

JAPANESE WOMEN AND THEIR CONNECTION TO THE CRAFT MOVEMENT AND CRAFT PRODUCTION IN JAPAN

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This paper will discuss Japanese women and their involvement with the traditional craft movement and production within Japan. In order to understand Japanese women and their relationship to this movement, one must look at the social context and historical placement of women throughout Japan's lengthy history. Starting with the Tokugawa or Edo period (1615-1868), a strong sense of proper place within society and community was instilled in men and women living in Japan.

Historically and contemporarily, the family, which is an extended part of the community, ranks first in a woman's obligation and overrides other more individual pursuits such as the arts. Within traditional craft and fine craft production communities, women's roles still reflect the idea of community harmony through cooperative work. Most traditional craft and fine craft products cannot be produced by one individual alone and, oftentimes they require several different stages for the final product to be made. Thus, it is women who fill the niche in the craft movement by processing of clay, lacquering paper, or the weaving of fine fabrics for the making of kimonos. This does not mean that women do not themselves produce traditional and fine crafts in Japan. Several women have been named National Living Treasures for their knowledge of and production of various crafts in Japan.

Women hold apprenticeships with master craftsmen, placing them within the forefront of craft production, if not the producers of the final products. It is the final showing of the craft piece in a gallery or department store with the main artist's name on it that shapes the worth and personality of the art work, hiding the multiple hands that shaped the actual piece into its final form. At the same time, there is a contradiction between the appreciation of those products produced by women and some women's status as National Living Treasures.

Historically, women have had little access to the Japanese world of art, or have only been exposed to certain types of art thought fit for women to produce. Few women have broken free from their social obligations as wives and mothers to immerse fully in artistic endeavors.

During the Edo period (1615-1868), Japan was ruled by a series of shoguns from the Tokugawa family. This particular family provided Japan with

more than 250 years of peace and security after the country's civil war. This security led to the ". . . stimulation of Japan's industry and commerce, led to the growth of large urban centers and a materialistic culture, a trend that had begun in the preceding Momoyama period of 1568-1600" (Fister, 1988). Townspeople and artisans soon became prosperous and were able to find a consumer base for their products. Early in the seventeenth century, Tokugawa Ieyasu enforced the division of the populace into four major social classes from the highest rank of the samurai, then farmer, artisans, and lastly merchants. Mobility within this system was restricted because it was felt one was born into a class. The peasant farmer held the highest ranking after samurai because it was thought of as the only profession that truly made something. Artisans merely changed the form of goods already produced by peasants. Merchants were ranked below the artisans because artisans provided goods for the samurai class, such as weapons and military supplies. (Sheldon, 1958: 25-26). The second ranking of farmers within the system was in title only, as farmers led rather oppressed lives under feudal lords who controlled the land on which they worked. "It was quite common for peasants to supplement their meager incomes by handicraft work done in their homes. Although the authorities did their best to see that this domestic industry did not interfere with the peasants' primary task of cultivation of the fields, this type of cottage industry eventually surpassed the output of artisans in the castle towns and cities. Some peasants even engaged in trade in the countryside" (Sheldon, 1958: 26-27).

Artisans and merchants enjoyed great prosperity even though they were regarded as lower classes. Merchants developed what was called the "putting-out" system in which merchants made advances on raw materials and equipment rather than pay money to producers. Provincial merchant and peasant landholders adopted this system to industrialize the farm communities with subcontractors supervising the subsidiary handicraft. "In trades where operations were both complex and numerous, the merchants assumed responsibility for dividing the work in its various stages among the producers. This system produced large amounts of raw silk, cotton and silk textiles, paper, mats, lanterns . . . by the end of the Tokugawa period" (Sheldon, 1958: 83).

The position of women within this four-tiered system remained low, with little legal or social freedoms. The feminine image suffered with the introduction of Buddhism, Confucianism, and the growth of feudalism. The religious movements in Japan, including Shinto, have contributed significantly to the development and maintenance of separate gender roles and gender inequality. "These religions have encouraged these people to accept a notion of ethics which proclaims that people are born with differing abilities

and into different status's within society, thereby serving to maintain the prevailing social order" (Haruko, 1995: 16).

