largely because of the encounter with Westerners and their Roman Catholicism in the seventeenth Century, the idea that the West had aggressive designs upon Japan became fixed in the minds of the Japanese. "The extent to which this prejudice was rooted in the Edo period can be seen from the fact that throughout the period the Japanese in general thought, without knowing why, that the Kirishitan countries were to be feared" (Chang, 1970; 6). In the years leading up to 1850, this fear among Samurai (fueled by an increasing arrival of Western 'black ships' to Japan's shores), encouraged a desire to learn more about 'the enemy'.

Along with a greater amount of information which became available about the outside world - largely from the Dutch (who occupied the only trade centre open to the outside world) - came the realization that the West was a superior power in technology and science. With this view came a corresponding notion of the 'backwardness' of Japan and a fervent desire to embark upon a "quest for equality" (see Chang, 1970). This 'quest' really began in the decade or two leading up to the Meiji restoration and as we will see in subsequent chapters, it still holds a place in the minds of some Japanese.

Chang's (1970) study, which traces the attitudes of two Samurai from 1826 to 1864,

shows how the concern with 'catching up with the West' brought profound changes in the notion of Japan itself - turning a land of agricultural provinces into a national whole in the minds of those who saw themselves positioned against an advancing outside force. Through Chang's analysis of these two Samurai, we see that "one significant by-product of Toko's and Shozan's changing images of the West was a deep-seated concern over the fate of Japan, coupled with a spirit of competition. This we may call national consciousness" (Ibid; 193).

Along with changes in the language used to express a concept of *country* - a transposition of the word for district to that of nation - Chang illustrates that the 'meeting of the West', and the 'quest for equality' which followed ushered in a definition of nation against Other which came to underpin Japanese national identity. Japan, at least in the minds of some Samurai and intellectuals, was a backward nation which needed to learn from the West in order to protect itself. This 'learning', however, incorporated some rather unfortunate views of humanity. To a large and permeating extent, the notions that the Western (*white*) world was the 'apex of civilization', Japan and its Asian neighbours 'semi-civilized', and the African continent a land of naked savages mired in barbarity, entered the musical score of Japan's now nationalizing identity (see Russell, 1996; 21).

Of course, it is no coincidence that such views and positioning of Other(s) came at this point in Japan's nationalization - identity being as it is dependent on dialectical definition for its fuel(see Burke, 1969 and Cohen, 1985). Paradoxically, it was the intellectual's and Samurai's own categorization of their country as backward (albeit with borrowed images from the West) which set in motion the social reforms of the Meiji era. As we will see, however, the transition which such men initiated did not, as we might expect, usher in the musical forms related to the improvisations of a 'modern' nation state.

*...of continuity in the guise of change*

*The orchestra of late nineteenth century Japan had operatic voices in the foreground. But these were not to rise or fall in volume or number. Nor was a substantial change of key heard amongst the ensemble. Detectable in the whole were new instruments, soft strings confined to the background. The invisible conductor, however, set the score in repetition, ensuring no entrance or fade within.*

The factors leading up to the Meiji restoration of 1868 have been touched on briefly by considering the improving economic circumstances of the merchants and peasantry in relation to the Samurai and Daimyo - an imbalance which threatened the hierarchical nature of the system. In tandem with Neo-Confucianism, which, over the generations of formal education and newly established academies, turned warriors into bureaucrats, there emerged young, ambitious Samurai who became critical of the system and its leaders. "There can be no doubt that of all the causes of the anti-Tokugawa, loyalist movement which ended in the fall of the [shogunate - the warrior class leader], the ambition of young samurai was the most powerful" (Sansom, from Waswo, 1996; 19). On a sociological level this imbalance "...we can conceptualize as a prolonged stand-off between the competing pressures of decentralized feudalism and centralized monarchy" (Waswo, 1996; 17).

As mentioned earlier, it was these complex, internal, political factors which triggered the change of government, not simply the arrival of Admiral Perry's squadron (1853) and the American demand that the shogunate open the country to commercial contact. However,

The shogunate's reluctant agreement to this demand, and to the similar demands it soon received from other Western countries, provided a focus for much of the discontent that had been brewing for decades. However rational its decision may have been, the shogunate had opened itself to charges of dereliction of duty. Rather than quelling the Western 'barbarians', one of the historic tasks of an emperor's chief military deputy, the shogun had bowed to their demands. His military weakness - and hence his vulnerability to domestic rivals, as well as to the barbarians - had been revealed (Waswo, 1996; 19)

The coming of Perry, then, fueled and accelerated a movement which had already gathered pace. This movement involved a relatively select group of Samurai, (including our friend Saigo Takamori), Daimyo lords and a small group of nobles from the emperor's court in Kyoto. Waswo points out that rather than a movement of collective motives, a diversity of objectives were involved. "Some participants wished to expel the barbarians at all costs, others to obtain revenge for the defeat of their ancestors by Tokugawa Ieyasu... still others thought only of elevating the emperor to his rightful place as ruler of all Japan" (Ibid; 1996, 20). What this select group did have in

common, however, was its fervent desire to topple the Shogunate. When Tokugawa Yoshinobu resigned in 1867 and brought the Shogunate to an end, confronting the future of Japan came as almost an unexpected task for those who had for so long been intent on merely ending a regime.

\*

At the point of transition from the Shogun era to the Meiji era, we can clearly see the wide spectrum of cultural identities in play and, to a limited extent, how they came into being. The ordinary Japanese, although increasingly linked through national economic growth, had little in the way of formal national membership. Their connections were still first and foremost with their immediate communities and continued to be positioned against the notions of place and appropriate station as defined by a strict hierarchy system which had existed for over two centuries within an agrarian society. The Samurai class, who had been relatively highly educated and had even, in some cases travelled to the West during the early 1860's, were beginning to see Japan as a national whole, not only as defined against a powerful West, but also as a nation with the potential for transformation and industrialization. There was a direct link to society - albeit a result of their positions - a hardwired connection between themselves and a vision of their nation. Because of the opportunities to follow reports of worlds outside Japan (see Chang, 1970) through the Shogun era, as well as their concern and resulting success in toppling a system which had encompassed the vast majority of Japan, these high ranking individuals had a vital stake in society. This combination in many ways made them the first *Japanese* to arise from the archipelago.

This rather crude separation between the two extremes of imagining one's world in Japan in 1868 is intended to illustrate the opposite ends of two extremes - the continuance of agrarian notions and those which have appeared because of factors related to the coming of modernity. Of course, if interviewed by anthropologists in 1868, the respective classes would be expected to have such fundamental differences in their ideas of nation, but would fall in-between the two extremes suggested above. Exceptions to the rule would also be seen with Samurai such as Saigo Takamori who gave up his position within the new Meiji regime when he saw that the warrior system would be abolished - clearly showing his aim to preserve agrarian organization rather than pursuing the construction of a fully modern nation.

It is in the extremes of, (on the one hand), those high class individuals who held a vision of a new Japan and, (on the other hand), of ordinary Japanese identifying with their locales that we can best see the rest of Japan's modern history unfolding. Systems of organization and reform were *implemented* from above following careful design and comparison with their effects in Western nations. Identification with the state and moves to unite ordinary people in the aims and progress of a new modern nation became paramount in the minds of the rulers. However, as mentioned earlier, the reforms of the Meiji era did not always bring about a modernization in the ways that people thought or identified with the world around them.

It is not difficult to see the cause of this inconsistency. Most obviously, those who came to represent the Meiji government in the few years after the restoration were themselves products of a predominately feudal past. Thus, despite their intentions for wide ranging reform, many of the values and social organization typical of their class were merely transferred to the population as a whole. Perhaps the most historically transcendent of these implementations was that the "patriarchal family of the warrior became the model for all families... inheritance of the property and headship of the family by a single son, and marriage as an instrument to produce that son" (Waswo, 1996; 22). Along with the messages from above to below that loyalty and service to the emperor were demanded, a move seen by many to be mere transferral of power from the Samurai or Daimyo, the "... new Meiji state (saw) the partial 'samuraization' of Japan" (Ibid, 22).

The Meiji government had, then, in its desire to move its people away from their strong ties with their villages and communities towards identification with the state, inadvertently instilled systems which had arisen from the agrarian cultural state. These power relations and family structures had developed in response to the presence of a hierarchically defined agrarian system and were now being drawn on to underpin the creation of a modern state which would attempt to align people rather than separate them. This was an odd mix to put in the sociological pot, to say the least, and a combination which Kumagai sees as today characterizing the complex nature of Japanese society (1996).



*...through the pre-war generations*

*The orchestra now had a conductor who would ensure that the instruments would conform to the appointed score. The tempo changed but the piece was set and although new sounds entered, they were soon gestured to arrest their contribution to the whole.*

The government's attempts to encourage ordinary Japanese to identify with the state were largely effective. Young people's daily lives - "involving family, village, school and place of work - were integrated into the values and aims of the state, towards which their emotional energies were legitimately channelled. Within this pattern of thinking, which could be called more or less absolute, the aims of life to which they adapted themselves may be defined as a 'cult of success'" (Naka, 1977). This cult of success related to people's own achievements being of and for the state; their individual success could be seen within the wider state - as a force behind national unification. Competitiveness became widespread and "justified within the limits of a group-centered morality" (Ibid, 1977; 24).

The Meiji government's efforts to modernize its population, bringing them into common identification with a new nation and away from the isolated spheres of the village and community, had both positive and negative consequences. Various social problems affected subsequent pre-war generations and at the heart of these was that fossilization of the feudal elements of pre-Meiji Japan and their coexistence with modern, industrializing methods of social organization. The expanding industrial system was, of course, city-based and with dreams of wealth and prosperity in their minds, many young moved away from the provincial farming areas into the industrial labour force. However, they were only to find themselves working for low wages under poor labour conditions and with no social security, so many people fell back on their local support networks - retreating back to the community for their security (see Naka, 1977).

These and other factors, then, illustrate the extent to which the local community still had a hold on people's social and financial security. In the midst of wide ranging changes brought by a government who, to all intents and purposes, was attempting to serve local ties to encourage a national workforce, ordinary Japanese took shelter in those very local communities. The bonding power which the feudal family structure gave to the individual and his family and community - the family structure typical of Samurai Class Shogun Japan - helped to preserve such local collectives. The core

supportive and organizational units of Japanese agrarian social life, then, were to remain as part and parcel of an increasingly modernizing society.

If we see this preservation of local community as agrarian organization existing within an otherwise modernizing nation, then the increasing amount of information about the West which became available to the population after the Restoration can be seen as a pull in the opposite direction. Increasing exposure across subsequent generations to the rhetorics of state and nation added to the import of Western ideas (everything from socialism to Christianity) and provided the necessary landmarks for a considerable amount of the population to imagine themselves now as part of a nation-within-the-world. This, as Gellner would have us see, not only allows for nationalism but illustrates a society's emergence from an agrarian state of organization into a modern one.

However, as feudal elements were present in the social organization of family and community - *alongside* the increasingly modern organization - there came into the nationalizing Japanese identity the first seeds of the Tradition versus Modernity dichotomy. Considering the views about Japan's place within a world of other nations, this dichotomy is seen by Stronach (1995) to have caused an 'identity crisis' - an uncertainty in positioning Japan within the surrounding national/cultural map. Taken in terms of the day to day lives of ordinary Japanese, Kumagai (1996), sees the two systems negotiated through history to create a dual structure of Japanese society.

