Performing Hakata: Yamakasa and Sôsaku Noh

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"Primitivity is at the heart of the modern nation state." Stephen Muecke

"The sacred is only a privileged moment of communal unity, a moment of convulsive communication of what is ordinarily stifled." Georges Bataille

Sacramental dialogue: the local and the nation

Disputes about the parameters of Japanese identity are a recurring presence in Japanese public life. Recent variations of this script appear in domestic and international debates about how early modern Japanese history should be interpreted. The subtext of these struggles is a disagreement about the extent to which a sacred Japanese identity should be

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institutionally protected from critique. Considerable attention has been given to how the high school textbook approval system transmits a selective version of modern history which angers certain portions of the Japanese educational community and the government and citizens of neighbouring countries.\(^2\)

Cultural histories that map the lethal consequences of embracing transience as the ultimate national sacrament outline how institutions shape the beliefs and actions of citizens.\(^3\) Along with the desire to instil correct etiquette and a love for truth, attempts to reform Japanese education in 2007 included the slogan "Love your locality and country."\(^4\) Local forms of identity have a complex relationship of mutual constitution with the national narrative. These hometown forms of pleasure and authority reinforce national modes of identification while also being possible alternatives to the excesses of "my country, right or wrong."

This paper explores the relationship between a sacramental form of local identity and national culture. Local identity means that Hakata identity invoked each summer by the Hakata Gion Yamakasa festival. National culture includes tea and noh, practices that tend to be transmitted


\(^4\) 「郷土を愛す、国を愛す」
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by grand masters. These traditions of noh, tea, and Yamakasa are pleasures that construct the identities of their followers. Significant tension exists between how these traditions have been criticised as ossified cultures of the copy and the experience of their embodied modes of performance that are dynamic and captivating.⁵

Cultural practices, including Yamakasa, noh, and tea are emblems of omnipresent antiquities and primitivities in Japanese modernity.⁶ These traditions are categories that house ritual, magic, and the irrational. The vitality of these local traditions and their durability as icons of Japanese cultural distinctiveness comprise one set of forces that account for the persistence of ritual in a state-run society.

The popular culture discourse of Yamakasa is surveyed to document the range of cultural practices that advance their status by invoking the authority of this regional icon. This Yamakasa industry has achieved national recognition through the mass media. Municipal and prefectural governments have leveraged this domestic profile by funding overseas displays of Yamakasa. This marketing of the sacramental otherness of Japanese identity has been part of a marketing strategy to publicise the products of the region.

A brief historical survey of noh draws attention to its self-invention as a sacramental arena, and notes that overseas performances of noh

⁵ Tim Cross, "Rikyū has left the tearoom: national cinema interrogates the anecdotal legend", in Morgan Pitelka (ed.) Japanese Tea Culture: Art, history, and practice, (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 151-183.
legitimated colonial forms of authority. The paper concludes by addressing the sôsaku noh Hakata Yamakasa. While the meaning of Hakata Yamakasa is of some interest, my concern is more with the work done by this synthesis of narration, symphonic and noh music, poetry, video projections, and newly written noh.

The Yamakasa Festival as Ideology: Time

The Hakata Gion Yamakasa casts a spell over the area surrounding Kushida Shrine. For a fortnight Hakata runs on Yamakasa time. The differing temporalities of Yamakasa are a time-stopping tradition that integrate cyclical, mythical and social rhythms: "Ritual makes no judgement on life; it integrates people and ghosts." Lifetime careers as members of the Yamakasa tribes span annual cycles, diving back into the local mythology of each nagare float lore. Hakata streets become carless as police cordon off the course. Yamakasa spectators perform ostentatious displays of belonging to the Yamakasa community. Authoritative comments about the speed of a particular team, or comments about the minute differences in customs between the nagare teams allow other Yamaknowers to identify the speaker's affiliation or perhaps even speculate about their address. The fantasy is that Yamakasa lets a past age emerge: Fukuoka was a samurai town to the west of the Nakagawa River and Hakata was a merchant town to the east of the Nakagawa River.

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7 Muecke, Ancient and Modern, p. 54.
Yamakasa as Tradition

One of the pleasures of the Yamakasa festival is gesturing towards its tradition that exceeds seven hundred years. Yamakasa functions as repository of pre-modern forms of rationality. The fortnight of July festival events sustains modes of social relationships and material culture that pre-dates the information age. The nostalgic fantasy of participating in this community event is tempered by a sobering realization: the intensification of vertical social relationships that characterizes male-to-male Yamakasa interactions owes much to the demands made on men by the Japanese state during the early Shôwa period.

Attitudes to gender are an integral part of the pre-modern rationality of Yamakasa shikitari. These shikitari rules define who can participate in Yamakasa and set behaviour standards. Males and pre-pubescent girls are permitted to run with the floats. Concerns with purity also demand that bleeding runners do not enter the float headquarters. Any injuries that are suffered in the course of Hakata Yamakasa events are not reported by runners. The conventional judgement is that such injuries are tenbatsu, divine justice. Senior runners chide those who have suffered mild abra-

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*Fukuma Yûji「山笠の分布とハカタ文化」 "The Spread of Gion Festival in*
sions and sprains with the taunt "You did something bad, didn't you?"

The gender politics of Yamakasa came under public scrutiny with the decision to eliminate the practice of the displaying a sign that forbade impure people from entering nagare headquarters. One interpretation was that the sign was sexist. The announcement that the practice of displaying this sign is no longer considered appropriate was accompanied by a formal recognition that the support of women is essential to the annual success of Yamakasa.

This rhetorical flourish towards an image of Yamakasa as an unchanging keystone is the strategy that opens the collection of Yamakasa photographs published by Shindô Yukô in 2004. The lack of satisfaction that comes from the meta-narratives of progress and evolution, driven by technological development which cannot address domestic and international social malaise, is contrasted with the communal pleasures of the Yamakasa tradition.

1241/2004

Looks like it wasn’t enough to have cell phones with cameras. Now they’re adding TV.

They say any time now, we will be able to connect to the Net from airplanes.

They advertise an electronic dictionary small enough to fit in the palms of our hands that contains the information that was once printed in dozens of books.

