

Overview of Symposium: On the Path to the Creation of New Folk Arts

メタデータ	言語: English 出版者: 公開日: 2017-10-03 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	http://hdl.handle.net/2297/28190

Overview of Symposium: On the Path to the Creation of New Folk Arts

JOHN ERTL

Kanazawa University

Foreign Language Institute

International Cultural Resource Studies Center

1. International Symposium: On the Path to the Creation of New Folk Arts

The collection of papers in this volume were assembled following an international conference held at Kanazawa University and sponsored by the “Japan-China Intangible Heritage Research Project” (*Ni-Chū Mukei Bunka-issan Kenkyū Purojekuto*), which is under the direction of Professor Nakamura Shin’ichi (Director, International Cultural Resource Studies Center, Kanazawa University). The title of the symposium was “On the Path to the Creation of New Folk Arts (*Atarashii Minzoku Geino no Soshutsu no Michi*), and was held on April 25, 2010. The symposium was organized by John Ertl and Kamiya Hiroo (Kanazawa University) with invaluable assistance from Nozawa Toyochi and the administrative staff of the Intangible Heritage Project staff. The symposium was divided into three sessions: the morning session was an academic workshop with papers from Kamiya Hiroo (taiko in the United States), Kawara Kiyoshi (Kanazawa Traditional Performing Arts), Uchida Tadayoshi (Yosakoi Performance in Japan), Nozawa Toyochi (drumming in China), and Wesley Ueunten (Okinawan folk music). The noontime session was a taiko workshop and demonstration led by Takana Sei’ichi, director of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, with assistance from the members of the local taiko group, Moriyama Momiji Taiko, and attended by over 70 people. The afternoon session involved a series of performances including a Noh-gaku performance by Eno Izumi and Mugiya Akio (*Kanazawa Noh-gaku Kai*), Okinawan sanshin and folk singing by Wesley Ueunten and Nakamura Setsuko, jazz performance by Nakamura Setsuko with assistance from the Kanazawa Modern Jazz Society, and taiko performances by Moriyama Momiji Taiko. The highlight performance was a taiko performance by Tanaka Sei’ichi, Mochitsuki Saburo, and Jimi Nakagawa.

2. The Path to the Symposium

The road leading to this symposium was one filled with happenstance, and as such, deserves an extended explanation. My involvement with this project and the people who participated can be stretched back 10 years, to when I was a new graduate student in anthropology at the University of

California, Berkeley. It was only a few months after arriving at Berkeley that a cohort in the anthropology program, who is an avid taiko player, invited me to the 2001 International Taiko Festival, held at Zellerbach Hall on the Berkeley campus. Even as a neophyte to taiko, it was easy to enjoy the moving rhythms, powerful sounds, and exciting choreography that marks the performances of San Francisco Taiko Dojo. This particular year's performance was marked by the announcement that "Grandmaster" Tanaka Sei'ichi, the founder of the group, had been awarded the National Heritage Fellowship from the Endowment for the Arts. In the following years, the two of us attended many of the taiko performances throughout the Bay Area, and while I resisted any attempts to start learning taiko, I did become acquainted with many avid taiko players who eventually became good friends as well.

The next part of this story jumps forward to the summer of 2008, when I was a new faculty member at Kanazawa University visiting Berkeley for a couple of weeks. I was at Sushi California, which becomes a local hangout for friends of the owner on Friday nights, when Jimi Nakagawa (a member of the taiko group Somei Yoshino) came into the restaurant with a man that I have never met before. Listening to live jazz guitar, I took a moment to talk to this new visitor. He introduced himself as Kamiya Hiroo, and he said that he was a professor at "a small university that I probably never heard of before" called Kanazawa University. He asked me what I do and I told him that I also am a professor. He asked, "at Berkeley?" And I responded, "It's a small university that you have probably never heard of before... Kanazawa University." Soon after returning to Kanazawa, I was invited to join the Intangible Heritage Project to conduct research on taiko in the United States, specifically because of my relationships with taiko players in the Bay Area. This initial research began in December 2009, and involved interviewing taiko players in the Bay Area as well as attending various group's performances and practices.

