

Democracy in Action: Heritage Preservation as a Social Movement

Ron Carle

This paper will examine the history and activities of the Shirakawa-gō Ogimachi Society for the Protection of the Natural Environment, known locally as the Mamoru Kai. It is the primary organizational agent for heritage preservation activities in Ogimachi hamlet, Shirakawa village, a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Hida region of Gifu prefecture, famous for the thatched roofed Gasshō-zukuri folk houses and a number of intangible traditions. An argument will be made that although heritage preservation is often a government led effort to revitalize regional society, it can also be a citizen generated movement that sets the basis for later, more complex policies that require legislative action. Such organizations can and do act as legitimate and formal political agents that formulate and execute policy, acting as intermediaries between the local citizenry and wider or higher levels of government and public administration. They enjoy the power and legitimacy, but are also subject to the tensions and contradictions inherent in political life in a developed democracy. One of the values of ethnographic research on social movements is the detailed evidence it affords us into the daily workings of such organizations, as well as their relations with higher organs of government responsible for responding to the legislative and administrative demands generated by such grassroots efforts.

I. “Because they’re ours”: the origins of the Mamoru Kai

He who controls the past, controls the present.

He who controls the present, controls the future.

—George Orwell

1. *Histories, Memories, and Motivations*

In this first section, I will give an outline of the historical background of the local preservation movement. This will establish the initial motivations that led to its organization, and for its rise to its current level of local importance, and show that such locally generated movements are integral agents in the political and social interface between local society, and various levels of the wider nation. As argued elsewhere in greater detail, inasmuch as local social and architectural history were embedded responses to changing national conditions, dynamic, processual phenomena, modern heritage conservation should be viewed similarly, rather than as a dam constructed to halt the flood of modernity.¹⁾ As we will see below, the metaphor of heritage conservation as a dam against progress is particularly appropriate to the analysis of Shirakawa.

In the immediate postwar era, large scale hydroelectric projects were planned throughout the nation, and the upper basin of the Shōkawa was an ideal site for such plans.²⁾ A series of projects began that saw three dams constructed within the village boundaries in a space of ten years, the largest of which is the massive rock fill style Miboro dam in the southern section of the village, the largest such dam in East Asia. Located on the border of Shirakawa and Shōkawa villages, the size of the dam and its reservoir required the destruction of large tracts of residential, agricultural, and timber land, including the large and vital Nakano hamlet of Shōkawa village.³⁾

Figuratively, Shirakawa-gō became submerged by a tsunami of modernizing influences. Literally, in the face of strident local opposition, communities were drowned, and their residents permanently displaced. With the dam construction came a huge influx of outside workers, and a whole range of new industry and employment for locals. Increases in employment income were accompanied by compensation payments from the government, and the incoming workers brought with them the accoutrements and inclinations of a nation in the initial stages of one of the most remarkable phases of socioeconomic development in the history of industrialization.⁴⁾ The worst effects of the project were borne by the villagers of Shōkawa: the village lost a third of its population, and half of its economic base. Despite vigorous protests, the residents of the submerged hamlets were coerced, threatened, then paid off and cast to the wind like so much rice chaff. Although the effects in Shirakawa village as a whole were less catastrophic, the attendant social upheaval had a ripple effect on the integrity of what had been a relatively cohesive society.⁵⁾

The transportation revolution that accompanied the dam projects along the Shōkawa also allowed the unfolding of a hitherto inconceivable phenomenon, the physical removal of the Gasshō-zukuri houses. They headed out on the decks of large lorries that could now navigate the headwaters of the Shō River, bound for a new, urban(e) existence as coffee houses, restaurants, and tourist information centers, as well as the more educational role some played as museum exhibitions. Furthermore, many villagers now had the wherewithal to leave the village. Many did just that, and the local version of the rural depopulation problem began.