Whichever perspective we chose to adopt, it is quite clear that the coexistence of typically feudal elements with the increasing proportion of modern organization affected ordinary people's lives, the economic state and the progression of cultural identities concerned with local and national memberships. Passing through a variety of rejections of the state, embracing of state goals and sometimes even into nihilism, the post-Meiji, pre-war Japanese generations dealt with a fast changing tempo of cultural diversity - a shifting of key conducted with precision but often not followed by the orchestra. The result was a rather noisy ensemble, with the loud sounds, just imposed, attempting to drown those which had always accompanied, but without complete success.

Nowhere is it more easy to see the competing notions of coming modernity contrasted with preserved feudalism than in the conscription of young men into the ranks of the

military. The continuation of hierarchical structure derived from the Neo-Confucianism - *natural social hierarchy* developed in response to feudal organizational demands - meant that young people were still required to show respect and use humble language with older members, regardless of their own achievements. With the coming of the military system and its notion that place was decided by achievement, many young men joined in the hope of providing themselves positions otherwise denied them by the rigidity of normal society (see also Waswo). Here, people chose modernity (or at least one of its typical organizational systems) to replace one typical of a feudal society. And although it is not true to say that the option was so attractive that the vast majority of young men wanted to move out of agrarian society, it is fair to say that some of the enthusiasm and absorption into the military and its connection with the state and aims of Japan came from the fact that the modern hierarchical system replaced the agrarian, not just as a moral underpinning but - in order to fill the vacuum of the lost local community relationships - as a way of life.

*...and the sound of post-war identities*

*The instruments which for so long had sounded in the background now tuned themselves to the whole piece. The tempo fell and the multiple conductors now attempted to bring harmony, considering rather than overpowering the background voices.*

With defeat in the Second World War, the generations which followed continued to negotiate a path between the feudal and modern structures which had come to characterize Japan. Such negotiations showed that Japanese nationalism was far from the modern nationalism which Gellner charts in his discussions. Indeed, contrary to Anderson's (1991) view of Japanese nationalism being brought about by isolation and the power of the official national model, it seems more accurate to suggest that the conflict between feudal and modern forces of organization was the direct cause. Indirectly, of course, the power elite arose with little knowledge of the outside world and few ideas about how to implement a state-first ideology. There is also truth in Masao's (in Anderson, 1991) argument that the ruling elite's lack of awareness of equality in international affairs was a direct result of the remnants of a feudal Japan. "Consequently, when the premises of the national hierarchy were transferred horizontally into the international sphere, international problems were reduced to a single alternative: conquer or be conquered" (Masao, from Anderson, 1991; 97).

However, just as the ruling elite were products of their recently departed feudal era, so the ordinary Japanese were involved in a present which, although modernizing, still contained agrarian-style families and close knit communities. It is with this in mind that we must unpack exactly what kind of relationship an individual could have had with the state. Increasingly, since the Restoration, the potential to imagine Japan as a nation with its own aims and strategies had become widespread amongst military leaders and, of course, the ruling classes. But, (and this is a big but), their internal worlds were still largely hierarchical (as Masao reminds us). In this way, we cannot see theirs as a direct link between themselves and society - the most important definition which Gellner gives for the appearance of modern society. With notable exceptions, even the ruling classes would have seen their own internal worlds as middlemen between themselves and some notion of Japan The State.

More importantly for a consideration of nationalism, the ordinary Japanese would almost have certainly seen their local communities as their first call on any journey towards the position of their state. While it is true to say that many young people who moved to the cities in search of employment slowly severed their family roots, there was still a strong notion of hierarchy and place in Japanese society. Thus young men who would join the national army would often do so because of this notion of moving away from such rigidity (again see Waswo, 1996 and Naka, 1977). By doing so, however, they merely *replaced* one community with another - one set of rules and support networks for another. This was not all-out nationalism where the connections with the state are personal, chest wrenching-feelings which can inspire violence. This was a regime which replaced the old hierarchy with a new - using the *rhetoric* of nationalism as a flag to encourage people to change from one community to another. It is a completely different type of organization and identity from the nationalism which is commonly defined.

As I have said, this all becomes apparent when we see how subsequent post-war generations align themselves in relation to these stands or ongoing musical trends of cultural identity. Through the 60's, 70's and 80's, we see at all levels the results of a nation negotiating and improvising their position within a dual structure of tradition and modernity. Such negotiations take many forms and some pull in one direction or another while others attempt to resolve and compromise.

An example of the former can be seen in the student movements of the mid-sixties. As Naka makes clear, there were two distinguishable types of movement, two types which I suggest represent the pulling at one force (modernity) against another (tradition):-

The first type aimed at mitigating the social evils brought about by the development of a capitalist economy. The other attempted to overcome the contradictions in the Japanese society of the day - contradictions arising from moves to incorporate the trappings of western capitalism and democracy into a system of nationalistic state control rooted in the emperor-worship that inspired the Meiji Restoration - by putting that state control on a still firmer basis (Naka, 1977; 77).

The first type of movement can be seen as one which embraced modernism and had a vision of its permanence in Japanese society. Thus the characteristic of this movement was modifying and improving a system which was to be lived in. As such, cultural identity here was the result of lessons learned in war, of the increase in information about outside worlds present since the Meiji era, and perhaps of the philosophy developed by those who had fewer ties to the rural, more feudal Japan. I also suggest that the lack of involvement within a *ie* family system would allow further separation from the agrarian roots of the nation and could have encouraged such views.

It is through such movements, which attempted to nurse modernity into life while protecting its people from its hazards, that a percentage of Japanese became truly modern in Gellner's terms. Identification with state - that direct link between oneself and one's country - solidified at the point where ordinary people became involved and concerned with the future of Japanese people under a nation subject to change through their democratic power. Conversely, the other type of student movement, concerned with a strengthening of state control, saw the social landscape as one of place and station, with strict, collective, hierarchical organization a way forward for the nation, in short, the twentieth century equivalent of feudal social organization.

Of a calmer, more intellectual breed, the *nihonjinron* literature which sprung up soon after the war and addressed 'what is was to be Japanese', (or in direct translation 'theories of Japaneseness'), also showed the cultural fissures left by the crashing of modernity into a once predominantly feudal society. *Nihonjinron* literature was/is very much concerned with consolidating the notions of Japanese tradition and its place in

the world. Contrary to Befu's (1992) vision of the literature filling a nationalist vacuum, I align with Raz (1992), that its purpose is to negotiate Japan's position vis-à-vis the West. Nihonjinron deals with that unfortunate view of humanity which was picked up from the West in the nineteenth century - that whites are the apex of civilization, Asians a kind of half-civilized race, and blacks the bottom rung of the natural social hierarchy. It is a literature concerned with combating such views directly and crudely by saying that the Japanese are the most unique/powerful race in the world and that other races are impure/savage, malicious etc.

As a Jew I read with a certain feeling of *deja vu* some of the hysteric literature on the Jewish conspiracy against Japan. But the real issue is not the (real or faked) 'facts'... (and) it is not enough to compare it with the rich traditional European antisemitic literature... (nihonjinron is) dealing with the problem of cultural Self-and-Other in modern Japan. When looking at it this way, the anti-Jewish literature (is not) Japanese vs Jews, but Japanese vs the west, of which the Jews were selected to be representatives (Raz, 1992; 127-128).

There is little doubt that the nihonjinron literature is crude in its tackling of the issue, replacing, as it does, one racist set of sentiments for another. Also it could be seen to, and has been used to, legitimize the positions of conservative politicians in their rallying and nationalist rhetoric. But as Raz warns us, we must be careful to read meaning beyond the 'facts', and see this as a discussion of how to consolidate a modernizing national identity with the traditional elements which continue to be part of people's lives. Seen as such, this literature and related attitudes spring from a particular cultural history which is complex but understandable - a cultural history which has borne contrasting elements of organization and identity needing hard negotiation.

Kinsella's (1996), paper on the Manga Comic industry shows a more broad-minded approach to negotiating Japan's issues of identity in the public media sphere. Kinsella demonstrates how, during the 1960's the manga medium transformed from a youth culture into a national medium. Although primarily concerned with giving taboo interests and dissident political attitudes expression, it became in the 70's a space to transmit serious political debate and up until the present day, it often concerns itself with pertinent issues "including the social role of women and immigrant workers, re-militarisation, trade friction and relations with the USA and Asia. Subjects such as these, explored on a popular level in adult manga books and magazines... are linked to a

broader trend, that is, the *renewal of Japanese national identity in contemporary Japanese culture*" (Ibid, 1996; 111, my emphasis).

Unlike the two types of student movement which can be more or less matched to supporting either feudal or modern systems respectively, *nihonjinron* and, to a greater extent, *manga*, *negotiate* the interaction and coexistence of both systems in a single nation. As such, their appearance after the second world war and their maturation into the present day represent the need continually to negotiate and improvise a position within a society which operates under such a dual structure.

There are many other examples which point to similar negotiations of the self-other, tradition/modernity dichotomy:- the use of white foreigners in Japanese advertising as ongoing negotiation of Japan's place vis-à-vis the West and the world (Creighton, 1995), the use of the black other in mass culture, again playing with the boundaries of racial superiority, and equality (see Russell, 1996), and the rhetoric of 'internationalization' as a negotiation of Japan's place in a world of nations - be it internal exclusivity or an open minded desire to learn about other cultures (see Shuichi, 1992 and Yasushi, 1992).

Since the engineers' of the Meiji era have entwined their Japanese design with the threads of their own feudalism and those of the western world's modernity, the Japanese have been in constant negotiation and improvisation with regard to this central pivot of their cultural histories. The results have been incredibly wide-ranging, and there are many ways in which Japan, its cultural heritage and diversity, come to be imagined in the improvisations of community which occur within its borders. What is clear is that the diversity itself represents a people bound to the forces of a dynamic nation state with a rich cultural history. Japan has emerged a modern nation, but its particular balancing between the presence of modern and agrarian social systems give the Japanese, as with all the nationalities on earth, a set of unique cultural histories and identities from which to improvise their social lives.

## Chapter Four

### *Sweetwood and Bitter Branches*

The town of Sweetwood lies in a large plain. Two mountain ranges enclose it on the north and south. Looking east along the plain, the ranges seem to meet in the far distance, and at their meeting the snaking river, which runs through the centre of the land, disappears from view. Looking west, the plain expands, widening the distance between the mountains, and other towns can be discerned amongst the shining paddy fields which patchwork the valley floor. "Sweetwood", the name of the town itself, is also the name of the surrounding county, which is large in comparison to its neighbours. Its boundaries reach north and south into the nearby hills and also encompass much of the plain on which the main town sits. The county population is 40,000, of which perhaps half live in the town and its surrounds. The town centre has a shopping arcade and a few tall buildings - the eight-story Sweetwood hotel being the biggest. A few minutes' walk out of the centre, however, the quiet narrow streets run past paddy fields and large farmhouses. The primary purpose of these roads, it seems, is to provide access to the network of irrigation channels that feed the rice fields. Despite the recent building of superstores and pachinko parlors on the outskirts, the sound of water running underfoot and the view of the silver-green fields against the hard ridges of the mountains, give the town of Sweetwood an air of permanence, of continuity, and of resistance to change.

\*

It was nine months later and I felt I now had a grasp on the cultural history and diversification of Japan. My studies and the many people I had conversed with over that time had given me a cultural map which I now used to help me interpret people's positions within their improvised social worlds. I could, to a certain extent, now see people as products of particular generations or economic brackets, or of rural or urban areas, or as exceptions to such categorizations. I could see, behind the landmarks they improvised around, the points in history where such ideas and notions had become available, and, to a lesser extent, their development through history into the sociality of the present. My six months in Tokyo had given me the chance to see Japan at its most contemporary *modern*, all those elements of modernity being concentrated here and in



other large cities for generations. My last three months in a small town on the southern island of Kyushu had allowed me to see the continuing struggles between the negotiation of tradition and modernity. As I myself became assimilated into the local community, my experiences entwined with my historical and cultural knowledge, making me too one of the lives involved in the constant border-disputes of the tradition versus modern fulcrum in Japanese community life.

