

**BODIES IN MOTION: GENDER, IDENTITY, AND THE POLITICS OF
REPRESENTATION IN THE AMERICAN TAIKO MOVEMENT**

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ABSTRACT

The ancient drumming tradition of Japanese taiko has recently become popularized in America, partially maintaining its Japanese roots while incorporating American musical ideals, practice, and aesthetics, thus creating a unique hybrid cultural tradition. My project, inspired by the recent study of musical identity in the diaspora, focuses on the development of taiko in America in relation to ethnic identity and gender.

The rise of the American taiko movement, although rooted in the Japanese American community, dovetailed with the ethnic revitalization movements of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and has thus become emblematic of the Asian American voice in America. This thesis examines the interrelation of ethnic identity as expressed through music and movement, gender constructs in taiko performance, and the politics of representation within the local and global taiko community. I utilize ethnographic data gathered from interviews and observation of San Jose Taiko of California and the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble of Honolulu, as well as numerous individual taiko practitioners, to argue that taiko drumming has provided a unique outlet for self-expression through music and movement and allows its practitioners to construct, affirm, and challenge their identities amid the changing American geo-political landscape.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT.....	v
CHAPTER 1	
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Purpose of the Study.....	1
1.2 Methodology.....	6
1.3 Instruments.....	7
1.4 Outline of Chapters.....	8
1.5 Significance.....	9
CHAPTER 2	
ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE AMERICAN TAIKO MOVEMENT.....	12
2.1 Asian American Identity in the Post-World War II Era.....	12
2.2 Racial Dynamics, Diaspora, and Ethnic Revitalization Movements.....	15
2.3 Case Study: San Jose Taiko.....	20
2.4 San Jose Taiko: Ethnic Identity and Community.....	22
2.5 Cultural Authority.....	25
2.6 Race, Authenticity, and the Visual Domain.....	30
2.7 Analysis of San Jose Taiko's "Ei Ja Nai Ka?".....	32
2.7.1 Processional.....	34
2.7.2 Opening Solos.....	35
2.7.3 Vocal and Dance Section.....	36
2.7.4 Closing Section.....	40
TRANSCRIPTION OF "EI JA NAI KA?"	44
CHAPTER 3	
GENDER AND PERFORMATIVITY IN AMERICAN TAIKO.....	53
3.1 Taiko and the Female Body.....	53
3.2 Gender as Part of Historical Tradition.....	57
3.3 "Gendering" Taiko.....	59
3.4 Analysis of San Francisco Taiko Dojo's "Tsunami"	64
3.4.1 Notes on Editing of "Tsunami"	65
3.4.2 Long Pause in the "Tsunami" Solos.....	66
3.4.3 Cheering.....	67
3.4.4 Rhythmic Variations.....	68
TRANSCRIPTION OF "TSUNAMI"	72

CHAPTER 4	
MUSICAL IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM'S "BIG DRUM: TAIKO IN THE UNITED STATES" EXHIBITION.....	90
4.1 Japanese American National Museum History.....	90
4.2 "Big Drum" Exhibition Background and Development.....	93
4.3 Socio-political Motivations in the "Big Drum" Exhibition.....	94
4.4 Diasporic Relations in the Global and Local Community.....	96
4.5 Politics of Representation in the "Big Drum" Exhibition.....	98
4.6 Promotion.....	100
4.7 Analysis of "Winds of Change".....	103
4.7.1 Instrumentation and Dynamics.....	105
4.7.2 Triplet-Feel Pattern.....	106
4.7.3 Guaguancó Pattern.....	109
4.7.4 Ending.....	110
TRANSCRIPTION OF "WINDS OF CHANGE".....	113
CHAPTER 5	
CONCLUSION.....	129
APPENDIX A.....	133
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	134

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Taiko drumming is a unique composite art form incorporating music, choreography, and lyrics. In the last several decades, taiko drumming in America has undergone a renaissance, growing from only a few *kumidaiko* (ensemble taiko drumming, hereafter referred to simply as “taiko”) groups in the early 1970s to more than 150 North American groups today.¹ One of taiko’s most distinctive characteristics is that despite having Japanese origin, its practice in America is a hybridization of numerous musical cultures. This thesis examines the intersection of social and ethnic identification, gender constructs, and representational politics in the American taiko movement.

Japanese taiko drumming has a long and resilient history in America. In the early twentieth century, Japanese immigrants imported traditional Japanese taiko drums to America, where they were primarily used in Buddhist temples and various *karate*, *jūdō*, and *kendō dōjo* (places for learning). Since then, the practice of taiko drumming in America has become increasingly widespread, especially from the late 1960s when ensemble taiko groups began forming within Japanese American communities.

Originally developed in response to the reinvigoration of Japanese American ethnic pride, the modern taiko movement dovetailed with ethnic revitalization movements of the 1960s and 1970s in America and has been significantly influenced by the discourses on modern feminism, racial formation, and musical identity in the diaspora. Taiko ensembles today are multiethnic with a majority of female performers and perform a variety of repertoire

pieces that have both Japanese and non-Japanese musical material; taiko, while of Japanese origin, is a unique, hybridized, and constantly evolving art form.

The history of taiko drumming in Japan has been well-documented in the seminal works of William Malm² and Eta Harich-Schneider,³ and Shigeo Kishibe,⁴ among others. Taiko were not used in group drumming ensembles prior to the 1950s, but instead were used in Buddhist temples and in numerous musical and theatrical forms, such as *kabuki* (Edo period popular theatre), *gagaku* (court music), *hogaku* (classical music), and *hayashi* (festival music). Taiko drums have consistently been used to accompany the *Bon Odori* dances that occur during the annual Obon (Bon) festival, a Japanese Buddhist holiday honoring deceased ancestral spirits.⁵

Japanese taiko drum ensembles are a relatively modern phenomenon in both Japan and America, originating in post-war Japan. Daihachi Oguchi, formerly a jazz drummer, is credited with first developing the kumidaiko genre with the formation of his group Osuwa Daiko in Nagano prefecture in 1951. Whereas taiko drums prior to the 1950s were primarily used in small numbers as members of multi-instrument ensembles, the kumidaiko movement established all-drum ensembles, sometimes with the accompaniment of *fue* (transverse bamboo flute) and other percussion instruments. Oguchi, by combining traditional Japanese musical material with modern influences, revolutionized taiko drumming and set a standard of tradition mixed with originality for future generations. The combination of traditional Japanese musical material with modern adaptations has become the benchmark of many contemporary taiko ensembles in Japan as well as overseas.

After the formation of Osuwa Daiko, numerous kumidaiko ensembles developed in Japan. Sukeroku Daiko, originally called Yushima Tenjin Sukeroku Daiko (of the Yushima Tenjin Shrine), was founded in 1959 and revolutionized kumidaiko drumming by emphasizing complex choreography and showy solos. The 1960s saw the development of many of today's standard repertoire pieces by Sukeroku Taiko, including "Oroshi Daiko" (1964), "Shiraume Taiko" (1964), "Matsuri Taiko" (1965), and "Yodan Uchi" (1976).⁶ Many of these pieces have since been transmitted, in some manner, to taiko groups overseas.