Following the immediate postwar period of rapid development and modernization, the loss of indigenous architectural forms and social integrity was expressly lamentable for many, as can be seen in the quote below.

Ron Sensei, I grew up in Miboro, you know. It was nice there. We had a happy childhood. We had lovely cherry trees there, the Shōkawa Sakura. I remember how they looked when they blossomed in the spring. It was so lovely, like petals of snow (*yuki no hanabira mitai yatta*). But we had to leave, because of the dam. Most of the people went to the city. Some of us moved to other parts of the village. We didn't talk about it much. Sometimes, while driving to Shōkawa, when the reservoir level is low, I can see the old trees sticking out of the lake. They looked better with flowers on them.
—Mrs. Itoh

The rise of the Furusato (the idealized rural heartland) as an object of urban

nostalgia was still some way off, but a sense of urgency for their own community motivated people to organize a means by which they could stave off the rapid loss of their traditional architecture. The idealized rural at the time was a focus and topic of ambivalence, if not outright derision, as shown in the essentialist characterizations in the contemporary work of Fukutake. One of the most important points impressed in verbal and local written accounts, especially by the first generation of activists, was the difference between the initial motivations and actions, as a salvage effort, compared to the later, much more conscious conservation activities.

The Mamoru Kai was formed in 1971 as a citizens' movement concerned with preserving the rapidly disappearing regional architectural heritage. The formal organization was the culmination of less formal efforts that began during and after the dam construction, and the period that saw the most drastic reduction in the number of Gasshō houses. The rapid increase in the salvage ethnology and architectural research at the time had a reinforcing effect on local preservation movements.⁶⁾ At the risk of engaging in the sort of dichotomizing that should be criticized, it seems useful to separate, as a heuristic device, the impetus or motivations for the initial salvage and subsequent conservation into internally and externally oriented rationales.⁷⁾ Internally, the salvage effort can be seen, and is often characterized as, an exercise in self-preservation. In the land of the *ie*, the house is often the self.⁸⁾ Furthermore, issues of self-reliance and autonomy can be interpreted from the movement's activities, and are expressly referred to in more strident and defiant local dialogue. Externally, it was recognized even then that the new industry of nostalgia-centered rural tourism represented the wave of the future. In association with this was the recognition and valorization of the Gasshō-zukuri by the wider world, and the emergent pride and valuation of the same by locals.

2. *Schismo-genesis amnesia*

I and some of the other university researchers told them that tourism was the future, that they should preserve the houses and what they have and use it to attract tourists to develop the local economy. That's where they got the idea from. Everyone here says that it was Yamamoto. He got everyone here moving, and that's where the Mamoru Kai came from, but the idea came from outside, from us.

—Professor Kakizaki to The Ethnographer, while drinking

Professor Kakizaki has been doing research here for a long time now. But even after all these years, he's never really lived here, like you do. Sometimes it sounds like he invented everything here. Like he poured water on the ground, and we all sprung up like plants. He's a good researcher, a real scholar, and his affection for the place is unmistakable. I respect that. I respect his work. But sometimes he makes us sound like a bunch of bumpkins, willing to be led around by the nose by anyone with a rope. But people here aren't like that, and we don't like being told that we are, or hearing that's being said about us. People here are proud; proud and stubborn. That's why we still have the Gasshō, and no one else does. That's what preserved the houses. We didn't do it because some famous professor from a famous university told us it would be famous for business; we did it because they're

ours.