"Well, I'm just not quite sure how to explain it to you," Sato-San says in a tone of exasperation. "It's like, well, Japanese culture.... You just can't invite Bando-San, and we have to give up on my sister and brother-in-law as well - he'll never have it".

"But I just don't see the problem," I retort in a state of agitation myself. "This is a party for friends and people who have helped me in my life here in Sweetwood. It is *my* party and I can't see for the life of me why Tanaka-San has the right to decide who is or is not coming. Also, there is no way I will now say to people that I have already invited that they are no longer welcome. My friends are coming to this party and if that happens to be a problem for Tanaka-San, as some of them are his employees, then that is a situation *he* will have to deal with."

Sato-San sighs and for a moment I feel sorry for him. He's not getting through to me and through my own frustration, a moment of empathy comes. I see him attempting to explain a situation to someone who has no capacity to understand. I feel for a moment like an outsider, but I have felt this before and found it to be an over-sensitivity on my part; I inject confidence into the vein of my emotion.

"Look," Sato-San says with the same air of exasperation, "Yamada-San will be here soon and can explain the situation to you better than I can. In fact I'll call him now and see where he's got to". Sato-San reaches for my phone and dials. "Yeah, Yamada. Look I told you he wouldn't hear it from me; you need to get over here. OK, OK; ten minutes? Right". He hangs up. "He's on his way". The words, uttered in a tone of inevitability and slight regret, have the effect of putting me on edge, and Sato-San, usually a conversationalist, sits silently fidgeting, awaiting the back-up of his work colleague and friend.

\*

The whole thing had started quite innocently. I had family coming to visit from Britain and I had decided that in order to say "thank you" to all those people who had been so generous to me over the three months or so I had lived in Sweetwood, I would throw a party. This, I knew, would interest the local people, as foreigners were a rare commodity here in the southern Japanese countryside and the prospect of having four together at the same place, rather than just the usual one, would no doubt cause a stir. As it happened, the person I most wanted to introduce to my family and who had been the greatest help to me in my move to the country, (volunteering to be my guarantor, buying me furniture etc.), was one of the most 'important' people in the town.

Tanaka-San was head of a transport company which he had built up from scratch. His company not only directly employed local people as lorry drivers, admin. staff or packers and casual workers, but also contracted the local construction company to build its buildings, the local electric's company for its computers, and so on. In short, there were a probably a hundred or more people benefiting directly from Tanaka-San's business and the local construction company, for one, would have gone under if not for his contracts. This gave Tanaka-San a god-like status. Anything that he required, whether it be on a business or personal basis, was provided by someone, and that someone was often Sato-San, the 44 year old sales manager for the local construction company, who was now in my apartment awaiting the arrival of his friend.

It was Sato-San who had secured my apartment, under the instructions of Tanaka-San, Sato-San who had taken me to the various county offices and waited for hours while I completed my resident-alien status applications. Sato-San was essentially Tanaka-San's servant, dealing with his every need, whether that be work related or otherwise. Sato-San had sat with me working out schedules for my fieldwork, spanning the whole year I would be in Sweetwood. He had taken me to maybe twenty households, introduced me to various families and had always said to them, on departing, that he would be grateful if they could keep in touch with me. It was these people, almost all of whom I had met through Sato-San months before, who were now being invited to my party. Sato-San had built up my social network under the order of Tanaka-San, who, despite his lofty position and often bossy demeanor, wanted the best to come of my year's research in his hometown of Sweetwood.

Tanaka-San, in his early sixties, was the father of a friend of mine in Tokyo. One night over a few drinks I had told this friend how I wanted to move from the city into a small

community to complete the second phase of my research. I had read that the southern island of Kyushu was still a traditionally-minded place in comparison with Honshu, the main island, and as I was in search of tradition, or at least its state of coexistence with the modern, it seemed as good a place as any on which to set my sights. When I explained this to my friend, along with voicing my intention to visit the island, he offered to take me to stay with his family on his next trip back - they live in Sweetwood.

So it was that I met his father Tanaka-San, the stocky, self-made business man who spoke a hard, aggressive Japanese. Despite his son's appeals to me to forgive him for "not being the most intelligent man", Tanaka-San struck me as quite the philosopher. The first night I spent in the company of the Tanaka's (husband, wife and son), we talked of how when visiting other countries, it is impossible to gain any idea of culture through the veil of the 'visitor' and that to see any genuine cultural interaction between people, one must have a friend or relative through which to become assimilated. It was on the surf of this inter-cultural understanding, combined with countless beers, that I, in a moment of utter relaxation, dropped all respective language (used with people older than oneself), and referring to myself as *ore* (not something I usually do in such situations), slapped Tanaka-San on the back with repeated insistence that he come to England where I would introduce him to all things otherwise unattainable without aforementioned native friend.

Taking this informality rather well, (probably assuming that all British people are absurdly direct), Tanaka-San collected more beer from the fridge and after a gusty "Cheers!", his son suggested that I become the third son of the family. This, again, was taken well by Tanaka-San who nodded solemnly as his son explained to his parents that I was now their third son, and, while I choked in the corner, negotiation took place as to where I would live and how best Tanaka-San could facilitate my introduction into the small town Sweetwood community.

\*

The door bell rang and Sato-San, knowing it would be his friend said nothing but stopped his fidgeting. I rose, opened the door and greeted Yamada-San.

"Yamada-San. Do come in! It's been a long time since I've seen you. Last time was when you Sato-San and I were all out drinking together around Sweetwood - must be at

least a month ago eh?" I ushered him in, well aware that an exchange of pleasantries was necessary before the discussion of the main topic. It was my discomfort at making nice noises for the sake of it - the awkwardness of the questionable sincerity of statement - which prompted me to drop this form of speaking sooner than Yamada-San, or Sato-San might have expected. In fact, so soon did I choose to take possession of the conversation that poor Yamada-San, a gentle, good natured family man in his early forties, hardly had the time to reply to my initial greeting.

"Well, look here... have a seat... Thanks for coming to explain this situation to me. I see very clearly what we are up against here - Tanaka-San's big and far ranging personality!". And there it was, my pitch; I awaited the reply. It came instantly.

"No," said Yamada-San, "this is not about Tanaka-San's character". He paused, glanced at Sato-San, who, defeated in his attempts to get me to change my invitation list, sat in the corner of the tatami-mat room, a picture of dejection. "How are we best to explain these complex things to you, Bruce?" He collected himself for a moment and said, "Japanese culture. This is really about Japanese culture". It was the same explanation I had heard from Sato-San. I fundamentally disagreed, but listened to Yamada-San as he spoke in his soft Kyushuu tongue.

"The problem is that Tanaka-San is a very important person here in Sweetwood. And as a very important person, he feels that attending a party where there will be people beneath him, a party which essentially will treat him as a guest amongst others, rather than a person with the status he has, is impossible. Furthermore, that you, whom he regards as almost a son, have not considered this in your plans, inviting as you have, one of his employees as well as a host of people he does not know, adds to the awkwardness of the situation". My heart sank at this. My intention, to bring Tanaka-San into my group - my way of doing things - was being construed as a lack of consideration for him by the community.

"You see, Bruce," Yamada-San said with a tone of kindness, "people generally just don't have parties like this in Japan so therefore, you are going to be up against this kind of problem". Having lived in Tokyo, I knew that Japanese did indeed have parties just like this, where a variety of different people are invited to a function. However, I could see that here in the country it could be construed as unusual. Anyway, whatever the interpretation, I was not prepared to change my plans or the invitation list, and with

the traces of anger and resentment that come when actions attempting to bring people together are read otherwise, I recharged my confidence and decided to give an alternative explanation of what was being bracketed here as 'Japanese culture'.

"As far as I am concerned, this party's purpose is to involve those people who have been of help to me here, in the welcoming of my family members from Britain. All thirty or so people invited have shown eagerness, asked no questions as to the other guests and shown no surprise in the fact that such a party is taking place and that they are being invited to it. I am aware that such gatherings bringing people together in such a random way are unusual but considering that Tanaka-San is the only one expressing any concern, I do not see this problem's relation to 'Japanese culture'. Are we not, after all, dealing simply with Tanaka-San's personality?"

The words had a strange effect on Yamada-San, as if I was speaking some secret language - voicing the behind-the-scenes or *honne* content of the situation. My statements seemed to appeal to his "up-for-those-subservient-under-difficult-authority-figures" side, a common stress for those who work in the world of business hierarchy. Instead of countering the statements or attempting to pursue the argument, he merely smiled widely and said,

"Well, yeah, that's true, isn't it?" Pleased at the shift of emphasis away from a *man quite justified* in his objection to attending a party containing his own employees by some idea of cultural hierarchical inevitability, to the presence of a *self-important personality* present in an otherwise equal mix of people, I relaxed somewhat. It was, after all, the explanation in which I wanted to frame the event - abnormality and narrow mindedness in a community of openness and good will. It was one that Yamada-San also saw as useful, and it was after my own insistence that what was required was for me to go directly to Tanaka-San's house that evening to 'consult' with him, that both Yamada-San and Sato-San took their leave, having done whatever they could to be the neutral negotiators for what could have become a situation of conflict and misunderstanding.

But as they left, I felt a sudden separation from the fabric of their social world. I had won a conversation that I didn't mean to fight. I had imposed my way of understanding the relationships involved, and the problem that had arisen. And although Yamada-San had understood my interpretation of the event, seen it

immediately in all its simplicity of separating of the problem-individual from the group, I hadn't revealed the ability to see his. As I stood in door way watching them climb into their cars, I knew that it was because I didn't *want* to see it - a world where hierarchy divides people for the sake of a continuity of social organization and avoidance of conflict - where social station "enters the hearts and souls of men". In all my good intentions to bring people together, I had imposed *my* value system, which I naively thought to be shared by everyone. But it was here, in encountering opposition to such intentions, as well as in understanding two fundamentally different explanations as to the cause of such opposition, that I had stumbled on that pivotal point between the traditional and the modern organization which characterizes Japanese community life.

\*

In attempting to give Yamada-San the same gift of understanding which he was able to accord me, a certain amount needs to be understood about the relationships and hierarchies which comprise a Japanese community. One of the fundamental points here is that the interaction between people in a traditional Japanese community is a complex art form involving use of language, gift-giving, choice of topic, expression (or concealing) of emotion, and appropriate behaviour with regard to superiors. As Hendry's work (1992, 1995) points out, this art of interaction is learnt from childhood and it is the home, and the relationships which occur within it, which provide a child's first lessons in his or her 'place' in the world. As the traditional *ie* family system is composed of the hierarchies relating to Neo-Confucianism, and the values of a part-feudal Japan - the same family system which was preserved and transferred to the population as a whole in the Meiji era - the hierarchical relationships are here instilled to be transferred later to the wider community.

The traditional *ie* family system, then, can be seen as a kind of factory for the production of people who generate and maintain close relationships between households which thus produce a Japanese community. Because of the complex systems of interaction which exist, ties between people are strong *within* interacting networks of households, and weak *outside* such virtual groups. Thus, traditionally, the links between people are carefully maintained and casual random cross-group mixing and meeting is not the norm.

