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JAPANESE CRAFT TOURISM
Liberating the Crane Wife

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Abstract: Snuggled in the Japan Alps, near scenic Lake Suwa, a small enterprise survives by hosting residential weaving vacations for women. Many Japanese women find it difficult to travel just for pleasure, but "education" and "tradition" cloak travel in cultural legitimacy. This paper explores the ironies involved in this leisure pursuit. The mills in this historic center of Japan's silk industry once exploited the labor of young rural women from poor families. Today, predominately affluent urban housewives pay money to study weaving, often as an excuse to travel. The women's own interpretations of their travel-weaving activities reveal how these constitute one form of agency enacted against hegemonic gender constructions in Japanese society. **Keywords:** Japan, gender, leisure, tradition, folkcraft.

Résumé: Le tourisme de l'artisanat au Japon: la libération de la femme grue. Blottie dans les Alpes japonais prés du lac Suwa, une petite entreprise subsiste en animant des vacances résidentielles en tissage pour des femmes. Beaucoup de Jaiponaises trouvent difficile de voyager juste pour le plaisir, mais les mots "instructif" et "tradition" revêtent les voyages d'une légitimité culturelle. Cet article examine les ironies qu'entraînent ces vacances. Autrefois, les ateliers de tissage dans ce centre historique de la soie exploitaient les jeunes paysannes pauvres. Aujourd'hui, des ménagères riches et urbaines se paient des stages de tissage, souvent comme une excuse pour voyager. Les interpérations de ces femmes de leurs activités de voyage-tissage révèlent comment ces stages consituent une forme d'action contre les constructions hégémoniques contre les femmes dans la société japonaise. **Mots-clés:** Japon, femmes, loisirs, tradition, artisanat.

According to an old Japanese tale, a man from a silk-weaving village found a wounded crane on a mountain path and tended its wound, thus saving its life. To repay this kindness, the crane transformed herself into a human and became his wife, returning to her crane form only in order to weave silk. She could weave the most beautiful silk anyone in the village had ever seen, but at the cost of her own health and body as the crane wife forcefully plucked her own feathers to place into the loom. Although the human wife was ill and emaciated each time a beautiful new cloth was finished, the man grew greedy for the wondrous silk he could sell for much money in town and demanded more cloth. Finally, her health deteriorated and her secret identity revealed, the crane wife was forced to flee from the man's home and the human world.

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INTRODUCTION

In modern Japanese domestic tourism, alluring vacation spots often combine the scenic beauty of mountains and water, with the promise of experiencing area historic traditions. The Japan Alps of Nagano Prefecture lie in an area still referred to by the feudal designation of Shinshū. Here the spectacular mountain scenery and the beauty of Lake Suwa beckon Japanese tourists. This area is also well-known to many Japanese for its folkcraft traditions, in particular silk-weaving. Raising silk worms and silk weaving were once common domestic chores for area wives. This area was also a center of the textile industry in Japan's early period of industrialization, when Lake Suwa served as a source of water-power to run the silk-weaving factories located in these mountains. In addition to enjoying the venue's scenic attractions, tourists often visit the sericulture (silk worm cultivation and silk production) museum built in the area by the prefecture in acknowledgement of Shinshū's silk-weaving history and traditions.

The textile industry—in which over 80% of the workers were female—was critical in Japan's early industrialization. At the end of the 19th century, the textile industry comprised 26% of all Japanese manufacturing, rising to 36% by the first decades of the 20th century (Brinton 1993:112). During Japan's Meiji Era (1868-1912), Shinshū's silk-weaving industry prospered by exploiting the labor of girls and young women from poor rural families, often sold into labor contracts by male household heads (Brinton 1993; Hazama 1976; Hosoi 1925; Tsurumi 1990).

Today, throughout the spring and summer months, many Japanese women—predominately those who are fairly affluent, urban dwellers—pay large amounts of money to travel to the mountains of Shinshū in order to study silk cultivation and silk weaving as a leisure hobby pursuit. Here in this remote area of the Japan Alps, a former Tokyo company employee and his wife who renounced Japan's modern middle-class urban life-style, found a way to make what they consider a fulfilling livelihood based on the current popular tourist interest in Japanese "traditions." They host week-long residential weaving workshops on *tetsumugi* (hand weaving) for vacationing Japanese women. Women participating in the craft vacations usually sign up through city culture centers, or through travel agencies, which also arrange their domestic trips to the workshops. The workshops have become very popular; many participants reported that they had to wait several years to get in.

