長城　哲
1976　　『風土の経済学』東京：新評論
角田　忠信
1979　　『日本人の脳』東京：大修館
若川　幸敏
1980　　「微地形と場所性」『見えかくれする都市』91〜138頁

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DANCE SPACE, TIME AND ORGANIZATION:
ASPECTS OF
JAPANESE CULTURAL PERFORMANCE

WITH the aim of studying dance in Japan, problems of definition immediately arise. The resolution of difficulties specific to dance research in Japan, however, depends partly on a more general characterization of dance for anthropological purposes. Of the few general texts devoted to the anthropology of dance, most include at least one chapter on the question of definition, coming up with their own criteria for what counts as dance. Aspects of both movement and motive tend to be included, so that common to the definitions is an emphasis on non-verbal body movements deliberately patterned or fashioned in a way that transcends utility.[1] This 'patterning' involves the organization of movement in time and space, as noted by several writers. Royce for example, in reviewing various methods of dance notation, observes (1977: 45, 50) that Labanotation includes reference to both the time value and the direction of movement, and Effort-Shape notation refers both to exertions of the body in time and positions of the body in space. Lange similarly argues (1975: 36–7) that form in dance is composed of the rhythmic pattern that shapes the flow of movement in time, together with the spatial properties of movement.

1.   These aspects are especially emphasised in the definitions provided by Hanna 1979: 19 and Royce 1977: 8. Transcendence of utility is also stressed by Kurath 1960: 234 and Lange 1975: 57.

Anthropologists of dance may be agreed on some basic defining properties of dance, but they vary in the degree to which they would take account of participants' categories: e.g. Kaeppler argues (1978: 37, 46–7) that we must take account of native dance classification, while Hanna emphasises that we must put forward a definition of dance that transcends participants' concepts (1979: 18). These positions are of course not contradictory, and both writers would probably concur with Royce (1977: 7–8) that we should decide on a minimal definition of dance, so that native terms can be preserved within this.

Whether we give emphasis to outsider or insider categories, there seem to be considerable problems in deciding what constitutes dance in Japan. Certainly if one carries a Western preconception of dance, focusing on so-called 'pure dance' as a rather abstract art form, one is likely either to recognize very little dance in Japan, or to misinterpret it as abstract when it is not. Pure dance, as emphasised for instance in Indian classical dance under the Sanskrit term *nritta*, is in fact rarely found in Japan. Most dance in Japan is combined with religious ritual and/or narrative and mime. Japanese dance is claimed to have its origins in mime,[2] and in much contemporary Japanese classical and folk dance the mimetic aspect is predominant.

If one thinks of dance as engaging the whole body, this assumption too must be abandoned in the Japanese context. For instance drum dance (*taiko odori*) which focuses on skilful, sometimes rapid and generally exaggerated drumming gestures, would not normally count as dance in the West. Nor perhaps would some items of Japanese classical dance in which the performer kneels on the floor, thus using only the upper part of the body to make largely mimetic gestures.

The obvious solution is to rely on Japanese terms to identify dance: this seems legitimate in terms of the anthropological definitions already mentioned, as all Japanese dance identified as such by participants would fall within the general definition of dance outlined above. The two basic terms used for dance in Japan are *mai* (舞) and *odori* (踊り), with an apparent distinction between the two along the lines of classical versus folk, and a freer versus more rigid rhythmic structure. However, in practice the distinction is less clear, with considerable overlap, e.g. in *kagura* (神楽), literally god music, a form of religious ceremonial dance.

Labels such as classical and traditional are not clearly differentiated for Japanese dance (unlike for Indian dance): a variety of epithets is applied to different types of dance, and the labels may overlap in terms of more abstract criteria; but because discussion of dance in Japan tends to remain on the particular level, overlap is not noticed or not deemed significant, as it is considered important merely to know the discrete category into which the dance form fits. Attempts at abstract systematization of dance forms are thus rare in Japan. An interesting recent attempt was made by Honda (n.d.), presenting a typology claimed to be based on motive for dancing: in practice the classification appears to be based on several implicit criteria, including, in addition to motive,

2. Thus M. Gunji, in a public lecture 'Miburi to Monomane' (Gesture and Mime), given at Kokuritsu Gekijō, Tokyo, on 13 March 1981.

the types of movement and props used, the number of participants, the degree of refinement and status, and whether native Japanese or of foreign origin.

Some Japanese dance terms are of rather recent origin: e.g. *nihon buyō*, literally 'Japanese dance', is essentially the style of dance used in *kabuki* and in the *geisha* dances related thereto; but the term *nihon buyō* was coined only in the Meiji era, when contact with the West brought the need to distinguish Japanese dance from Western dance (*seiyō buyō*). Western-style dance performed in Japan today tends to be called *dansu*, with a sharp distinction being made between this and Japanese dance categories.[3]