"Many Buddhist texts taught that women's nature was inherently evil, associating them with attachments to the sensual world as opposed to the spiritual realm" (Fister, 1988: 10). Because of a woman's supposed evil nature, they were given very little freedom to explore themselves. At an very early age, a girl learned that she would be taking care of her own family and later the family of her husband. Women had to follow three obediences, in which they had to obey their fathers as a daughter, obey their husbands when married, and obey their son if widowed. Women could not become independent under Buddhist teachings, and those promoting these teachings did not wish for them to be. Nunneries in Europe were usually thought of as a place where women could find educational freedom. Faced with either marrying or getting a religious education, some women chose not to get married, but in Japan even the nunneries were places of male domination. "The nunneries had such a dependent status that they were referred to as the 'laundry room of monasteries' in the Ninon sandol jitsuroku, a record from the ninth century (Haruko, 1995: 19). The nunneries were subordinate to the monasteries and the nuns were expected to serve the monks. The monastery and nunnery relationship paralleled that of the <+">ie, <-">or Japanese household or family system. "While the monks lived atop the holy mountains conducting various religious affairs in service of the nation, their wives, mothers, and sisters resided in a separate community called a<+">satobo<-"> at the foot of the mountains under the protection of the monks, leading a religious life and performing their assigned roles -- sewing and washing the monks' clothing and preparing their meals" (Haruko, 1995: 22-23).

With the introduction of Confucianism, women's status within the Japanese society dropped even lower. "From the seventeenth century on, the Tokugawa government fervently promoted Confucian teachings which generally regarded women as inferior to men, reinforcing the doctrines of Buddhism" (Fister, 1988: 10). Sentiments that women were lower than men originated from the Chinese patriarchal society were. These notions of male superiority over female inferiority surfaced in the elements of Yin and Yang. Yin and Yang through their interaction created the universe. Yang embodies the positive, bright, male principle and yin the negative, dark female principle. A husband and wife symbolizes this union of yang and yin or heaven and earth. Women are to regard their husbands as heaven. (Fister, 1988).

The samurai class mainly carried out the doctrines of Confucianism. Women within these classes were supposed to set examples for women in other classes. Therefore, women in samurai classes, even though they were considered higher on the social ranking, had even less freedom to deviate

from their roles as good wives and mothers. Women from the other social classes were given greater responsibilities within the families' occupations. "They were often called upon to assist in running the family business and at times went beyond merely helping their husbands and became imaginative entrepreneurs" (Fister, 1988: 11).

The influence of various religious teachings, as well as the strict structures set up for people to live, shaped Japanese thought and identity. An individual consciousness became subordinate to that of the group consciousness. A general lack in the ability to make decisions as an individual permeated the culture, instilling a sense of community reliance that is prevalent within Japan today. In Japan, ". . . there is a tendency to accept and try to harmonize both the good and the bad rather than to seek to make clear the differences. Within this milieu individual qualities and abilities are often ignored. Social pressures encourage people to be as similar to others as possible and to maintain the status quo rather than seek to change it" (Haruko, 1995:26). Women had little choice but to join other women in their prescribed roles. This sense of community and lack of individuality still persists in Japanese society today, in which children in kindergarten are taught to see their classmates as equals. This trains children for their future roles in Japanese workplaces, and female children as mothers taking care of the family and community.

During the Tokugawa period, even with these religious setbacks, women's participation in the work force increased. Between the early eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries within all of the social classes, ". . . the rural peasant, the urban merchant and commoner, the samurai in town and city -- women were doing more work and, for those who worked for wages, being paid more for their labor" (Howland, 1995: 18). Women of all classes were also responsible for producing their family's clothing. This process was long and involved, often requiring the carding, spinning and weaving of cotton; raising of silk worms and then spinning and weaving silk; and, lastly, sewing the clothes. Shoes, *tabi* socks, kimonos and mosquito netting were produced by hand and expected to be produced by women (Howland, 1995). The growth of the commercial economy during the Tokugawa period tended to bring more women into the Japanese work force, increasing the amount of time women devoted to working outside of the home. Commercialization made available certain household items that in the past had been hand made. Firewood, charcoal, candles and rope became available, giving the housewife more time to work in factories. Maid servants were also hired to take care of house work, ". . . thereby diverting rural wives' labor into other activities and freeing women of all classes to concentrate on the enterprise that at least in the household unit, continued to be the centerpiece of a wife's labor: spinning, weaving and sewing" (Howland, 1995: 19). A shogunal ordinance in