When we were children, the 21st century was going to be a bright, shining future.
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That future has been today, for several years already. Robots now shower us with love. But in Iraq and Palestine, people still take each other’s lives. Nations cling secretly to nuclear weapons. Parents abuse their children. Thieves using the Net steal vast amounts of personal information. The range of things we have to eat is unbelievable. Progress? Evolution? Something new? - Will that make humanity happy? July, 2004

Once again, the Yamakasa Festival begins, with power and passion unchanged for 763 years.9

Invoking the category of tradition as an antidote to the ills of urban life points to the necessity of primitivity for the nation state. The physicality of the Yamakasa tradition is the antithesis of rationality underpinning the nation state. The magic and rites of the Hakata community are the corollary to the scientific mentality of the modern state. Belonging is the primary mode of traditional membership in a community but citizens of a nation state are driven by desire, lack, and the meta-narrative of progress.

Noh: national as sacramental

The status of noh as an international representative of the cultural distinctiveness of Japan was formalized in May 2001 when UNESCO designated noh as a "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of

9 近藤祐光『写真集1241/2004 博多祇園山笠』(福岡 2004)。

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Humanity." Several years later the relevant government ministry established an initiative to increase the exposure of primary and secondary school students to Japanese forms of music. Local members of the professional noh community have been busy building connections with municipal and prefectural Boards of Education as they compete against other 'native' forms of Japanese music for classroom access. Against the background of tension between these discourses of representative culture and cultural purity and the heated debates about the necessity of the Hinomaru flag and the "Kimigayo" national anthem at high school gradation ceremonies, the following survey outlines how noh has been implicated in notions of sacramental Japanese identity.\(^{10}\)

Since the mid-fourteenth to fifteenth century Ashikaga patronage of Yoshimitsu, Yoshimochi and Yoshinori, audiences for noh have changed from the cultural and political elites of warrior and court nobility to wider sections of the general public of Japan, both inside and outside Japan. As noh became accessible to wider communities, it retained its connection with the spirit world. One explanation for this association of noh with divinities has its basis in the rural origins of earlier forms of performance.

As part of harvest and planting celebrations, dengaku were prayers-in-action that ensured the survival of the village by appealing to local deities and appeasing malevolent spirits. Dengaku incorporated the circus skills of the eighth century continental form sangaku, but remembering the mythologies of distant agrarian pasts that bound community and cosmology continues to be an active trope in the rarified discourse of noh experience. This gesture back to the native soil is not without contradic-

\(^{10}\) This survey draws on the work of Pinnington, Brown, Rath, Looser and Kagaya.
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Despite the popular status of Okina, researchers have yet to conclusively rule out the possibility of Okina being an adaptation of an imported form.\footnote{Noel Pinnington, “Invented Origins: Muromachi Interpretations of ‘okina sarugaku’”, \textit{Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies}, University of London, vol. 61, no. 3 (1998), p. 493.}

Against the noh canon, Okina retains its explicit engagement with a world populated by spirits. Okina consists of three dances: Senzai (initially maskless, performed by a \textit{kyōgen} or \textit{shite kata}), Okina (white mask, performed by a \textit{shite kata}), and Sanbasō (white mask, performed by a \textit{kyōgen} kata). Although Okina was generally understood in Buddhist terms around the beginning of the Muromachi era (1333-1573), Shinto interpretations of Okina were taught by the Yoshida school around the middle of the sixteenth century.\footnote{Pinnington, “Invented Origins”, p. 492.}

Regarded as a rite and not noh, Okina has been identified as an invented tradition serving a narrow set of gendered interests. Fifteenth noh century professionals intent of defining patriarchal lines of genealogical transmission as legitimate used their performances of the act of divine possession in Okina to strengthen their social position. Conventions of celibacy, dietary restrictions, and certain cooking rules were imputed to assist senior male actors preserve the spiritual purity required for the process of becoming a god onstage. The audience is treated to a partial display of an additional rite of fire purification before the actors enter the stage proper. If the protection from the polluting influence of women has been successful, when the onstage actor shows the audience the process of putting the mask on, they are seeing the actor become the god.
Skepticism about the potential of a mask to elevate theatre professionals to the divine realm reads culture as power.

Given the constructed nature of the okina ritual and the meanings imputed to it, Okina ought to be viewed less as a premodern religious artifact than as a modern myth of the postwar noh profession. This myth is sustained through its re-enactment in performances and noh discourse, where it is resuscitated again and again, as a medium of power.  

One element of noh discourse that sustains the status of Okina as a sacred performance is the experience of performing the role. Some of these written and spoken accounts by senior male members across five centuries of the noh community are powerful evidence that some force often invisible in our daily lives may be moving. Onstage, back stage, or offstage, there is no escape from the inevitability of power.

Accounts of the power of institutions to shape experience often address how narrowly defined notions of authenticity work as ideals that are aspired to and to some extent, internalized, by true believers. The precedents of previous generations and how they represent their experience of the Okina masquerade operate as conventions that limit how the experience of the current generation can be expressed. Even if a senior figure deeply socialized into the noh lifeworld felt no significant change in consciousness during the performance, there would be a noh community expectation that some touch of the divine took place.

Rather than move in the direction of framing Okina as more of a

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postwar myth than a pre-modern text, keeping the tension between culture-as-power and culture-as-disciplined pleasure would make informed examinations of noh subjectivities possible. Acknowledging the validity of the experience of generations of elite members of each noh generation and reading the tradition as power would be a richer way to analyse the totality of Okina meaning effects: "As Mick Taussig has so beautifully shown, the more you reveal the tricks necessary to invite the gods to the ceremony ... the stronger is the certainty that the divinities are present."\(^{14}\)

Concerns with divinity engaged the attention of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598). In the process of consolidating his rule of the country, Hideyoshi applied political and economic mechanisms of patronage. As part of his strategy for bringing the cultural realm under his jurisdiction, Hideyoshi gave rice stipends to noh schools in 1593. This moderated the control of religious institutions over noh performers.\(^{15}\) The leaders of noh schools became subject to restrictions on movements. Hideyoshi commissioned a series of noh plays that elevate his life beyond the merely mortal, and some of these plays are performed after his death as part of an initiative to ensure Hideyoshi is deified as a god.

The alignment of noh in national configurations of power continued after the death of Hideyoshi. By 1646 the noh schools were submitting a special list of plays to the shogun. The paradox is that the stipend system for Yamato troupes established by Hideyoshi and continued under the Edo


bakufu resulted in noh becoming a standardized form dominated by written formula. This shift away from embodied traditions to one characterized by secret treatises occurred as noh became the shogunal rites that united the country and transcended time. These shogunal rites, shikigaku, were celebrations of eternity. Time-stopping rituals, these stately and measured performances legitimated the current government.\(^\text{16}\)

Presenting noh as the ritual theatre of the shikigaku of the Tokugawa bakufu was an early modern fabrication, created when noh professionals were under particular duress. There is no linguistic evidence to suggest that the term shikigaku was in use during the early Edo period.\(^\text{17}\)

Despite the fact that leaders of noh troupes were considering leaving their profession, the fortunes of noh benefited from the international expectations being made on Japan. During the 1870s, visits of Count Iwakura Tomomi to Europe and the US brought home the necessity of a nationally distinctive form of theatre. Kabuki was judged to be too undignified to represent the cultural heritage of Japan. The intention was to institutionalize the representative status of noh as the theatrical form best suited to welcoming foreign guests. Although there was an early Meiji era proposal to establish a national noh theatre, the National Noh Theatre did not open until 15 September 1983. The first students enrolled in 1984.