The difficulty of deciding what constitutes dance in Japan arises, as already mentioned, partly because of dance being so often part of a wider cultural performance. This difficulty brings with it certain advantages, however: dance, if integrated with other elements of Japanese culture, is likely to be a more significant indicator of key cultural characteristics, and thus can be used as a cultural document. This approach is the one advocated by Singer (1972: 71), when he suggests the use of dance and other 'cultural performances' as 'the elementary constituents of the culture and the ultimate units of observation'. Geertz takes up this concept of cultural performances in his research in Indonesia, and develops the notion of cultural document and the metaphor of a manuscript to apply to a whole range of verbal and non-verbal behaviour which the anthropologist tries to interpret: culture is seen as an acted document, and its interpretation is 'like trying to read (in the sense of "construct a reading of") a manuscript—foreign, faded, full of ellipses, incoherences, suspicious emendations, and tendentious commentaries, but written not in conventionalized graphs of sound but in transient examples of shaped behaviour' (1975: 10). A further argument for using non-verbal performances as cultural documents is that one is less likely to take the text out of context: with a performance it is less easy to overlook contextual aspects, such as where and when it takes place, by whom, for whom, etc.

In addition to anthropologists, sociologists too have emphasised the importance of non-verbal documents for the study of the wider culture. An early advocate of this approach was Karl Mannheim, who suggested the documentary interpretation of cultural objectifications as a means of understanding the '*Weltanschauung*, the global outlook behind these objectifications' (1952: 42). He also argued that the most revealing documents, those richest in documentary meaning for the interpretation of *Weltanschauung*, would be a-theoretical (ibid.: 38). More recently sociologists of youth sub-cultures, especially those associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham,[4] have

3. The dance forms I observed included *kagura* and those forms loosely classified as classical (*bugaku* and *gigaku*, *nō*, *nihon buyō*), as well as several types of folk dance (*min'yō*, such as *bon odori*, *rokusai nenbutsu odori*, *dengaku*, *ba odori*; along with particular dances of wide renown such as *shika odori*, *sagi mai*, *awa odori*, *komachi odori*) and modern dance, including *butō-mu*, the Takenoko-zoku dancers at Harajuku, the Western-style rock'n'roll dancers at Harajuku, and Western-style contemporary art dance (*modan dansu*). In addition to observation of dance forms, interviews were held with dancers, dance teachers and students, organizers and critics.

4. See for example Hall and Jefferson 1976 and Hebdige 1979.

emphasised that sub-cultural research requires the decoding of non-verbal documents such as dress, music and movement, whose stylistic features may be related to the wider values and social situations of the sub-cultures. It could be stretching the point, but an argument might be made for non-verbal documents being more useful in the study of Japan than verbal ones, as even in speech it is often claimed that in Japan the how, the style or manner of speech, is more important than the what, the manifest content.

Dance then, as a non-verbal cultural performance, may provide documentary evidence of more general cultural characteristics, especially where, as in Japan, it is integrated with other cultural forms. From a Western standpoint, it would be easy to assume a sharp division between the religious and aesthetic spheres, but in Japan it is worth remembering Geertz's suggestion (1975: 113) that the line between 'religious performances and artistic, or even political, ones is often not so easy to draw in practice, for, like social forms, symbolic forms can serve multiple purposes.'[5] Thus Japanese dance may integrate aesthetic and religious orientations, as in *kagura* (by definition) and *bugaku*, with its dual role as artistic entertainment and sacred ritual (Inoura and Kawatake 1981: 35). Most folk dance in Japan has religious origins, and retains religious significance, especially in rural areas: in urban areas the religious aspect may be less apparent or less well integrated.[6] Along with the dance itself, the occasion of performance has traditionally defied categorization as exclusively religious or artistic: e.g. *matsuri* (festivals) tend to combine entertainment and religious functions, as may performers.[7]

Apart from integrating religious and aesthetic orientations, dance by its very nature integrates different art forms or acts as a link between them or focus for them, as in the dramatic, musical and costume design aspects of dance performance.[8] Insofar as dance acts in this way as a point of integration for different art forms, it may provide a useful document of aesthetic values common to several Japanese arts. Their spatial and temporal aspects in particular may be indicated by dance, given that it involves, as noted above, the organization of movement in space and time. The following discussion will thus deal in turn with spatial and temporal aspects of dance.

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5. Singer similarly notes the mistake of assuming that artistic performances represent 'a secular, aesthetic culture distinct from the ritual and religious culture' (1972: 148).

6. For example, at a performance of *komachi odori* at Shiramine Shrine in Kyoto on 7 July 1981, there were rites of purification at the beginning, but once underway the performance seemed aimed primarily at photographers and local and national television. Similar tendencies can be observed in rural festivals, e.g. see the Foreword by R.J. Smith to Yamamoto 1978.

7. For example, Yamaguchi points to the entertaining (including dancing), trading and ritual functions of itinerant priests in pre-Tokugawa Japan (1977: 156).

8. For example, the very term *kabuki* suggests the integration of song and dance.

Spatial Aspects

Two recurring spatial emphases are common to many Japanese dance performances: rather static pictorial presentation, and asymmetrical posture.

(i) Pictorial presentation

In much Japanese dance, the visual aspect predominates: aural and kinetic senses are less intensely called upon in the dance perception. Even in *kabuki*, where narrative is a major component, it is said that visual presentation is considered more important than the words.[9] In *kabuki* and *nihon buyō* the spectacular may thus be the main focus of attention, with gorgeous costumes (and costume changes) being a principal feature, together with magnificent scenery and frequent use of special effects. At public performances audience appreciation of these spectacular aspects is particularly noticeable.