1649, proclaimed that a peasant wife's duty was to work at the loom. The more influencing patriarchal system within the samurai classes also urged women to concentrate on the art of sewing. The act of women weaving and sewing during the Tokugawa period serves as an indicator of social standing and placement of women within the Tokugawa work force. "The 'iconicity' of women at work, then, points to several discourses in Tokugawa society that include working women among their objects, and which . . . were in part concretized in specific literary genres" (Howland, 1995: 20). Moral instruction books were written during this time giving rules for how men and women should live. All were based on Chinese versions, the earliest written during the Han dynasty. Primarily women in China wrote these moral instruction books, but in Japan they were written by men who reinforced a woman's duty to the home and caring of their families and the pursuits of certain labor. (Fister, 1988).

Professional artists during the Edo period were by and large males, since women were supposed to fulfill certain household duties before leisure activities. Two exceptions to this rule were Kiyohara Yukinobu (1643-1682) and Sasakishogen (active late seventeenth-early eighteenth century) who both became famous for their painting and calligraphy (Fister, 1988). "For the wives and daughters of the upper class (shogun, court nobility, and daimyo), personal artistic interests could be indulged only when they did not interfere with family duties, but we know that some of these women did devote considerable time not only to reading but also to writing poetry. Women born into high-ranking families were likely to receive training in calligraphy and in composing the traditional Japanese form of poetry known as *waka*, [composed of thirty-one syllables arranged in five lines of 5-7-5-7-7]" (Fister, 1988: 26). One of the most prestigious positions for a woman of samurai class was a lady in waiting for the imperial palace in Kyoto, or in one of the many castles in Japan. Families competed for these positions to secure for their daughters prestigious placement for marriage and to strengthen political and economic positions within the family. Women within these positions also had the benefit of being surrounded by cultivated women and could devote a certain amount of time to artistic pursuits. *Waka* became the most suitable written form for women, and during the seventeenth century several female *waka* poets were recognized.

Otagaki Rengetsu (1791-1875), was one such woman who was a member of the elite samurai class who had connections to *waka* and other artistic pursuits. She is most known for her unique pottery that she inscribed with poems. After being married twice, she decided to become a nun. She turned to pottery to support herself, creating utensils for use in the Chinese-style form of tea drinking known as *sencha*. She seems to have been self-taught, crafting

her pots by hand and adding her own *waka*. It should be noted that pottery is not considered even presently as something that women do in Japan at the master level. Louise Cort has pointed out that Rengetsu's popularity was linked in part to her identity -- the fact that she was a woman rather than one of the countless professional male potters. Her success was also not in her pottery *per se*, but in the *waka* she inscribed on the pieces. The *waka* made the pieces unique from other artists' pottery, making them desirable for ceramic collectors.

During the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when Japan opened its doors to the Western world, the governmental systems and the social systems in Japan were altered in favor of women. "The abolishment of the feudal system meant the dissolution of the samurai class and the establishment of basic legal equalities for all people" (Fister, 1988: 14). This general equality should not be mistaken for equal rights between men and women. Women in Japan did not receive the right to vote until after World War II, and still were tied to the basic assumptions of the proper placement of women within the society. Women began to formalize groups during this time under government encouragement. The government, wishing to give women more life options, started to allow them to attend school, and created art societies for them to attend in their leisure time.

Following the political revolution called the Meiji Restoration, named after the Emperor Meiji, who ascended the throne in 1868, the members of the once privileged samurai class now had to find work elsewhere. During the nineteenth-century and twentieth-century, few things changed for the rural farmwomen as it did for the women of other previous classes. Farm women helped earn the household income through ". . . hard physical labor at cultivating wet and dry fields, through less strenuous work at by-employment such as silk worm raising, spinning, weaving, and straw sandal-making, and through domestic tasks such as cooking, laundry, cleaning, preparing the bath, and childcare" (Uno, 1993: 39). These patterns of employment and tasks have followed women of both rural and urban residence into other employment.