It is ironic that as the pressure to modernize Japan increased, the role of noh as one tradition that could demonstrate the cultural integrity of Japan expanded. Noh began to be an international icon of Japanese-ness as overseas visitors, including Ulysses S. Grant (1879) and German opera

\(^{16}\) Looser, "Locating Tokugawa Power", pp. 145-95.
singer Minnie Hauk (1894), were treated to noh performances.\textsuperscript{18}

The association of noh with sacramental ways of being in the world was intensified in 1902 when the Noh Association moved its office to Yasukuni Shrine. Around that time, support for the war effort was increased by \textit{shinsaku} noh plays. Cultural practices like noh and tea construct a specific identity for the nation. The national identity is aestheticised to the point of becoming a sacrament:

\begin{quote}
A sacrament is the enacting of a convenant, or spiritual contract, that sets out the responsibilities of people toward their God. ... It penetrates the clutter of ordinary perception to visualize the traces of antiquity and nobility in the slightest movement, in the humblest object. ... [D]eath is not overcome but glorified because it is the best way to show one's loyalty to the kingdom.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

As part of building loyalty to the wartime needs of the Japanese state, one \textit{shinsaku} noh featured submarines. In the field of canonical noh, because the blind son of an emperor appears in \textit{Semimaru} the Hōshō school elected to perform voluntary self-restraint and not stage the play.\textsuperscript{20}

Colonial activities in Taiwan, Korea and China were given an aesthetic veneer of legitimation by a series of noh performances. Instead of watching foreign forms of entertainment while abroad, Japanese audiences announced that the noh performances made foreign soil Japanese. More than

\textsuperscript{20}家永三郎, 『猿楽の思想的考察』\textit{Sarugaku-No no Shiso-shi-teki Kosatsu} (Inquiry into the theoretical history of Sarugaku no (Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Shuppan Kyoku, 1980), pp. 3-64.
merely acting to incorporate foreign territories into the sphere of influence of Japan, noh also became a means of honouring the war dead. The *Taiwan Nichi Nichi Shinpō* reported on a series of noh performances that took place on May 6 1909, May 6 1910, May 5 1911 and May 4 1912. The souls of Japanese military men, policemen, and sea men were honoured at ceremonies that included noh performances.  

These performances for the souls of dead soldiers bring noh into alignment with the Yasukuni Shrine practices of commemorating dead soldiers. After 15 years of court action, a lawsuit against the forcible internment of dead soldiers at Yasukuni Shrine was lost by a Japanese Christian woman, Nakaya Yasuko (June 1st 1988).  

Around 2001 six lawsuits alleging Prime Minister Koizumi’s visits were unconstitutional because they violated the separation of religion and state had been filed with district courts in Tokyo, Chiba, Naha, Osaka, Matsuyama and Fukuoka. In 2006, resident *zainichi* Koreans also filed a demand for compensation. The visits of Prime Minister Koizumi to Yasukuni Shrine were criticised by China and South Korea as glorifying the colonial atrocities. The trope of the nation as sacrament is not without its discontents.

**Non-Canonical Noh**

Non-canonical noh includes 'new' written works, adaptations, revivals, and collaborations. These newly written works include the ten *taikō* noh

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21 Kagaya, "Nō Performances in Gaichi", pp. 257-269.

commissioned by Hideyoshi, the shinsaku works that are pure noh, and the sōsaku works that integrate other theatrical elements. Shinsaku noh tend to be performed on conventional noh stages. The extended sense of theatricality of some sōsaku works demands technologically more sophisticated lighting, sound, and staging systems.

The blending of the distinction between performer and audience in the taikō noh commissioned by Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) is relevant to the later discussion of how the sōsaku noh Hakata Yamakasa reinforces community identity. Six out of ten taikō noh plays written by Omura Yūko (1536?-1598), with the music being written by Konparu Anshō (1549-1621), survive.23 Written between 1594 and 1598 these plays include one god play, one woman play and several warrior plays. Plays written and performed after the death of Hideyoshi, for example Toyokuni mode (Pilgrimage to Toyokuni), compound the use of taikō noh to legitimate the rule of Hideyoshi by insisting on his posthumous deification. As Hideyoshi performed his role of hegemon, the cultural realm was manipulated to magnify his actions. The intention was to elevate him beyond the specificity of his personal history by conflating his everyday activities with a heroic past.

The Taikō plays stretched the historicity of medieval noh theatricality by dealing with the very recent or even the still current present, rather than the distant, remote past represented in the canonized classics by Zeami and others, which typically involved

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23 The god play is Yoshino mōde (Pilgrimage to Yoshino) and the woman play is Yoshino Kōya sankin (Pilgrimage to Kōya). The warrior plays are Shibata, Hōjō, and Akechi uchi (Conquest of Akechi). In 2000 Kono Hana (This Flower) was discovered. 
topics set in the Heian or Kamakura periods.\textsuperscript{24}

Two pilgrimage plays were written and rehearsed before being performed \textit{in situ} at their given destinations as part of the event that these \textit{taikô noh} were representing. Members of the entourages who accompanied Hideyoshi on these outings that have been immortalized by \textit{taikô noh} became part of the spectacle of that event, before playing the role of audience at the inaugural performance. Performers in the parade starring Hideyoshi on his way to view cherry blossoms see Hideyoshi arrive at the Yoshino sakura site. When Hideyoshi commands the noh players to perform \textit{Yoshino môde} at Yoshino Shrine, those \textit{hanami} participants become audience members who saw the child actor representing Hideyoshi perform. The pleasures of court leisure are co-opted to frame the performance of the desire of Hideyoshi for legitimation:

[I]n drawing attention to the fact that the hegemon was actually an actor, Hideyoshi’s performances also seem to have disclosed the very mechanisms of self-fabrication and image-making upon which they relied. ... By disclosing the self-reflexive staging of Hideyoshi’s political power, both on stage and off, the Taikô noh unmasked the theatricality of politics operative in the Momoyama era.\textsuperscript{25}

The 1989 film of Teshigahara Hiroshi, \textit{Rikyû}, captures the reflexivity of \textit{taikô noh}. Teshigahara presents the spectacle of Hideyoshi performing the \textit{nanori} section from \textit{Akechi uchi}, where Hideyoshi introduces himself as


\textsuperscript{25} Brown, \textit{Theatricalities of Power}, p. 126.
Hashiba Chikuzen no Kami Hideyoshi. Viewers of the film watch members of the audience, including the wife of Hideyoshi and Cha-cha, who is heavily pregnant with the child of Hideyoshi, watch Hideyoshi commemorate his own military success in the 1582 Battle of Yamazaki.