Attention to costume may thus outweigh interest in dance movements, and this may even be the case in folk dance, but is more likely in staged folk dance (increasingly common in urban areas), where dances are deliberately selected because of their visual impact on stage, as in the use of impressive costumes, masks or props; or dances may be adapted to enhance the spectacular aspect. Apart from the attraction of strange or lavish costumes, striking dance formation patterns are often used in folk dance to add to the visual effect. Such dance formations are of course especially likely where each individual's movements are limited, for example where leg movements are simple and a fan or parasol is being held.

These points—the attraction of extravagant costumes, and the emphasis on dance formations where individual dance movements are limited—seem equally applicable to the most famous recent example of contemporary youth dance in Japan: the Takenoko-zoku ('bamboo-shoot tribe'), who dance each Sunday on a pedestrianized urban highway at Harajuku in Tokyo. At Harajuku in 1981 two dance styles were in evidence: one based on 1950s rock'n'roll, and the other the Takenoko-zoku who attracted the most attention from spectators and the media.

The dance movements of the Takenoko-zoku consisted mostly of gentle and uncomplicated arm movements while standing in a circle. Leg movements tended to be confined to a few steps forward towards the centre of the circle, or turning on the spot, or knee bending in time with the beat. Both participants and spectators paid more attention to clothing and make-up than to dance, so that the dance seemed to be a pretext for exhibition and spectacle. Adjustment of costume and make-up preoccupied participants for much of the time, and the youth magazines that frequently report the happenings at Harajuku focus on the

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9. Thus T. Kawatake, at a public lecture at the Centre for Japanese Studies, University of Stirling, on 9 October 1981.

fashion aspect: in 1981 the long colourful robes and trouser-suits described as Chinese style.

Emphasis on the visual aspect is not confined to contemporary dance, folk dance and *nihon buyō*, but may also be noted in current performances of ancient dance. One of the main features of *bugaku* is its colourful costumes. *Gigaku*, though described as a 'comical dance and ballad drama',[10] has now become primarily a spectacular procession, which would link it with many of the *matsuri* processions, which combine historical re-enactment with costume spectacle to provide a pageant well suited to photographic recording. In these events indeed, as in some folk dance performances, posing in costume for photographs may seem more significant than any dance or processional movement. Such precedence given to the camera may suggest that an emphasis on the visual extends beyond the arts understood in a narrow sense. A further example would be the observations often made on the importance of visual presentation in a Japanese meal and in gift-giving: again the suggestion is that how one presents, the visual style of presentation, is more important than the content of one's offerings, words or actions.

It may be noted that in some of the dance forms already mentioned there is an emphasis not just on the visual aspect, but on occasional static presentation, as in posing in dance costume. Striking a pose may indeed be an integral part of the dance performance, most famously in the *mie* in *kabuki*. Not surprisingly this type of pose is also a characteristic feature of *nihon buyō*. In some of the *geisha/maiko* and even folk dances presented at festivals such as Gion Matsuri whole sequences may be made up of successive poses reminiscent of semaphore. In *kabuki* and *nihon buyō* posing often takes the form of a spectacular tableau wherein several dancers strike poses in gorgeous costumes amidst stunning scenery or visual effects.[11]

That such periodic static presentations are an important part of *kabuki* and *nihon buyō* is confirmed by Kawatake,[12] noting that the ideal is for every moment on the stage to resemble a beautiful painting. Within such tableaux a characteristic feature of individual and group poses is asymmetry, which constitutes the second spatial feature notable in many Japanese dance presentations.

(ii) Asymmetry

Asymmetry is especially apparent in *nihon buyō*: in some performances[13] individual poses are reminiscent of the curving asymmetry of Japanese flower

10.   From the programme notes for a performance of *Gigaku* and *Gagaku* by the Gagaku Department of Tenri Daigaku, 15 February 1981.

11.   For example most performances included, and concluded with, such tableaux in the annual performance of the *Nihon Buyō Kyōkai* at the Kokuritsu Gekijō (National Theatre) in February 1981, part of the Tokyo Art Festival.

12.   In his public lecture (see note 9 above).

13.   For example by the Hanayagi School at the Kokuritsu Gekijō, 24 March 1981.

arrangements, suggesting a further link between some Japanese dance forms and the visual arts more widely; painting and gardening would be additional examples.

Asymmetrical posture may also be found in some folk dance, especially where learnt by middle-aged urban women as a hobby, or by young girls for public presentation at a major festival. In more traditional folk dance, however, most dance movements involve symmetrical repetitions, e.g. a step with one leg repeated by the other, or arm movements to one side and then likewise to the other. Such symmetry is also characteristic of the ancient *bugaku* dance, and suggests caution in generalizing about the degree of asymmetry in Japanese dance. Similar aesthetic divisions can be seen in the temporal aspects of Japanese dance.