The individuals within Japanese communities often work together to accomplish certain goals, such as the care for shrines and other sacred places. (Hendry, 1987: 62). I will argue that within the traditional craft community it is only through group effort that a finished craft is made. Illustrations from the eighteenth century of works within Pomeroy's text of particular craftspeople give clues into the crafts associated with men and women, and the ways in which these crafts were made. Craft production contributed to by women were the cordmaker, paper maker, fan maker and potter. The plaited cord was supposedly the invention of women. Cord making is a simple form of

weaving in which threads are weighted for uniform tension and twisted together in a repetitive pattern. "The craft had its commercial beginnings in Kyoto, the account continues, when a certain thread merchant in that city began to employ women in his shop to plait thread into cord to the order of his customers, who could wait and watch the work being done" (Pomeroy, 1967-68: 30). Weaving, as mentioned previously, traditionally has been a female task. This is partly due to the associations with the sun goddess. "Myth and legend in Japan give high place to the figure of the weaving girl, and she is still honored with a festival of her own on the seventh of July: the celebration known as Tanabata" (Pomeroy, 1967-68: 36).

Other illustrations within Pomeroy's text depict this continued complementary work between men and women to finish a final product. The paper-making illustration depicts a man and a woman, presumably husband and wife, performing the complicated art of making Japanese paper. "The woman, with her kimono sleeves held back by a band that goes around her shoulders, dips her mold into a vat filled with pulp. After shaking the mold back and forth to make the fibers in the pulp to form a sheet, she removes the sheet and places it on the stack at her right" (Pomeroy, 1967-68: 42-43). Few illustrations depicted women working alone. Those crafts associated with women often are transferred directly over from household activities, such as weaving or fan making, because it is seen as a delicate work requiring dexterity and a delicate touch. This is also related in the painting of contemporary Kokeshi dolls within factories because the face demands a delicate touch, of which only women are capable.

In the depiction of the potter's wife, she does not actually get to throw the pots, but carries a basket filled with lumps of kneaded clay ready for the potter's use (Pomeroy, 1967-68). The distinctions between delicate work and heavy labor add to the conflict within the Japanese craft movement. Women straddle two identities in which they gain a certain amount of personal freedom helping out in the communities, but at the same time are still considered to be the ones who take part in the delicate art works, as in the past use of *waka*.

The lines between fine art and craft are blurred within Japan, and it is difficult to make a distinction between the two. "During the early part of the Meiji period (1868-1912), not only was the distinction between 'art' and 'craft' blurred in Japan as it was in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century . . . the Japanese also failed to distinguish between 'craft' (*kogie*) and 'industry' (Kogyo). It was only the development of modern industry in Japan that gave rise to the gradual autonomy of the two latter concepts, while the distinction between 'art' (*bijutsu*) and 'craft' (*kogei*) for the most part followed western precedent" (Moeran, 1997: 13). Japan's contact with the western

world also influenced, in particular the pottery community within Japan, exploration of the craft traditions and the creation of unique styles based on old traditions. "Those concerned with the development of Japan's crafts realized that not everything they had borrowed from western culture was necessarily better than that which they themselves could produce. It was this attitude that facilitated the construction of museums, the formation of associations promoting Japanese arts, and the publication of the country's first art magazine, *Kokka* (in 1889)" (Moeran, 1997: 14).

What is called the Mingei art movement, and later Mingei crafts themselves, was started by what Brian Moeran terms nostalgia for the traditional past or the *natsukashisa*, a very particular Japanese trait. A link with social organization and folk art, as mentioned previously, also contributed to this sense of nostalgia for the dwindling traditional ways of life and the crafts associated with them. The Industrial Revolution not only effected the ways in which art is seen, ". . . but the rise of industrialism, and its concomitants, urbanization and mechanization, has led many of us to look with a certain nostalgia either back in time to those forms of art or craft which evoke a pre-industrial, golden age of simplicity, or across in space to objects produced in other, less 'civilized' cultures" (Moeran, 1997: 17). Traditional crafts themselves also denote ideals of a past time because they are generally handmade, intended for everyday use rather than decoration, made according to traditional ways with natural, often self-grown materials, and produced by collective and simple techniques. These notions of tradition, though, are giving way to individual craftspeople who earn a name for themselves because of the uniqueness of the product they produce.