The couple, who run the seminars on their own, handle all organization and instruction for the sessions, which involve 20 to 24 participants each week. To make this possible, the participants themselves perform much of the daily work necessary to maintain the group living situation. Since everyone at the workshops is female (with the exception of the male instructor) the week-long sessions involve an intense living situation where women learn to weave and to mutually reflect upon and share understandings of their gendered identities as Japanese women.

While on their excursion into Japanese silk-weaving traditions, the

vacationing women live communally, cooperatively clean and maintain the premises, and take turns cooking meals for the group. They learn to weave silk on large looms that require coordinated arm and leg movements. However, the women do not just learn how to weave silk. They are required to learn and experience what the instructors consider the entire traditional silk-weaving process. They tend silk worms, boil silk cocoons and process the batting, spin their own silk thread, and go out into the mountains to collect grasses and other natural materials from which they dye the spun threads into various colors. Each workshop day begins at 6:00 a.m. as the women prepare to exercise together to the nationally broadcast *rajio taisō* (radio exercises). However, most participants are awake by 5:00 a.m., cleaning rooms or assisting with breakfast preparations. The women are in group classes, or working on their own projects throughout the day and into the late hours of the evening, usually retiring close to midnight.

The author first participated in one of these weaving workshop sessions in the summer of 1986 after reading about them in the recreation and travel section of a Japanese newspaper. In 1992 the author returned to conduct field research on the workshops, and participated in repeated sessions. The reflections and analysis presented here are drawn from interactions with numerous women attending all of these sessions.

MacCannell (1976) describes tourism as a quest for authentic experience, an escape from the alienation caused by modernization, and a desire for the exotic. Lee and Crompton (1992) also point to the search for novelty as an important motivation for tourism. The women's silk-weaving workshops encompass all of these motivations for tourism. Women who attend are attracted to the workshops in part as an excuse to travel, but also because they promise an "authentic experience" living communally in an apprenticeship-like situation while engaged in a culturally valued folkcraft. Like many other modern domestic tourist options, they suggest an escape from the alienating influences of modern life via a reunion with a Japanese heritage and the values of past rural folk villages. Such craft tours also involve a search for novelty and exoticism. For many modern, urban-dwelling Japanese, a westernized daily lifestyle has become the familiar, and those things defined as "traditionally" Japanese have come to represent the exotic. The desire to travel to remote rural areas and the intense popular interest in Japanese traditions reveal the extent of "self-exoticism" embracing contemporary Japan (Ivy 1988; Tobin 1992,).

This paper discusses three interrelated issues reflected in these travel-craft vacations. First, these craft vacations are situated within the extensive promotion of nostalgia and tradition permeating the modern Japanese domestic tourism industry, and the associated quest for a presumed past heritage. Second, these vacation workshops are shown to expose the problematic nature of the work and leisure dichotomy. Third, the workshops are analyzed for insights into modern constructions of gender in Japan. This paper suggests that women's involvement in these travel-weaving vacations represents an attempt to redefine their gender identity as Japanese women, and, therefore, constitutes one form of female agency in which, despite hegemonic

gender constructions in Japanese society, women are attempting to reinvent gender identities.

JAPANESE CRAFT TOURISM

Nostalgic Journeys

The Japanese scholar Akatsuka (1988) designated Japan's current era "our retrospective age." Japan's rise to economic affluence and world prominence in the past few decades ushered in an era of "internationalization," which, Befu (1983:259) asserts, created a Japanese "identity crisis on a massive scale." To offset this crisis, modern Japanese search for indicators of Japanese "uniqueness" (Dale 1986). According to Befu this does not mean cultural traits unique to Japan, but rather involves the search for traits absent in Western societies because increasing westernization is the main cause of Japan's modern identity crisis (Befu 1983:259). Japan's retrospective age is imbued with nostalgia for an imagined pristine Japanese past.