In 1982, Seido Kobayashi, a founding member of Sukeroku Daiko, split with the group and formed a new group, O Edo Sukeroku Taiko, of which Japanese American taiko practitioner Kenny Endo⁷ was an original member. The dissemination of the Sukeroku style can be seen in numerous groups in Japan and America. The group Za Ondekoza, founded by Tagayasu Den in 1969, prioritized taiko as a way of life. Based on Sado island, the group dedicated themselves to the study of taiko and incorporated rigorous physical training into their lifestyles. In 1981, some members of Za Ondekoza branched off and formed the group Kodo, which has since become one of the most internationally renowned taiko groups in Japan.

Taiko drums have been used in America since the early twentieth century, but taiko ensembles have only been in existence since the late 1960s, when *Issei* (first generation Japanese American) Seiichi Tanaka introduced the concept of ensemble drumming to America. The story of Tanaka, who came to San Francisco from Japan in 1967, and, disappointed in the lack of taiko at a local cherry blossom festival (*sakura matsuri*), decided to return to Japan to study taiko and bring it to America, is well-known

in the taiko community. His style of taiko, along with his martial arts background, has become known as “Tanaka Style,” a fusion of O Edo Sukeroku Daiko, Osuwa Daiko, and Gojinjyo Daiko styles.⁸ In 1968, he formed the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, the first taiko group in America.

In 1969, the group Kinnara Taiko was formed at the Los Angeles Senshin Buddhist Temple. Kinnara Taiko was influential in establishing the link between the taiko movement and the Buddhist Churches of America. Reverend Masao Kodani has been instrumental in developing numerous taiko groups across America and producing literature on taiko of the Buddhist tradition.⁹

The third taiko group in America, San Jose Taiko, founded in 1973, is rooted in the ethnic revitalization movements of the 1960s and 1970s. As Kenny Endo states about the development of taiko in North America,

“Among many of the early Japanese American taiko groups such as Kinnara Taiko of Los Angeles, and San Jose Taiko, were young Japanese American activists who saw taiko as a way to assert their new-found cultural pride. In the case of North American taiko groups, because the majority of the groups consist primarily of Japanese American members, the taiko art form provides a basis for cultural pride and connection to their ‘roots.’”¹⁰

The alignment of the taiko movement with grassroots and ethnic revitalization movements of the time reflected the increasing sense of solidarity and shared history among not only Japanese Americans, but other Asian Americans as well. The rise of taiko in the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the Civil Rights, Black Power and Asian American movements, ushering in a “quiet no more” generation of Asian American activists who challenged the “don’t rock the boat” attitude that had dominated previous generations in the aftermath of World War II. As Lisa Lowe claims,

“The social movements of the 1960s and 1970s brought together Asian American struggles with those of African Americans, Native Americans, and Chicano-Latinos in a concerted demand for racial equality and social justice. These movements challenged institutionalized racial segregation

and disenfranchisement through direct action and grassroots mobilization...and through the development of 'resistance cultures.'"¹¹

I suggest that the rise of taiko, merging with the trend of Asian American¹² solidarity based on a shared history of socio-political oppression, became not so much a Japanese American art form as an Asian American one.

Paul Yoon, in his study on taiko and Asian American identifications, describes the mixed racial makeup of the New York taiko group Soh Daiko, where most members of Asian descent identify as Asian American rather than the more specific Japanese American, Chinese American, and so on:

"There is little or no perceived friction in a group of predominantly non-Japanese Asians performing a Japanese art form and labeling it as an Asian American group, particularly when a majority of the membership considers itself to be Asian American. Hence, things Japanese American and things Asian American are seen as, in most important ways, complementary if not coterminous."¹³

Taiko's development in America coincided with ethnic revitalization movements which encouraged a new Asian American consciousness. The (new) political awareness and ethnic solidarity of the late 1960s and early 1970s thus resulted in the formation of taiko groups which communicated an Asian American voice while still being distinctly, if distantly, related to Japanese taiko. As Yen Le Espiritu states in her book *Asian American Panethnicity*, "Because panethnic groups are new groups, any real or perceived cultural commonality cannot lay claim to a primordial origin. Instead, panethnic unity is forged primarily through the symbolic reinterpretation of a group's common history, particularly when this history involves racial subjugation."¹⁴ Given that taiko in America is a hybridized art form, composed primarily of Asian Americans, and since most of my informants view it as such, I will refer to taiko as an Asian American art form in this thesis.

1.2 METHODOLOGY

For this thesis I used a variety of research methods to examine the role and function of taiko in America, including practical study of taiko drumming in both Japan and America, intensive ethnographic field research, concert and rehearsal attendance, archival research, transcription and analysis of musical sources, and interviews with numerous taiko practitioners.

Field research in San Jose, California through an Arts and Sciences Advisory Council Award (May through August 2007) allowed me to observe rehearsals and performances of San Jose Taiko, one of the most prominent professional taiko groups in America, as well as conduct personal interviews with numerous members. I also carried out ethnographic research with Eden Aoba Taiko of San Leandro, California, a small, recreational community group whose leader is an Issei. During this time I was also able to attend the 2007 Intercollegiate Taiko Invitational at University of California, Los Angeles, where I had the opportunity to meet and talk with numerous taiko practitioners from eleven different collegiate groups and observe workshops as well as the final performance. I also attended the 2007 North American Taiko Conference in Seattle, Washington, where I observed workshops of both American and Japanese taiko practitioners, conducted interviews, and attended several forums and concert performances.

My qualifications for research include four years of practical taiko study, both in Japan where I was a member of the semi-professional taiko group Soshin Daiko in Mie

Prefecture (2003-2005) and in Honolulu where I was a training member and performer with the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble (2005-2007).

I based my musical transcriptions on DVD and audio recordings, both commercial and private, of taiko ensembles performances. In addition to the taiko drums featured in these pieces, I have also notated the numerous other percussion and melodic instruments. I have notated each piece in a Western staff notation format.

Romanization of Japanese names and terms follows the modified Hepburn system. Italicization conforms to the style used in anthropology, with the first usage of Japanese words in italics. Japanese terms, genres, and names of instruments will not be italicized after the first usage. All translations from the Japanese are my own unless otherwise noted. When combining the root word “taiko” with prefixes, it is important to note that the “t” becomes a “d” (shime taiko becomes *shimedaiko*, chu taiko becomes *chudaiko*, and so on).