Temporal Aspects

The first temporal aspect to be discussed parallels asymmetry of posture: in classical Japanese dance one might refer to asymmetry of rhythm, in the sense of the avoidance of strict rhythm, the extensive use of melisma, and the general emphasis on movement flow in contrast to following a regular metric beat.

(i) Avoidance of strict rhythm

It is perhaps significant that 'rhythm' is a rare concept in Japanese, whether in the term *onritsu* used for poetry and music, or *ritsudō* for dance: when the concept is needed the imported word *rizumu* is usually employed.[14] *Nihon buyō* in particular exhibits relative freedom from rhythmic constraints, and is thus able both to incorporate longer set poses (as already mentioned) and to flow more smoothly, thus more effectively expressing elegance, refinement and controlled emotion. Lack of strict rhythm thus allows the flow either to be interrupted by poses, or to be varied in speed as an expressive device, as where faster movement is used to indicate passionate feelings. Flow in the temporal sense of uninterrupted movement is often combined in *nihon buyō* with movements suggesting spatial flow, as of a stream: for example, a fan may be manipulated in a smooth undulating fashion like gently flowing water.

Not all Japanese dance flows in this way: avoidance of strict rhythm seems to be a characteristic of *nihon buyō* rather than of folk dance, and rhythm may thus be a way in which *mai* and *odori* are distinguished. Fujii[15] argues for *nihon buyō* being

14.   Contrast with this the systematic elaboration of concepts of rhythm in Indian music and dance.

15.   Interview with Prof. T. Fujii at the National Museum of Ethnology, July 1981. It is interesting to note that *buyō* (舞踊) combines the *kanji* for *mai* and *odori*. *Nihon buyō*, formerly classified along with folk dance as *odori*, is now included by Fujii and others under *mai*. This may mark its achievement of classical legitimacy.

included in the *mai* category, largely because of its freer, less clearly defined and regulated rhythm. He sees *mai* as being less concerned with metric beat and more varied in the speed and frequency of movement in relation to any discernible beat. In contrast *odori*, primarily folk dance (*min'yō*), tends to involve a simple and direct relationship of each movement to regular musical beat. Most folk dance is indeed framed within a strict and simple rhythmic structure appropriate to the jaunty style that characterizes, for example, much of *bon odori*. The distinction between *mai* and *odori* is less easy to uphold in relation to *kagura*, where the musical rhythm may be fast and regular, yet the dance may still avoid a strict movement-to-beat regularity, and may at times make use of continuous twirling movements.

Modern dance in the West often emphasises free flow rather than strict rhythm. In Japan this means that *modan dansu* is able more readily to borrow or blend traditional dance styles, especially the classical emphasis on slowly flowing movement. Japanese classical dance (*nō* and *nihon buyō*) may thus lend itself surprisingly easily to an adaptation to or synthesis with *modan dansu*, as certain elements are already common to both: e.g. (in comparison with classical ballet) less emphasis on plot development, less emphasis on technical brilliance, greater flow and serenity of movement rather than discrete steps rapidly executed. An example of contemporary Japanese dance in which these characteristics, and the influence of Japanese classical dance, are apparent is *butō-mu* (literally 'non-dance'), a major exponent of which is Daimon Shirō, whose movements resemble slow-moving sculptures.

As already indicated, flow in Japanese dance may be interrupted (precisely because of the avoidance of strict rhythm) by pauses in which poses are struck. The pause (間, *ma*) is thus the second temporal feature notable in Japanese dance.

(ii) The pause

As we have already seen in considering the periodic static presentation in Japanese dance poses, the pause is a device that extends beyond classical dance (where it is most famous in the *mie* in *kabuki*), and may be found to a greater or lesser extent in all Japanese dance forms.

In folk dance the pause, as an aesthetic device to heighten effect, is most evident in the staged folk dance that emphasises the spectacular, and in recently choreographed folk dance. In performances of such dance, no longer strictly 'folk' as usually understood yet still referred to as *min'yō*, a common feature is for each movement to the beat to be followed by a regular pause to hold a pose. Such poses, held at intervals throughout, are likely to be sustained for a longer period in a concluding tableau. Recently choreographed folk dance, in particular, is likely to resemble *nihon buyō* in this and other respects.

Regular interruption of movement to strike a pose is even a feature of the rock'n'roll dancing at Harajuku: the youths dancing in this style would often display a succession of poses to the beat of the music, to a greater extent than was

apparent in the original American style.

The temporal aspects characteristic of Japanese classical dance—flow relatively unconstrained by regular metric beat yet interrupted by occasional pauses—might be taken as a document of a more general Japanese orientation to time. It has often been remarked that the Japanese traditional arts focus upon the fleeting moment, and this has sometimes been interpreted in terms of a high evaluation of transient phenomena. This however is to confuse the acknowledgement of transience with its positive evaluation: on closer analysis temporal aspects of Japanese dance suggest a more complex attitude towards the passing of time. Japanese concern with the fleeting moment is often concern *about*, and regret for, the passing show: its fleeting aspect is regarded not only as especially worthy of attention and as contributing to its beauty, but also as a cause for sorrow. Thus the acknowledgement of transience in Japanese poetry, for example, is often accompanied by a sense of melancholy concerning the brevity of human and other life, the passing of the seasons, etc. Furthermore the recognition of transience should not be taken to imply the lack of desire for permanence: one may at the same time appreciate transient phenomena and yet wish to make them, or one's experience of them, last as long as possible. Thus, in the case of Japanese dance, not only may a brief episode be extended and dwelt upon in the flow of slowly developing movements, but the moment may even be frozen, as seen most obviously in the *mie* and less dramatically in the poses struck where pauses intersperse Japanese dance forms, both classical and non-classical.