Here, then, we get the first inkling of what Yamada-San was attempting to explain to me using his 'Japanese Culture' explanation. He was gesturing to the structural composition of Japanese communities, and how, when asked to make cross-group affiliations which go against the careful maintenance of in-group collectives, people may feel that they are unable to make appropriate adjustments of place - the very subtle adjustments which underpin the construction of the community and the traditional social environment.

I argue here that this social classification within community and its intricate construction represent the feudal organizational remnants of the pre-Meiji era in contemporary Japan. We see how interaction between people is based upon positioning of place and station, concepts inherent to an agrarian society. We also see, in Tanaka-San's response to the party, the absoluteness of such hierarchical parameters. In Gellner's terms "Agrarian society depends on the maintenance of a complex system of ranks, and it is important that these be both visible and felt" (1997; 20). It was Tanaka-San's concept that his rank would be invisible at the party which concerned him most, as if to lose sight of rank would dissolve his identity within the community.

Inherent in Yamada-San's explanation is the notion that this ranking will inevitably cause conflict if the correct rules are not followed. As such, my throwing of the party, although primarily designed to bring people together, risked of causing station-related problems. His logic, not acknowledged by me at the time, was flawless. Yamada-San had seen the problem in more anthropological terms than I had been able to do. Rather than isolating Tanaka-San as a problem-individual within a bounded group, he saw him as a integral part of an evolving, carefully balanced community involved in the production of complex relationships and alliances. This was flawless logic applied to the complex workings of a *traditional* community with its related set of values.

The ability Yamada-San displayed in applying my explanatory model - indeed to see *both* models as explanations - shows he could view egalitarian values within and against a hierarchically-defined society. If modern society, as Gellner advances, appeals to equality and to mobility within itself, then in a 'truly' modern society, my explanation of Tanaka-San being a problem-individual, in a open minded community is appropriate for the case. Here Tanaka-San's position would be seen as an inappropriate self-importance which prevented him from mixing successfully in 'normal' society. My explanation to Yamada-San, emphasizing the fact that the other thirty

invites had no such response, illustrates the logic of the position. Yamada-San's immediate grasp of such an explanation shifted his focus to the alternative explanatory model which exists *alongside* that which he initially gave me. This is to see the community in egalitarian terms - in terms of personalities in social space and a collective of people who have an equal stake in society. In short, he saw and acknowledged the modern interpretation.

If Yamada-San, then, demonstrates the possession of a dual model for social organization and identity, consisting of traditional and modern modes of seeing the world, then two questions arise; 1. Why then does Tanaka-San *not* have such a dual model, and 2. Where does Yamada-San's ability come from? I suggest that the answers to both of the questions are related to the concept of Generational Change, and, in particular, to that ongoing negotiation identified in the previous chapter, between tradition and modernity, *as present and accessible* to particular generations of Japanese.

Before embarking on an argument which emphasizes Tanaka-San's generational place in the unfolding of identity diversification in Japan, it would be shirking anthropological responsibility not to reiterate the point which Hendry herself draws from Dumont's *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980). Simply, this is that hierarchy is an integral part of all human sociality and that such ranking may be "quite independent of natural inequalities or the distribution of power" (Dumont, from Hendry, 1995; 76). Implicit in this notion is that hierarchical structures underlie and entwine with cultural organization in multiple ways. The workings of hierarchy, then, are highly cultural-specific and we must "recognize that the assumptions one brings to the subject from one's own background may need radical revision in a different cultural context" (Hendry, 1995; 76).

This is essential knowledge if we are to see Tanaka-San as a product of his culture and not, (according to the *modern* interpretation), as an abnormal or difficult person. For Tanaka-San, the organization of his world, as defined by the significant others who surround him, is directly related to a strict adherence to place and station. Thus, he will not attend a function which does not acknowledge his position vis-à-vis the other participants. He will not put himself in a position where status positions are questioned or uncertain. And most of all, he is unable to relate to a particular person differently in different contexts - his employee is *always* inferior and servile whether 'in



offices hours' or not. Tanaka-San's social world is rigid, ranked and ordered according to set rules and values, and he explains this to me openly when I fulfil my promise to Yamada-San to visit him that very night:

"People of my age - old men - see the world a little differently." Tanaka-San speaks in his usual philosophical tones, but there is a wounded air about him, and I know that in his world, my lack of consideration for his position has hurt his feelings, and I am sorry. "For us, Japan is ordered and our communities are tightly bounded things. People's lives are carefully balanced and there is a place for everyone." He pauses briefly to light a cigarette, draws deeply, and continues. "There are relationships in business and between families that can't be messed with - they define the situation and you just can't put bosses in the same party as their employees." In an effort to demonstrate this, he asked me how, if he did come to my party, he would obtain an astray or a refill of his glass. As everyone was there as equals, turning to his usual servant clan would embarrass him and upset the relationships through which he operates daily in his business world. I explained very gently that at such parties the hosts provided drinks and anything else that the guest may require. However, I was talking to someone who wanted to give, and not to receive, cultural information.

"I just couldn't deal with it...". He had picked up that I was seeing this as *his* problem and not a cultural one. "I mean, I spend every day of my working life with these people," he continued, "and I would have to worry about what kind of role to play. It's just... impossible." He finished bluntly and I sensed again his wounded pride. Upset myself at the conclusion but aware now of its inevitability - he wasn't going to attend - I attempted to repair whatever generational, cultural and/or communication damage had occurred by saying, "Well, I'm sorry that things have turned out this way. Out of all the people I wanted to introduce to my family and express gratitude to at this party, you mattered most and it is you who will not be there". The words had the desired effect. Tanaka-San's expression changed and it seemed to me that he suddenly saw my attempt as a desire to *include* him, rather than separating him by inviting his employees and inferiors. Aware now of my intention, but still obviously constrained by the rules of the community as he saw it, he took the opportunity to create some good out of the situation. Looking at me with smiling, triumphant eyes, he slapped me on the shoulder and said, "Well.. you can put it all in your thesis!"

\*

Tanaka-San would have been around fifteen years old when Japan lost the war. As he went through the pre-war education system, all the nationally unifying values imposed deliberately by the Meiji government would have defined his social world. These values were not merely picked up in passing, "they were firmly entrenched, in association with the family system and the authoritarian machinery of the state" (Naka, 1977; 10). Therefore, not only can we rely on the assumption that "young people before the war had, in principle, at least, a group-orientated attitude to life" (Ibid., 1977; 11), but that such values and hierarchy structures were programmed from earliest life in the home for entrance into the wider community. Tanaka-San was part of that fossilization of the feudal elements of Edo Japan, implemented (fossilized) to such a degree by the Meiji government, that Waswo chooses to see the transition as the Partial Samuarization of Japan (1996).

These values not only carried over feudal-derived organizational systems of family and community, but through the links forged with nationalism and imperialist ideology, taught the lesson that this state of organization and being was *Japanese*. Thus, by giving a kind of national stamp to a way of life, Tanaka-San's generation had their worlds effectively sealed from change - defined on all sides - and they became, as they were meant to, agents of the state in social organization and identity. This helps to answer the first of the two questions posed above - that Tanaka-San's direct and all encompassing involvement in the values and systems of Meiji Japan had been instilled within *one* particular way of interacting and participating in social life. Although mixed with the infusion of many essentially modern elements that also came with Meiji Japan - a gradual move away from the rural community life and consequent break-up of traditional communities etc. - Tanaka-San's experiences on the *social* level were characterized by their *exclusive* dependence on traditional, part-feudal family and community structures.

In order to answer the second question, we must see Tanaka-San's generation as markedly different from the one which followed. It is not difficult to find the evidence: "It was clear that there were outstanding changes in young people's aims in life due to the differences of periods in which they lived, which resulted from the revolutionizing of various aspects of society" (Naka, 1977; 13). By no means least of these revolutionizing aspects was that "defeat (in the war) and the subsequent social change... brought about a collapse of ideological systems, and pluralised young people's value concepts,

relativising ideas and creeds" (Ibid., 1977; 10). In contrast to his generation, Tanaka-San's postwar successors had clear tendencies to "set up as an ideal a life in accordance with *personal* preferences rather than for the *benefit of society* (Ibid., 1977; 11, my emphasis).

Here, then, is our most obvious example of the flood-like entrance of typically modern social values into a largely traditional functioning social whole. Although naturally pre-war Japan was beginning to negotiate the co-existence of the traditional/modern, post-war Japan, with its emphasis on equality of the sexes, the virtual prohibition of the traditional *ie* household and its hierarchical trappings - all, of course imposed Western values - speeded up the pace and intensity with which ordinary Japanese were now negotiating their social organization and identities between notions of tradition and modernity.

Thus, generations who grew up in post war Japan inherited a world in a state of fundamental change and at the same time were restricted in their interaction within such a world by the rigidity of form which older generations demanded. Preserved values still present in the education system - see Hendry 1992 - also restricted them. It is this transitional generation - those who participate in a world defined by those who feel, as older members, they have the right to order it - who have most experience of the duality of Japan's place between its own tradition and its own modernity. To these forty-somethings, Japan is poised between the young generations (often their children), seen as roaming a land of pure modernity, and their often resident parent(s) on the edge of life, who represent a world of extreme tradition. Such a position often results in the ability to participate in both worlds and so develops the dual ability to see the world as the product of ranked relationships between interlinking households, and as a group of common people simply attempting to produce community.

\*

There are two notes of caution in attributing this dual ability to participate in predominantly modern or traditional social groups to this fortysomething, post-war generation. The first, and most obvious, is that a wide variety of particular circumstances exist which cause a multitude of exceptions to any generational generalization. The second, related point, is that such diversity tends to have resulted, not in 'exceptions to the rule', but rather in the adoption of a default modern or

traditional model. Simply put, although many of this generation *can* work in both mind sets, those who have had particular upbringings or circumstances tend to defer to *one or the other* as the predominant way to understand the world.

This is not easy to prove, although some of the most convincing evidence comes in the guise of attitudes to the outside world and the consequent notions of self-as-nation. As seen in the historical development of available landmarks in the previous chapter, the 'absolute traditional' mode of imagining oneself in the world is limited to one's local bounded community. With a sprinkling of modernity - brought about by the Meiji era - this diversity expands to include identification with state and, *to a certain extent*, with Japan's place in the world. Traditional notions of world placement, as Masao (in Anderson, 1991) points out, can often involve a mere transferal of local hierarchy to an international sphere. Thus, notions of race, picked up from the Americans of the 1850s - white as superior etc. - still come to form part of a traditionally minded identity-in-the-world package. These values and notions have been transferred through the Meiji era - indeed one could say *as a composite part* of the traditional values *preserved* by the Meiji era - to the pre-war generation. The post-war generation thus picks up a large percentage of such values, and, mixed with the more modern notions of the post-war era, they provide the dual model. Post-war generations with less access to modern values - or with liberated parents who are already moving away from traditional modes - thus develop a dominant traditional or modern interpretive model, and use corresponding landmarks to position themselves in their *respective* streams of cultural history.

Consequently, I have found in my conversations with a variety of 40-50 year olds, a causal relationship between existence of traditional values in the family and community and views of the outside world. Briefly, the more traditional values a person holds and organizational systems he is a part of, the more his views of himself as Japanese and his idea of the outside world will be essentially unchanged from those of his predecessors. Likewise, a holding and participation within a typically modern value and organizational system will illustrate a significant departure in such views of nation-in-the-world (self-other). This, it must be said, is no great discovery, as Hendry (1992, 1995) points out that the classification learnt in traditional family houses becomes, through socialization adapted for the outside community and wider world. Also, as we have seen, feudal hierarchy systems are often absolute self-fulfilling systems which by their very rigid adherence to station and rank, prevent, rather than encourage, change within themselves. However, it is useful to illuminate exactly what these views of the

outside world are, and how a subjection to predominately modern or traditional values and/or organizational systems configures the self in relation to the outside world.