1.3 INSTRUMENTS

Taiko drums used in American can generally be divided into two categories: *byoudaiko* (tacked head) and *shimedaiko* (lashed head). Most commonly used is the *nagado daiko* (long bodied drum), a nailed head drum often referred to as the *chudaiko* (middle sized drum). Initially, the drum bodies were carved out of a single piece of wood, but this costly and time consuming procedure is waning, and in America many groups make drums out of wine barrels.¹⁵ *Odaiko* (big fat drum) refers to the largest drum in the group and can be either nailed head or lashed head. The odaiko is usually

placed on a stand and played horizontally. The shimedaiko is roughly the same size as a snare drum, and generally played on a stand at hip level.

Other common instruments include the *atarigane* (or *kane*), a small hand-held gong usually used to keep time, *tetsuzutsu*, a piercing instrument made from three different sized pieces of pipe welded together, and *fue*, a transverse bamboo flute (also called *takebue* or *shinobue*). *Bachi*, the sticks used to strike the drum, vary in length, diameter, and type of wood.

1.4 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

The chapters that follow aim to chart the socio-political and personal motivations underlying the modern taiko phenomenon. The introductory Chapter 1 is designed to historicize the taiko movement both in Japan and America and establish its contribution to the discourse on musical identity in the diaspora. Chapter 2 outlines the history of Japanese Americans in the post World War II era, then maps the development and evolution of taiko from the late 1960s to the present in relation to critical theory and recent cultural studies discourse. I use San Jose Taiko as a case study in establishing taiko as a phenomenon and byproduct of the ethnic revitalization movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and argue that taiko's hybridized nature prevents it from belonging to any singular ethnic community. I include transcription and analysis of San Jose Taiko's "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" performed in 2003 in Berkeley, California. Chapter 3 is a study of gender in taiko, and addresses the issue of the large number of women who play taiko in America as well as the concepts of masculinity and femininity in the aesthetics and

performativity of taiko. I use Judith Butler's theory that all gender is performed to suggest that taiko players at times put on markers of masculinity or femininity during practice and performance. I analyze and transcribe a 2003 performance of "Tsunami" by San Francisco Taiko Dojo, included in the commercially released "Big Drum" DVD. Chapter 4 addresses the Japanese American National Museum's (Los Angeles, California) "Big Drum: Taiko in the United States" exhibition of 2005, focusing on representational politics and the concept of musical identity in both the local and global community. I analyze and transcribe the piece "Winds of Change," composed by Kenny Endo. In Chapter 5, a summary of the study, I argue that taiko is constantly changing and adapting to its surroundings. Taiko today represents not only the culmination of four decades of development and growth across America, but also embodies the interrelation of race, identity, and gender at the heart of musical identity in the diaspora.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE

While conducting research in the taiko community over the last several years, I was constantly reminded of the personal nature of playing taiko, and the fact that for most, playing taiko is not just about the music or the physicality. Among most of my informants, there has always been a sense of personal investment in nurturing this art form; taiko is reflexive and intimate. I believe this to be true of many art forms, and to a great extent in taiko, whose practice in America is dynamic, flexible, and deeply intertwined with fluctuations in the social and political arenas. Having studied taiko in a rural community in Japan, I was overwhelmed and intrigued to discover the vast range of

cultural, social, and political motivations that have bearing on taiko in America. Having seen a visible and conscious connection to Japanese roots in many taiko groups, I also found groups composed of entirely non-Asian Americans, practicing with no *sensei* (teacher or master), or playing a repertoire that bore no resemblance to Japanese drumming. Furthermore, I saw small community groups that had an Issei teacher but lacked group cohesion and skill. How could I, as a researcher, make sense of these incongruities?

This thesis attempts to make sense of these incongruities in a way that provides insight into the Asian American experience. A study of taiko in America will demonstrate the complexities involved in musical and physical self-expression and the renegotiation of identity through a musical framework. First, we examine the recent history of Japanese Americans in the post World War II era and how it gave rise to taiko as a medium for identity construction.

¹ http://www.taiko.com/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=39 (accessed February 12, 2008).

² William Malm, *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (New York: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959).

³ Eta Harich-Schneider, *A History of Japanese Music* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

⁴ Shigeo Kishibe, *The Traditional Music of Japan* (Tokyo: Kokusai Bunka Shinkokai, 1969).

⁵ Christine Yano, "Japanese Bon Dance Music in Hawaii: Continuity, Change, and Variability" (master's thesis, University of Hawaii, 1984).

⁶ Kenny Endo, “Yodan Uchi’: A Contemporary Composition for Taiko” (master’s thesis, University of Hawaii, 1999), 21.

⁷ Kenny Endo studied taiko in the 1970s with Kinnara Taiko and San Francisco Taiko Dojo before moving to Japan from 1980 to 1990, where he studied with Sukeroku Taiko and O Edo Sukeroku Taiko of Tokyo. He moved to Honolulu in 1990, and since then has set up a taiko school, Taiko Center of the Pacific, and a semi-professional taiko group, Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble.

⁸ http://www.taiko.com/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=39 (accessed February 3, 2008).

⁹ Endo, “Yodan Uchi,” 23.

¹⁰ Endo, “Yodan Uchi,” 22.

¹¹ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 22-3.

¹² See Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992).

¹³ Paul Yoon, “She’s Really Become Japanese Now!”: Taiko Drumming and Asian American Identifications,” *American Music* 19 (2001): 426.

¹⁴ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*, 9.

¹⁵ Kinnara Taiko is credited with the innovation of using wine barrels as drum bodies.

ETHNIC IDENTITY IN THE AMERICAN TAIKO MOVEMENT

2.1 ASIAN AMERICAN IDENTITY IN THE POST-WORLD WAR II ERA

The American taiko movement has become a fixture of the Asian American movement as well as the contemporary music scene. The formation of taiko groups, although preceding the formal Japanese American wartime redress movement (1970-1983),¹ attempted to establish an Asian American voice amid the changing American geopolitical landscape. The internment of Japanese Americans and Japanese nationals by the US government from 1942 to 1946 had imposed limitations based on fear, prejudice and discrimination. For Japanese Americans, the period following the war from 1945 to 1959 was characterized by changes in thinking about discriminatory practices, a rise of ethnic awareness, and a reevaluation of the goals of American society, according to Japanese American historian Harry Kitano.² He also identifies the period from 1960 to 1980 as one of liberal pluralism in which the American government actively acknowledged civil rights. In addition, fair employment legislation and affirmative action programs supported a new generation of Japanese Americans who comprised the “model minority.”³

The quest for formal acknowledgement and apology by the US government for wartime internment coincided with a period of ethnic awareness related to the affirmation of Japanese American ethnic identity. Within the Japanese American community, the

redress movement sparked an increased sense of pride in the motherland of Japan. As most of the redress recipients were *Nisei* (second-generation Japanese Americans) who generally aspired to Americanize their families in the spirit of conformity, their children, the *Sansei* (third-generation Japanese Americans), were instrumental in cultivating, developing and reconnecting with Japanese cultural heritage. In her study of *Sansei* children of inmates, Yasuko Takezawa argues that “the more recent reaffirmation of ethnic identity and sense of community among the *Sansei*...is a cultural product of their reconceptualization of their forebears’ suffering and subsequent victory in acknowledgement of this from the Government.”⁴ In Takezawa’s view, the *Sansei*, aware of the struggles of their parents and grandparents, felt invested in nurturing forms of cultural heritage that held a sense of nostalgia for the members of the ethnic community.