During this initial research I was fortunate to meet Tanaka Sei'ichi. Tanaka sensei is a figure who is well respected by all taiko players in the Bay Area, although equally feared for his Spartan training practices, and most other leading taiko players in the Bay Area have experience learning directly from Tanaka sensei. I found the fearful image of Tanaka sensei to be largely unfounded—my experiences were quite different from most of the people I talked with, perhaps because I was not a student of taiko. Tanaka sensei was extremely receptive to my various questions and requests to attend practice sessions. In fact, while I intended only to observe his classes, he was quick to have me practice alongside his more experienced adult students. Subsequently, every time I return to the

Bay Area, Tanaka sensei is quick to invite me to practices, performances, parties and receptions, as well as simply inviting me to lunch and dinner.

One day in between my classes at Kanazawa University, I received an unexpected phone call from Tanaka sensei, which caught me quite off-guard, as I had never given him my phone number in Japan (I still wonder where he got it from...). He explained that he will be coming to Kanazawa in April 2010 and asked if he might be able to contribute to my research in some way while he was here. Seeing this as a great opportunity to show first-hand how taiko, as a Japanese folk/ethnic performance art has taken shape in the United States, and with Kamiya Hiroo we planned this symposium with the explicit intent of brining the flavor of these performance arts to life in Kanazawa.

3. Theoretical Underpinning

The formative idea of this symposium is that folk arts are something that inevitably takes on new shape and meaning for people based on changing needs and interests over time. In the context of an ever-globalizing world, in which people are no longer bounded to territorial communities or traditional practices, the notion of folk arts has changed dramatically, especially in terms of who performs them, how they are practiced, and how they are taught. . In the past, folk arts (looking primarily at music and dance) were practiced by a relatively territorially bounded people (e.g. by nation, community, linguistic or ethnic group) and linked to particular stages or ritual activities (e.g. taiko at festivals), and handed down in particular set ways. Changes in local and global economies has led ever-increasing mobility of people outside of their natal communities, leading to a breakup of previous community structures (e.g. agricultural villages) that have supported traditional folk arts. Increased mobility of people has left many East Asian rural communities with a dearth of people to continue traditional folk arts, and the increased diversification of people living in urban centers and foreign countries, thus making it difficult to continue folk arts in traditional ways. Rural festivals are turned into tourist events to not only encourage locals to return to their hometowns but also bring tourists and their money. The diversification of urban cities has made traditional festivals and arts more difficult to continue, but it has also allowed for an increasing range of arts and activities that take place.

To examine the ideas that this volume is based upon, I will introduce some aspects of my research on taiko in the United States. This extended discussion is not meant to either fully summarize the results of my research—as this material will be fully developed at a later date—nor is it meant to

summarize the approaches of the other contributors of this volume. Rather, it is an outline of ways in which folk arts may be transformed through as a result of globalization.

3.1. The Making of Taiko into a New American Folk Art

Taiko is a relatively new form of musical performance art, having its origins in post-WWII Japan and introduced in North America from the late 1960s. Despite its recent origins, taiko has been linked to narratives of Japanese culture, heritage, religion, and spirit so as to present it as essentially Japanese—that is, tied to an ancient and enduring cultural tradition. As such, taiko could be presented as yet another example of “invented traditions,” in which historians and anthropologists have attempted to unveil the processes through which the past is manufactured to support contemporary political and economic structures (see Vlastos 1999; Hanson 1989). To call taiko an “invented tradition” is not an attempt to critique the “authenticity” or the symbolic or cultural importance of taiko. Nor is to claim that taiko is an invention of tradition an end in itself, as there is little point in simply “showing” that taiko has transformed throughout the years and how it has been linked to a narrative of “Japanese culture.” To link taiko to a body of academic literature on invented traditions at the outset has several merits for this paper. Foremost, it posits taiko as a “living tradition” that is constantly undergoing a process of revision—of style and performance types—and shifting meanings for those who participate (Terada 2001). It also allows one to focus upon the personal, and often political, motivations that bring people into the world of taiko playing. In particular, taiko has had a particular role in civil rights inspired activism in the 1970s, the strengthening of Japanese American community ties, and has also become a “cosmopolitan” or multicultural art that has a role in the creation of communities of solidarity that are not dependent upon ethnic background, age, or gender.