Documentary Interpretation and the Compartmentalization of Dance

Although aspects of Japanese dance styles may be considered to indicate more general Japanese aesthetic concerns, or even wider Japanese orientations beyond the confines of the arts, we have already seen that Japanese dance forms do not always provide consistent documentary evidence for generalization. Discrepancies on the degree of symmetry, and on the extent of regularity in rhythmic structure and of employment of the aesthetic pause, all counsel caution in the interpretation of Japanese dance as a cultural document.

One may attempt to account for discrepancies in the characteristics of Japanese dance forms by taking account of three main factors that contribute to the differentiation of Japanese dance:

(i) Preservation of past forms relatively unchanged

Bugaku provides a good example of the retention of past dance forms. Largely imported from the Asian continent from the seventh century onwards, *bugaku* was codified at the height of its social significance at the Heian court. Thereafter its history is primarily one of preservation (Wotz 1971: 10), though with significant

loss of individual dances (Inoura and Kawatake 1981: 34). The nature of *bugaku*
as both foreign-derived and ancient thus renders its use as a document of modern
Japanese culture problematic. More generally this warns us not to assume that
the arts are culturally integrated in Japan: they may in some cases be culturally
compartmentalized, thus being of limited value as documents of the wider
culture. Kimura[16] contends that classical dance is especially likely to be
compartmentalized in this way, through preservation of past forms,
accompaniment in old linguistic styles, and use of complicated vocabulary of
gestures. Folk dance, he suggests, is more integrated with its local context, and is
thus more subject to alteration with changes in life-style.

(ii) Level of legitimation of the dance form

Classical Japanese dance, legitimated by a cultural elite, emphasises the
traditional aesthetics of refinement, including a restrained elegance that since the
Heian court has been seen as a criterion of elite art.[17] The predominance of such
aesthetics has meant that when subsequent dance forms have aspired to
legitimate status as high or classical art, they either have had to be already in
compliance with the traditional canons of elite taste, or have had to adapt to
these canons through stylistic modification. Care must thus be taken not to over-
generalize from examples of elite dance forms: the limited social context of their
significance must be borne in mind, since dance forms may be *socially*
compartmentalized rather than integrated with the life of most members of the
society.

(iii) Complexity of codes operating in the dance form

As in most societies, complexity of aesthetic codes is a characteristic of elite art in
Japan, whilst popularity, often resting on simplicity of codes, is inversely
correlated with legitimacy. Folk dance thus functions through more readily
accessible codes of comprehension, and indeed of performance. Where
transmission of the form is more open, less deliberately organized and less the
prerogative of experts guaranteeing legitimacy, the codes of performance will
tend to be characterized by ease of cultural access and of mnemonic retention:
symmetrical dance movements help to satisfy both these requirements for
simplicity. Again one should avoid reading too much into stylistic features which
derive from practical needs rather than from the expression of basic value
orientations. Moreover differential access to various dance forms reminds us once
again that dance may be too compartmentalized to constitute a reliable cultural

16.   Interview with Prof. H. Kimura, Director-General of the International Artists Centre, Tokyo,
February 1981.

17.   See Varley 1974: 43 on *miyabi*.

document. Complexity of codes may limit *cultural* access in terms of competence
(interpretation) and performance. Access may also be limited *materially* (most
obviously in the costs incurred in *nihon buyō*, said to be the world's most expensive
art form to learn [Havens 1982: 227]) and *socially* in the sense of certain forms
being a social preserve, e.g. of men.[18]

Although degrees of preservation, legitimation and codification may
differentiate Japanese dance, hindering or at least complicating the attempt to
treat dance as a cultural document, it should be noted that the divisions within
Japanese dance, and the processes contributing to such differentiation, may
themselves be indicative of wider structures and processes in Japanese society.

To treat such organizational features of dance as documenting the wider
society is to bridge the normal division between documentary-interpretative and
organizational-institutional approaches to the social scientific study of the arts.
Viewing art as a social institution is often contrasted with an interpretative
approach to the arts as social documents: the two alternatives may even be taken
to be irreconcilable. Yet it has already been noted above that features of dance
organization involved in the compartmentalization of dance must be taken into
account when attempting to generalize on a performance's social and cultural
significance, and that such organizational features may themselves document the
wider society, i.e. that they are both derivative and indicative of the wider social
structure (Valentine 1982: 17).

Rather than giving a general account of Japanese dance organization and its
documentary significance,[19] the focus here will be on those organizational
aspects which augment the documentary evidence from stylistic features,
whether spatial or temporal.

Organizational Aspects

Before turning to certain wider aspects of Japanese social organization
documented by both dance organization and spatial aspects of dance style, it is
worth following up the theme of Japanese attitudes to time, and especially
transience, already seen as documented by *temporal* aspects of Japanese dance
style.