Kelsey Furuta, a *Yonsei* (fourth-generation Japanese American) from Seattle who has been playing taiko since the age of ten, confirms that taiko has been a formative process in the development of her self-image and identity as a Japanese American:

“As a *Yonsei* from the Pacific Northwest, playing taiko has such deep meaning to me that is related to my background. For me, playing taiko is very closely related to and intertwined with my Japanese American identity. American taiko flourished during the Civil Rights Movement, and especially in the Pacific Northwest it was a new outlet for empowerment and community strength during the redress movement...I hold this piece of history very close to me and why I play taiko.”⁵

Taiko performance thus allows Furuta to participate in a collective declaration of Japanese American ethnic identity and community power.

Lisa Lowe’s 1996 book *Immigrant Acts* discusses the intersection of legal, political, economic and cultural meanings in the process of Asian immigration to and assimilation within America. According to Lowe, the narrative of the cultural integration of Asian immigrants is negated by their actual position “outside the cultural and racial

boundaries of the nation.” Furthermore, she claims that the distance thus enacted creates a space for the rearticulation of Asian American identity:

“Rather than attesting to the absorption of cultural difference into the universality of the national political sphere as the ‘model minority’ stereotype would dictate, the Asian immigrant – at odds with the cultural, racial, and linguistic forms of the nation – emerges in a site that defers and displaces the temporality of assimilation. This distance from the national culture constitutes Asian American culture as an alternative formation that produces cultural expressions materially and aesthetically at odds with the resolution of the citizen in the nation. Rather than expressing a ‘failed’ integration of Asians into the American cultural sphere, this distance preserves Asian American culture as an alternative site where the palimpsest of lost memories is reinvented, histories are fractured and retraced, and the unlike varieties of silence emerge into articulation.”⁶

The preservation of Asian American culture resulting from the marginalization of Asian Americans holds significant meaning for the manifestation of cultural identity in art forms such as taiko. As Lowe states, “In light of the importance of American national culture and its institutions...the contradictory history of Asian Americans produces cultural forms that are materially and aesthetically at odds with the resolution of the citizen to the nation.” She goes on to say that due to the history of racialization among Asian Americans, “sites of minority cultural production are at different distances from the canonical nationalist project of resolution.”⁷ This supports the notion that taiko reflects the historical adversity suffered by Asian Americans, and in doing so, resists insinuation into the dominant American narrative.

The period liberal pluralism of the 1960s and 1970s coincided with the Civil Rights Movement and other ethnic revitalization movements in which ethnic minority groups reexamined their positions in American society and banded together through the solidarity of their shared histories: “As Japanese Americans, we found it possible to examine our own history in relation to civil rights. During this period the consciousness-raising activities of groups such as the Manzanar Committee and the political and legal actions of organizations such as the Japanese American Citizens League and National

Council for Japanese American Redress have provided channels through which we could express the hurt, anger, and frustration we experienced during World War II.”⁸

Therefore, I argue that this period of social and political activism led to the formation of taiko ensembles where Japanese Americans were often conceived of as part of an Asian American whole. Despite taiko’s Japanese roots, the development of ensemble taiko drumming in America was completely new, and its loudness and dynamism was essential in creating a new Asian American voice. The resultant re-examination of ethnic and social identities had significant bearing on the simultaneous challenging and development of cultural art forms such as taiko.

2.2 RACIAL DYNAMICS, DIASPORA, AND ETHNIC REVITALIZATION MOVEMENTS

During the period of liberal pluralism in 1960s and 1970s America, Asian Americans came to more actively question their racialization in American society. Although Asian Americans had long questioned their role in America, this period ushered in a new era of political activism that allowed Asian Americans to publicly challenge their social identity. According to sociologists Michael Omi and Howard Winant,

“Racial dynamics are quite visible in social life. They cause uncertainty in the minds of individuals subject to them...They confront institutions, local communities and families with deep-seated conflicts and agonizing dilemmas...They inspire movements. These individuals, groups, institutions and movements are moved...to make new interpretations of racial meanings, to understand the meaning of race and racial identity in new ways. Once reinterpreted, rearticulated, racial meanings are disrupted and space for political contestation is opened.”⁹

This challenging of identity and position led to the formation of the Asian American Movement (starting in mid-1960s). As Asian Americans banded together in solidarity, some moved toward radicalism as they focused on rearticulating their identity rather than

continually trying to assimilate into American society: "Instead of seeking to be integrated into the institutions and processes of the wider society, many of them realized that a more attainable aim was to make a place for themselves in America's ethnic pluralistic society through the development of a unique ethnic identity and counterculture. The Movement gave them an unprecedented means of developing a pan-Asian consciousness, changing them from Asian ethnics into Asian Americans."¹⁰ The Asian American Movement focused on developing an amended Asian American identity through participation in conferences, educational forums, and rallies, among other things. William Wei states that during the meetings of the Asian American Movement, individuals started the process of renegotiating their identity and supported each other through ethnic solidarity: "Asian Americans experienced a catharsis, releasing years of pent-up negative feelings about themselves and dissipating inner tensions and anxieties. They helped each other expose and deconstruct unconscious cultural assumptions."¹¹ This corroborates the previous argument that the solidarity provided by ethnic communities can serve as a familial support system.

Yuta Kato, a Yonsei from California who has been playing taiko with numerous groups since childhood, believes that although historically Asian Americans were brought together through the Civil Rights movement, elements of Japanese American history clearly diverge from Asian American history:

"Japanese American culture has a significant experience and now a strength that others have not experiences within the Asian American community [such as] the internment camps...so although the Civil Rights movement brought us all together within the Asian American community, there still are many different experiences and pains that still exist in some families and cultures. I can't say that the Japanese American identity is coterminous with the Asian American identity. In taiko, I try not to have such differences affect me, but all teachers have had different experiences, and all students have had different experiences. After belonging to different groups, I can only come to the conclusion that all people are different and that problems exist not just because of cultural differences, but human differences."¹²

Kato's comments emphasize the importance of individual experience and personal history. He also attests to the diverse nature of taiko in America, where teachers and students come from all backgrounds.