Taiko is most certainly rooted in a Japanese tradition, as the earliest drums date back perhaps as far as two thousand years, contemporary musical and performance styles were developed in Japan, and as common rhythms and songs have their origins in various Japanese religious customs and regional festivals. As such, taiko can be presented as a “Japanese folk art” that has largely developed within local communities and their residents, as opposed to forms of “high arts” like Noh or Rakugo that are based on a family succession system (*iemoto*) and required the patronage of wealthy benefactors (e.g. feudal lords in the past and the Japanese government in the present) for their succession. Also in opposition to these high arts, which strictly demand the continuation of traditional forms (e.g. costumes, music, performance style, training, ect.), taiko may be regarded a folk art in the fact that it is based on local traditions and is open to changes based on the needs and interests of those

individuals who practice it (Mochitsuki Saburo, personal communication). At the same time, when viewed as a performance art practiced in the United States, taiko is marked as a “Japanese ethnic art.” Such a definition stems partially from the simple fact that many taiko players are Japanese or have ancestry in Japan (*Nikkeijin*), but more forcefully from the symbolic representations of taiko that involve linking taiko to Japanese customs, language, costumes, and so forth. In many cases, taiko in the United States has become an overt symbol of Japanese ethnic identity and performed both as a means to positively express one’s ethnic and national origins, as well as a route for learning more about Japanese culture.

A further transformation that has taken place is that taiko has been incorporated into an “American” cultural heritage. One way in which this is strongly pronounced is in the numerous awards and certificates of recognition granted to Tanaka Sei’ichi, the founder of the first taiko group in the United States, San Francisco Taiko Dojo. In 2001, Tanaka was named a National Endowment for the Arts “Heritage Fellow,” in which he is recognized as a “Master Artist who has contributed to the shaping of our artistic traditions and to preserving the cultural diversity of the United States.” This award is one of the highest honors given in recognition of folk and traditional arts, and Bill Ivey, the chair of the National Endowment for the Arts (in 2001), is quoted, “We honor these artists not only for the excellence of their work but also for their efforts to preserve our diverse cultural traditions for future generations. Through these valuable contributions, they remind us that America’s rich and varied cultural heritage is what makes us who we are as a nation.” Similarly, Tanaka Sei’ichi’s accomplishments have been recognized by California State and San Francisco City representatives, including Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, and San Francisco Mayor Gray Davis.

Throughout the United States today, there are thousands of “taiko players” who make up the membership of several hundred taiko groups. The people who play taiko come from a diversity of backgrounds making it impossible to simply subsume taiko under the category of a Japanese folk or ethnic art. Over its brief history, taiko has been linked to several forms of ideological movements—from civil rights activism, gender empowerment, and religious traditions—within which the one unifying theme has been an overall promotion of tolerance and acceptance. In this paper, I explore the changing shape of taiko in relation to the advancement of multiculturalism in the United States since the late 1960s.