—Yoshikawa Tarō to The Ethnographer, while on lunch break from cutting thatch

The presentation of the above quotes in neat synchronization, both of them comments made to me in very different situations, fully a year apart, may seem artificial, but is intended to highlight the possibly pedestrian proposition that the struggle over heritage conservation is a political struggle, “the question of the ownership and control of information being a crucial political issue”, to quote Connerton.⁹⁾ There is an active if often subterranean contest over the rationale and impetus underlying the initial preservation initiatives and the formation of the Mamoru Kai, centering on the extent to which it was a local citizen’s initiative, as opposed to the intellectual product of an elite and external vanguard. It is the outspoken and ebullient personae of Kakizaki and Yoshikawa that allows it to be expressed so openly. This exegetical synthesis is a fiction, in the Geertzian sense, but taken together, they show that the dialogue on this matter is relatively open, public and continual, and a matter of considerable contest.¹⁰⁾

Based on this research, the argument for the preservation of Ogimachi’s Gasshō-zukuri as an endogenous civic movement is far more plausible. There is evidence of a chronology of action and ideation, of practice, that undermines any attempts to reproduce the movement as a product of elite administrative acuity and leadership.¹¹⁾ The initial movement precedes even the earliest emergence of any formalized preservation society, as a rather haphazard response to the surrounding situation, as the Gasshō began to ‘change their clothes’, in one local scholar’s evocative phrase. That this action occurred within the crucible of rapid socio-economic development, and the context of the national trend towards heritage preservation, merely highlights the interrelation of the locality with the nation, and rather than exposing its actions as externally generated, also highlights the wisdom and foresight of the first generation of local leadership that saved the Gasshō from the dustbin of history.

To re-introduce an element of complexity into a rather simplified account, the research has shown that leadership is a two way street, a mutually constituting nexus. Leaders lead because their constituency reinforces such roles through their demands and their cooperation.¹²⁾ In the mid 1970s, when the village administration and the Mamoru Kai were pursuing the prestigious national heritage designation, officials from the village administration held discussions at neighbourhood group meetings (*kumi no yoriai*), where the prospects for local approval of the application were sounded out. Furthermore, most of the political leadership itself came from Ogimachi hamlet, as the largest electoral bloc in the village. Even as a citizen’s initiative, the early Mamoru Kai membership lists read like a veritable Who’s Who of the hamlet, and most of the Gasshō-zukuri thought worthy of preservation were those of the upper middle and upper strata. In such a place, at such a time, as the nation made the transformation to its more habitual democracy, the roles and authorities of political leadership and external advisors would have been considerable, as contemporary studies have established.¹³⁾ More recent studies by John Knight, and recent postgraduate research have discussed the roles of external advisors and local elites in the development of local and regional heritage and identities.¹⁴⁾ The actions and

metaphors involved in these roles were and are very often strategically evocative of early modern ideas on the immanent morality of authority, and of the authorities.¹⁵⁾ Even today, practices and ideas mistakenly derided as Residually Authoritarian retain a cogency that precludes their dismissal as remnant forms. They are living practices, based on broader social values and expectations of the roles of leaders, and of leadership. Strategic planning and exhortation intended to promote continued social viability, is, after all, what leaders are for in relatively structured and hierarchical industrial democracies.¹⁶⁾

Another issue of irrelevance is the question of external advice and exhortation as the root of the preservation movement, for as John LeCarre's George Smiley is wont to quote, "in the beginning was the *deed*." Preservation is first and foremost a practical act, and ideas and advice do not amount to much if left to rot like an old thatch roof. The village administration, other levels of government, and expert advisors worked and continue to work tirelessly to aid in the preservation of the Gasshō, as do many scholars, but it is the locals that did it first.

II. The organization and activities of the Shirakawa-gō, Ogimachi Society for the Protection of the Natural Environment

This section will give a brief description of the organization and actual operations of the preservation society itself. This will show how the local activities of such an organization are central to the political relations of the heritage site with higher levels of government organs involved in the administration of national heritage conservation.