The Mingei craft movement and the appreciation for handmade crafts came largely under the encouragement of Yanagi Soetsu (1889-1961), who was, in turn, influenced by the loss of traditional forms of art due to rapid urbanization and a shift from hand to mechanized methods of mass production. "The whole idea of 'folk art' first received public recognition in Japan in the late 1920s, when Yanagi published his first book, *The Way of Crafts (Kogei no Michi)* (Moeran, 1997: 25). It can be said that Yanagi's interest in Japanese folk art in general came initially from his interest in Korean ceramics from the Yi dynasty. He discovered that much of this pottery was made by unknown craftsmen much like the pottery in his own country. "He thus became interested in what initially he called 'people's art' -- for the way in which it accorded with his ideals of beauty" (Moeran, 1997: 25). The term mingei was applied to things that were functional, used in people's everyday lives, 'unpretentious', 'pure' and 'simple'. "Yanagi argued that mingei was characterized by tradition and not by individuality. Art should not be associated with the individual creator; it should be unassuming, the work of 'non-

individuality'. Beauty could exist 'without heroes' " (Moeran, 1997: 26). Yanagi started the Folk Craft Association to promote his ideals of true folk craft and to promote the folk crafts themselves. This knowledge about crafts spread to people living in the urban and industrial centers of Japan, who in turn started to buy handmade folk crafts. This was called the 'mingei boom' and continued until about 1974-75.

The average craftsman, however, was not interested in the philosophies of mingei but in making money. In addition, the craftsmen, while admitting the beauty of what they created, saw the essential functionality and usefulness. At the same time, while Yanagi characterized "artists" as exalted, the craftspeople themselves felt that their productions were from all the community. Several problems arose within the Mingei movement in which artists who wanted to develop their own styles broke away from the Mingei movement. The debate between Yanagi's ideals of beauty and the artists' concept of function started to run against each other, causing stress within the movement and difficulty in trying to capture all that was meant by Mingei art. After Yanagi's death, the Folk Craft Society itself developed financial problems. The magazine published by the Association was called *Mingei*, and was published monthly in 1980, with distribution to about 5,000 people. It became evident that people were not really reading the magazine. "Rather, subscription was a form of passive membership; craftsmen, in particular, took the magazine to keep the 'people of Tokyo' happy" (Moeran, 1997: 29).

The most active participants in the Folk Craft Association were women. They would travel around the country visiting craftsmen's workshops and would purchase their works. "Yet many will argue (and they are men, of course) that the housewives do not understand the meaning of 'true' mingei and cannot appreciate 'proper' beauty. It was perhaps not surprising, therefore, to find that -- at the time of my research [Brian Moeran's research] -- the mingei potters and other rural craftsmen dismissed the Mingei movement as another urban elitist fashion whose followers had failed to come to grips with their problems" (Moeran, 1997: 29). It is evident that the Mingei failed in some ways and has continued to fail by not looking at the actual reality within the rural communities and the individual folk artist's relationship with the craft community on a whole. Two dichotomies exist within the discourse for speaking about craft communities. On one hand, there is the individual breaking away from the traditional collective craft community, and, on the other, there is the collective whole of the craft community working together toward a common product. The reality is that each is linked to the other and does not carry on a separate dialogue.

The rural craft community is seen as a unique enterprise cut off from the rest of Japan and encouraged by the government to be isolated and to main-

tain its traditional past. Women within these communities are also seen as the purveyors of a traditional past oftentimes locked into roles that do not represent the reality of the contributions given to the craft community. Much of the traditional craft forms still rely on traditional products and years of apprenticeship to acquire the skills to make them. Currently in Japan, the crafts are still seen as a link to Japan's traditional Japanese past, but few outside of the rural communities in which they exist are willing to take the time to produce them or learn how to produce them. It is because of this phenomenon that both individuals and craft forms are honored and protected within Japan. These people are known as "Holders of Intangible Cultural Properties" or Japan's living treasures. The community emphasis has been shifted to that of the individual master of a particular craft in which seventy individuals and twelve groups within Japan are recognized as living treasures. (Fontein, 1982).