3.2. *The Emergence of Taiko as a Ethnic and Multicultural Performance Art*

The story of taiko's origins in the United States goes back to 1967, when a young Japanese immigrant, Tanaka Seiichi went to the San Francisco Sakura Matsuri—a yearly spring festival in the heart of Japan Town—only to be disappointed that there was no drumming at the festivities. Tanaka, who grew up in Nagano and Tokyo before marrying his wife (a second generation Japanese-American who had been studying photography at Waseda University when they met) decided to take upon himself the role of introducing taiko at the Sakura Matsuri the following year. Borrowing a taiko drum that had mostly been collecting dust at a local Buddhist church, Tanaka played the drum on his own, recalling the rhythms from festivals he attended in Japan, and in the process gathered the interest of spectators. The interest garnered from this initial performance, especially from Japanese-American *sansei* (third generation) youth, led to the creation of the Taiko Fan Club, later renamed San Francisco Taiko Dojo, which is the earliest and longest-lasting taiko group in the United States. Framed in the context of the Japan Town Sakura Matsuri, performed largely by Japanese and Japanese Americans, and tied to cultural traditions of Japan, taiko was introduced in the States primarily as an “ethnic” performance art. Over the forty-plus years that taiko has been practiced in the States, it has been instrumental in the positive expression and reevaluation of Japanese-American ethnic identity, present in the creation of a “pan-Asian” identity, and instrumental in the construction of a multi-ethnic/cultural community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

To understand the role of taiko in shaping Japanese ethnic identity, it is necessary to examine the concept of ethnicity itself, which was introduced into common parlance from the late 1960s. The concept of ethnicity deserves attention because of the diversity of ways in which it is conceived and used. On the one hand, ethnicity can be viewed as an ever-present aspect of human organization, external to individual agency, through which peoples' social lives are structured. But at the same time, ethnicity is but one of several social identities that people have and is only relevant in particular situations and activities. Ethnicity is perhaps best understood as form of categorization that divide people (and which people use to divide themselves from others) into groups that may be biologically, linguistically, or culturally distinguishable. However, the ways in which ethnic group are categorized, and what features are used to distinguish one group from another, are historical, situational, and relative—or simply put, ethnic groups change shape over time.

The anthropological understanding of ethnicity is rooted in the work of Fredrik Barth, who in 1969 edited the generative text titled *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. His definition begins by citing a typical understanding of ethnic groups:

The term ethnic group is generally understood in anthropological literature ... to designate a population which:

1. is largely biologically self-perpetuating;
2. shares fundamental cultural values, realized in overt unity in cultural forms;
3. makes up a field of communication and interaction;
4. has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order (Barth 1969: 10–11).

The immediate problem with this definition is the equation implied between race, culture, and language brought about in the first three points. Anthropology had long understood that these traits are not necessarily overlapping (see Emberling 1997: 229), and that there are many examples of ethnic divisions despite certain groups having linguistic, biological, or cultural similarities. Furthermore, Barth critiques this model of ethnic groups as it reflects an “ideal-type” that meets the preconceptions of anthropologists and perpetuates a misconception that the continuation and maintenance of ethnic groups are unproblematical (Barth 1969: 11).

Barth focuses his attention on the fourth point, that is, “to the fact that ethnic groups are categories of ascription and identification by the actors themselves” (10). This is a critique of the anthropological ideal of ethnic groups as “culture bearing units,” which can be distinguished through an examination of trait inventories (e.g. overt cultural signs and basic values). While it is certainly the case that cultural differences are part of ethnic group identities, it is not the full sum of “‘objective’ differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant” (14) that are used to define and differentiate ethnic groups. This subjective definition of ethnicity opens analytical doors for understanding how ethnic groups are formed and maintained, why it is possible for individuals to change ethnic affiliation, how ethnic and other social identities coexist, and how ethnic boundaries persist despite changing ecological, economic, and social conditions.

The term “boundaries” is a useful metaphor employed by Barth that allows one to shift analysis of ethnic groups away from the “stuff” that defines them—namely the language, culture, and biological features—towards an investigation of how particular features are employed to differentiate one group from another. The boundaries that are of concern are social boundaries, as for an ethnic group to maintain a distinct identity, there must be standards of behavior and values that members share and judge each other upon as means of signaling members and outsiders. The designation of others

as “strangers”—as members of another ethnic group—also entails the recognition that there are “limitations on shared understanding” that causes a “restriction of interaction” with non-members (Barth 1969: 15).