Yen Le Espiritu has argued that the governmental labeling of ethnic groups leads to collective group action: "When the state uses the ethnic label as a unit in economic allocations and political representations, ethnic groups find it both convenient and necessary to act collectively. In other words, the organization of political participation on the basis of ethnicity provides a rationale for, and indeed demands, the mobilization of political participation along ethnic lines."¹³ For Espiritu, state usage of the panethnic label "encourages individuals to broaden their identity to conform to the more inclusive ethnic designation."¹⁴ This concept supports the notion that taiko in America, although rooted in Japanese arts, has come to be viewed as an Asian American art form. Additionally, Espiritu notes that "while ethnicity may be an exercise of personal choice for Euro-Americans, it is not so for nonwhite groups in the United States. For these 'visible groups,' ethnicity is not always voluntary, but can be coercively imposed."¹⁵ This ethnic visibility plays an important role in taiko's performance practice, which I will discuss later. Espiritu connects the rise of the Asian American movement to other movements, such as the Civil Rights Movement:

"Prompted by broader political struggles and internal demographic changes, college students of Asian ancestry spearheaded the Asian American movement... Besides offering tactical lessons, the civil rights and the Black Power movements had a profound impact on the consciousness of Asian Americans, sensitizing them to racial issues. The anticolonial movements in Asia also stirred racial and cultural pride and provided a context for the emergence of the Yellow Power movement."¹⁶

Roy Hirabayashi notes the importance of university students of Asian descent in the development of San Jose Taiko. The rise of taiko in America, therefore, was both instigated because of and embraced by such ethnic revitalization movements. As PJ

Hirabayashi points out, it was not until she was a college student that she started to question her identity. In contrast to her childhood when she was urged by family to not “rock the boat,” during and after college she became involved in ethnic revitalization movements in the pursuit of her own individuality:

“[As a child], living within the parameters of the ‘rules’ left me quiet and shy, with little self esteem, no sense of adventure. I did not know that it was ‘okay’ to make choices to determine my own destiny...I have since come to realize and understand that cultural repression and oppression (such as the internment camps) had insidious and silent residual effects on my sense of wellness.”¹⁷

For Hirabayashi, taiko proved to be a forum in which she could communicate and express her personal identity without boundaries.

Within the context of the renegotiation of ethnic social identities, Asian Americans challenged stereotypes and mediated new positions in American society. According to Omi and Winant, “Racially based movements have as their most fundamental task the creation of new identities, new racial meanings, new collective subjectivity. Not only does the articulation of a new racial ideology involve the recombination of pre-existent meanings and identities, but it also draws on quite heterodox and unexpected sources.”¹⁸ Omi and Winant’s “new racial ideology” is closely connected to the rise of taiko in America, as Asian Americans utilized taiko both as a political tool and statement of ethnic identity. Omi and Winant argue that the interrelation of racial identity and social practice changes and is negotiated over time:

“This takes place, we argue, through *political contestation over racial meanings*. Such contestation occurs today throughout American society: it takes place at the level of ‘personal’ relationships (indeed it arises *within* individuals whose very identities and racial ‘beliefs’ are necessarily contradictory); it exists in ‘objective’ relationships such as work or political activity; and it occurs in cultural representation.”¹⁹

Thus taiko, as a cultural representation of Asian American identity, is heavily influenced by the renegotiation of racial meanings that pervades all aspects of life in America.

Lon Kurashige has pointed out how the racial reshaping of Asian American traditions and ideology contributed to their assimilation into American society: “Ethnic traditions, like those practiced during Nissei week, may have been both preserved and abandoned, but more often they were rearticulated on the basis of perceived opportunities to gain broad-based acceptance, legitimacy, and class status – an American dream for any subjugated minority.”²⁰ Ironically, the rearticulation of taiko enacts Asian American assimilation as Americans, thus contradicting the notion that taiko was once a pure performance of Asian American culture.

Taiko performance is attractive to Japanese Americans in part because it is connected to Japanese culture. An increasing number of Japanese American taiko practitioners are going overseas to Japan to study taiko with Japanese groups for an extended period of time, a process which holds high cultural capital within the American taiko community. This suggests a high degree of respect for learning directly from the (Japanese) source. According to Radano and Bohlman’s 2000 study, “In the language of nationalism, music that grows organically from the soil of a particular nation is *ipso facto* more natural, more authentic, because it is nourished by sources to which no other nation has access.”²¹ Referentialism to Japanese culture and philosophy is one of the primary reasons taiko holds such appeal for Japanese Americans, as it reflects an imagined Japan and provides a creative outlet for the expression of ethnic pride. For anthropologist James Clifford, diasporic groups in the new homeland can demonstrate resistance manifested in the theoretical reclaiming of the lost motherland.²² I argue that taiko performance allows Japanese Americans to create ties to Japan in the aftermath of the internment’s social injustices and within the context of ethnic revitalization movements. However, American

taiko is complicated by the fact that it is viewed as an Asian American art form, practiced by some non-Asians, and has always been a hybridized musical form. As Clifford states, “Whatever their ideologies of purity, diasporic cultural forms can never, in practice, be exclusively nationalist. They are deployed in transnational networks built from multiple attachments, and they encode practices of accommodation with, as well as resistance to, host countries and their norms.”²³ This illustrates American taiko’s adoption of non-Asian musical material and ideology while simultaneously maintaining musical and ideological ties to Japan. In the following section, we will look at San Jose Taiko as a case study of taiko amid ethnic revitalization movements.

2.3 CASE STUDY: SAN JOSE TAIKO

San Jose Taiko of California was founded in 1973 as the third North American taiko group, after San Francisco Taiko Dojo (1968) and Kinnara Taiko of Los Angeles (1969). They started at the Buddhist Church under Reverend Hiroshi Abiko and quickly grew into a community activity, drawing primarily on Sansei students enrolled in San Jose State University. By training with Tanaka-sensei of San Francisco Taiko Dojo, San Jose Taiko learned physical *kata* (form) as well as the philosophy of taiko. Under Executive Director Roy Hirabayashi and Artistic Director PJ Hirabayashi, San Jose Taiko is inspired by traditional Japanese drumming and encourages performers to “express the beauty and harmony of the human spirit through the voice of the taiko as they strive to create new dimensions in Asian American movement and music.”²⁴ San Jose Taiko’s repertoire extends far beyond traditional Japanese drumming; stylistic elements of

African, Balinese, Brazilian, Latin and jazz music are fused with Japanese styles and rhythms to create a contemporary hybridized musical tradition, “bridging many styles while still resonant of the Asian soul in America.”²⁵ In addition to utilizing diverse musical styles in their compositions, San Jose Taiko also collaborates with many international musicians, dancers and choreographers while touring as well as on independent projects: “To increase its artistic strength, share in a variety of creative processes, create a diverse network of fellow performing artists, and reach new audiences, San Jose Taiko frequently participates in collaborations that cut across artistic disciplines. Working with an ‘open mind and open heart,’ San Jose Taiko strives to expand, extend, and enhance the boundaries of its art.”²⁶ Collaborations have occurred with renowned Japanese taiko performers and groups such as Kodo, Ondekoza, Eitetsu Hayashi, and Oedo Sukeroku Taiko, as well as American artists and organizations Kenny Endo, American Conservatory Theater, The San Jose Museum of Art, and Keith Terry, among many others. As a non-profit organization, San Jose Taiko has received numerous grants from such organizations as The National Endowment for The Arts, the Rockefeller Foundation, and the Arts Council of Santa Clara County, attesting to their artistic and managerial prowess.