Interestingly, it is not the Japanese government who saw the need to protect its dwindling craft tradition. After World War II, Army General Douglas MacArthur, commander of the Allied occupation forces in Japan, was appalled by the wartime destruction of priceless works of art. He persuaded the Japanese government to safeguard those who carried on the creative traditions (Fontein, 1982). This runs parallel to that of Yanagi's movement to educate Japanese people in an appreciation of Japanese traditional craft forms over modern western art forms. These educational practices, though, often treat individual craft-makers and whole communities as anomalies and amusement parks to be visited on vacations. Japan's often forced traditional past is isolated from modern Japan, and, at the same time, is integrated into everyday-use items produced by the craft communities. The communities themselves, out of economic necessity or pride in their unique heritage, play to the tourist industry and promote the prefectures in which they live as holding unique wares not found any other place in Japan. So-called modern Japan and traditional communities in Japan, though promoted as being different and separate, are not. It is because traditional crafts are crafts of the people, and are linked to specific cultural events during the Japanese year and daily use in the Japanese homes, that the two are dependent on each other for existence.

The *ie*, or the Japanese household, provides an important locale for cooperative craft making and craft product making. The *ie* is not just a nuclear family. In agricultural villages, the *ie* has been seen as the fundamental unit of Japanese rural society. The word *ie* refers to the Japanese house, but it also refers to the social unit within the household. The structure of the *ie* remains the same regardless of the people involved. It is also a " . . . political and economic unit, whose members work together on land, making use of

common property and of the household's right to irrigation water. . ." (Moeran, 1997: 63). Traditionally, the most important person in the *ie* was the head of the household. "The head used also [*sic*], to hold absolute authority over the affairs of all members of the household, but this is no longer legally permitted. Nevertheless, in rural society, he still has enormous influence in the running of the household and over activities of its members" (Moeran, 1997: 63).

Changes within the *ie* structure have increased over the years to keep up with the decrease in farming and the increase in craft production in tourist trade within the rural areas of Japan. Not only have women gained a more prominent place in the *ie*, they have also been recognized within their communities as contributors to specific craft productions. Of the seventy individuals considered living treasures of Japan, eleven are women.

The most well known of the women living treasures is Ayano Chiba (*sic*), recently passed on, a weaver and dyer who worked in traditional indigo-dyed cloth. In order to produce this product, Ayano Chiba grew her own indigo plants and hemp plants for fiber and dye production. Growing the stock herself insured quality of the finished product. Ayano Chiba relied on the help of her daughter and other family members to help her spin and process the hemp. The whole process to produce her dyed fabrics required many steps and she herself admitted that no one would want to do it today because it is so difficult and time consuming. (Fontein, 1982: 5) Ayano Chiba's daughter-in-law still carries on this work today.

Like many of Japan's traditional arts, public support and personal satisfaction is necessary to continue the long process of procuring the raw materials for and the assemblage of traditional forms of art. To make the one-of-a-kind kimonos, the kimono maker uses a stencil. The papers used to make these stencils are in themselves works of art because it requires years of training to paint on the persimmon tannin that gives the paper strength and waterproofness. Yoshimatsu Namba, a stencil cutter, recounted that, [t]he woman who made these stencil papers worked with a quick and steady hand, carefully brushing the three-layered sheets of soggy paper neatly and smoothly onto the long pine boards" (1982: 51). Women make up the often unseen though appreciated work force behind the craft movement in Japan. In the ceramics communities, women process clay at every stage until it is ready to be thrown. Women rarely throw pots, though, because it is not considered women's work. Women within pottery communities spend much of their time farming, so the production of the actual ceramics rarely enters into their set work schedule. In the art of paper making, women strip the bark off of mitsumata branches. They then stack the cleaned fibers for a twenty-four-hour soaking then boiling and multiple rinsing processes. The finished sheets

of paper are gently picked up and placed on a stainless steel griddle that is steam heated, allowing the paper to dry in minutes. The woman's skill lies in the way that she brushes the sheets of wet paper onto the griddle and the quickness with which she does it (Fontein, 1982). Women contribute on a personal and collective level to the production of traditional Japanese crafts. They as individuals have continued traditional women's craft forms such as weaving and have incorporated into their everyday activities the processing and making of the core materials that go into making traditional craft products.