This extended discussion on ethnic groups allows us to understand how taiko became emblematic of Japanese (or more specifically Japanese-American) ethnic identity from the late 1960s. Even if one views taiko as an ancient performance art that has roots in Japan, it only became a “overt signal” of Japanese ethnicity following its introduction at the San Francisco Sakura Matsuri, and from the continued efforts of Tanaka Seiichi and other taiko players to popularize it as a performance art. It may be considered as a Japanese ethnic art simply because of its origins in Japan and the fact that most of the early taiko players have Japanese ethno-national origins. But this alone does not allow us to understand how it has been utilized for the expression of ethnic identity in the United States or why its association with Japanese-American culture has expanded outside of this original characterization.

3.3. Folk Arts and Relational Identities

Taiko is interesting not only for how it has become emblematic of Japanese-American ethnicity, but moreover for how it has helped redefine it—and redefine the range of individual and cultural expression for its members. Tanaka Sei’ichi stresses that his aim from the beginning was to open taiko to everyone no matter his or her nationality, ethnicity, or gender. Moreover, one of his long-term goals has been to popularize taiko to the extent that it is as commonly known as other Japanese cultural traditions and arts—to sit alongside martial arts, samurai, and sumo as Japanese words that have been incorporated into the English dictionary. He has largely succeeded in accomplishing both of these objectives. One of the interesting results of his approach to taiko is that the inclusion of women in taiko groups has become an accepted practice not only in the United States, but also in Japan, where women were largely excluded before San Francisco Taiko Dojo began to receive international recognition. By embracing the ideology of cultural pluralism prevalent in the United States, and especially San Francisco, Tanaka sensei has encouraged the opening of taiko to people who may otherwise be considered outsiders. This has led to the reformulation of the community base of many taiko groups—that membership does not necessitate ethnic origins or territorial affiliation—but can rather be based on commonality of interests and objectives. This approach has thus not only led to a positive reevaluation of Japanese ethnicity and culture in the United States, but also opened avenues for all people interested in taiko to become limited participants in this culture—if they so wish to do so. In short, by introducing taiko as a Japanese ethnic art that is open to all,

Tanaka sensei has actively transformed the boundaries of Japanese ethnicity such as to open new spaces for individual expression of Japanese ethnicity and to incorporate “others” into ethnic spaces that were previously restricted.

Transferring these ideas to the present volume and the initial aims of our symposium, each of the chapters here shares some commonalities. (1) The effect of globalization (whether explicitly elaborated or not) have changed the demographics, economies, and social interactions of the communities in which folk arts have developed, which has in turn required these communities to actively protect or reshape their traditional folk arts. (2) The creation of new folk arts is aligned with efforts to create new forms of “community” that recognize the changing shape and backgrounds of community members. (3) The practice of folk arts is tied to activities that commoditize culture—that transform a cultural practice into something that can be utilized for the economic benefit of communities, especially when tied to tourism and revitalization activities. (4) The folk arts presented within are also tied to political movements, generally tied to the positive reevaluation of local culture and ethnicity. Thus, this volume attempts to show not only that folk arts are forms of cultural expression, but are equally necessary for the creation of culture, community, and ethnicity.

4. Acknowledgements

A symposium of this scale would not have been possible without the cooperation and assistance from a broad number of people and institutions. Foremost, I wish to thank Professor Nakamura Shin'ichi for his assistance and encouragement in organizing this symposium. I also wish to thank the administrative staff of the Intangible Heritage Project provided invaluable assistance, helping with the difficulties of running a symposium that was located at two venues, visited by several hundred visitors, and involved the preparation of spaces for academic talks, taiko playing, and musical performances. They helped with many of the administrative intricacies such as scheduling, promotion, creation of symposium posters, and much of the other details that I am hardly aware of. I am especially grateful to Nozawa Toyochi, who not only presented his research at our workshop, but also assisted with the set-up and running of the symposium, which ended up requiring a great deal of flexibility on his part to cover my lack of preparedness. Nozawa has also taken the responsibility for the editing of this present volume, which he has done so quite adeptly.