According to Davis, nostalgia is part of a "collective search for identity" that "looks backward rather than forward, for the familiar rather than the novel, for certainty rather than discovery" (1979:107,108). The shift from an agrarian to an urban society, industrialization, westernization, and even Japan's modern affluence have all contributed to a sense of culture loss and questions of cultural identity. Re-affirming heritage crafts, such as silk weaving, calms fears about a vanishing cultural identity, and assuages nostalgia for a way of life from which people feel themselves increasingly separated. Thus, there is a surging popular interest in anything conceptualized as a "Japanese tradition," an interest that often becomes a passionate pursuit in leisure activities (Ashkenazi 1993; Creighton 1992; Ivy 1988; Kelly 1986, 1990; Ohnuki-Tierney 1993; Robertson 1987, 1988, 1991). This has been referred to in Japan as the *dentō* (tradition) or *dentō-teki* (traditional) boom. The Japanese word *dentō*, consisting of two characters meaning transmit and heritage, implies those things that have been transmitted or conveyed through a line, or passed down through the generations, which will in turn be passed on into the future. This again suggests or emphasizes indicators of a Japanese past rather than foreign, particularly western, traditions. The consuming fascination among modern Japanese with their traditions, including heritage crafts, exemplifies the (re)invention of tradition to suit modern needs (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). As Singleton points out the very concept of "folkcraft" is a modern invention since it can only exist in comparison to "post-folkcraft modes of production" (1989:15). More than an actual historic past, these (re)invented traditions reflect "the urgent need of peoples to redefine their own identities" (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:4).

Tobin suggests that Japanese attempts to rediscover tradition, often lead instead to self-exoticism (1992:30). The Japanese sociologist Kurita expounds on this new self-exoticism, suggesting that the recent Japanese fascination with traditional culture is evidence of a very westernized and international lifestyle which has severed most Japanese from their own cultural background. He writes,

> No period has ever seen Japan so open to the outside than today, in terms of goods, information, and way of life. . . . The very international-ness of the lifestyle makes the traditional Japanese arts appear quite alien and exotic. We look at our tradition the way a foreigner does, and we are beginning to love it. . . . The fact that Japanese are seeing charm and depth in their tradition reveals just how alien it has indeed become (Kurita 1983:131).

Modern nostalgia and the search for representative traditions has become a focus of the domestic tourism industry. Just as industrialization in western Europe created a romanticized image of the preindustrial countryside, the prevailing imagery of nostalgia disseminated by Japan's culture, consumer, and tourism industries is rural in nature. Images of a symbolically mediated traditional craft and rural existence address the threat of estrangement by embracing an ideal of communal belongingness that represents "community," "wholesomeness," "harmony with nature," the "good life," and the moral values of Japan. Although any rural or remote area can become a featured destination for a nostalgic journey, the mountains hold a special aura. In Japanese cosmology the mountains were the abode of the deities (Ohnuki-Tierney 1993:64), representing one special connection to Japanese identity. Mountain scenes are commonly featured in Japanese tourism posters, promising a reunion with a lost Japan. For example, in a poster for the "Discover Japan" campaign, a young Japanese woman in Western style jeans meets a wrinkled and weather beaten old peasant dressed in more "traditional" kimono-style garb, while descending a narrow mountain path (Ivy 1988). The encounter with the Japanese peasant on a mountain path is both a metaphoric and metonymic encounter with the Japanese past. A Japanese past is metaphorically personified in the elderly Japanese peasant, whose image directly contrasts with the westernized Japanese youth. The mountains are also a significant symbolic element; as a feature of Japanese geography they come to symbolize all of Japan. They have existed through time, or more specifically through *Japanese time*, and are, therefore, a metonymic link to "our Japanese past." Thus, remote mountain areas exist in contrast to the cities which are new, now, modern, and international.

Robertson's (1988, 1991) extensive work on *furusato* (one's "old village" or "hometown community") imagery in modern Japan, shows how remote rural countrysides and mountainous areas, thought to represent a more "traditional" and quintessentially "Japanese" life-style, are both promoted and decontextualized through tourism. Although *furusato* once designated a person's own native hometown and the bonds with that place created through the memories of childhood, the modern tourism industry suggests that any Japanese person can travel to any rural place and experience it as their own *furusato*. Moeran's (1984) study of a mountain pottery community on the island of Kyushū, shows how popular city consumer and travel fads have affected the area, while the works of Ivy (1988) and Martinez (1990) reveal the impact of nostalgic discourses for a lost Japan on the domestic tourism industry, and on those Japanese who really do still reside in remote

areas. The weaving seminars appear to be a rural, "traditional" phenomenon, but are based in the reality of an urbanized, industrialized, and highly consumer-oriented modern Japan. The women involved in these craft tours are mostly urban dwellers who form part of the modern exodus to representative areas of "lost Japan" during their vacation periods. Modern tourism campaigns suggest that traveling to remote rural areas involves a return to Japan's rural past, and also to the Japanese *kokoro* (heart/mind), a *kokoro* that is nonrational, nonurban, and definitely non-western. As presented by Ivy (1988:22),