The founding charter of the society outlines the aims of the preservation movement, the principles that are the basis for preservation activities ("Do not sell, Do not rent, Do not destroy"), and sets out general goals for the protection of the three pillars of local tradition: the surrounding natural environment, the Gasshō-zukuri houses themselves, and the intangible traditions and customs that are seen as integral to the continued vitality of the local material heritage. It exhorts villagers to uphold traditional customs and principles in architecture and land use, to avoid construction and renovation that adversely affect the atmosphere of the hamlet, and to endeavour to preserve local customs, and to continue to transmit them to future generations. The mandate of this charter is a general but comprehensive one. It outlines the basic principles to be followed, allowing for specific decisions to be made that allow for a compromise between the needs of the residents, and the exigencies of a comprehensive preservation policy, according to the Rules of Order of the society.

1. Operations: roles, duties, activities

This section will examine the ways in which the society operates, and its roles, duties and activities in the hamlet of Ogimachi, and the wider Shirakawa village. The purpose is to give evidence of the reasons why the Preservation Society can be fruitfully viewed as a constitutive political and social agent in local society.

1-a. The council meetings of the Mamoru Kai: developing preservation and preserving development:

The membership of the Mamoru Kai comprises all the households of Ogimachi hamlet. In this role, it frequently holds or is involved in special meetings and activities that foster a more active sense of pride in local heritage, deal with the material and social problems facing the practice of preservation and address problems with local tourism development. It also holds periodic meetings with representatives from other heritage regions, nationally and internationally. All these activities and duties highlight its role as a liaison with the various regulatory bodies that are central to the formulation of heritage conservation policy, an intermediary between individual villagers and their elected administration; a citizens' movement in every sense of the term. It represents the continued importance of selected representatives acting on behalf of, and as the collective voice of the whole community.

Although the membership comprises all of Ogimachi, the actual operation of the Society is left largely to the Delegates Council (*mamoru kai iinkai*; hereafter the council). The representation on the council is broadly representative of the hamlet's neighbourhood and citizens' committees. Nonetheless, the stipulation that eligibility for the council requires each potential delegate to show general support for the objectives of the Mamoru Kai means that a number of individuals actively opposed to its mandate are ineligible to sit as delegates.

Any resident wishing to erect new or alter existing buildings and surrounding fields and land must first make an application for approval to the council, and the consideration of these is the main business of the monthly meetings. Formally, the initial Mamoru Kai decision is not a binding one, but its will, as the voice of the community, is considered to be practically binding on the public administrative bodies concerned. The first order of business is the consideration of specific applications, which are circulated, discussed, and put to a vote. They are subject to approval, conditional approval, conditional disapproval with recourse to a reapplication, and rejection. Outright rejection is rare, and I never saw such an instance. Following the completion of the agenda, business, issues, and reports are received from the village administration liaison officers, and after that any miscellany are dealt with before the meeting draws to a close. The major focus of discussion at the council meetings is the potential impact of the applications on the overall visual aesthetic of a mountain village. This is defined as traditional houses set among terraced rice paddies and dry fields, as an example of pre-modern life and settlement patterns. Any application with potential to adversely affect the overall visual aesthetic is almost certain to engender a lively debate, and to be passed over for reconsideration and reapplication following further negotiations to ensure compliance. During the consideration of applications, frequent and good natured but often acerbic comments are made as to the personalities involved, especially when the applicant is a delegate of the council.

The dominant trope is the tensions and paradoxes inherent in the relationship between the development of Ogimachi The Community, and the preservation of Ogimachi The Brand. As applications are considered, there are frequent conditions attached, consisting of requests to match colours, materials, appearance, styles, to

mask naked concrete, to attach wooden covers to metal fittings and shutters, etc. In the case of new structures, conditions are attached requesting alignment of the direction of the ridge of the building along the dominant North-South axis. The rejection of applications made in good faith invites rogue action by the rejected applicant. The building plans then fall outwith the ken of the voluntary and cooperative Mamoru Kai mandate, and while there are penalties for such action, when intended as a business enterprise, it is often financially more rational to accept the fine and go ahead with the plans. Once matters proceed to such a point, social stricture and disapproval (*seken no me*—lit. the eyes of the world; i.e. society) are the only effective means of control.¹⁷⁾