The acknowledgement of transience in Japanese dance style, along with the
attempt to prolong or preserve the moment, is paralleled in the organization of
Japanese dance by the attempt to fix the transient through the institutional

18.   See below, in the discussion of stratification by sex.

19.   The *iemoto* system, for example, where operative in the organization of certain forms of Japanese
dance, may be indicative of wider principles of Japanese social organization (as suggested by Hsu
1975: 62 ff. and Kumakura 1981: 6), but will not be discussed here except insofar as it relates to spatial
or temporal aspects of Japanese dance styles.

conventions and traditions that surround it. Thus the passing beauty of a Japanese dance performance, and the common thematic focus of the fleeting moment, is held within an enduring social network of conventions and their supporting human relationships, as in the *iemoto* system that organizes the transmission of *nihon buyō*: the system persists despite the transience of the individual *iemoto*'s life. Thus the artist of genius with no followers, a unique and new bloom destined to vanish after brief glory, is not a characteristic of Japanese aesthetic organization, which typically emphasises the continuing family line.

A further, though arguably far-fetched, example of the attempt to prolong or circumvent transience, might be seen in the honouring of a renowned performer as a 'living national treasure' (*ningen kokuhō*).[20] This might be interpreted simply as indicating that the Japanese have a different conception of treasure: unlike the Western notion, which refers to relatively permanent objects, the Japanese value most highly the impermanent. I would favour an alternative interpretation, according to which the granting of the title 'treasure' to a living human being is an attempt to render as permanent as possible the impermanent: to give the label 'worthy of careful preservation' to that which will inevitably perish.

It is not just the carriers of the conventions who are, at least through their descendants, enduring: the conventions themselves may be codified, with rigid and detailed rules ensuring continuity over the centuries. This is most obvious in older forms of dance, such as *bugaku* and *nō*, but is found more widely in Japanese arts, for instance in tea ceremony, where the prescribed forms (*kata*) are strictly observed by practitioners under the ultimate authority of the *iemoto* (Kumakura 1981: 5). Thus while the art itself, or what it represents, may be transient, the organization within which it is transmitted and presented is hedged around by strict and enduring conventions. The same ambivalent attitude to transience may thus be seen in the organizational as in the stylistic features of Japanese dance.

In looking at the *spatial* aspects of Japanese dance, certain features, such as static visual presentation and asymmetry, were seen to be characteristic of a wider or narrower range of the Japanese arts. Spatial aspects of style may however, along with modes of organization of Japanese dance, document characteristics of wider social organization in Japan, most clearly in the emphasis on collectivity and in restrictions on women.

In the organization of Japanese dance the collective nature of transmission and performance is especially noteworthy in folk dance. This in itself is hardly unexpected: a collective emphasis is probably characteristic of folk dance in most societies. Stylistic features may here be more revealing: undifferentiated collective space may be arranged through dancing in a large circle, as so often in *bon odori*. More surprising is where this is found in contemporary dance, as in Harajuku, where the Takenoko-zoku dance in a large circle, making hand or arm gestures reminiscent of *te odori* (hand/arm dance), as seen for instance in

Hachijōjima folk dance. However in Harajuku, as indeed in some folk dance, collective space has its contrast: the dance is led from the centre by a few individuals, notably older and male, unlike the majority of those in the circle. In rock'n'roll, the other style danced at Harajuku, the organization of dance transmission is collective (and, by girls especially, in a circle), and while there is more room for individuality and improvization in performance, even here the majority of the dancing is in groups. This may indicate the adaptation of an American style to a more collective Japanese orientation.

The most striking example of Japanese adaptation of a Western style in this way may be seen in *modan dansu*. Individualistic expression is greatly outweighed by patterns of group formation, though sometimes a collective shape is contrasted with a lone individual, who may be an older dancer and bear the family name of the dance school. Spatial patterns reproduce patterns of hierarchy in the dance organization and beyond.

The adaptation of modern dance in Japan thus involves not merely an emphasis on collectivity, on group formations, but also the creation of certain dance roles for the less nimble older performer. These roles, emphasising subtlety and grace rather than ability and brilliance, favour length of experience over youthful vigour, thus preserving the prestige and authority of the older dancer, and ensuring the survival of the traditional principle of Japanese social organization whereby status is conferred by age.

Patterns of social stratification are thus reproduced in dance style and organization. Stratification by sex is documented in a similar way. In dance organization this can be seen in terms of exclusion and authority. While some *kagura* dances are reserved for *miko* (shrine maidens), in certain other religious dances, such as *rokusai nenbutsu odori*, women are excluded for reasons of ritual impurity. In some cases only young boys are qualified to dance, by virtue of their special purity prior to their *genpuku*, the ritual attainment of adulthood. *Bugaku* and *kabuki* have also traditionally excluded women from public performance, thus denying women an important means of claiming professional legitimacy in these styles. This is especially significant in *nihon buyō*: female *nihon buyō* dancers are at an inevitable disadvantage where some of their male colleagues can demonstrate their authenticity in the male preserve of *kabuki*. Although the majority of students of *nihon buyō* are women, the higher one advances up the pyramid of the dance school towards the *iemoto*, the greater the proportion of men. As we have seen above, such a pattern is not confined to classical dance: among the Takenoko-zoku dancers the great majority are young women, while their leaders and teachers tend to be male.