The making of traditional Japanese dolls is a good example to illustrate how women have been seen as producing prestigious handmade dolls and factory dolls which are not deemed as prestigious. Handmade goods fail to simulate the consistency of the machine made goods, " 'Yet precisely because of this, they are seen by some to be more serviceable. . . hence the marks of hand labor come to be honorific, and the goods which exhibit these marks take rank as a higher grade, than the corresponding machine product'"(Veblen, 1925: 159 in Moeran, 1997: 214). This placement of the handmade over the machine-made places women in two conflicting positions within the craft movement. It is the finished product that is considered of value by the consumers, not the smaller products that go into its production. Women who make the stencils, process the clay, and weave the cloth sent to a master crafts-maker are overlooked in their connection with the all more important production processes within a particular crafts' life. Also, it is the factory which has a predominately female workforce, which produces the less prestigious machine-made crafts like *Kokeshi* dolls. Women must also fight against contradictory representations of who should and who should not be producing certain crafts. "Most of the amateurs devoted to doll making as a hobby are women. As it is difficult to master the art of carving heads in wood and of applying *gofun*, these amateur doll-makers have contrived a method of making heads and hands by the use of a dough-like paste called *shiso* (Yamada, 1955: 156). The above would suggest that women do not participate in the art of wooden carved dolls, but Ryujo Hori, one of the seven women designated as living treasures, carves dolls by hand. She goes out into the forests herself to collect *kiri* or *Paulownia* wood for her dolls that often take up to ten years to complete. (Fontein, 1982)

It is true that men produce most traditional dolls within Japanese society. It is this association of male production and that of handmade construction that draws prestige to the object. The *Kokeshi* doll illustrates that it is often the "maleness" of an object that denotes prestige. Men are seen as completing the final stage in craft production and creating the complex or simplistic designs that hold the appeal of the crafts. The three ways of making

this type of wooden doll involve hand-turning the doll on a lathe or factory machine construction. Certain factory-made Kokeshi do merit high prestige by the Japanese art communities because their design and esthetic beauty are appreciated. It is the design, though, and not the production of this product that is appreciated. Other factory Kokeshi do not have the complicated designs, and are more readily produced for the sale abroad or in very touristy areas of Japan. Men design the award winning Kokeshi and make the lathe-turned Kokeshi. It is only women who put together the machine-made Kokeshi; their main purpose is to paint on the pretty face and add the text or flower decorations that accompany the dolls. These types of activities mirror the social ranking of merchants during the Edo period, the merchant class being ranked lower than the farmer class because they just acquired and sold products already made by another social class. Women within the factories do not produce the designs for Kokeshi dolls, so they are not ranked highly in their efforts, nor are they considered artisans in their own rights.

As with many social rules, this runs parallel to the production of ceramics in which women who procure the products to make the ceramic pieces and who process the clay are viewed as one portion of the labor force. They are not perceived to be the true artist when it comes to making the ceramic items. Ceramics produced in rural Japanese communities are utilitarian devices utilized in everyday living. It is outside communities who place a value on the ceramic pieces and dictate their decorative worth. The craft community sees effort by all members of the household as contributing to the production of a ceramic item; the outside community seeks out the individual for praise in producing a unique art form. In reality, the naming of individuals as living cultural treasures fails to compensate for the lack of recognition for those who help and produce particular portions of what will become the finished product.