### *Taisho-San*

Taisho-San is a photographer, and at forty-two a young-looking, open-faced man. He has spent a year in Italy photographing village scenes and is having an exhibition next month. We talk a bit about his work and it seems he speaks Italian, but his English is a bit rusty. He asks me about my work and having told him of my interest in examining the links between the traditional Japanese family and Japanese identity, he volunteers the following:

"Many Japanese are still positioned in traditional families; that's right. And, yes, I would agree that such upbringings would have an effect on identity - perhaps accounting for the reputation of the narrow-mindedness of the Japanese as regards their views of the outside world. But this is nothing compared to the boundaries of nation that can be suddenly thrown up, by say, religious circumstances..."

Taisho-San is well versed in global rhetoric - a result of an in-depth relativisation of himself as Japanese in the world and the ability to transfer such knowledge to other nations. Also, unlike many Japanese, he has in-depth experience and a cultural *relationship* with another country. Such affiliation gives him a permanent bridge over any traditional cultural remnants which pull at his "Unique Japaneseness" and, by inference, *incompatibility* with the outside world. He is married, but on being asked, expresses no desire to perpetuate an *ie* family, of which he himself was not a part. Taisho-San, in comparison with his countrymen, represents a fine balance of 'modern' values with organizational systems. His landmarks for positioning himself in the world illustrate a distinct departure (almost opposition) to those available to ordinary Japanese throughout modern history.

### *Yamada-San*

I have chosen Yamada-San here to represent the most common balance of modern and traditional elements for this generation. His ability to apply either modern or traditional interpretative models to his social world is the most common feature of members of this generation. However, reaction to me as a foreigner (white), inspired

surprise in the first instance and continues to invoke a respect. This is in contrast to his visiting Korea and the Philippines with work mates particularly for 'female adventure' and the essentially racist attitudes to these other Asian countries which I have heard him express. Clearly there is some racial superiority component at work here, which, as Oblas (1995) argues, is perpetuated (and in part 'justified') by the media.

Yamada-San comes from a traditional *ie* system. His marriage to his wife was by negotiation rather than love, and the vast majority of his daily life is involved in the hierarchy of a business world run by older generations. Yamada-San's ability to see modern interpretations even from within a predominately traditional system is presumed to be due to the theoretical *choice* he had between vocation and social place while in education. Due to family and community factors, however, mobility was never much of an option, although his life is secure and happy enough for him not feel as though such choices were *in reality* unavailable. He relates to me mostly as a person, but occasionally as a representative of pre-defined category - the white foreigner - especially when in the company of those more traditionally minded than himself. This ability to switch modes again illustrates his duality of interpretive mode.

### *Hara-San*

Hara-San has said so many things to me which reveal his complete lack of understanding about the similarities between people that it is difficult to know where to start. One of the most shocking displays of ignorance was when I informed him of my grandfather's death. On hearing that he was 74 when he died, Hara-San looked at me, and said with genuine astonishment, "You mean to say that white people die at about the same age as Japanese?" Although not a stupid man, Hara-San's world is his community of friends and family and what he sees on television. As a percentage of Japanese media does indeed broadcast notions of white foreigners being mere objects rather than people (see Creighton, 1993), and supports arguments pertaining to Japanese racial distinctiveness, Hara-San's views do not exist in isolation. However, he is an unusual configuration - almost entirely traditional in thought - to be found in his generation, and seems far more influenced by the pre-war generation, and consequently unaware of modern values, despite their existence. His views of Japan and the outside world result directly from historical reaction to Western notions of superiority and the crude attempt to substantiate such thinking by advancing Japanese superiority and uniqueness. He has never related to me as a person; I consistently

represent the white foreigner to him - all interaction on his part attempts to reaffirm rather than challenge the established categories.

\*

The above three brief portraits of individual Japanese and their views of the outside world with regard their traditional vs. modern configuration of identity, is *in no way* supposed to represent the limitless diversity of ways in which such configurations show themselves in particular individuals. As such, I *do not* advance the view that the majority of Japanese in their forties go to Korea for female adventure, nor that to embrace modernity in Japan means that you need to speak Italian. What the portraits above attempt to show are two extremes and one arbitrary mid-point in a multitude of configurations of the modern and traditional, as seen in *three* individuals.

These individuals, in their open, simultaneously open/closed, or closed views of the outside world, also tend to belong to more modern based, mixed, or traditional based cultural systems, respectively, and that is why I present them here as illustrations.

Also, it must be said that traditional values are not necessarily 'anti-world', 'pro Japanese' values. The intimacy of traditional Japanese communities, which can and do include foreigners in various places in the country, help ordinary Japanese to receive knowledge about other countries *through* a traditional system. As such, I do not make as strong a statement as Shuichi (1992), that traditional values are an "obstacle" to internationalization as cross-cultural understanding, but a related one: that a *concentration* of traditional values *preserves* the use of feudal landmarks in understanding Japan's position vis-à-vis the wider world. Conversely, a concentration of modern values tends to jettison such notions and allows for change in the way in which 'Japan' is improvised (although this can lead to modern nationalism as easily as it can lead to international understanding). Due to what Naka (1977) refers to as 'various revolutionizing aspects of Japanese society this century', the concentrations of these traditional and modern configurations have become representative of particular generations. This has illustrated how certain individuals attach themselves to the flows of their cultural histories in the present day. It is here that we can now begin to follow this complex spread of diversity down and across the years - to the improvisational sounds of contemporary Japanese further removed from the initial clashes of tradition and modernity - the sons and daughters of the sons and daughters of the pre-war generations.

## Chapter Five

### *Generations of Change*

On the morning of the day of the party, before I was to meet my family at the airport, my girlfriend Yuki came down from her hometown as she did every other weekend or so. Despite the small amount of time we had available that morning, we decided to visit the Tanaka-Sans at their home. The purpose of this visit, we agreed, was to offer once more an apology for the misunderstanding which had occurred. Also, I wanted to make sure that no 'not wanting to involve them in my life' feeling remained or that to any degree I was ungrateful for the support and generosity which they had shown me during my time in Sweetwood. Yuki, with an acute sensitivity for the ways that sentiments work in traditional communities, also felt that she herself, "being Japanese", should take some responsibility for not warning me of the possible outcome of arranging such a party.

So it was that we arrived at the house and were welcomed in by Tanaka-San's wife, who gave us the news that her husband was not around, having gone to see a friend in town. I, at least, was slightly relieved by this, knowing that the message would reach Tanaka-San that we had visited and that this, in itself, would be sufficient to illustrate our concern. Yuki, however, seemed insistent that, if his wife had time, we would love to pop in for a quick chat. We were ushered in to a large tatami room and served tea. The conversation began with the usual pleasantries, followed by me apologizing and reiterating my real desire to have the Tanakas at the party. I explained that I hadn't consulted with Tanaka-San in depth before organizing the party, because I assumed that the desire to introduce him into my Other World would be obvious.

Tanaka-San's wife, a clever woman, recognized the truth of this and, it occurred to me then, saw the whole series of events very clearly. She had been the one through whom I had arranged the appointment with her husband; she had been the spokeswoman for Tanaka-San since the beginning of this chain of events and I had been talking to her on the phone about matters involving her husband and even my plans since I had moved to Sweetwood. In the words of her eldest son "she was the only person who could really deal with Tanaka-San". However, I knew instinctively that she also wanted to go to this party. She would have enjoyed meeting new people - and especially my family.



She was essentially a kind woman and wanted to appear to be able to understand and relate to different people.

I felt almost certain that she was disappointed with her husband's decision not to attend on the grounds of his rank and status. I sensed a deeper feeling also - an anger that the situation, in preventing her from attending, exposed her dependence on her husband's decisions and went directly against her almost hidden feelings of self-worth and desire for greater independence. Having to confront these inconsistencies in herself made her feel bitter and enclosed, and more importantly, alone. In order to consolidate her position, she needed to feel established back in the community, to cement her wandering person back in the flow of local relationships. I represented the ultimate outsider and therefore there was little use she could make of me in repositioning her lost self. Yuki, however, was not only Japanese, but an outsider to the local community, and a young woman.

"I'm really so sorry not to have seen the circumstances sooner." I heard Yuki apologize as I tuned back into the conversation between the two women. "I should have seen that, of course, Tanaka-San would have difficulty in attending a party where work colleagues were also to be present. It was so silly of me not to notice. There is really no excuse..."

Now Yuki had no responsibility here at all. Not only did she live three hundred kilometers away, but she had little knowledge of my day-to-day activities. Although she knew my intentions to have the party, she did not know who I was inviting. However, priding herself on the fact that she belonged to a similar intimate (traditional) community in her home town, she went about her interactions within the Sweetwood community with absolute cultural precision. There was *a way* of doing things, she would explain to me, a *Japanese way* - namely, to adhere to the complex art forms of community building which included appropriate behaviour, language and general custom. In a sense, such traditional community construction and maintenance were familiar because it was the mode she entered when with her family, and (in a sense) she was acting the part because she, as a thirty-one year old woman who had travelled abroad, (I had met her in England), was free from the all-embracing aspects of what *real* membership meant. Or so it seemed to Tanaka-San's wife.

"Yes, well - we were going to contact you to see if you could explain to Bruce what was

happening behind the scenes - we didn't want to hurt him, you see - but in the end - I think it was my eldest son who said it - we decided that you too may not understand such things - having been abroad and all that."

It was a wounding statement, although I was unsure if it was intended as such, and I saw Yuki visibly recoil. It certainly did the trick in putting forward the conclusion that it is impossible to make one's life broader, to belong to different groups of people without considerable sacrifice (losing sight of your own upbringing). It also served to contradict any apparent temptation she may have harbored to do something that her husband would not have approved of (ie. going to such a party), as it put her back into the protective station of her place as guardian of traditional community - *protecting it from the plural notions of a young 'polluted' woman.*

We left soon after and Yuki broke down in tears in the car on the way home - the incident had hit her hard. She wondered how people could be so cold and said that she hated the way that people sometimes viewed her differently just because she'd been abroad. I attempted to comfort her, and, knowing the personalities involved, talked of how Tanaka-San's wife had said those things to protect herself. It helped a bit but Yuki was still shaken - the incident had challenged her membership not to the world of friends, jobs and day to day life, but to the world of her parents and her extended family. The values and systems under which they work were the same as those which the Tanaka-Sans belong, and her rejection from one was tantamount to a challenge of her status in both.

\*

It is in this clash between Yuki and Tanaka-San's wife that we can identify wider fissures in the evolution of the modern vs. traditional social-scape. Firstly, as illustrated by Naka (1977), the differences between pre-war and post-war suicide rates may be looked on as "an index of the progress of awareness of self and sense of their own rights as individuals among Japanese women" (pp. 69). Thus although pre-war generations of women in farming prefectures suffered very low status - "their sphere of life (being) restricted to the confines of the family" - suicide rates were surprisingly low. "Since the war, however, identical circumstances have come to be seen by the individual concerned as 'disappointment in love' or 'domestic discord', with a resultant increase in the number of women who choose suicide". The increased awareness of self and of

their own rights as individuals have resulted in "outstandingly high suicide rates among young women in Japan, in comparison with the rest of the world". Naka sees this as "due to various factors characterizing periods of transition to modern ways", particularly in the existence of "pre-modern patterns of human relationship within the family that inhibit self-expression" (Ibid., 1977; 70).