Differentiation of sex roles is further documented by the spatial aspects of Japanese dance style, most obviously in *nihon buyō*. Here the style depends of course on the role danced, not on the actual sex of the dancer: whether the dancer be male or female s/he may perform both feminine and masculine dance roles, though feminine dance roles are more popular and considered to be more fundamental to the practice of this dance form.[21]

20.   Cf. the title *mukei bunka-zai*, intangible cultural property, which may be given in recognition of a great traditional cultural performance.

21   The same could be argued for *nō*. As Inoura and Kawatake point out (1981: 116–18), the great

The feminine style in *nihon buyō* emphasises constraint and humility: movements are directed downwards, backwards and especially inwards. A shy or coy impression is conveyed with eyes downcast. Retreating from the front of the stage the dancer will tend to make inward-directed movements. The direction inwards is emphasised by protective movements against the outer world: the arm, or a prop such as a fan or umbrella, may be held up in front of the performer as a shield from public attention and embarrassment, a common theme of the dance. Where props are held and gently waved, they tend eventually to close in again on the body. Movements of legs and feet are dainty and again inward-turning: this restraint may be seen as conditioned by female costumes, yet costume can itself be viewed as a further document. Costume is indeed an important part of *nihon buyō* performance (as already noted above), and the long sleeves characteristically worn for female dance roles are used further to emphasise inwardness and passivity: the sleeves may be closed in on the body almost as body doors, and they extend the slack passivity of the gently swaying arm, giving an impression of elegance and frailty.

In contrast, male roles in *nihon buyō* seem to indicate preparedness for action, rather than withdrawal from action into an elegant pose to be appreciated by others. Arm movements tend to be firmer and more outward-directed; the hand may be held in a fist or a rigid open-palm position. The body commonly stands stiffly upright rather than curved and swaying. Leg movements are much wider, and feet are turned outwards.

In *nihon buyō* the delimited physical space drawn by women's movements symbolizes restricted cultural space.[22] Women's retreat into private space is thus not just a *model of* women's social role in exaggerated form: it also acts as a *model for* women,[23] reinforcing social restraint and self-control. Indeed *nihon buyō* may be undertaken by women precisely for these qualities, to engender restraint and control of both body and emotions for the sake of an elegant humility. Thus *nihon buyō* is a favoured amateur accomplishment amongst women of a certain social status: not the highest (as this dance form still suffers from its association with the popular and morally dubious *kabuki* of former times) and not of course amongst poorer women who cannot afford the expenses.

Although *nihon buyō* provides the clearest example of stylistic differentiation of sex roles, such differentiation may be found in almost all Japanese dance, involving many of the elements noted above. For example both *bugaku* (danced only by men) and male roles in folk dance are characterized by widely spaced leg movements, while leg and foot movements in female folk dance are inward-

nō dramatist Zeami considered the most important *nō* plays to be those in which the central roles are female. These 'woman pieces' are the most lyrical and expressive of *yūgen*, a profound, subtle and mysterious beauty.

22.   For a perceptive examination of the restricted cultural space of youth sub-cultures in Britain, see Hall and Jefferson 1976: 45 ff. and *passim*.

23.   Geertz argues that cultural patterns have an intrinsic double aspect, as both *models of* and *models for* reality: 'they give meaning, that is, objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves.' (1975: 93)

directed: again costume restrictions must be taken into account. Staged folk dance also tends to have inward-directed arm movements for women as in *nihon buyō*, and male and female dance styles remain sharply contrasted.[24] In contemporary dance, stylistic differentiation according to sex role is no less in evidence. In Harajuku, among the rock'n'roll dancers there is a clear distinction between the sexes in movement, the female style being more restrained and the male style more ambitious and dramatic: women here largely focus on hand/arm movements while men tend to dance with the whole body. This latter contrast is also seen between the circle of Takenoko-zoku dancers, largely female, and the few male dancers in the centre of the circle.

In *modan dansu*, classes are usually directed towards women, with appropriate invitations to new students: for example, 'modern dance is now awaiting the will and enthusiasm of young to middle-aged women who like to live creatively'.[25] This means that modern dance from the West is often adapted, not only to a more collective orientation as already noted above, but also to what are assumed to be natural female styles and capacities. Where men participate in *modan dansu* they tend to dance apart from the group, or to play less passively appealing roles and to include more active leaping movements in their dance. This form of sex differentiation, however, is equally characteristic of a great deal of modern dance in the West, warning us against the temptation of generalizing about Japan in isolation.