Adaptations of noh deserve more attention than the following perfunctory survey. The expression of non-Japanese literary works through the conventions of noh demonstrated the ability of the arts to cross linguistic and national boundaries. As the following paragraphs document, performances of *shinsaku* noh in English and Japanese have expanded the thematic possibilities of the noh genre.

The efforts of Ueda Kuniyoshi, working under the auspices of the Noh Shakespeare Group, are of particular interest because the adaptations of Shakespeare were performed first in English and then in Japanese. *Noh Hamlet* was performed in London in 1982 and toured USA in 1985. *Noh Othello* was performed in English in 1986 and in Japanese in 1990. *Noh Macbeth* was performed in English in 1987 before being performed in Japanese in 1993. *Noh King Lear* was performed in English in 1992 and in Japanese in 1994. *Noh Cleopatra* was performed in Japanese in 1996. The 1997 *Noh Thomas Becket* was based on T. S. Eliot’s *Murder in the Cathedral* and its world premiere in Japanese was supported by the British Council.26

In 1956 Mishima Yukio adapted noh themes and subjects, rewriting them for contemporary Japanese theatre spaces. The eight plays were *Kantan, Aya no Tsuzumi, Sotoba Komachi, Aoi no ue, Hanjo, Dōjōji, Yuya*, and *Yoroboshi*. The addition of written stage directions is a conspicuous

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26 http://atlantic.gssc.nihon-u.ac.jp/~ueda/e_profile.html
change to the conventional noh notation. Ninagawa Yukio directed performances of *Sotoba Komachi* and *Yoroboshi* at the Lincoln Center in July 2005.

A significant number of plays from the European tradition have been adapted to noh conventions. Richard Emmert has arranged the music for some of the following works. In 1970 the Arthur Little play *Saint Francis* was adapted for noh. Theatre Nohgaku adapted Yeat's 1915 *At the Hawk's Well* in 1981. In 2005 *Double Nora*, a modern noh play based on Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* was directed by Ueda Kuniyoshi and performed at Umewaka Nôgaku Gakuin in Tokyo.

In 2006 the Osaka-fu Government supported a Hôshô Ryû performance of *Noh Macbeth* featuring Tatsumi Manjirô. As the Kanze and Kita Schools have a reputation for being more open to the possibilities of *shinsaku* noh, the Hôshô Ryû performance was an unusual event for that school. Although Hôshô Ryû had a period of developing *shinsaku utai* songs, their *shinsaku* repertoire includes a play that addresses the resurrection of Christ, directed by Hôshô Kurô XV.

This Hôshô Ryû *Noh Macbeth* should not be confused with the noh-style performances of Ueda Kuniyoshi. Three years in production, the Hôshô Ryû *Noh Macbeth* was originally performed as research. After the first performance, there was an acceptance that *Noh Macbeth* was an authentic expression of Hôshô Ryû noh values and the play was performed...
Performing Hakata (Cross) for public audiences twice. In the course of being performed three times, aspects of the staging and kyōgen segments were improved. Additional Hōshō Ryū shinsaku works are in production.

As the following three paragraphs show, shinsaku noh produced outside Japan have addressed the nature of the human condition, the politics of colonial contact, and the postwar problems of multicultural identity in Canada.

Janine Beichman published *Drifting Fires* in 1986.\(^{28}\) Set on the remains of Earth sometime after the end of the world, the play is a dialogue between the ghost of the Last Human Being, a traveler from the Veil Nebula, and a Servant of the Master of the Universe. Against the background of the death of the solar system, the ghost dances in memory of Earth, and speaks of the passionate joys of being human, being born and dying.

Alan Marett’s *Eliza* was performed in 1989, and addressed the early formation of race relations in Australia. The 1836 shipwreck that left the wife of Captain Fraser stranded on an Aboriginal island had significant repercussions for the colonial policies of the British Empire and the representations of Aborigines in the narratives of first contact.\(^{29}\)

Daphne Marlett has written a shinsaku noh about the postwar experience of Japanese-Canadian fishermen. The play presents how after being imprisoned during the Second World War, the fishermen come back to Steveston, British Columbia, ready to resume their lives. The collaboration between noh professionals and Canadian theatre artists was a

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thematically important reinforcement of the production’s concern with identity politics. In 2006 *The Gull: The Steveston Noh Project* was performed on a traditional noh stage inside a tent. Like the sōsaku noh *Hakata Yamakasa*, this intense concern with local identification in *The Gull* brings that production into the realm of cultural tourism.

*Shinsaku* noh often address historically significant figures and events, with varying degrees of political intent. One of the limitations of the *shinsaku* noh genre has been the relative rarity of multiple performances. Attempts at topicality, and the incorporation of the philosophical concerns of the day, tend to date the plays rather severely. The political positions evident in a survey of the genre of newly written noh includes sentiments from the "Honour the Emperor, expel the barbarians" movement, modern religious activities, and *kokumin dōtoku* philosophy.  

Reference to the figure of merchant-tea master Sen no Rikyū (1522-1591) has resulted in multiple performances, one of which was in a theatre with two *hashi kakari* runways. At the World Tea Matsuri held in Shizuoka during November 2004, an exhibition featured the grand masters of the Urasenke tea school and the Kanze school. Before the premiere of the *shinsaku* noh 『利休』 *Rikyū*, written by Fukase Seki, the sixteenth Urasenke *iemoto* served tea on the noh stage in the Kenninji Shikiten style. As the exhibition was celebrating the individual achievements of two particular grand masters who are alive now, and by extension, endorsing the *iemoto* system of cultural transmission, it is appropriate that the *shinsaku* noh commemorating The Grand Master featured the performance of three grand masters. The twenty-sixth *iemoto* of Kanze performed the

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30 西野春雄「近代前期の新作謡曲-近代謡曲史橋」『能楽研究』, vol. 9 (1984), p. 120.
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The shites role, the eleventh Fujita Ryū iemoto played the flute, and the sixteenth Ogura iemoto played the kotsuzumi shoulder drum.