One of the primary goals of San Jose Taiko’s mission is to maintain strong ties with the community. To that end, they have established numerous programs in addition to the professional performing group, including Junior Taiko, in which members of the performing group teach children aged 8 to 18, Summer Internship, in which student interns learn about operating a non-profit arts organization, School Outreach, designed to educate students about the history of taiko, and Public Workshops, which include a

history of taiko, demonstration, and hands-on experience.²⁷ In Japan, taiko drumming has traditionally been performed at festivals. San Jose Taiko also adheres to the more traditional role of taiko by frequently performing at festivals held in the Asian American community in addition to formal concerts and twice-yearly tours. In fact, groups like San Jose Taiko credit the success in their recent growth in part to the exposure they receive through festival performance: “The growth of the art form owes much to the visibility that taiko groups have enjoyed at these celebrations, so San Jose Taiko gladly participates in these local events, as well as at multicultural and music/dance festivals, state fairs, and city celebrations throughout the country.”²⁸ The sense of indebtedness to the support of the Asian American community is clear and speaks to the importance of the community network in the development of taiko, which I discuss later.

2.4 SAN JOSE TAIKO: ETHNIC IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

One of the most notable aspects of American taiko is its hybridized form, which allows performers and composers to incorporate non-Japanese musical material in the way of instrumentation, choreography, and compositional techniques. As Roy Hirabayashi states about the development of San Jose Taiko: “[San Jose Taiko] was not based on any Japanese or Asian theory or musical context at all...For San Jose Taiko...that has been the strength of our music...we wanted to create a sound using our own experience...our musical experience comes from a Western or American or multicultural experience...trying to understand what the taiko is about.”²⁹ By pointing out that even as Japanese Americans, they had limited understanding of the relatively

new art form of ensemble taiko drumming, Hirabayashi substantiates the fact that taiko in America is essentially a created and creative process, although rooted in Japan. In addition, many taiko players, such as PJ Hirabayashi, also remark on the importance of understanding and appreciating the historical foundation of taiko: "It is important to understand where 'taiko' comes from – the historical roots in Japan and the diaspora of taiko. This gives a holistic understanding of past-present-future...it also gives me a foundation of substance and purpose for what I do."³⁰ Understanding American taiko performance within the larger context of Japanese taiko thus gives performers like Hirabayashi a broader sense of historical purpose. Furthermore, although San Jose Taiko has established a name for itself in the contemporary American music genre, their members continue to acknowledge the Japanese origin of taiko. The resulting hybridization speaks to the tendency of minority cultures to adopt and absorb elements of the dominant culture: "Subcultures borrow from the dominant culture, inflecting and inverting its signs to create a bricolage in which the signs of the dominant culture are 'there' and just recognizable as such, but constituting a quite different, subversive, whole."³¹ This accounts for the fact that American taiko performance is viewed primarily as an Asian American art form despite the fact that many stylistic musical elements are borrowed from American culture.

The resurgence of interest in Japanese American ethnic identity was central to the American taiko movement. Part of taiko's appeal lies in its loudness and dynamism; this challenged the dominant stereotype of Asian Americans as quiet and submissive. PJ Hirabayashi, whose parents were interned during the war, cites taiko's expressive quality and political potentiality as a way of communicating a new sense of self: "For me, the

realness factor of American taiko was that taiko in America allowed me to experience and understand my identity as a Japanese American...the American taiko was very real, an instrument of expression that unabashedly unleashed our historical oppression in America. We were able to openly celebrate our diversity while reverberating joy and empowerment for all to see.”³² She also recalls that while growing up, her parents never encouraged her to pursue activities of Japanese origin, believing that they didn’t want her to experience the same social injustices they had encountered.

Community involvement has played a major role in the advancement and survival of taiko groups in America as well as shaping the social identity of those involved. The Japanese American community is a source of ethnic solidarity, yet also serves as an agent of socialization to the expected norms and values of American life. The formation of Japantowns in America arose not only out of economic necessity, but also for the purpose of maintaining Japanese culture and community. According to Roy Hirabayashi,

“For the Issei (first-generation Japanese American), although many did learn English, Japanese culture was a primary way for them to live, and that’s why Japantowns are created...the Nisei community was being taught an American way of life, and in order to make it in this society you have to be like an American, you saw a lot of Nisei ignoring heritage in order to assimilate...the third generation has had this resurgence of interest in culture and identity that was lost in the second generation.”³³

As ethnomusicologist and social anthropologist Martin Stokes claims, “Musics are invariably communal activities that bring people together in specific alignments, whether as musicians, dancers or listening audiences. The ‘tuning in’ through music of these social alignments can provide a powerful affective experience in which social identity is literally ‘embodied.’”³⁴ Community support has been integral to the success and longevity of San Jose Taiko, housed in San Jose’s Japantown. According to PJ Hirabayashi, “San Jose Taiko is considered by the City of San Jose as a cultural ambassador. Our members are trained not to perform for performance’s sake, but also to

consciously create connections through our playing. As a representative of culture and art, San Jose Taiko assists in the revitalization and reinvigoration of Japantown.”³⁵

Therefore, although San Jose Taiko is entwined with the Japantown community, they also represent the larger multi-ethnic community through their attempts to bridge cultures through performance.

2.5 CULTURAL AUTHORITY

The founders of the American taiko movement consistently credit its Japanese roots as central to its success, although its practice in America is multiethnic and it is perceived as an Asian American art form. Therefore, taiko’s position within America is unique since it allows Asian Americans to make sense of their diasporic situation, while performing an art form whose current practice is distinctly American. For Radano and Bohlman,

“Music fills the spaces between racial distinctiveness, and when it does, it undergoes another, albeit no less racialized, metaphysical transformation, which...generally falls under the rubric of hybridization or hybridity. Thus, music is a domain that different races, depending on interpretation and case, can potentially share, appropriate, and dominate; or that contains common syncretic practices...Music participates in many of the aesthetic and discursive constructions of race, and race provides one of the necessary elements in the construction of music.”³⁶

For example, many taiko groups in America include non-Japanese performers and incorporate diverse compositional styles. Some groups also wear non-traditional costumes, although many wear clothing such as the traditional Japanese *sarashi* (waist wrap), *donburi* (cotton top), and *nagapachi* (cotton pants). Japanese American taiko artist Kenny Endo frequently utilizes Japanese musical material such as rhythms from Edo bayashi (Tokyo festival music) or Hōgaku (classical drumming) in his compositions; however, he just as often uses funk or Latin rhythms. The selective picking and choosing

from various cultural traditions suggests an elision between the Japanese source and the current Asian American dominated, multi-ethnic practice.