Conclusions

This paper has concentrated on how spatial and temporal aspects of Japanese dance style may, along with organizational features of Japanese dance, document wider characteristics of Japanese culture and society. There remains however the question of how anthropologists know how to read these documents, and whether they are 'reading in' what they already suspect is there from a wider knowledge of the culture. These are important methodological problems. The first revolves around dance codes and their interpretation. It is very easy to make

24.   An interesting example of this was a performance of *komachi odori* at Shiramine Shrine, Kyoto, 7 July 1981, for *Tanabata* (Star Festival: according to the Tanabata legend, the Cowherd Star is allowed to cross the Milky Way to meet his love the Weaver Star on only this night each year). Most of the performers of *komachi odori* on this occasion were young girls, who danced in a circle, their movements inward-directed, coy and *kawaii* (sweet, cute). An adult woman, in the role of *Ori-hime* (the Weaver Princess), danced in the centre of this circle and later on a raised stage with a man performing the role of the Cowherd. Their dance styles were sharply contrasted in the ways described above, and the final pose was of the Cowherd standing proudly upright with the Weaver Princess kneeling by his side.

25.   Programme of the Kamizawa Modern Dance Institute at their performance of modern dance in Kyoto, 3 July 1981

gross errors here: for example, where a Japanese dance operates with a complex code for the expression of emotion, as in *nō*, outsiders may interpret according to the only code at their disposal which seems to fit, categorizing the movements as 'abstract dance'.[26] Similarly in *nihon buyō* it is a common mistake of Westerners to view the dance as a freely flowing improvization, as they are unaware of the constraints of a complex stylistic code and of the social organization of its transmission through strict imitation of the teacher.

The only solution to this problem of unfamiliar codes is the usual one of increasing familiarity, whilst retaining maximum possible awareness of one's own preconceptions, thus remaining open but without the dishonest and unworkable assumption of a blank mind. This honest but messy solution is the one advocated by hermeneutics:[27] a circular movement, perhaps better represented as a reflexive spiral, between researcher and subject-matter, with awareness of one's own viewpoints but openness to their transformation through progressive involvement with the subject-matter, thus changing self and interpreted object in a constant interaction conceived as a hermeneutic circle.

A further version of this circle underlies the problem and solution involved in relating a document to its culture.[28] The difficulty consists in finding a starting-point for the interpretative process, and in ascertaining how much is being read into the part from knowledge of the whole. Again the honest answer highlights the circularity of this process: document and culture have to be viewed in relation to each other. The one that acts as starting-point will and should be reinterpreted in the light of the other, and so on in a developing spiral of interpretation of part and whole. Where discrepancies block the smooth progression of this spiral, they do not have to be seen as an unfortunate annoyance: first they indicate a degree of openness whereby not all the evidence is being forced into a preconceived mould; and secondly they can reveal significant divisions within the culture. Such divisions are not always sufficiently recognized by approaches that emphasise 'totality' of interpretation:[29] not only may the whole be compartmentalized into cultural divisions, but the part, the particular range of documents to be interpreted, may be internally differentiated (e.g. into diverse dance forms), which may prevent generalization to a 'whole' culture, whilst revealing

structural divisions and their generative processes extending beyond the part itself. Thus, while recognizing the doubly circular process of research into cultural documents, one must avoid the assumption of homogeneity whether in culture or document, whole or part.

Therefore, in the case of Japanese dance, generalization cannot be extended unequivocally to the whole culture: conclusions may instead be drawn on different levels of generality. For instance, on the more specific level, certain spatial and temporal aspects of Japanese dance were seen to have links with other Japanese arts, for example in the emphasis on asymmetry: here the danger of over-generalization is clear, as not even all dance in Japan manifests such qualities. Certain orientations, however, appear to extend beyond what is normally conceived as the arts to a wider aesthetic preference, as in the emphasis on visual presentation, often in rather static form.

On a broader level, some of the orientations apparent in dance were seen to indicate more general orientations in Japanese culture, extending well beyond the aesthetic sphere. This seems to be the case with the attitude to time in Japanese dance, combining acknowledgement of transience with the desire to prolong or freeze the passing moment. This attitude to time was found to be further documented by features of Japanese dance organization. Likewise spatial aspects of Japanese dance style, when seen in conjunction with Japanese dance organization, document wider social structural principles, such as collective participation and stratification by age and sex.

This twofold reading of dance, in both stylistic and organizational terms, draws on two theoretical approaches that are sadly often divorced in the social scientific study of the arts: art as a cultural document versus art as a social institution. When organizational features are themselves read interpretatively as documents, along with the styles they organize, this not only brings the benefit of further documentary evidence, but begins to break down the artificial division between institutional and interpretative approaches.

26. In similar fashion Western modern dance may be interpreted in Japan according to an available code that makes sense of it as 'chaotic movement', which may then become a code not just of interpretation but for the creation of new pieces of *modan dansu*.

27. An admirably clear account of the hermeneutic approach to the interpretation of art is given in Wolff 1975: 102 ff.

28. The circular or interactive process here was noted by Mannheim in his documentary interpretation of *Weltanschauung*: 'we understand the whole from the part, and the part from the whole. We derive the "spirit of the epoch" from its individual documentary manifestations—and we interpret the individual documentary manifestations on the basis of what we know about the spirit of the epoch.' (1952: 74)

29. For example, where hermeneutics suggests proceeding towards a 'complete' or 'global'

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JAPANESE REFERENCE

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PART II

TRADITIONAL RELIGION

AND ITS CONTEMPORARY MEANINGS