The general tone of discussion at the meetings is quite informal, and tends to a familiar jocularity, although intense discussion is not uncommon. There seems to be little overt attention to formal hierarchy or age difference in language use, although the majority of the talking is done by senior members. The local dialect is overwhelmingly the most common medium of expression. Personal opinions are expressed in straightforward language, usually in dialect. Statements and questions are couched in more polite terms, as are formal motions (e.g. *yoroshii desuka*). These latter forms are often expressed in standard Japanese, but there is an aspect of irony or mindful performance in such use, if only because of the rather arch nature of standard Japanese within the local sociolinguistic context. The use of or reversion to relatively polite or formal language can also be an aggressive strategy deployed during discussion and debate, and open challenges to opposing positions or opinions are almost always expressed in, or at least prefaced with, relatively polite language. This is in keeping with wider sociolinguistic practice, and with the pattern of social interaction in smaller communities.¹⁸⁾

1-b. Factionalism: developmentalism vs. preservation-ism

Within the council, and broader Ogimachi society, there are two main factions that advocate differing and often opposing policies towards the related problems of heritage preservation and community development: the Development and Preservation factions. To define the divide rather neatly, the former sees heritage preservation as occurring within a framework which priorities local development, while the latter sees such development as occurring best within a framework which priorities the preservation of local heritage. Most of the time, these definitions are rather moot; a case of half a dozen of one, and six of the other, but at certain nodal points, factional tension comes to the fore. Based on the evidence provided by local dialogue, which tends to slot individuals neatly into one category or the other, with several figures enjoying a certain degree of positional ambiguity, the Development faction tends to include those whose household income is derived from the tourism industries. The Preservationists tend to be those not directly involved in the tourism business. Despite that neat division, many pension operators could only be adequately described as Preservationists, while many locals whose livelihood does not depend directly on the tourism industry are outspoken Developmentalists. Such matters are decided by habitus, and not solely on material motivations alone.¹⁹⁾

Most answers to questions on the existence and extent of this factionalism were met

with responses vague enough to be considered evasive. Indeed, answers continually emphasized a distaste for factionalism, and its potentially divisive effects, despite its obvious existence and the less obvious, but widely acknowledged competition between factions.

The delegates of the Mamoru Kai need to work together, to present a united front, both to locals, and to the outside. That doesn't mean we agree on everything, and we probably shouldn't. People here are pretty stubborn, and stubborn people have opinions. We're here to represent the variety of opinions in the community. But even if we don't agree with someone else's opinion at a meeting, we still have to live and work with him. Even if we have debates over the right strategies and policies, we all have to work together.

—Fujisaki Osamu, speaking at a council meeting

What this quote from one of the younger delegates shows is the power of the metaphors of harmony and consensus. This is not to say that it exists everywhere or at all times. As with all metaphors we live by, however, its genius, its practical and ideological power, lies in its capacity to operate simultaneously as a descriptive statement of, and prescriptive idiom for human social practice, at once an *Is* and a *Should*.²⁰ Its elevation in essentialist analysis to the level of unitary motivation is the product of retrospective over-determination, and it is important to note that Harmony and Consensus are not a matter of a priori conditions and inevitable outcome, but processual results.²¹ As discussed at length by Marshall, and also by Tsuji, the work of *wa-zukuri* (harmony) and *nemawashi* (consensus building; lit. groundwork) is hard and continual. Although its achievement is a conscious objective, success is the result of active discussion that seeks to construct a suitable compromise that can satisfy, to varying degrees, the wide range of opinions and positions that constitute Popular Opinion.²² Another element in the workings of the Mamoru Kai is the principle of democratic centralism, expounded most eloquently by.²³ This is a significantly different notion from the adversarial premises of Anglo-centered democratic practice, but this does not, *ipso facto*, render it any less democratic. Here, the discussion preceding a decision is wide ranging, lively, and often relatively adversarial. Frequent mention was made by delegates older and younger on the need for frank discussion, in order to make the society run more smoothly. Once a decision has been made, however, as representatives of the council all delegates are expected to support the decision made, and defend it in public, as pointed out in the above quote.