It is such inhibition which Tanaka-San's wife sees present in her own life and absent in Yuki's. Tanaka-San's wife had a very difficult and low status early life. After her marriage her husband's mother treated her like a slave of sorts and up until her mother-in-law's death she lived exclusively in her husband's family home. In later years, however, with her husband's success, she began to lead a freer life and now does voluntary work, as well as mixing with a wide set of outside friends in a variety of activities. Her husband is a decent man but he still ensures that she is not on too free a reign, although recently he has not raised a finger against her passing her driving test, and it seems as that they will go abroad together next year for the first time. (He has gone to many places alone or with business colleagues).

Her treatment of Yuki represents not only the gap which exists between their respective generational experiences of womanhood, but by inference, where larger negotiations and conflicts occur between those exposed to predominately traditional and modern systems. For instance, her use of the 'landmark' that experiences abroad somehow contaminate or 'make-stupid' one's understanding of Japanese relationships is a common conversational manoeuvre used to 'relativize' returnees from abroad (see White, 1988). In Tanaka-San's wife's case, I have shown the reason to be related to her need to return to her 'place as a woman' within the community, but I venture to advance that all such statements excluding returnees from so-called 'Japanese society' are made from positions of fundamental inferiority in regard to the outside world and other people's experience of it. It is in this way, of course, that such conflict illustrates powerfully the dynamics at work in the reproduction and preservation of culturally isolationist values within traditional Japanese communities. As pre-modern relationships rub with modern, notions of superiority and inferiority are breached, conflict arises and in order to avoid it, the power is handed to the inferior-feeling party who then, in turn, determines the status quo.

This is largely the pattern of "tradition meets modernity on a community level" which has been occurring for at least five generations, and on a large scale in the last two. Yuki,

in her early thirties, however, represents a generation that although brought up under many of the group-orientated values of the education and local community systems (see Hendry 1992), is almost entirely 'modern-programmed'. Her generation are conscious of the need to identify with traditional parents but fundamentally different in their almost 'default' understanding of a Japan as a modern nation. Although it has been argued that there have been times in Japan's history (the 1920's for instance - see Smith, 1972) which have shown clear generational trends, the *shinjinrui* (the new species) are the first generation to be affected en masse by the impact of modernity.

It is this generation of approximately 27-35 year olds who grew up in the Japanese economic miracle. "We had no worries about our future employment - the world was ours", a friend of Yuki's once told me. Such an environment in the wider nation would have been a contrast to still widespread traditional values in the home and it is likely that experiences like Yuki's with Tanaka-San may typify this generation - where segregation from tradition in the home leads to identification with peer groups outside - a self-fulfilling dynamic which moves people away from tradition into a world where they define themselves directly against a wider image of 'society'. If this is so, we are identifying the first large scale fusion of the individual with the state, a relationship which Gellner sees as essential to a modern society (1997).

Certainly, in my many conversations and meetings with people in this age range I find it unusual for there to be much surprise or characterization of my foreignness, suggesting again the links between the visions of Japan-in-the-world and the participation within predominately modern or traditional value and organizational systems. However, my fieldwork here is limited to Tokyo, Hiroshima and Fukuoka cities, as my Sweetwood research has not yet considered in depth the views and values of these and younger generations. This is a limitation that will be overcome in the next phase of research and subsequent thesis. The following brief portraits, then, do need to be seen as individuals within the social worlds of larger cities. Although this doesn't necessarily mean that traditional communities are less likely to be in existence (indeed they work just as effectively as in rural areas - see Hendry 1995), it does represent a slight imbalance in the fact that rural or small-town life may induce stronger ties between parent, child and community, resulting in a less modern-minded generation. (I see this as likely but *estimate* the extent of the phenomena as not fundamentally challenging the generational argument thus stated).

## *Jun*

At 28, Jun has much of the physical appearance of his father, Tanaka-San. It was through Jun that I managed to be introduced to the community of Sweetwood. When I first met him, however, having no idea of his country-roots, he struck me as a very cosmopolitan and world-minded individual. Not only was his research at the University of Tokyo on education - his MA thesis being a detailed study of the education system in the UK - but his studies gave him a relativized position on Japan which seemed to remove him from the flow of its more isolating identity. Perhaps because of this world view, I, as a foreigner, did not represent an oddity or challenge to Jun's notions of his Japanese self - he did not have to expend energy fitting me into his world.

Interestingly, I have had the opportunity in Jun's company to meet Japanese who are obviously surprised at my foreignness. In these situations, Jun takes on the role of mediator between the Japanese and myself, introducing me as representative of a foreigner and then, bit by bit, talking of my individual, personal differences. It is an odd situation to be in, and Jun is very much the middle-man between what he sees as a world that he understands and has access to and the teaching of how to achieve such membership to other, less foreign-experienced Japanese. Here, Jun is very much the teacher that he will no doubt become, packaging me as the 'foreigner' to begin with, to make the concept easily understandable, and then unwrapping, layer by layer, the individual differences which make me, after all, human.

There is little doubt that in his family life - his relations with his parents and the occasional times he returns to Sweetwood to visit - he is confronted with the traditional values I have illustrated in his mother and father. However, Jun will always attempt here also to educate his parents in the more contemporary ways of seeing the world, and is very unwilling to allow the traditional values to be seen as the status quo. Jun has been empowered by a set of educational and personal opportunities to see Japan as a nation open to the world and with the ability to contribute to international society in many areas. His task is now to make sure such knowledge is passed to his countrymen, so that Japan as a whole may catch up with like-minded people of his generation.

### *Atsushi and Naoko*

Atsushi is a broad faced, sturdy man of thirty-one. His slightly chubby features give him a constant air of cheerfulness, a physical complement to his personality, which is large and warm. One is not surprised that the beautiful Naoko, one year his junior, has married him, and she herself, although quieter than he, comes across as a kind and open hearted person. Atsushi is a soccer coach at a soccer school in Tokyo and works long hours. Naoko, after her marriage, quit her job and now looks after the house and prepares for the children they plan to have in the next couple of years.

As with many affluent people of this generation I have met in larger cities, they make no reference to my foreignness and characterizations of the white-foreigner are almost unknown. What's more, Atsushi's connections with the game of soccer provide a similar function as Jun's access to cross cultural education study - they relativize Japan as a nation within a world of others. This relativization creates a virtual forum in which to see nations pitched against one another in a world of equal opportunity; it goes directly against traditional notions of race and Japan-versus-the-west. Indeed, not only is the world broken down into its component parts rather than huge racial divides, but through the individual players, followers of the game can see that theirs is a society having much in *common* with other modern societies. This notion not only represents a growing pluralism within Japanese society, but also, as McGregor (1996) suggests, is the basis of "a nicer new nationalism".

Not only is this pluralism apparent in Atsushi and Naoko's response to me as a foreigner but in the way they talk about the world in relation to Japan. More revealing in the conversations I have had with them at various times, is the *absence* of any traditional modes of thought or interpretation. Likewise, traditional family values are almost entirely absent - although Naoko comes from a traditional *ie* family, Atsushi does not, and neither of them plan to implement any of the traditional hierarchies to future members. Although Kumagai (1996) would argue that even in this 'professional' generation, there are elements of tradition and modernity still in negotiation, these elements seem marginal (in historical terms) as against an overwhelming existence of typically modern values and organizational systems.

\*

It is important to remember, when commenting on the majority of modern values present in this generation that their home-worlds may well be places where traditional modes of interaction and improvisation are the norm. Given the opportunity to create a world for themselves outside the home, however, this generation do seem to take advantage of the opportunities of growing economic and social modernity to attach themselves directly to society as 'modern' individuals. I have suggested that conflict of the sort illustrated between Yuki and Tanaka-San's wife can arise to fuel the process of assimilation to a world outside the traditional home. It is also possible, however, that little or no conflict arises, and members of this generation exist between their traditional home worlds and their own. Some conflict is inevitable, however, if these people choose to start a new family separately from the traditional home - going against traditional values of entwining the lives of successive generations - and of course looking after the elderly.

Such separation and conflict is seen in the growing number of care homes for the elderly. Where traditional families are separated from the starting of new nuclear units (a trend which in itself emphasizes the adoption of modern values and rejection of tradition ones) the traditional family unit is steadily decreasing. Also, couples do not have the ability or desire to bring the constraining traditional values of their parents into their modern worlds (Barrow, 1992). This is perhaps largely due to the fact that the core value systems of modernity illustrate almost direct opposition to the traditional notions analyzed in the previous chapters.

What characterizes this modern generation, then, in comparison to those older than themselves, is that although that they, like the majority of their elders, have a dual modern/traditional model with which to interpret the world, *their own* world - their own direct connection with society has become the modern mode. Broadly speaking, this generation puts on the traditional interpretative mode when home with the parents or grandparents or in particular ritual situations, but in what they see as their world - the outside world - the *real* experiential world of their partners and maybe even children, they use the modern interpretative model as default.

\*

What I have demonstrated here in terms of the generational norms of this twenty-thirtysomethings generation, is, again, by no means absolute, there being many

exceptions to any generational grouping. However, we can identify in this generation certain widespread trends involving a movement away from tradition. A broadening in ideas of Japan in relation to the outside world can be seen not just in reactions towards me in my fieldwork but by changes in the media representation of foreigners in advertising. Where more contemporary generations are now considered as target market groups, images of the foreigner have changed from the depiction as 'objects' to those of 'real people' (see Creighton, 1995) to align with the value systems of such generations.

The position of women - their place as increasingly equal members of society - is also given most expression within this age grouping. There seems to be a large group of women soccer fans emerging, a trend which illustrates a significant move from the traditional place in the home, to a place in-the-nation, while expectations of women held by the older generation (witness Yuki and Tanaka-San's wife), seems representative of a different era.

The recent growth of soccer is particularly interesting, and the great majority of supporters belong to this generation (or younger). Such popularity allows a feeding back of a nationally relativized Japan to more traditional communities, through the agents of media. I have seen this in the change of national values expressed by Sato-San (my Sweetwood friend) before during and after the world cup, when he and his wife and children grouped together to cheer Japan on in front of the television. The experience allowed him to connect directly with Japan as a nation rather than through the filter of his community and its traditional views of the world (see again McGregor, 1996).

Of course, there are those in this generation who have had less opportunity or desire to attribute themselves to the generational grouping on offer, and therefore remain involved with the communities of their parents and grandparents. These people are likely to display more traditional values and therefore tend to be more like the generation before them. However, in my conversations and informal interviews with urban members of this age group, I have found overwhelming evidence of modern ways to see the world and its organizational systems which often directly counter the traditional notions analyzed in the previous chapters.

\*



It is by examining younger generations' improvisations of community - and the landmarks they use to position themselves within their cultural histories - that we can often obtain rich information about such cultural histories and suggest the directions and trends of their continuing development; "They (young people) point backward to our histories and forward to our futures" (White, 1994; 49). In identifying the *shinjinrui* generation in Japan as representing a continuing negotiation of tradition and modernity, we see not only their position within a move towards modern value and organizational systems, but through the conflicts with the older generations and the departures they have made from traditional forms of social life, the historical progress of a central tradition/modern fulcrum upon which modern Japanese society has been consistently defined and improvised. Most importantly, this charting of cultural improvisation and identity has illuminated the increase of diversification which occurs as a society travels through time. Perhaps predictably, then, it is to the study of even younger generations, people in their teens or early twenties, that researchers increasingly turn to unfold the diversity in Japan's cultural milieu.