The shinsaku noh Rikyū draws on the legendary single morning glory flower incident immortalised in tea anecdotes. Teshigahara's 1989 film Rikyū opens with the distracted excitement of Hideyoshi as he anticipates the dawn pleasures of the garden of Rikyū. The absence of those morning glory flowers from the garden puzzles Hideyoshi but when he enters the tea room, the one flower selected by his host for solitary display really wakes him up. The tea values celebrated in this anecdote assume a representative function because they exemplify a celebration and reinforcement of the centrality of seasonal transience by tea practitioners, and by extension, the Japanese nation.

This strategy of reducing and simplifying Japanese nature is recognisable as an attempt to escape from the clutter of the everyday and is one component of national sacramentalization. This reductive impulse is not confined to tea ceremony, and the following account of the anecdote reenacted in the film's opening scene demonstrates that it is a common trope in the creation of an idealised Japanese vision of nature:

Another well-known story is the use of a single camellia flower in the Ikenobo School of flower arrangement. In 1816 the fortieth master of the school instructed that only six and a half leaves should be left, the others removed to reveal the pure essence of the

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32 For one variation of this anecdote, see A. L. Sadler, Cha-no-yu: The Japanese Tea Ceremony (Rutland and Tokyo: Charles Tuttle, 1998 [1933]), pp. 102-103.
33 Davis, Picturing Japaneseness.
flower. His successor went further: only three and a half leaves should be left.\textsuperscript{34}

This movement from a single camellia flower to six and a half leaves to only three and a half leaves is an example of how creative expressions become codified and reduced to formula inside \textit{iemoto} systems.

In the \textit{shinsaku} noh \textit{Rikyû}, a teacher of linked verse poetry is asked by the Spirit of Morning Flower why all cut flowers must be discarded, leaving only one to be displayed in a tea room. Sen no Rikyû appears and talks about tea to the Spirit of Morning Flower.

The \textit{shinsaku} noh 『不知火』\textit{Shiranu}, written by Kumamoto resident Ishimure Michiko, addresses the relationship between the innocence of citizens and nature against the responsibilities of the national administration and Kumamoto Prefectural government for the pollution that caused the Minamata sickness. The Dragon Princess Shiranu, absorbs poison from the ocean into her body. Umewaka Rokurô performed the lead role in the Tokyo premiere in 2002. In 2004 \textit{Shiranu} was performed outdoors at Minamata Eco-Park, against the backdrop of Minamata Bay.

In the manner of Ishimure Michiko, Tada Tomio has been using \textit{shinsaku} noh to address issues of world importance. Tada wrote 『一石仙人』\textit{The Hermit Isseki}, in 1999 and it was performed in Yokohama Nōgakudō in 2003. In what might be a gentle bow in the direction of a German pun on his surname, Einstein appears as the Hermit Isseki. Set in a Eurasian desert, the \textit{ai kyōgen} discuss the paradox of time telling space how to curve. In the course of being performed five times in a relatively

short period of time Tada reworked the play several times. In 2005, the World Year of Physics that commemorated the one hundred anniversary of the three seminal papers published by Einstein, a substantially revised version of the play was performed in Tokyo. Having integrated zen and the theory of relativity in Isseki, Tada wrote two shinsaku noh to commemorate the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Pacific War: 『原爆忌』 (Genbaku Ki) and 『長崎の聖母』 (The Blessed Virgin of Nagasaki). Prompted by the experience of these two plays, he is scheduled to publish another shinsaku noh 『沖縄残月記』 (Okinawa Zangetsu Ki) in 2007.

An outstanding example of non-canonical noh as a successful collaboration is the work 『無』, Nothingness. Butô pioneer Ono Kazuo and Kanze Hisao danced a dialogue that blurred the lines of each genre.

The category of revival noh include those plays from the canon which survive in fragmentary form. The example of Hakozaki is a case in point. The words of the play but the fushi and melodies did not. With the creation of the fushi and melodies, Hakozaki has been a popular piece.

**Fukuoka in Canonical Noh**

The brochure of the Hakata History Hall proudly proclaims "Hakata was the gateway to the continent of China and the Korean Peninsula." Located in Kushida Shrine which is crammed up against long shopping arcades, the Hall’s gateway idea of history suggests bustling international commerce and exchange: the introduction of paddy-grown rice, tea, and Zen practices from continental China. The area now called Hakata, and its earlier incarnation as Tsukushi, was the major centre for commercial and
diplomatic activities from the eighth century onwards.

Against this image of Hakata as a lively economic and cultural centre, certain canonical noh plays represent the north of Kyūshū as an emotionally rather desolate destination. The fourth-category play *Aya no Tsuzumi* (The Damask Drum) is set in "'His Majesty's Log Palace in the province of Chikuzen' (built as a temporary residence in the mid-seventh century, at Asakura in present Fukuoka Prefecture, by Empress Saimei)".³⁵ A gardener becomes infatuated with the Imperial Consort who agrees to meet him if he beats upon a damask drum. In anticipation of meeting the Imperial Consort, the gardener joyfully strikes the mute drum. The exhausted gardener is overcome with a sense of his own futility when he realizes that the drum remains silent: he throws himself into a pond and dies. The vengeful ghost of the gardener curses the Imperial Consort and consigns her to a cold hell. *Aya no Tsuzumi* concludes as the enraged Phantom wearing an ōakujō mask descends into the turpitude of desire.

Zeami has described the fourth-category play *Kinuta* (The Falling Block) as being a *hietaru* noh, a cold work. Set in Ashiya, a coastal town in Fukuoka Prefecture that has housed an American Air Force base since the Korean War, *Kinuta* addresses insanity and the emotions of loneliness. A wife mistakenly thinks that she has been discarded and forgotten by her husband. Despite promising to return by the end of the year, the husband is detained for three years in the capital. When the husband finally returns to Ashiya, he finds the wife he has been longing to meet already dead. The agony of her separation poisoned her love for him and her hating soul has gone to hell. The ghost of the dead wife, wearing the *deigan* or *yase-onna*

mask, angrily accuses the husband of ignoring her pain.

In contrast to the anguished settings around Fukuoka invoked by these mad woman plays, the deity plays of the first-category would be better advertisements for Kyūshū cultural tourism.