> the traveler's "self" equals an original Japanese self which equals the authentic *kokoro*, which in turn equals the rural, remote, nonAmerican, and nonrational. Travel is the operator which connects the terms of the equation, by allowing the displacement of discovery to occur. Travel permits a temporary recuperation of a lost self.

Tourism to remote areas, such as the mountain venue of the weaving workshops, is thus projected as the link reuniting modern, westernized Japanese urbanites with their imagined village heritage, traditional past, and Japanese selves.

Just as the mountain location of the weaving seminars is infused with symbolic significance, working in silk also provides a focal symbol of identity. Ohnuki-Tierney (1993) expounds on ways rice comes to symbolize Japanese identity, even though rice cultivation was practiced in many Asian countries. Japanese rice is seen as contrasting with the nonrice based diets of westerners, and also as being distinct from rice produced elsewhere in Asia. Similarly, Japan's sericulture heritage is viewed as a contrast with Western traditions, while Japanese silk is believed to be different from silk produced elsewhere in Asia. Silk becomes a metaphor for the Japanese self, and silk weaving becomes a symbol of all Japanese tradition. By participating in the residential silk-weaving seminars these Japanese women are not just learning to weave, or learning *a* craft, but learning *a Japanese* craft. Therefore, the craft involvement is itself part of the nostalgic journey to reunion with a Japanese self.

Work, Leisure and Women's Travel

Women's involvement in these weaving workshops, as a part of leisure tourism, reveals the need to reconsider the dichotomy between work and leisure activities. Attempting to trace the historical meanings of work, Joyce (1987:1–3) stresses that work is a cultural activity and not just an economic one, and that the concept of work cannot, therefore, be restricted to a discrete activity in a distinct "economic" or "productive" realm. Many orthodox work studies, exemplified by Kornhauser's (1965) massive study of the meanings of work for over 400 employees and their spouses, assume that "work" is paid labor where personal and social identity is primarily formed, while "leisure" involves unimportant "pastimes" or "entertainments." Feminist critiques, such as those provided by Pahl (1984) and Rose (1985), have tried to expose the fallacy of equating work with paid employment,

usually of men, which tends to negate many of the activities and work contributions of women.

The weaving workshops problematize the work/leisure dichotomy in several ways. Whereas the silk industry located in this area once exploited the labor of rural women from poor families, it is now fairly affluent women who travel here to work at leisure in silk weaving, showing that what was once work for the working classes has been transformed into leisure for the leisure classes. Furthermore, the "leisure" involves long hours of diligent "work," with most women working at weaving, cleaning, cooking, maintaining the grounds, etc. from 5:00 a.m. until nearly midnight daily. The workshops also reflect the transformation of what was formerly women's domestic labor. In many parts of Japan, silk weaving and silk worm cultivation were once common domestic chores for married women. It is frequently asserted (usually in congratulatory tones) that industrialization minimized "women's work" in the domestic realm through wonderful advances in "labor-saving" and "time-saving" appliances and convenience goods. However, in many cases it seems that what was "saved" (or, perhaps more correctly, "eliminated") of women's traditionally defined domestic labor were those work activities offering the greatest possibilities for creativity and personal satisfaction (culinary crafts, clothing and textile crafts, gardening, etc.), while many of the more mundane aspects of housework remain. To pursue these activities now, women must do them as "hobbies," which tends to reconstitute them as self-indulgent pleasures, minimizing the once recognized work contributions of female labor in these same activities.

Moorhouse assertively argues the need to "rework the 'work ethic'," by paying more attention to how people construct meaning in 'work activities' often trivialized as leisure pursuits (1987:257). According to Moorhouse (1987:252),

> The, more or less, unexamined activities and ideological material of gardening, angling, cooking, do-it-yourself, boating, motoring, home-computing, sport and so on, all have plenty to say about labor and identity, skill and self, craft and commitment.