White's (1994) study of Japanese teenagers, for instance, shows their world to be, in all aspects from friendships to their conceptualizing of the world outside Japan, victim to an enormous expansion of social diversity within their generation. Indeed, she sees this diversity as the result of significant changes in the way Japan has and is being imagined and improvised, and consequently she marks its presence as fundamentally different from the Japan of previous generations. "It is the teens themselves who have, with some confusion and discomfort, come to terms with a consciousness of diversity and it is this diversity *among* teens themselves, in family life, buying power, sexual and interpersonal experience, political and personal ideas - that will indeed be the basis of new thinking on the nature of Japanese society" (White, 1994; 221).

## Chapter Six

### *The Common Symphonies*

On holiday with Jun and his parents in Korea recently, I had the good fortune to see how the Japanese improvised a variety of communities when outside Japan. The Tanakas had kindly offered to take me to Seoul after I expressed an interest in visiting another Asian country. Jun, although not happy to spend too much time with his parents, wanted very much to meet up with a couple of Korean friends he hadn't seen for a long time.

So it was that the four of us arrived, on a cloudy Wednesday afternoon, at Seoul airport, and a bus ride later, at a huge hotel and shopping complex in the downtown area. Tanaka-San, (Jun's father), pushed us forward to the front desk - we had been designated In Charge Of All Interaction With Koreans, due, I presume, to our Outside Japan Experience. It soon became clear, however, that all staff at this complex could speak both English and Japanese. Indeed, many seemed completely trilingual, and if not, were certainly more fluent in Japanese than English. This, interestingly, did not change matters, and Tanaka-San was still insistent that Jun and I take care of all interactions *foreign in nature*.

During the three days I spent in Seoul, I was acutely aware of the many groups of Japanese and their impressions of the Koreans. I overheard conversations in lifts, in shops, in restaurants and in bars. By far the most common theme was the fact that so many of the Koreans spoke Japanese. This was talked about endlessly by groups of middle-aged men, who found great amusement in imitating the imperfections of speech they had heard around town. They would laugh openly in front of shop keepers just because they were being spoken to in their own language and seemed quite unaware that these were real *people* at all.

All the politeness and form of relating to others seemed to disappear from the behaviour patterns of some groups of older Japanese. And it seemed that while they were powerfully re-enforcing their internal group identities with each other, they had no capability to relate to a world outside of that group. At no time during my fieldwork had the connection between the methods of traditional community construction, (the

maintenance of strong *internal* networks and consequent weakness of out-group relations), and the results of transferring such methods to an international sphere, been so obvious.

In stark contrast to these isolated groups of Japanese, Jun's interpretation of this environment sought to encompass, to experience and to make broad his understanding of the people and culture in which he found himself. From the moment we met his Korean friends several hours after checking in, Jun's behaviour sought to find commonality, to share stories and impressions - to improvise a world which he saw himself co-inhabiting with his friends.

During those three days Jun and I moved in two worlds. From the daily time with his parents, to the nights out with his Korean friends, our social positions altered radically. We heard Jun's father talk of the racism which existed in his generation against Koreans - apparently, when he was young the worst insult you could give someone was to call them a *Korean Wog* (my translation). We saw how even when addressed in perfect Japanese by a Korean, Jun's parents would show little or no courtesy (a result of their lack of ability to relate to *outsiders*, I argue, rather than a reflection on their personalities). And then we would talk into the night with Jun's friends about travel, sex life, Japan, Korea, and just about anything that people talk about when thrown together for hours. We were moving between a world held in place by the organization of inside and outside divisions, and one where diversity, in itself, provided the basis for belonging.

The separateness of these two communities (his parents and his friends)- with their respective landmarks and ways of relating to people - often became topics of conversation as Jun and I attempted to consolidate our position In-Between. In one such conversation Jun offered the following:- "My father just lives in a different world - a closed world, a business world - which doesn't allow him to experience anything different from what he already thinks he knows. He doesn't even understand my world as a student, how I relate to my friends or the purpose or meaning of my research. What annoys me the most", says Jun, visibly hurt by the lack of understanding, "is that he doesn't even try".

My time in Korea with the Tanakas brought me closer to all of them while illustrating clearly the fault lines along which their relationships are delicately balanced. It

showed me how, even within a society where people learn to co-operate and distinguish inside-group from outside-group early in the education system, (see Hendry, 1992), there can be wildly different ways in which such categorization manifests itself as group identity in later life.

Indeed, we can see how the learnt construction of inside and outside groups can allow for a diversity of world views (as seen predominantly in Jun's generation), or (traditionally) produce group collectives which operate at the expense of the 'strange (foreign) outsider'. The latter requires further investigation not merely because underneath such dynamics lie basic methods of community improvisation, but more importantly, as illustrated by some groups of Japanese wandering the Seoul hotel complex, such a collective can exclude foreigners, producing an internal, bounded Japanese Identity.

Hendry's (1992) work on group identity illustrates how the learning of inside and outside divisions is part of a Japanese child's socialization.

The outsider is dubbed *okashii* (strange, peculiar) and other children may laugh at one who cries. This is consistent with a sanction threatened by mothers and other caretakers that people will laugh at a child who fails to comply. It also reinforces the notion that security and satisfaction is on the inside, joining in with the new *uchi* (inside) group of fellow kindergartners, and few children stand outside for long. They soon realize that there is little choice about cooperating with the group, that the way to gain attention and benefit personally is to be an active participant (Ibid., pp59).

The methods of constructing these *uchi*, (or inside), groups are not limited to the confines of the kindergarten. Establishing and belonging to *uchi* groups, Hendry sees as characterizing individual Japanese in all spheres of social life, and can be thus represented as "a series of concentric circles, with the smallest, most intimate group in the middle, and the largest probably being the *uchi* group of all Japanese people" (Hendry, 1995; 223). It is here, then, that we can see how socialization *can* produce a Japanese identity which has the same formula for its maintenance as the local community - to re-enforce in-group identity in opposition to out-group. As a method by which to improvise community, (and returning to the examples raised in chapter one), we are replacing Brian and Ignacio's 'beginners guide to social life' as that of

improvisation around nation, to those improvisations which revolve around inside and outside group memberships (with may or may not involve notions of nation).

So the traditional method of imagining oneself within a group in Japan revolves around notions of inclusion vis-à-vis the excluded. As such, when these notions are put onto an international realm, segregation at obvious differences of language and/ or appearance, becomes a cheap and easy way to score points among fellow peers by accentuating the out-group-ness of the individual in question while simultaneously re-enforcing the inclusive boundaries of the group. Broadly speaking, it is this dynamic which is at work in many meetings between Japanese and foreigners. Foreigners can often misread the exclusion as deep-seated nationalism, but as I suggested in chapter three, such communities are far more embedded in pre-modern hierarchical systems (which Gellner suggests do not allow nationalism to occur), than a result of a modernizing, unifying, Japanese national movement.

The relationship between the traditional Japanese community and the production of such in-groups (*uchi*) is a strong one. Not only do the principles underlying the traditional family unit (*ie* household) correspond to the hierarchies learnt later in school and then in the community, but the in-group study of 'how-to-be' or 'what-role-to-play', are also transferable skills throughout Japanese social life (see also Hendry, 1995). In encompassing the realms of family, school community and wider society, the traditional Japanese social system can be seen as a more-or-less absolute system of belonging. Having its foundations in the production and maintenance of in-groups, it includes rules of membership, and the decided root chords of improvisation ensure adherence to the group through ridicule and reward.

In all these regards, Japan's social system has developed in response to the environment of a predominantly agrarian society. With its emphasis on the maintenance of rigid systems of rank and hierarchy, and with the notion of in-group relationships often outweighing cross-group ones, it fits quite neatly with Gellner's (1997) vision of the social landscape of feudal society. In the exclusive nature of the traditional in-group construction, diversity is discouraged, whether on small or large scale community construction (class-group or nation). These factors coupled with Japan's cultural history and its relative lack of conflict, make some commentators suggest "that it will be difficult (for Japan) to cultivate a real tolerance for a diversity of values" (Yasushi, 1992). Such concerns have brought about wide-spread debates on

Japan's 'internationalization' and just how it can be achieved.

However, contemporary Japan illustrates how these issues are not only being debated by foreign or domestic commentators attempting to understand or 'explain' Japan, but, far more importantly, by the successive generations of Japanese who exist within the constant negotiations and improvisations of cultural identity. It is the internal conflict arising from Japan's particular blend of traditional and modern elements which is the agent of major change in the way the world is seen as a series of inclusive groups or an assessable whole of which Japan itself is a part.

Jun's attitudes toward his father represent a clear, (if somewhat extreme), example of how a diversity of cultural experience has entered his *shinjinrui* generation, starkly contrasting it against the predominantly traditional values of his parent's social world. Jun's interaction with his Korean friends, and his desire to experience and learn about Korean culture, illustrate Jun's vision of himself as part of a world which has common themes of existence (landmarks) across various nations. In opposition to his parents he relates "to (his) total society directly, without mediation, rather than by first to one of its sub-groups" (Gellner, 1997:28), and such direct connection to an idea of himself as an individual in the flow of the diversity of a modern nation, positions him firmly able to relate across nations - to those he sees in similar positions as himself.

That the education Jun and his generation received taught the same lessons of the importance of in-group out-group construction illustrates that such values can come to work to strengthen relationships between friends of any category (rather than divide people by their foreignness). Along with the injection of modern values and the diversity of cultural experience which accompanies such values, comes the ability to construct in-groups which have cross-cultural understanding and acceptance of others as their primary membership requirement. Thus, those who are outsiders to these concepts - often older, more traditionally-minded parents - become the 'outsiders' which help to give the group definition.

It is here, in the separation of those who make Japanese identity exclusive, that young generations truly depart in their 'musical styles', by bringing on board a whole new set of landmarks with which to relate to the world. At this intersection of tradition and modernity - the point at which tradition becomes a defined Other against a modern identity - we see clearly the wider transition from the traditional use of Other to define

Japan-the-nation (through inclusion/exclusion), to the vision of Japan a nation immersed in a common global diversity. It is a transition seen by White (1994), Creighton (1995), and Waswo (1996) as representing fundamental change in the make-up of Japanese society.

It is always tempting to see the present as a turning point, and to assign to unfolding events or trends a significance they may not in the end deserve, but I cannot help feeling that the temptation is justified so far as contemporary Japanese society is concerned (Waswo, 1996; 163).

Common to many of these theories that Japan is at a point of fundamental transition with regard its identity, is the notion that this is a *generational* phenomena. I have attempted to identify in this paper, how, from the considerations of the Meiji leaders to the feelings of professional Tokyoites about their nation, ordinary Japanese have been and are positioning themselves within the cultural histories which feed their improvisations of community - their identities. From the pre-modern ideas of one's place in the world, through the part-modernizing, part feudal-fossilizing Meiji period, and into the 1990s, there has continued to emerge layer after layer of cultural diversity. The unfolding of this diversity, however, has streamed from a central negotiation within the social milieu - the co-existence of traditional and modern values and patterns of social organization within a united cultural whole. At this central pivot of improvisational production lies the conflict between those who are born into the streams of power relations created by the older generations and the subsequent change which they implement. Repetitive negotiation coupled with influential historical events have resulted in wide-spread common *generational* trends in the production of cultural identity. As such The Generation has become an agent of cultural change, the diversity of ways in which Japanese improvise their social worlds broadening with each reproduction. It is this process that I see as linking the youth of Japan with the youth of other nations.

The uncertainties facing youth today are not necessarily unrelated. These are the residues of societies governed by older people and of histories generated by older people, and younger people find themselves thrust into this stream of power relations and change (Spencer, 1991;1).