_Haku Rakuten_ is set in Tsukushi, at Matsura Bay, near modern day Karatsu. _Haku Rakuten_ages the appearance of the youthful god of Sumiyoshi from _Takasago_. The aged Sumiyoshi marshals his powers as god of poetry and defense, appearing as a fisherman to the Chinese poet of note, Po Chu-i. _Haku Rakuten_ maps the influence of continental culture on Japanese literature, and the implicit contest between Chinese and Japanese poetry is won by the land of the Rising Sun. Po Chu-i fails to reach the sacred soil of Japan because of the collective efforts of the numerous Japanese deities who gather to support Sumiyoshi. Takano Tatsuyuki dates _Haku Rakuten_ back to the early efforts of Zeami, arguing that the play was written "to celebrate the successful defense of the country against the attempted Mongol invasions, a major event in Zeami’s lifetime.” In 2007, remnants of the twenty kilometre defensive wall around Hakata Bay that was started in 1276 to hinder Mongol invasions are visible behind protective fencing around the Iki-no-matsubara foreshore.

Like _Takasago_, the play _Oimatsu_ is one of those _shūgen_ noh that celebrate the New Year’s holiday. Zenpo noted "_Shūgen_-the joy of the New

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38 Yokota-Murakami, _The Formation of the Canon of Nô_, p. 156.
Year, similar to wishing someone one thousand autumns and ten thousand years (senzumanzai).”39 These first-category pieces feature the appearance of "a divinity, initially disguised as an old man or woman, who bestows 'auspicious blessings' (shûgen) upon the nation and the present government, praying for 'national harmony and peace'.40 Oimatsu is the name of the pine tree spirit that followed Sugawara Michizane (845-903). This pine tree uprooted itself to leave the comforts of the capital garden for the wilds of Michizane's Kyûshû exile. According to some accounts, it was the now famous plum tree, Tobiume, that was the first to tear its roots out of Kyoto soil to follow Michizane to the dirt of Dazaifu: "although the title Oimatsu is now written with the characters meaning 'ancient pine,' it was in the original legend and early Nô documents written in the characters meaning 'pursuing pine.'"41

**Yamakasa as popular culture discourse**

Popular culture is one arena where the categories of national narrative and local identity reinforce each other as they compete to dominate their other. References to Yamakasa appear across a range of media, including film, manga, NHK made-for-TV serial drama, photography, the cut paper pictures of kiri-e, and sôsaku noh. Photographs of Yamakasa scenes have been used to promote local products including udon, and the logo for Fukuoka Beef features a Yamakasa runner. Guided walking tours of the

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Yamakasa course are popular early summer activities organised by a local NPO Hakata no Kaze. Surveying these secondary texts of Yamakasa discourse brings into view the various investments that sustain sacramental versions of local identity.

The 1944 film, 『陸軍』 (Rikugun), directed by Kinoshita Keisuke opens with a reference to the tensions between identifying with local forms of authority and embracing a national narrative. Commissioned by the Ministry of War as a film commemorating the Dai Tōa War, the film was adapted from the novel Shosetsu Rikugun, written by Fukuoka-born Hino Ashihei (1907-1960). Although the Rikugun film was released in 1944, the novel was not published by Asahi Shimbun until 15 August 1945. The film addresses the fortunes of three generations of one family, spanning roughly seventy years of military history. Rikugun starts with the civil war conflicts of the Meiji period and finishes during the time of the Dai Tōa War.

The Boshin War (January 1868-May 1869) is the initial setting of Rikugun. Chōfu is attacking Kokura Castle, and a wounded associate of the Kokura merchant says "From now on, this isn't the age in which we risk our lives for the feudal domain. For the sake of the country, can you do public service?" The tenuousness of this Rikugun appeal to the imaginary community of the Meiji nation is underlined by the 1875 remark of Fukuzawa Yukuichi that "in Japan there is government [seifu] but no national citizenry [kokumin]."42 What appears on the screen next is an image of the Dai Nihon Shi, a history initiated by Tokugawa Mitsukuni in

1657 and completed in 1906. Although in reality the *Dai Nihon Shi* was comprised of 37 volumes, the screen image is a single volume that shows how Asia is being invaded by England and America. These colonial acts require that local forms of identity be subsumed by the category of the Japanese nation.

Unlike the later on-screen appearance of Yamakasa in the NHK drama *Hashiranka!*, the festival is not integrated into the plot of *Rikugun*. As a documentary element within the film, the footage of the Yamakasa float and runners appears almost too festive. Comparing the scene of the lead runner parting the crowd with the fan with the experience of actually watching the teams of runners more than seventy years later, the film fails to convey the physicality of the spectacle of about twenty men schlepping a one ton float around a five kilometer course in the humid July heat. However, the intense dedication of men subjecting themselves to the discipline of a local tradition that will outlast their lives is thematically important for the wartime imperative of *Rikugun*. This image of a local sacrament in action supports the demands of a national narrative for unconditional participation in the Fifteen Year War. As the late 1860s remark made by the wounded man in the film's opening emphasizes, the nation eclipses identification with local identities in the history of early modern Japan.

The Home Ministry censor criticised *Rikugun* because the film could have done more to glorify the war it was funded to commemorate. The emotional complexities conveyed by Tanaka Kinuyo, playing the role of a mother searching for her eldest son amongst a mass of departing soldiers, were a point of contention: "Accompanied by non-diegetic music with
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patriotic lyrics, she [Tanaka] registers a variety of emotions which have at last broken through the repression of "selfless devotion to the state", solely by means of a sequence of facial expressions and the act of running: anguish, joy, affection, ecstatic delight, despair and anxiety."

In the postwar period bureaucratic policies attempted to revitalize local identities with the *furosato* movement. Local identities became marketable commodities, and appeared in a wide range of media. Notable publications that benefit from local interest include the Suga Hiroshi collection of colour Hakata Yamakasa photographs, and the cut paper *kiri-e* compositions of Konishi Kazuyoshi.

Hasegawa Hōsei drew the Hakatakko Jūnjō manga from 1976 until 1983. Originally published in the Manga Action series by Futaba, it was reprinted by Nishi Nippon Shimbun in 2005. The subtitle of chapters sometimes includes a phrase of the local Hakata-ben dialect or a specialist Yamagasa term. One section of Hasegawa’s manga was adapted in 1978 to become a film of the same name, produced by Shōchiku. In 1977 the Fukuoka-based band Tulip performs a song called "Hakatakko Jūnjō" that uses lines from the Hasegawa manga. In 1980 the manga of Hasegawa was awarded the 26th Shogakan Manga Prize. Elements of the film are adapted in the 1994 NHK serial drama "Hashiranka!" Hasegawa appears in a commercial for Hakata Tōrimon, a deliciously buttery sweet that was awarded the Monde Selection Gold Medal from 2001 to 2006. Hasegawa

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44 「博多っ子純情」: 漫画アクション (双葉社).