Looking more seriously at how leisure activities are used to construct meaning and self-identity can reveal ways women find fulfillment and invoke agency through these activities. Henderson, for example, suggests that,

> . . . women's lives can be made more visible through involvement in leisure. The outcome of empowerment that women experience in having the opportunity to control their bodies, and ultimately their lives through leisure, can result in a heightened sense of control in other aspects of life (1994:4).

The weaving workshops involve a craft once conceptualized as work, which is now pursued in leisure as part of educating the self. Although the Japanese word *shumi* is usually translated as "hobby," it does not have the same trivializing connotation. In Japan, *shumi* should not interfere with one's "work" responsibilities, but are nonetheless ac-

corded high cultural value as dedicated engagement in long-term goals that involve self-education and self-development; people can find *ikigai*, or the reason for living, and a pathway to enlightenment through the earnest pursuit of *shumi* (Creighton 1992:50). For women with work or family responsibilities, a hobby simply for fun would be *wagamama*, (selfish). However, the same activity is applauded when reinterpreted as a means of developing the self through an educational hobby. The weaving vacations thus exemplify what Creighton (1992, 1994) has labeled edutainment—entertainment socially validated in the guise of education. The "educational" nature of the workshops also legitimizes the women's interest in domestic tourism. Travel in the guise of pilgrimage has long been used to legitimize pleasure sightseeing for Japanese, something Graburn (1983) has labeled the "Pray, Pay and Play" philosophy of Japanese tourism. For many of the women who come to the sessions, the workshops provide an excuse to travel to one of Japan's noted scenic locations, tour the surrounding area, or take place in regional festivals for a few days preceding or following their week's session. Some of the women reported that they participate in similar residential weaving classes in different parts of Japan each year. In many of these cases the weaving interest seemed secondary to a desire to experience diverse regional tourism locations throughout Japan.

Recognizing the interconnections between work and leisure activities is essential to an understanding of gendered tourism in modern Japan. Japanese society represents Lipman-Blumen's (1976) concept of a "homosocial" world, one in which social activities involving members of the same gender predominates. Japanese domestic tourism often involves either all male or all female groups and activities. Men, who are expected to totally dedicate themselves to their paid work organizations, typically travel together as members of company retreats (which, again, often provide the cloaking of legitimacy for pleasure vacations). The Japanese family, educational, and employment system still pose severe impediments to women with serious work or career goals (Brinton 1993). However, precisely because they are not expected to be serious about work goals, young unmarried women are given full range to indulge in leisure pursuits including travel. Those women who do have careers often find it much more difficult to engage in such activities, and must be able to find ways of rationalizing such pursuits. Adult married women, caught between societal expectations regarding their family responsibilities and the cultural ideology of motherhood, which holds that only the mother is the best caretaker and educator for her children (Fujita 1989:72–80), find it difficult to travel, or even engage in self-fulfilling hobbies just for the fun of it.

The educational cloaking of the craft tours provides one form of cultural legitimation for these female tourism pursuits. Ironically, the same intense cultural ideology surrounding motherhood provides another. Women have the focal role in raising and educating children. Precisely because men are expected to be wholeheartedly devoted to their paid work tracks, women are accorded the "cultural work" of maintaining Japanese traditions and transferring a sense of cultural identity to the next generation (Iwao 1993). Thus, the strong persisting dichotomy in Japan between the public male work realm and the fe-

male family and domestic realm can sometimes facilitate women's enjoyment of domestic travel. This is also reflected in recent tourism promotions for the "Family Vacation." Given the "homosocial" nature of Japanese society, and long existing practices of same-gender group travel, the family vacation as understood in North America has not been a common feature of Japanese domestic tourism. In the 1990s, the Japanese travel industry began to promote "Family Vacation Paks" (tour packages), usually involving reduced fares on trains and accommodations. From a North American perspective, what is most intriguing about these "Family Vacation Paks" is that they are for one adult and up to three children. The assumption underlying this newly formulated Japanese version of "family vacation" is that fathers are too wrapped up with work activities to travel with their families, but that mothers (typically denied serious work careers) and children should enjoy leisure travel together and experience Japan's different regional cultures.