Japanese society has always placed boundaries around what is considered the social unit such as the *ie* as being *uchi* inside and *soto* outside of the social unit. "Tradition is seen to grant a local community strength in communal participation and action by providing the locality with a sense of solidarity and unity. In other words, in the Japanese 'folk' theory of traditionalism, community-wide activities are both indicators and products of the power of the community which (in turn) is still based on its 'past' legacy" (Ben-Ari, 1998: 84). The rural communities of Japan, whether or not they still hold on to their traditional ways of life are associated by urban and city dwelling Japanese as the holders of traditional truths and antiquated life styles. It is only by going to these particular communities that one can get a sense of what truly is Japanese. As Ayano Chiba pointed out, " 'I'll explain our work as many times as you like, but you'll never understand it until you do it. People

can read about it, watch it, but they still don't get it. I say, better than trying to learn it, do it" (1982: 15).

The *uchi* and *soto* system also keeps women in a state of being outsiders themselves within their own communities. Historically, as in the example of nunneries, women hold a position separate from men in the *ie* which is transferred when they become an outsider residing in their husband's *ie*. Insider and outsider knowledge within women's worlds and men's worlds contributed to the engendering of specific craft items, or the inaccessibility of certain craft production to women. Outside of the craft communities, women still duplicate the traditional *ie* system in that they are responsible for taking care of the family. Roles are changing slowly within the family structure in Japan, with men contributing more to household and family care and women entering into the full time positions with companies. The *ie* system and associations with *soto* and *uchi* still prevail as a primary system of seeing the world.

The structure of the traditional household has changed in some respects from that of the entire unit acting to produce the same products. With the decline of farming and the economic necessity of survival, rural communities have turned to traditional crafts and performances to draw the nostalgic Japanese public into their communities. Now, a collective effort is put forth in the production of craft items for tourists. The passing of farming techniques is still prevalent. Its educational approach has been used by those in the craft movement who continue the apprenticeship model of passing on certain cultural skills and techniques in craft production. Women often do the bulk of the work in preliminary craft production. And, since the full knowledge and mastery of each craft item requires years of work and observation, it could be said that women will soon fill areas where men used to reside as the prestigious repositories of the actual knowledge and expertise. Still, women's contributions to raising the family and farming have blocked many women from fully participating within the craft movement. Women find that when they no longer have the responsibilities of childcare that they can explore traditional art forms.

Women historically have been the main element in the preservation and continuance of certain traditional art and craft forms within Japan. These women tend to be of middle class origin with grown children who wish to get back in contact with their traditional roots. "The traditional arts such as *chado* are popular ways for women to spend their leisure time because these arts affirm traditional views of women as nurturing and supporting others in society. At the same time, they allow women to pursue personal goals of self-expression, artistry, the development of managerial skills" (Mori, 1996: 117). Changes within the Japanese family structure and household duties,

such as in the Edo period, have encouraged women to look to the traditional arts for personal growth and enjoyment. "The traditional arts have a special appeal for middle-class women in that these arts advertise themselves as providing self-improvement and educational opportunities that enhance a woman's abilities as wife, mother, and hostess. Women are encouraged to take up traditional arts in order to learn Japanese cultural practices and pass [them] on to their daughters" (Mori, 1996: 120). Traditional crafts and arts again are seen to symbolize that of a proper and past way. It is this relationship which complicates women's relations to traditional crafts in Japan and the society's overall assessment of the relationship that women have with craft production.

Though women in rural communities reliant on craft production lead different lives from women who live in urban settings, the same rules set up in the beginnings of the Tokugawa period still apply to them. The outside community's interpretation of women's worth in their production of tradition craft items contributes to the lack of acknowledgment of women's true contributions to the craft industry. The inside dynamics of the craft labor system incorporate women's activities into the collective process of craft production emphasizing the process over the item. Japanese women still tend to gravitate towards traditionally female-based crafts or do not make the actual finished craft items. When women do excel at making a certain craft product, they are elevated to high status, but often ignored as achieving status with their male counterparts. It is the Japanese system of separate worlds of men and women and the social structure that dictates what women can and cannot do, placing them in an uneasy relationship within the craft world of Japan. What needs to be examined is the relationship between outside urban influences based on traditional values and inside rural perspectives also based on traditional values, and how they collectively place women in contradictory roles of producing and not producing craft items within Japan.

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