III. Case Study

1. From paddy field to parking lot: application number 8

The following case study is presented as evidence of the interrelation between the different levels of the heritage administration process, and especially of the politics and tensions involved within and between the different levels of the heritage conservation framework. This is a case of one particularly contentious application that came up early on in my initial fieldwork, and had not been completely resolved at the end of it.

At the first Mamoru Kai meeting of the new year, in 1998, item number 8 on the agenda was an application from Mr. Wakihata to fill in a disused rice paddy for use as a commercial car park. Such applications are usually rejected outright, both by the council and the village agricultural land use committee. He had applied previously to build a cafeteria, but was refused, and this was presented as a compromise. The applicant is a retired village official who held a high administrative position. The first round of comments by the delegates noted the danger of setting a precedent for similar applications in the future.

Following that were some rather acidic comments about the veracity of the applicant's need for additional income, given his generous public service pension. The right to dispose of personal property is not so lightly trampled upon in action as it is in conversation, however, and immediately following, some delegates began to suggest a compromise; the search for a consensus had begun.

The application was approved without visible opposition, but as I found out later, the delegates knew that this was largely meaningless. It was certain to be rejected for legal reasons alone (such use being contrary to the national Agricultural Land Act), and also by the Advisory Committee for the Preservation of Traditional Architecture, the ACPTA (described below). This issue illustrates the tensions between the community and the individual, that locus classicus of social anthropological investigation, as well as tensions between local autonomy and outside interference.²⁴⁾ Wakihata sees his land as his, the disposal of which should be a matter of personal choice. Against this stand the needs of the community, and the Mamoru Kai, as its representative voice, to preserve the visual integrity of the World Heritage Site.

2. Expert advice, and the rejection of item number 8

This section will discuss the role and position of the Advisory Committee for the Preservation of Traditional Architecture (ACPTA) in the conservation of the heritage of Ogimachi, especially as regards the tensions involved in having appointed experts, many of whom are outsiders, make rulings that effectively determine conservation policy and practice in the designated heritage site of Ogimachi. The broader significance of this relation, especially as relates to the paternalistic and pastoralist elements of the relationship, is discussed in more detail elsewhere.²⁵⁾

The ACPTA is comprised of local, regional, and national expert advisors, the executive of the Mamoru Kai, and elected Ogimachi legislators. It meets irregularly, generally only when there is sufficient business at hand. Above the ACPTA are the prefectural and national Agencies for Cultural Affairs (ACA). The voice of the ACPTA is said to carry great weight with their officials. The village's Board of Education plays an intermediary role in this process. This is the initial body that decides whether applications approved by the Mamoru Kai council adhere to the spirit and word of the Preservation Charter, and which problematic applications warrant further consideration by the ACPTA. As civil servants, they are duty bound to ensure that applications do not contravene the relevant regulations, a situation that often puts them in a very difficult position, sandwiched as they are between the legal restrictions under which they operate and the political pressure to allow their constituency to dispose of their private property as they see fit.

As it considers applications, the ACPTA tends to be far stricter in interpreting what is beneficial or detrimental to the overall visual aesthetic of Ogimachi. The first meeting of the year came in the spring, after the Wakihata application had been passed by the Mamoru Kai. The first response of the appointed advisors was overwhelmingly negative, and mention was made that the number of cars entering the World Heritage Site area was already too great, and that a drastic reduction and master traffic plan were more necessary than another parking lot.