Another limitation imposed by the work/leisure dichotomy involves the negation of female agency worked out in so-called leisure activities. Given the strength of this dichotomy, and its corresponding trivialization of leisure relative to work, Western scholars' attempts to ascertain women's status in Japan, as well as the search for signs of Japanese women's consciousness of gender issues, nearly always focus on whether women's career prospects are expanding, and whether more Japanese women are themselves choosing such career paths. Brinton's (1993) recent treatise on modern Japanese women, which focuses on the continuing cultural and structural impediments preventing women from entering the male work realm, exemplifies this approach. Although Brinton does an excellent job of showing how gender socialization, the family, the educational system, and corporate organization all act systemically to block women from responsible work, thus reinforcing their family-centered and support labor roles, the analysis misses the connections between restricting forces on women in the work realm, and their own attempts at agency in leisure pursuits. In contrast, the Japanese feminist scholar Ueno (1988b) attempts to show how, given the impediments to career work paths, Japanese women instead utilize leisure activities to create and enhance female support networks to maximize women's enjoyment and sense of control over their own lives.

The Crane Wife and the Tale of Grandma's Loom

The weaving workshops as a leisure tourism experience reflect issues related to women's roles and aspirations in Japan. From an outside perspective, Japan often appears noticeably lacking in a "women's movement," because the women's movement in the West is largely discussed in terms of careers and work. Japan's Equal Employment Opportunity Law, passed in 1985, was largely a response to international pressure rather than an indication of internal changes in gender role expectations. Tanaka (1990) has shown that fewer, rather than more, women were interested in pursuing career work tracks in the years following the passage of this law. Ueno (1988a) believes the

responses to the Equal Employment Opportunity Law show that Japanese women are not embracing careers, but are instead saying "no" to this new form of exploitation that would coerce a double burden of household work, and an excessive work load in the public domain.

The work of another leading Japanese feminist, Higuchi Keiko, exemplifies the contradictions surrounding the status of contemporary Japanese women. Higuchi (1985) claims that the Equal Employment Opportunity Law with its two track system, requires women to choose between total dedication to careers formerly reserved for men or acceptance of low-ranking supportive work roles. This will further exploit women's labor both at home and in employed jobs, will only benefit male-dominated capitalistic institutions, and will not further women's own goals. Therefore, she encourages women to resist this new form of hegemonic domination by refusing to get trapped either in careers or low-ranking jobs, and instead fully devote themselves to their homes and their children. Of course, this is precisely what many conservative thinkers in Japan have presented as the only valid role for Japanese women throughout the past few centuries.

Many Japanese women, realizing that they are trapped in a process of hegemonic control no matter which course they take, have eschewed the North American solution of careers as a means to self-identity and fulfillment, and instead dedicate themselves to a craft or hobby pursuit (Iwao 1993, Ueno 1988b), if not as a means of eliminating status inequalities between the sexes, at least as a means of creating female arenas of self-discovery, development and fulfillment. Japanese women's resurgent interest in handcrafts has characteristically involved embracing activities long defined as female pursuits. However, what appears to be women embracing a very traditionalistic model of gender definitions, is more than just women performing gender (Butler 1990). In contrast, it can be understood as women returning to culturally designated activities as a form of agency by attempting to recast the cultural gender performance.

The long established anthropological distinction between domestic and public spheres of activity originally suggested that cross-culturally women are given the primary responsibility for maintaining the domestic sphere, while men are more often defined in relationship to the public realm (Rosaldo 1974). This distinction has been criticized both for its asserted universalism and its potential for reinforcing biologistic conceptions of gender status. Noting its limitations and abuses, Rosaldo, one of its original proponents, claims that it "has led too many scholars to forget that men and women ultimately live together in the world"; and, therefore, "we will never understand the lives that women lead without relating them to men" (Rosaldo 1980:396).

Japan as a specific case is one in which the culturally constructed distinction between male and female activities and lifecourse are particularly pronounced (Brinton 1992). Japanese women are overwhelmingly defined by their family and domestic responsibilities, and societal expectations for total commitment to these arenas limits their prospects in other domains. However, too frequently ignored in discussions of changing female status in Japan are changes in domestic life, or changing relationships between men and women in the supposedly "female

realm." Yanagisako's (1985:48–55) distinction between spheres of activity and spheres of control enhances an understanding of Japanese women's attempts to shift relationships between men and women that impinge upon culturally designated female activities.