45 「走らんか！」
appears in the TV advertisement with two characters from his Hakataakko Jūnjō manga: earnest high school student Kō Roppei and his girlfriend Koyanagi Ruriko.

At Fukuoka Asian Art Museum in July 2004, Shindō Yūkō exhibited a series of Yamakasa photographs that were 1.8 metres in height. Shindō also published a collection of his colour and black and white photographs to mark the exhibition.

Shindō transmutes flesh that is absolutely singular into images that hint of legend and a more authentic past. Yamakasa belongs to a simpler and more terrifying time when rationality acknowledged the force of inanimate objects, personifying the unknown in an attempt to eat its power. The priest Shōichi Kokushi was right in 1241. As he was carried around on a wooden platform, he scattered holy water and expelled the plague from Hakata with incantations. The best protection continues to be naming unknown forces to exercise some illusion of control over that power which consumes locals.

Release the memories of the streets that have seen hundreds of years of sustained devotion to the belief in banishing misfortune with the raw intention and brute strength of blind convictions. These installed photographs call forth the demons and spirits that lurk beneath the melting bitumen, the international playground of corporate fleets and luxury sedans. Beneath the hum of the hymn of closing the deal, from below the homeless huddling deep in a wintry Hakata Station, unfetter those energies denied by the dull consumption of cable TV. Let the animal emotions for survival that became the conviction of generations emerge and take flight across a plague stricken market, a merchant town overrun with barbaric
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invaders, a fire-bombed city that later flinched at an atomic flash. Unleash the felt forces of faith and make eight hundred years of Hakata history collapse with a roar that announces this is not controlled artistic chaos. Embrace the communal pulse hibernating behind the aorta of apparently demure salary-men. Ride that wave of recognition and join the afflicted swarm that explodes as the crowd roars, fuelling the fire in the team belly. This incendiary now, with the float shouldered and the furious intelligence of the team working with the relentless economy of a centipede, this is Yamakasa time. In this instant which knows only the ideal of its own repetition, the brutish fiends of mortality, the injustices of fate, and the tedium of the daily grind are devoured, dismembered and thrown aside. Fired on by blessings of water and the howling prayers from the street, the cacophony reverberates past its crescendo, sustaining Hakata for another year.

Sōsaku noh Hakata Yamakasa

At 16:59 on 11th September 2004, the premiere of the newly written noh Hakata Yamakasa began at Fukuoka Symphony Hall. The 4:59 p.m. start was a reference to the 4:59 a.m. start of the final day of the Yamakasa festival. Aligning the time of the performance with Yamakasa time was one strategy for transforming the venue into a moment, a moment of unity in sacramental identity.

A foreigner voyaging to Japan for the first time arrives on the shore at Hakozaki and sees men digging in the sand. On inquiry, he is told that it is part of a ritual for a festival and that he should
go to Kushida shrine to learn more. At the shrine the traveller meets an old man who tells him the story of the festival, which is known as the *Hakata Gion Yamakasa*. Hinting that he is in fact High Priest Shōichi, legendary founder of the festival, and announcing that he will reveal his true self to the traveller, the old man disappears behind the Great Maidenhair Tree of Kushida.

Early on "Oiyama", the climactic day of the Yamakasa festival, the traveller is taking a nap as he waits for the days events to start. An evil spirit appears and tries to destroy the city of Hakata. The god of Susano-o-no-mikoto manifests to fight the spirit. High Priest Shōichi assists him, splashing holy water throughout Hakata. Together they vanquish the spirit. In the traveller’s sleep befuddled mind the ancient scene slowly merges into the present entry of the first *nagare* (float group) into Kushida Shrine and the start of the *Oiyama*.

The Yamakasa festival comes to its climax, uniting the gods and the people as their prayers for eternal peace and prosperity for the city of Hakata echo across the land.⁴⁶

**The work of sōsaku noh *Hakata Yamakasa***

Since its establishment in February 1999, the initial impulse of the noh musical ensemble Hakata Raku was to take noh out of its conventional Fukuoka spaces (Ohori Noh Gakudō, Sumiyoshi Jinja Noh Gakudō, ₪₃₉₈ ₪₃₉₈

⁴⁶ Precis adapted from *Hakata Yamakasa* programme notes, translation by Masue Ritsuko and Nick May.
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Shiragane Noh Gakudō, and Morimoto Noh Butai). By performing noh across Fukuoka Prefecture in venues including the Nishitetsu Grand Hotel and the IMS Hall, and running noh workshops in community halls, Hakata Raku were building a different audience demographic.

Different audiences, like different spaces, have different dynamics. Teaming the shoulder drum, hip drum and flute of Hakata Raku with compelling performances by younger competent noh shite kata in spaces near the retailing centre of Tenjin gives Hakata Raku noh performances a different tone. Instead of the spectacle of dignified senior citizens nodding off in the plush carpet comfort of Ohori Noh Gakudō, the gentle frisson of the discourse of fandom is becoming part of Tenjin noh experience.

More than fanning the pleasant tickles of the audience shopping for new variations of themselves, the M&M management agency of Hakata Raku wanted to increase the bookings for the Kyūshū Chamber Orchestra. Out of this managerial synergy the Hakata Yamakasa project began to develop momentum.

Finding funding and organizational approval was crucial to ensuring the successful marketing of the initial one-off performance. The Hakata Yamakasa project was endorsed as a Kokumin Bunka Event, as an event commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the Yamakasa Shinkōkai Hatsukai, and as an event commemorating the tenth anniversary of the opening of the Across Fukuoka complex. It was also designated as an Asian Month event. The principal sponsor was RKB Mainichi Broadcasting. Approval came from Fukuoka Prefecture, Fukuoka Prefectural Board of Education, Fukuoka City, Fukuoka Municipal Board of Education, Fukuoka Municipal Foundation for Culture and Art, Fukuoka Baikō
Kaigishō. Support was forthcoming from Across Fukuoka and Kyūshū Power, with Asahi Beer supplying special support. The programme acknowledged the co-operation of Hakata Gion Yamakasa Shinkōkai and ANA.

Notable noh performer Umewaka Rokurō was the artistic director of this sōsaku noh that was divided into two sections. The first section was entitled "The Four Seasons of Hakata", and featured poetry, the Hakata Raku noh ensemble, other genres of noh, the Kyūshū Chamber Orchestra, the narration and seasonal costume changes of RKB announcer of Shōno Bunji, and video projections of autumn, winter, spring and summer images and Yamakasa-related locations, including Hakozaki Shrine and Kushida Shrine.