It is this immersion into the streams of cultural histories produced by older generations,

and the simultaneous participation in a society which seems unlike that being defined, which at once produces the generational change sketched out in the previous chapters and links the Japanese youth to youth-of-the-world. As in White's (1994) study of Japanese teenagers, we see that at the very point at which young people forge their own interpretations against those of their elders - defining for themselves new styles of improvisation - we begin to see the unfolding of an infinite cultural diversity. Echoing much of White's perspective on a more global sample, Amit-Talai (1995), puts it as follows:-

Youth cultural production occurs at home, at school, at work, at play, on the street, with friends, teachers, parents, siblings and bosses, draws elements from home-grown as well as transnational influences, and intertwines with class, gender, ethnicity and locality with all the cultural diversity that such a multiplicity of circumstances compels. Such multi-culturalism imparts to youths, as to adults, a degree of consciousness that goes beyond any one situation, an awareness that each moment is embedded within a range of cultural possibilities (Ibid., pp.231).

It is this *degree of consciousness* that is beginning to pervade the construction and adherence to the in-group dynamic on the international realm. Simply, it is becoming far less likely that young Japanese will use the foreigner as a symbolic Other to distance in order to produce the internal Japanese category. "The 1990s may be a decade of marked change in attitudes towards foreigners, as young Japanese who have grown up seeing them as ordinary people come of age. There are also intentional promptings to encourage Japanese of all ages to reflect on their own degree of acceptance of others" (Creighton, 1995; 157).

It is hoped that by tracing the unfolding of cultural diversity in Japan, through the evolution of views of the outside world and corresponding Japanese identity, the paper has gone some way to show how many young Japanese use diversity as an inclusive unifying concept rather than seeing it as a threat to an exclusive identity. Most importantly, I wish to emphasize how such a transition represents a more universal processes of global cultural change. As Japanese young people respond to the unfolding dynamics of their social place in an historical process of negotiation around tradition and modernity, so does youth in many parts of the world. The relatedness of world youth is in this negotiation of their place in cultures which are unique in their blend of traditional and modern elements, but which are common in the diversity that



improvisations of community, through history, have produced.

\*

The heavy rain on the tent shrouds the four of us in a conversational intimacy. Words turn to images without effort of the imagination. Yuki and I have taken Hiro and Hiroko (my Tokyo friends) camping in the mountains of Kyushu - they're on a break from the big city - and Hiroko is talking about her thoughts on the Japanese news:

"It just seems to be that in all the coverage of disasters, it's as if, the announcer says 'Well there were no Japanese killed', and there is this little space for the feeling 'Well isn't that a bloody relief'. It just makes me think how narrow minded the news can be - I mean, where is the compassion from other people and why is it only Japanese who matter?"

"That's really interesting," I quickly say, "I've always thought that myself, but took it to be a kind of foreigner reaction - it's a relief to hear that some Japanese think it's a bit narrow minded, too." I wondered how Hiroko, a girl in her mid twenties, who has never been to a foreign country, speaks little English, and whose only experience of foreigners is this friend of her boyfriend that she doesn't know very well, came to this inspired position. I decided to ask her how she came to see the news like that.

"It was during the Kobe earthquake, I think. Of course, so many people were following the rescue operation on the tele, and I remember the thousands of foreign aid workers who just flew in to help out - the attention and concern from foreign countries was just amazing. And then there is some disaster on the other side of the world and Japan is just worried about whether any *Japanese* are dead - like it's just not right, man."

"Well", I say, thinking that that's definitely going to find its way into the thesis somewhere, "it's a really refreshing thing to hear, as I often feel alone in such thoughts."

"Well," she laughs, "now you know it's not just you with a *gaizin* (foreigner) complex. It's just a way for people to make themselves more secure in their own little world. And sometimes it's blindingly obvious that's what it is, isn't that right, Hiro?" She turns to her boyfriend and thumps him on the leg to entice a response. Hiro nods, and says, "Yep, it's crap, but it's Japanese". We laugh.

## Bibliography/References

- Amit-Talai, V. (1995) "The 'Multi' Cultural of Youth," in Amit-Talai V. and Wulff H. (eds) *Youth Cultures: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, London: Routledge
- Anderson, B. (1991 [1983]) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd Edition, London: Verso
- Appadurai, A. (1991) "Global Ethnoscapes: Notes for a Transnational Anthropology," in Fox, R. (ed) *Recapturing Anthropology*, Santa Fe: School of American Resrach Press
- Barrow, G. (1992) *Aging, the Individual, and Society*, St. Paul: West Publishing co.
- Befu, H. (1992) "Symbols of Nationalism and Nihonjinron", in Goodman, R. and Refsing, K. *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*, London: Routledge
- Ben-Ari, E., Moeran, B., Valentine, J. (eds.) *Unwrapping Japan: Society and Culture in Anthropological Perspective* (1990), Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press
- Benedict, R. (1935) *Patterns of Culture*, London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd.
- Benedict, R. (1954) *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, Vermont: Tuttle Press
- Booth, A. (1995) *Looking for the Lost: Journeys Through a Vanishing Japan*, Tokyo: Kodansha
- Burke, K. (1969) *A Grammer of Motives*, Berkeley: University of California Press
- Carrier, J. (1995) *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Carrithers, M. (1992) *Why Humans Have Cultures: Explaining Anthropology and Social Diversity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Carrithers, M. (1996) "Concretely Imagining the Southern Digambar Jain Community, 1899-1920", in *Modern Asian Studies*, vol.30 (3): 523-548
- Carrithers, M., Collins, S., Lukes, S. (eds) (1985) *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Chang, R. (1970) *From Prejudice to Tolerance: A Study of the Japanese Image of the West 1826-1964*, Tokyo: Sophia University Press
- Cohe: *The Symbolic Construction of Community*, London: Routledge
- Creggion, M. (1995) "The Other in Japanese Advertising", in Carrier, J. (ed.) *Occidentalism: Images of the West*, Oxford: OUP
- Dumont, L. (1980) *Homo Hierarchicus: The Caste System and its Implications*, Chicago: UCP

- Fox, R. (1991) "Introduction: Working in the Present," in Fox, R. (ed) *Recapturing Anthropology*, Santa Fe: School of American Resrarch Press
- Geertz, C. (1983) *Local Knowledge*, New York: Basic Books
- Gellner, E. (1997) *Nationalism*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson
- Goodman, R. (1990) *Japan's 'International Youth'*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Goodman, R. (1992) "Ideology and Practice in Japan: Towards a Theoretical Approach" in Goodman, R. and Refsing, K. *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*, London: Routledge
- Greenfeld, K. (1994) *Speed Tribes: Children of the Japanese Bubble*, London: Boxtree
- Gupta, A. and Ferguson, J. (1992) "Beyond 'Culture': Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference" in *Cultural Anthropology*, vol.7 (1): 6-23
- Hannerz, U. (1996) *Transnational Connections*, London: Routledge
- Hendry, J. (1992) "Individualism and Individuality: Entry into a Social World", in Goodman, R. and Refsing, K. (eds.) *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*, London: Routledge
- Hendry, J. (1993) *Wrapping Culture*, Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Hendry, J. (1995 [1987]) *Understanding Japanese Society*, 2nd Edition, London: Routledge
- Huber, T. (1981) *The Revolutionary Origins of Modern Japan*, Stanford: Stanford University Press
- Ishiguro, K. (1987) *An Artist of the Floating World*, London: Faber & Faber
- Kelsky, K. (1996) "Flirting with the Foreign: Interracial Sex in Japan's International Age," in Wilson R. and Dissanayake W. (eds) *Global-Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, London: Duke University Press
- Kinsella, S. (1996) "Change in the Social Status, Form and Content of Adult Manga, 1986-1996", in *Japan Forum* 8(1): 103-112
- Kosaku, Y. (1992) *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan: A Sociological Enquiry*, London: Routledge
- Kumagai, F. (1996) *Unmasking Japan Today*, Westport: Praeger
- Kuroyanagi, T. (1981) *Madogiwa no Tobtochan*, Tokyo: Kodansha
- Liechty, M. (1995) "Media Markets and Modernisation: Youth Identities and the experience of Modernity in Kathmandu, Nepal," in Amit-Talai V. and Wulff H. (eds) *Youth Cultures: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, London: Routledge

- Littlewood, I. (1996) *The Idea of Japan: Western Images Western Myths*, London: Seeker & Warburg
- Machin, D. Carrithers, M. (1996) "From 'Interpretative Communities' to 'Communities of Improvisation'" *unpublished version*: Anthropology Department: University of Durham
- Mannheim, K., *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd
- McGregor, R. (1996) *Japan Swings: Politics, Culture and Sex in the New Japan*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin
- Murdock, G. (1992) "Citizens, Consumers, and Public Culture," in Skovmand, M. and Schroder, K. (eds) *Media Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media*, London: Routledge
- Naka, H. (1977) *Japanese Youth in a Changing Society*, Tokyo: International Society for Educational Information
- Oblas, P. (1995) *Perspectives on Race and Culture in Japanese Society*, Ontario: Edwin Mellen Press
- Okely, J. (1996) *Own or Other Culture*, London: Routledge
- Powers, R., Hidetoshi, K. (1989) (eds.) *Handbook of Japanese Popular Culture*, Westport: Greenwood Press
- Raz, J. (1992) *Aspects of Otherness in Japanese Culture*, Tokyo: Tokyo Publishing and Printing co.
- Russel, J. (1996) "Race and Reflexivity: The Black Other in Contemporary Japanese Mass Culture", in Treat, J. (ed.) *Contemporary Japan and Popular Culture*, Surrey: Curzon
- Shuichi, K. (1992) "The Internationalization of Japan", in Hook, G. and Weiner, M. (eds.) *The Internationalization of Japan*, London: Routledge
- Skovmand, M. and Schroder, K. (1992) "Introduction," in Skovmand, M. and Schroder, K. (eds) *Media Cultures: Reappraising Transnational Media*, London: Routledge
- Smith, H. (1972) *Japan's First Student Radicals*, Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press
- Spencer, P. (1991) (ed) *Anthropology & The Riddle of the Sphinx: Paradoxes of Change in the Life Course*, London: Routledge
- Stoetzel J (1955) *Without the Chrysanthemum and the Sword: A Study of the Attitudes of Youth in Post-war Japan*, London: William Heinemann
- Stronach, B. (1995) *Beyond the Rising Sun: Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, Westport, CT: Praeger

- Tobin, J. (ed.) (1992) *Re-made in Japan*, London: Yale University Press
- Wagg, S. (1988) (ed.) *Because I tell a Joke or Two: Comedy, Politics and Social Difference*, London: Routledge
- Waswo, A. (1996) *Modern Japanese Society 1868-1994*, Oxford: OUP
- White, M. (1988) *The Japanese Overseas: Can They Ever Come Home Again?*, Princeton: PUP
- White, M. (1994) *The Material Child: Coming of Age in Japan and America*, London: University of California Press
- Wilson, R. and Dissanayake, W. (1996) "Introduction: Tracking the Global/Local," in Wilson R. and Dissanayake W. (eds) *Global-Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, London: Duke University Press
- Wulff, H. (1995) "Introducing Youth Culture in its own right: the State of the Art and New Possibilities," in Amit-Talai V. and Wulff H. (eds) *Youth Cultures: A Cross Cultural Perspective*, London: Routledge
- Yasushi, S. (1992) "Internal and External Aspects of Internationalization", in Hook, G. and Weiner, M. (eds.) *The Internationalization of Japan*, London: Routledge
- Yoshino, K. (1992) *Cultural Nationalism in Contemporary Japan*, London: Routledge