Following that were a number of acidic comments on the applicant's need for additional income, as made at the Mamoru Kai council meeting spoken of above. There, however, the commentators were locals, Wakihata's neighbours. These came from outsiders, and there were raised eyebrows and pursed lips among local committee members. The interpretation is that such comments were considered inappropriate, questioning as they did the right of an individual to better his lot, based on a rather lordly judgment that his current income was "more than sufficient." Native exegesis later supported this impression, and it is inappropriate commentary such as this that heightens the sense that such outside advisors care more about the buildings being preserved than the people preserving them. After a long discussion that ranged back and forth over the entire range of issues touched on by this application, the Wakihata application was rejected, with a request for cooperation from the applicant. The same answer came after the next ACPTA meeting, two months later.

The request for cooperation specifically mentioned the need for *gaman* (patience; forbearance) by the applicant, for the sake of the common good. This is a common strategy to achieve compliance with rejected applications. The resolution of internal conflicts of interest by reference to the suppression of Selfishness, in the interest of the hamlet, is a strategy that retains considerable persuasive currency, employing a healthy element of moral admonishment. Plans such as Wakihata's are disowned as merely private, selfish, for individual or personal interest only, ones that do not account for the Common Good. Fukutake has commented on this strategy, and Bourdieu refers to such devices as legitimating strategies.²⁶⁾

As a publicly charged advisory body, the ACPTA is responsible for ensuring that changes and development do not adversely affect the heritage value of the site, and they are opposed to any further reduction in the stock of agricultural land. They are also charged with providing advice on how best to balance the often opposing forces of preservation and development. Experts in their own fields, they are hardworking, and sincere supporters of local efforts. Their very role and status within the heritage conservation framework, however, carries an element of paternalism and extra-local authority that is not lost on locals. The rejection of applications previously approved by the Mamoru Kai is a constant source of consternation for the delegates, who are chided by their constituents for their powerlessness against Meddlesome Outsiders. My attendance at such meetings, however, led me to realize that these bodies often serve as a useful political foil for local preservation activists and politicians, as a strategy to deflect criticism and diffuse the fallout from some of the toughest conservation decisions. Marshall, Fukutake, Beardsley, and Nakane have all discussed these roles of local administrations and such bodies.²⁷⁾ Hopefully my

epiphany of complexity shows that I come to criticize such experts, not to demonize them. Their pastoralist essentialism and advisorial arrogance is frequently visible, and at times it seems that the expert concern is for things rather than the people responsible for preserving those things.

The preservation of agricultural land is seen as vital, and the filling in of paddies and fields for the erection of new buildings is seen by the higher authorities and experts as an encroachment on the balance between the traditional architecture and the natural surroundings.²⁸⁾ At meetings like the ACPTA, there were frequent questions regarding the degree of, and the loss of, local self-sufficiency in agricultural production, reflecting practical considerations, such as the irretrievable loss of arable in urbanized areas, and a perceived need to increase agricultural self-sufficiency. Nonetheless, the concern seems focused as much on the preservation of the visual aesthetic as about the preservation of productive agricultural land in and for itself, and so should be seen as a pastoral concern, as illustrated in the prevalence of nostalgic commentary by advisors on the passing of Traditional Rural Society. The frequent advice and exhortation to avoid the loss of agricultural land, and to continue or revive its cultivation is a fine example of collateral urban intellectual arrogance and appropriation.²⁹⁾

While it remains true that agriculture can be a profitable enterprise, the simultaneous denigration of tourism as a way of life, and the exhortations for locals to return to an agricultural way of life, illustrate the underlying prefigurations of such expert understandings, a common affliction known as *nōhon-shugi* (agrarian fundamentalism), as criticized by Fukutake and Ooms.³⁰⁾ The belief that this is what rural people do, and should do, is a matter of constant reiteration at such meetings. As one famous tourism development and heritage conservation expert put it: “People should be working in the fields to give the impression of a living farming community.” In the land of heritage, the medium is the message, and the impression is king.³¹⁾ The words of Tomimoto Hiroyuki adequately represent the response to such unwelcome advice:

The suggestions to promote more agricultural activity are all made by outsiders. Nobody here wants to do that anymore. Especially the younger people say to me: “Why should we farm?” They think it’s a stupid idea.