I wish to thank all the people who presented and performed at the symposium. In particular, there are a few people that I wish to thank specifically. First, Wesley Ueunten, who is an assistant professor in the ethnic studies department at San Francisco State University and graciously accepted

my invitation to present his research on the Okinawan-American diaspora, his activities teaching sanshin in the States, and also performing during our performance session. As someone I have known since we were both graduate students at the University of California, Berkeley, I have always wished to collaborate on research with Wesley, and I appreciate his willingness to take time from his busy schedule to participate. I also wish to thank Nakamura Setsuko, who is someone I also know from Berkeley. I assume it was somewhat difficult for her to understand why I wished to include jazz in a symposium on “folk arts” in East Asia, she regardless accepted the invitation and with limited preparation was able to develop a wonderful set with the members of the Kanazawa University Modern Jazz Society.

Mochizuki Saburo is someone that I was especially happy to meet as a result of this symposium. Mochizuki sensei is renown as one of the top *kotsuzumi* performers in Japan, and also as one of the first professional taiko players in Japan, having been a founding member of Sukeroku Taiko in 1966. As someone who is among the founding figures of contemporary taiko, I was nervous to invite such a respected figure to our symposium. On encouragement and introduction from Tanaka Sei'ichi, I called Mochizuki sensei at his home and I was taken by surprise by his friendliness and eagerness to participate. I am especially grateful for the time that I was able to spend talking with him about his experiences and philosophy towards taiko and folk arts in Japan in general.

Most especially, I wish to thank Grandmaster Tanaka Sei'ichi for offering the opportunity to hold this symposium. Without his initial offer to come to Kanazawa, and continued efforts to make it successful, this symposium would never have come about. I have been welcomed by Tanaka sensei without reservation, and as a result been able to see not only his work with San Francisco Taiko Dojo, but also into his private life as well. I appreciate the time and energy he invested into our symposium, most impressed with his most impressive ability to teach taiko during the workshop session. When over 70 people came to the workshop, despite having only 10 drums to use, I was worried that it would be impossible to keep everyone actively interested. But in a most impressive display, Takana sensei was able to get the entire group engaged throughout the 90-minute workshop, and even though only a limited number of participants could play at any one time, everyone was watching intently and mimicking the rhythms with their empty hands in the air. A couple of my students talked to me several weeks later, also gave overwhelmingly positive reviews.

One final person that I wish to thank is Jimi Nakagawa, who was an unexpected participant at our symposium. Jimi is a former member of San Francisco Taiko Dojo who has since gone on to be a

founding member of the taiko group Somei Yoshino and has also opened his own taiko school in Oakland California. Jimi is a former student of Tanaka Sei'ichi, and is a current student of Mochizuki Saburo, where he has been learning *kotsuzumi* for the past several years. As Jimi happened to be in Kanazawa for the same wedding that both Tanaka sensei and Mochizuki sensei attended, he was invited to join the performance and workshop only the day before it occurred—even delaying his departure to Tokyo to participate.

References Cited

- Barth, Fredrick, ed. 1969. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Cultural Difference*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget.
- Emberling, Geoff. 1997. "Ethnicity in Complex Societies: Archaeological Perspectives," *Journal of Archaeological Research* 5(4): 295-334.
- Hanson, Allan. 1989. "The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic," *American Anthroologist* 91(4): 890-902.
- Terada, Yoshitaka. 2001. "Shifting Identities of Taiko Music." pp. 37-59 in *Transcending Boundaries: Asian Musics in North America*, ed. Yoshitaka Terada. Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology.
- Vlastos, Stephen, ed. 1999. *Mirror of Modernity: Invented Traditions of Modern Japan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Wong, Deborah. 2005. "Authenticity and Ownership in Asian American Taiko." pp. 75-90 in *Diasporas and Interculturalism in Asian Performing Arts: Translating Traditions*, ed. Hae-kyung Um. New York: RoutledgeCurzon.