Yanagisako differentiates between the "division of labor" and the "division of power" in the construction of male and female activities. This important distinction recognizes that being assigned to certain activities cannot be equated with control over those activities. Japanese women have long been primarily designated to the household, and domestic sphere. But in the traditional household this was not the same as control over their own work in that sphere. Researching differences in Issei (first generation Japanese immigrants) and Nisei (second generation Japanese immigrants) women's status in the United States, Yanagisako contends that women in both generations were assigned to domestic duties, but that a transformation occurred in terms of control over these duties. Issei women worked in the domestic sphere, but men controlled their work activities. Nisei women worked in the domestic sphere but were in control of these work activities and the domestic sphere itself. Similar shifts can be seen over time in the Japanese case. For example, managing the household budget has long been a duty assigned to Japanese wives, but until recently they had little real control over household finances. Their job was to manage the family finances according to the desires of male heads of households. In contemporary Japan, it is understood that the wife often has true control of household finances, making her own decisions about how the household will spend, save, and invest its money.

As women return to crafts, they are indeed embracing activities that have long been defined as "female," but they now control their participation in these activities, and the products of their own labor. To help show women's awareness of this, the personal story of one woman attending a workshop session in 1986 is presented, along with interpretations women participating in sessions during 1992 gave to it.

This woman's personal story mirrors the discourse of nostalgia involved in the transition from a rural premodern Japan, to a highly urbanized, postindustrialized Japan. She was raised in a traditional rural extended family household. When she first heard of the seminars, this urban dwelling woman recalled her own rural childhood, and how the sounds of her grandmother's silk loom reverberated throughout the large wooden farmhouse from dawn until dusk. She shared this nostalgic memory with the other women in her session as they all looked at catalogues selling weaving equipment. Seeing the ads for high-priced looms she longed to buy but knew she could not afford, she sighed as she recalled a loom just like them that sat in a room of her household for years. "When my grandmother died" she said, "my mother burned it".

A Japanese proverb states, "the father works, the son plays, and the grandson begs." Perhaps a modern version of this proverb could be restated as, the mother-in-law weaves in the Japanese tradition, the daughter-in-law throws it away to embrace westernization and modernization, and the granddaughter sulks over culture loss. For this woman's grandmother weaving was an essential part of a woman's household work. It meant clothing a family in the lean postwar years,

or supplementing the family income. For the mother such domestic work was something from which to be liberated, the modern conveniences of life were welcomed. The loom was an anachronistic symbol of the past, as Japan was modernizing and rising to a par with industrialized western nations. Now the granddaughter, only after the past is lost, recognizes the value in it and wishes to have back what her parental generation threw away.

This story was presented to women participating in the 1992 workshops who were asked for their own interpretations of it. The women discussed the story as a reflection of women's experience in Japan and a metaphor of female resistance. Several women dealt with the story as a reflection of Japan's agnatic kinship system. In this interpretation, burning the loom was seen as an act of resistance in a system that controls women by compelling them to control each other, most clearly represented in the tension-ridden mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship. By burning the loom the daughter-in-law symbolically destroys the yoke of her mother-in-law as she is freed from it upon the grandmother's death. Although the three generation household was extremely common in the past, such households are decreasing in Japan. Women living in three generation households—who, therefore, experience the realities of the mother-in-law/daughter-in-law relationship in daily life—voiced this interpretation more frequently than single women or women living in nuclear family households.

Women in both extended and nuclear households also vocalized the story as a metaphor of female agency through the rejection of a process that controlled women rather than one in which women had any control. In the past, the women explained, women wove, but men decided what to do with the cloth. Women would be prodded to work harder, to weave more and more, or better and better cloth. When they finished weaving, the men would take the cloth to market to exchange for money in order to buy things that the men themselves wanted.

One woman drew an analogy between this story of one grandma's loom and the Japanese folktale of the crane wife. Although there are many variations of the crane wife tale (Yanagita 1951:382), the version presented at the beginning of this paper (Yagawa 1979) fits this woman's discussion well. She believed that the crane wife presented a particular model of Japanese womanhood which she, in her own life, was struggling against. She explained that when the crane wife became human her province was the domestic realm and her labor was controlled by the male household head. It was the husband who demanded that she make more cloth, the husband who sold and received the profits from the cloth, and the husband who used the money to better his own standing in relationship to other men in the village. This woman expressed the desire to liberate the crane wife, not from the domestic realm *per se*, but from male control over the domestic realm and over culturally designated female activities.