The first section commenced with a Yamakasa video projection. In a reference to the countdown to the start of Yamakasa announcer Shōno says "Three minutes to go!" The Kyūshū Chamber Orchestra commences tuning. From the soundtrack of the video we hear "One minute to go!" and the recorded applause of the spectators crammed around Kushida Shrine for the 4:59 a.m. start of the July 15 finale of Oiyama. "Thirty seconds ... twenty seconds ... ten second to go!" Finally an explosion of energy from the screen and soundtrack as the float leaves.

This sōsaku noh co-opts local forms of capital to legitimate noh. The social organization of the Yamakasa communities, the material culture not limited to Hakata dolls, cedar floats, and happi coat uniforms, and the brute strength of the runners young enough to be able to actually shoulder their floats around the timed course, these forces are harnessed to bring the audience into the theatre. This incorporation of the hierarchical, material
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and physical capital that sustain the sacrament of Hakata identity is
deemed permissible in part because of the sacramental elements of the noh
tradition.

The persistence of this veneer of the divine extends into the develop-
ment cycle of the sōsaku noh Hakata Yamakasa. Before the first public
performance of the second half of the play at the noh stage of Sumiyoshi
Shrine in 2004, the actors, chorus, and musicians attended a special rite to
appease the gods and bless their onstage performance. Some members of
the ensemble may have also been hoping for enough divine intervention to
help bring the dispirit elements of the production into an aesthetically
coherent whole.

By attending that rite as the participants who would be transformed
and protected by the prayers, while being the audience who witnessed the
recital of the priest, the noh players were imbibing the authority to be
elements of their own sacramental performances. Such rites are spaces of
mutual legitimation that sustain the discourse of noh as being a theatrical
carrier of sacred Japanese identity. Noh functions as a close substitute for
the religious forms of authority invoked by the Kushida Shrine world view
of purity versus pollution.

As the high culture traditions of noh are grafted onto the grounds of
local identity, something more than the slippage between modes of
sacramental performance happens. The sōsaku noh Hakata Yamakasa
integrates literate, verbal, and on-screen inscriptions on to the rhythm of
the authentic male Yamakasa body.

The second section of Hakata Yamakasa starts with the lights coming
up on the conductor who bows to applause. The narrator gives a potted
history of Fukuoka: the Korokan that was the diplomatic staging post for departures to the continent, the presence of Hideyoshi, and the place of noh performances in the Kuroda fief machi iri celebration. The orchestra builds to a climax as the narrator finishes by outlining the importance of Kushida Shrine and Yamakasa for Hakata.

**Hakata Yamakasa** begins with kyō ake. Noh plays beginning with kyōgen tend to feel intimate, and in this case the kyōgen presence establishes a feeling of belonging. Audience recognition of the kyōgen players in the team uniform of the Nishi nagare happi is consolidated by their dialogue. The "kashi komatta de gozaru" of kyōgen playfully duels with Hakata-ben dialect, and when one player forgets his line it is met with good humour by the audience. The players move across to the thrust stage, chanting "oshoi, oshoi " to the applause of the audience. Using their fans as props, the men scoop sand into containers, a reference to the oshioitori event that takes place on the beachfront near Hakozaiki Shrine. The jutai chorus sings. An orchestral interlude introduces the narrator who speaks about Hideyoshi dividing Hakata in the machi-wari divisions that defined the seven nagare team boundaries for Yamakasa. It is a moment of self-recognition, as members of each nagare hear the narrator list their team. The combination of the kyō ake beginning with the familiarity of the Nishi nagare uniforms and Hakata-ben dialect allows the audience to confirm their membership of the Yamakasa community.

Hakata Raku ensemble play an accompaniment to the entrance of the Traveller. The Nishi nagare Man answers the questions of the Traveller, recommending he visit Kushida Shrine. The orchestral piece features a trombone solo. The jutai chorus sings as Hakata Raku ensemble play. The
lights come up in the auditorium as timpani ring out. The narrator is accompanied by a bass drum heart beat. (Up in the gods, the head priest of Kushida Shrine has been refusing offers from senior nagare leaders in their ceremonial long happi coats to sit down. The head priest leaves the auditorium.) The Old Man of Hakata answers the questions of the Traveller about the origins of the Yamakasa. The jutai chorus and the narrator continue their Yamakasa explanation. The Traveler exits as the orchestra announces the entry of two kyōgen players: one compliments the other on the display of a larger-than-life size Hakata doll adorning a Yamakasa float. The kyōgen players exit to the applause of the audience.

The exposition of the Nishi nagare Man, Old Man of Hakata, the jutai chorus, and the narrator is a basic introduction the Hakata Gion Yamakasa. The level of information is so basic that it is deliberately not informative. Instead, the cursory overview leaves the insider audience feeling that they know their tradition in a different, deeper way that is superior to a outline of mere facts. Noh might be official culture, and we are grateful for the efforts of local artists to use their talents to put Yamakasa on the stage.

The orchestra precedes the jutai chorus. Susano-o-no-mikoto enters wearing a black wig and sits, promising to protect Hakata from evil. Plague enters wearing a white wig. A crescendo of brass, cello and drums as Plague dances on the hashi kakari runway. The duel begins as Susano-o-no-mikoto and Plague take turns jumping each other's weapon. A great clash of cymbals as Plague is vanquished. Shōichi Kokushi stands and blesses Hakata. The jutai chorus repeatedly bless Hakata. Susano-o-no-mikoto and Shōichi Kokushi exit stage right, and Hakata Raku and the
jutai chorus exit stage left. The conductor bows, and there is applause for the orchestra. The narrator introduces representatives of Hakata Yamakasa Shinkōkai. The Chairman of the Board makes a speech about the seven hundred and sixty three year history of Yamakasa. The narrator introduces Hakata Raku and they are presented with flowers.

The audience sings the Hakata Iwamedeta song which is sung when the Number One float stops inside Kushida Shrine. When the audience sings this song, the theatre space is transformed from being the air-conditioned venue for an event sponsored by a wide variety of national, prefectural, and local agencies. That song, followed by the distinctive clapped rhythms of Hakata Te-ippōn chant, brings the theatre space into the network of places that are the sacred sites of Yamakasa course. The communal modes of local interaction that are sustained by the organizational nagare framework overlap the worship of a distinctive national culture.

When the audience ceases being spectators of the multimedia sōsaku noh, and become the performers of the sacramental markers of local identity, that public validation of stubborn Hakata vitality is the real work of sōsaku Hakata Yamakasa. The pleasures of self-consecration are considerable, as Hideyoshi realized.

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