The issue of cultural authority and ownership has played a major role in the development of American taiko repertoire and performance practice. American taiko ensembles borrow Japanese tradition, norms, and customs, yet are geographically located in America and primarily composed of Asian American members. Thus, there is a silent struggle of two or more opposing cultural systems. For example, some groups maintain Japanese traditions such as greeting members with "*Ohayō gozaimasu*" (good morning), regularly cleaning the *dōjō* (practice space), and observing the *senpai-kōhai* (senior-junior) relationship hierarchy. One respondent, a Filipino-American, compares such formalities in Japan and America, noting that in Japan, they feel like a naturally ingrained part of social custom, whereas in America, they feel forced and artificial. When asked to describe any obstacles encountered while playing taiko, this respondent says "The requirement to say ohayo gozaimasu to every single person and since you are low ranked, you have to say it first! The whole formalization during practice was very difficult and I must say, I am still not used to it. These formalities constructed in many ways hinder the flow of practice because everyone has to discuss everything, but then no one wants to say anything because there is someone of higher rank."³⁷ The fact that this respondent, as a Filipino-American, struggled with formalized Japanese traditions suggests that protocol and methodology may be problematic in multi-ethnic American taiko. During my research, numerous informants commented on the difficulty and inefficiency of the *senpai-kōhai* relationship. One of the most common complaints was that since taiko

communities are closely knit, members often socialize outside of practice, and awkward situations can arise when social hierarchy is only selectively applied.

Such formalities are emblematic of the complex system of obligation, social hierarchy, and conformity in Japan. Many of the core values of Japanese social interactions have been transmitted, to some extent, to American taiko groups, where they are sometimes misunderstood or unappreciated: “The cultural roots of Japanese conceptions of the proper relationship between individuals and groups are found in a variant of Confucian ethics that places a high value on harmony, asceticism, and obligation. These values, in turn, have created a normative system that gives, from a Western individualistic perspective, an inordinate amount of attention to norms about interpersonal relationships, especially those concerned with the obligations of specific roles and statuses.”³⁸ Additionally, the group dynamic of taiko follows the Japanese sentiment that places the well-being of the collective group over that of the individual: “One value derives from the difference between a collective and an individual orientation. Self-needs for the Japanese are deemed to have a lesser priority than group needs.”³⁹

Regardless of the transmission of Japanese cultural norms to American groups and communities, however, the maintenance of such norms is constantly being challenged and renegotiated by assimilation to American way of life. In fact, some taiko groups, including San Jose Taiko, do not observe such Japanese customs as the senpai-kōhai relationship, preferring to treat every member as an equal and unique contributor to the art form. According to Roy Hirabayashi, “it was important not to bring into the art form some of the baggage that comes from Japanese classical art forms.”⁴⁰ Some

American taiko groups have viewed such Japanese customs as not only unnecessary, but also a potential hindrance to the group's harmony. Indeed, as previously mentioned, the incorporation of certain Japanese norms has proved controversial among some members of American taiko groups. The highly selective borrowing of only certain Japanese customs, those deemed beneficial to each individual group, illustrates the degree to which American taiko groups seek their own unique and individual persona.

Furthermore, the rapid spread of taiko groups across North America corroborates taiko's appeal for Asian Americans in all manner of communities. For example, many collegiate taiko groups have formed since the early 1990s, and every year, one university taiko group hosts the Intercollegiate Taiko Invitational. During my field research in the summer of 2007, I traveled to Los Angeles, where Kyodo Taiko and Yukai Daiko of the University of California, Los Angeles, were hosting nine other collegiate taiko groups for a weekend-long Invitational. The Invitational, established by Stanford Taiko in 1995, aims to offer taiko workshops and provide a forum for sharing ideas across the broader collegiate taiko community. According to the program notes written by members of the host groups, interaction between members of the taiko community is imperative: "We all come together this weekend to learn from one another and to grow together as a family. In addition we hope the groups can connect with the overall taiko community and fuse tradition with contemporary influences; so that the members of the collegiate teams can extend their perception of taiko beyond their current experience."⁴¹ Pictures in the program show young, collegiate taiko players energetically posing with their *happi* coats, *bachi*, and (often homemade) taiko drums. Some women even pose with the "peace-sign" hand gesture, the omnipresent favored pose in photos of young Japanese women, or

are playfully frolicking with friends. It is clear that each group is eager to showcase their energy and spirit, all the while “continuing to spread the art of taiko to the local community.” Some groups aim even higher, attempting to use taiko as a tool for advancing cultural relativism in their communities. University of California, San Diego’s program notes state, “While composing more songs that are original and growing in membership, Asayake Taiko hope to accomplish its mission statement: cultural awareness not only on the UCSD campus, but also in the greater San Diego community as well.”⁴²

Recent trends in the taiko world also include involvement in non-profit organizations. The best known of these is Kodo Arts Sphere America (KASA), an American public benefit non-profit corporation. According to the mission statement, “In today’s fast paced world of computers and information super highways, it is easy to forget our past, and to concentrate on electronic connections rather than interpersonal ones. KASA believes that the power of the taiko, and of the arts in general, is the power to unite people regardless of age, race or cultural background. The beat of the taiko is a common language we all speak, and a primal expression that links all human beings.”⁴³ KASA attempts to hearken back to a simpler time, with an idyllic natural setting unmarred and uncorrupted by technological advancements. This reminiscence suggests a sense of nostalgia for an era when a simpler way of life prevailed and individuals of any race could, through playing taiko, connect and communicate through a shared primordial sense of self. Ironically, the promulgation of this false history has proven an effective way for KASA to achieve transcultural as well as transnational connections through the medium of taiko music and movement.

2.6 RACE, AUTHENTICITY, AND THE VISUAL DOMAIN

Taiko performance presents any number of potentially problematic performer-audience relationships hierarchies. Russian theorist Mikhail Bakhtin claims that performer and audience are inherently entwined, communicating through a complex network of varying expressions of meaning and identity.⁴⁴ Looking at taiko performance through Bakhtin's theoretical framework suggests that not only gender roles, but also social and racial roles, can be both internally and externally constructed. In addition, Edward Said's theory of Orientalism in which the West and the Orient are culturally constructed through each others' difference, suggests how taiko can provide novelty to spectators.⁴⁵ Many informants told me that they often fielded requests for all Japanese, or Japanese-looking, groups during taiko performances. As Kato says, "Asian Americans have the same skin tone, and it is easy for us to be bunched up into one category. So I feel like, even though I am not sure, there is a joint effort due to the categorization made from the outside...we identify ourselves by how others view us."⁴⁶ This corroborates the earlier point that for the "visible" minority groups, ethnicity tends to be imposed. Therefore, since taiko is viewed as an Asian American art form, audiences often expect to see Asian American performers. Given the multi-ethnic makeup of many taiko groups and the diversity of audience members, the multiplicity of ethnic identity can problematize audience reception. If, as Bakhtin says, the world of art and the world of culture coexist in a fluid continuum, then to what extent are audience members viewing performers as cultural objects?