The fact that it is hard and heavy labour is an important factor. Complicating this is the fact that any local working in the fields is bound to be the victim of a swarm of camera clicking tourists, with their incessant questions and requests for *foto apachuniti*.

A couple of days after the council meeting where the Wakihata application was first presented, I ran into Yoshikawa Tarō, the Souvenir Shops Association representative on the council. He is an outspoken person, especially by Ogimachi standards, one who freely offers his often rather acerbic opinions on most matters under discussion. His voice is well respected and widely recognized as authoritative and representative, as an accomplished Gasshō craftsman whose livelihood is deeply tied to tourism development (he runs a souvenir shop). After some small talk, he suggested we go for a cup of coffee. Speaking of his duties as a Mamoru Kai delegate, he said:

It's hellish. This is the worst possible duty one could choose (*zettai yaru beki janai*—something that one is not supposed to do). Not enough people are stupid enough to help out (*baka ni natte kureru hito ha inaiya*). But these days we are worried about how to leave a legacy for our children and their children. If the tourists just stopped coming, we'd be left with nothing. Then nothing would be worth protecting (*nanimo mamoru kachi naku natte mau*). All the development in the village is due to the tourism. All the road work, all the construction. Without Ogimachi, the village of 1900 persons would become one of 1000, just like that. You know, I heard the other day that there were 25 young men here. I was surprised. There were times when there were only six or seven. Young men want to stay in the village nowadays. There's work for them now. The future seems bright. We have to change to stay with the times. Ogimachi is a place where real people live real lives, and not some sort of museum. *Nihon de kyū to arata ga issho ni aru no ha koko dake yaro* (in Japan, this is probably the only place where the old and the new exist together, eh?). If we had to preserve everything just as it was, we couldn't do it. Things have to change, to suit the new lifestyles.

IV. Conclusions

In conclusion, and even if the words just above are given only partially representative status, it would seem that the historical legacy of the Gasshō is not one borne lightly. What this paper has shown is the centrality of the preservation society in local social and political life, and gravity of the current situation in which the delegates find themselves. As they sit in judgment on the aspirations of their fellow citizens, refusal is difficult, for social and political reasons, but for philosophical and cosmological ones as well. The applicants are always known to the delegates, and are quite often friends or relatives. Their often rather modest attempts to join in the prosperity that has been the hallmark of postwar national development are understandable and laudable efforts, the rejection of which is not a measure taken lightly. Japan is rich, as a state, and as a society, the product of a newer *Kyōheifukoku*.

In the history and activities of the preservation society, we can see how a citizens' movement, initially begun as a specific response to a perceived crisis in local society, has been increasingly formalized in its organization and in its institutional status and significance for local political activity. It is the primary voice and representative of local political concerns related to the administration of heritage, as well as an important agent for the development and preservation of that heritage, seen widely as the economic, social, and cultural lifeblood of the community.

At present, the roles and duties of the Mamoru Kai are often a source of great anxiety and strain, as well as one of pride in accomplishment. The problems that face the community as it wrestles with the paradox of a local development policy based on the external popularity of the conservation of a local heritage, and the need to devise and implement strategies that will ensure a legacy for their descendants, are issues in constant discussion. This is especially true when the desires, intentions, and rights of individuals are deemed to be in direct conflict with the greater good. It is true that the Mamoru Kai delegates are particularly concerned with and conscious of these issues, more so than many other locals. Nonetheless, their voices represent concerns and

issues that touch on the lives of all the residents of Ogimachi. As heritage preservation and tourism increasingly become attractive strategies of local social and economic development, the issues seen in the case of this World Heritage Site offer insights and analogies for other locales facing similar problems, and seeking to exploit similar opportunities for growth. It is hoped that this paper has made a contribution to the knowledge of these issues.

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