The women's own interpretations of this story show that the resurgent interest among Japanese women in craft pursuits goes beyond a sense of fulfillment found in making and creating their own craft items, or a sense of nostalgia for past traditions. The vacation workshops did not offer women the means of gaining equal status with men,

or eliminating the sexual asymmetry prevalent throughout Japanese society. However, the women themselves frequently saw their involvement in these craft tours as related to women's status in the society. The women's comments show that returning to female craft activities did not mean embracing their own subjugation. Instead, silk weaving was a way for women to reclaim women's activities by eliminating the distinction between the division of labor and the division of control in "women's work." Women were embracing by choice, on their leisure time, and through their own expense, precisely those activities they believed had once constrained women. Whereas before these were domains of women's work, under the control of men; now these were experienced by the women as domains of women's work, which they themselves controlled.

CONCLUSIONS

Residential silk weaving workshops held in a remote location of the Japan Alps offer Japanese women a modern craft-tourism experience. As in other popular tourism promotions, nostalgia for a "lost Japan" prompts travel to one of the many remote locations that presumably represent core Japanese values. The mountains metonymically represent all of Japan, and a link between modern Japanese and a more pristine Japanese past. Like rural areas, their contrast to modern, Westernized urban centers promises the possibility of reunion with a purer Japanese self. The work organization of the craft vacations is also situated within nostalgia for a romanticized preindustrial rural communal existence where people supposedly lived in greater harmony with nature, engaged in cooperative activities, and felt more closely bonded to each other. However, despite the imagery surrounding the remote mountainous location, and silk weaving as a "traditional" folkcraft, the weaving workshops are a phenomenon based in the realities of a modern, postindustrial, highly urbanized, and consumer-oriented Japan. They thus exemplify the (re)invention of tradition to suit present needs.

One of these modern needs is reasserting Japanese identity amidst an increasingly westernized daily lifestyle. Just as the tourism industry promotes travel to remote domestic locations thought to represent a more "Japanese Japan," the contemporary revitalization of crafts in this country promotes crafts thought to represent a national cultural identity. Silk becomes a metaphor of the Japanese self, because it is not part of western traditions, and because "Japanese silk" is viewed as distinctive from what is produced elsewhere in Asia.

A great deal of modern Japanese tourism represents a search for identity, and women's participation in the silk weaving workshops is situated within this quest. However, cultural identity is strongly connected to constructions of gender identity. Japanese culture posits strong definitions of what it means to be *onnarashii* (female-like) or *otokorashii* (male-like). Thus, a great deal of what it means to be Japanese is tied to the meaning of one's identity as a Japanese man, or as a Japanese woman. For most of the women who attended the sessions, their identity as Japanese women was constructed within constraints

posed by their cultural ideology of motherhood, and expectations of a woman's intense devotion to household concerns. A few of the women who had entered career tracks (and had all remained single), were constrained by expectations of intense devotion to their work organizations. The "educational" nature of the workshops provided the cloaking of legitimacy allowing these women to visit the scenic mountain locale and experience the craft workshops as a self-development and highly valued cultural pursuit, rather than having it defined as "pleasure travel."

The craft workshops are consistent with the highly gendered nature of tourism in Japan, in which travel by all male or all female groups is common. With the exception of the male teacher, the craft workshops involve a week-long retreat exclusively shared by women. Women's comments about their involvement reflected their awareness of and concern about Japanese gender identities. The women were not trying to enhance female status by entering the "male realm" or activities more commonly assigned to men in Japanese society. Instead, the women were attempting to recapture female realms of activity, and gain control of them. By embracing activities long designated as "women's work," but by choice and with control over those activities along with the products of their own labor, the women were symbolically eliminating the distinction between domains of activity and domains of control that had once given men control of women's labor and experience even when involved in activities commonly assigned to women.

This study suggests the need to re-examine the work/leisure dichotomy and calls for a more complex understanding of the relationships between so-called work and leisure activities. Work and career patterns should not be viewed as the only windows on gender in Japan; other arenas of Japanese life must also be explored in order to ascertain women's and men's responses to cultural constructions of gender. Women participating in the craft-tourism experience offered by the residential silk classes were not just seeking out a "traditional" activity, or passively "finding" their Japanese selves, as suggested by modern tourism campaigns. They were actively involved in their own (re)invention of tradition by attempting to reconstitute women's "traditional" roles, and thereby recreate Japanese women's identities. □ □

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