One performer is tall and blonde with blue eyes. Throughout the course of her taiko career, she remembers at times being questioned as to why she played taiko as a non-Japanese. In my own personal experiences as a non-Japanese playing taiko in both Japan and America, I was consistently confronted with curiosity as to my interest in taiko and Japanese culture. The Japanese American taiko players I communicated with were not asked to explain their interest in taiko; their ethnic heritage gave them an automatic cultural right to an art form that I, as a non-Japanese, had to justify. Ironically, I had spent more time studying taiko in Japan and spoke more Japanese than most members of my group. Furthermore, one informant told me that certain taiko groups will not accept members unless they are of Japanese ancestry. Of course, these groups claim that their basis for selection is ability and skill in taiko playing, but my informant relays that it is “common knowledge” and an unspoken rule that you can’t play with such groups unless you are Japanese American. These examples imply a tendency of both audience and performers to treat the physical body as a cultural property. Another practitioner told me that audience reception to taiko performance in the 70s was positive mainly due to novelty: “When I played with San Francisco Taiko Dojo, it was still in the early days of the taiko movement...we demonstrated a type of Japanese spirit that had not been seen publicly in the US...We were doing things that people had never seen Japanese/Japanese American people do before...Audiences were very receptive.”⁴⁷ The general audience identified taiko with Japanese Americans, and were thus surprised to see such a loud and dynamic performance by what they had stereotypically perceived to be a quiet and soft-spoken minority. The utility of taiko as an expressive art form as well as a way to communicate sense of self has proven to be effective in countering stereotypes. Next, I

analyze a piece by San Jose Taiko called “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” that illustrates the potential of taiko as both a spirited source of entertainment as well as a meaningful forum for expressing personal history.

2.7 ANALYSIS OF SAN JOSE TAIKO’S “EI JA NAI KA?”

San Jose Taiko’s “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” is composed and choreographed by PJ Hirabayashi, with lyrics by Yoko Fujimoto, of the groups Kodo and Hanayui in Japan. The phrase “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” literally translates to “isn’t it good?” and also, colloquially, to “ain’t it great!”, “why not?”, “isn’t it so?”, and “that’s right.” Japanese director Shohei Imamura’s 1981 film “Ei Ja Nai Ka” depicts a situation of civil strife in Japan in which the heavily taxed poor villagers took to the streets chanting “Ei Ja Nai Ka” and dancing in a demonstration of protest to unfair social conditions; this sense of having “nothing to lose” and acting in the moment inspired Hirabayashi to compose the taiko piece “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” According to Hirabayashi, “San Jose Taiko’s ‘Ei Ja Nai Ka?’ chant and dance captures and celebrates the virtue of living in the moment.”⁴⁸

I have observed three live performances of “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” during the course of my research; one performance on each day of San Jose’s Obon festival on July 14 and 15, 2007, and one formal concert performance at Seattle’s Benaroya Hall during the 2007 North American Taiko Conference Taiko Jam concert. Additionally, I have watched a DVD recording of “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” performed at the 30th Anniversary Concert at San Jose’s Center for the Performing Arts during October 2003.⁴⁹ I have also studied a version of “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” recorded on audio CD by the Triangle Project (Yoko

Fujimoto, PJ Hirabayashi, and Nobuko Miyamoto), which I will further discuss later. For this analysis I focus on my transcription of “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” performed during the 30th Anniversary Concert in 2003.

“Ei Ja Nai Ka?” is a piece in 4/4 time consisting of music, chant, and dance. The piece utilizes a large *ojimedaiko* (lashed head odaiko, hereafter referred to simply as odaiko) set horizontally on rollers on its side, so both drum heads face out. Additional instruments include one chudaiko, set in the *beta* (vertical) position far upstage, one pair of hand-held cymbals, fue (Japanese shinobue, or flute), and bachi (drumsticks), clicked together rhythmically by the performers throughout the course of the piece. The fue plays a melody based on a pentatonic scale; the part is improvised with the exception of the vocal section, during which it is precomposed. One of the most notable features of this piece is the centrality of the *ojimedaiko*; nearly each performer takes turns soloing on it and it remains the focal point of the piece throughout the performance. The chant in this version consists mainly of the phrases “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” and “Sore!” (a popular *kiai*, or vocalization, in many taiko pieces), with a small amount of additional syllabic chant based on the phrase “Tottemo Yoi” (Very good). The full lyrics, which I discuss later, are implemented in select performances. The choreographed dance in the middle of the piece derives from Japanese folk dances based on work movements. According to Hirabayashi, “I wanted to arrange a dance that could celebrate our Japanese American history, giving tribute to our first pioneers from Japan to America to work in hard manual labor – fishing, farming, Southern Pacific Railroad.”⁵⁰ For the purpose of this transcription, I analyze “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” in three layers: physical, textual and vocal, and musical. I divide my analysis into four main sections, the processional, the opening

solos, the vocal and dance section, and the closing section, and I have distinguished four performers who have significant solos on the odaiko as A, B, C, and D.

2.7.1 PROCESSIONAL

Taiko drumming is known for its energy and physicality in both formal concert and festival performances, and “*Ei Ja Nai Ka?*” is no exception. The piece opens with one performer, playing hand-held cymbals, leaping out from the wings and dancing around the stage in a sprightly, upbeat fashion, all while simultaneously setting the rhythm with a repetitive swung eighth-note pattern played on the cymbals. Following his entrance, other performers come onstage, some dancing in rhythm while holding their *bachi*, and some working together to set up the drums. The odaiko is wheeled onstage in a sort of procession; one performer pushes the drum around in a circle as it is played by two performers, playing a unison abstraction of the cymbal rhythm emphasizing the offbeats (see mm. 3-24). As the odaiko is wheeled around into position, a *chudaiko* is set far upstage behind the other performers and one performer begins to play on it the same rhythm as the cymbals (m. 8), the *fue* player takes his position upstage, all the while continuing his improvised melody, and the other performers crouch down on either side of the odaiko, clicking their *bachi* together and giving *kiai* to energize the two odaiko players. The visible cooperation among the performers in carrying out the odaiko procession reflects not only preplanned stage directions, but also illustrates the onstage collaboration that has become a hallmark of taiko performance practice. The drums are heavy and unwieldy; to move the equipment without collective effort would not be

feasible. Even during rehearsals, I claim that moving equipment becomes a way to strengthen group relationships and establish camaraderie. I suggest that this teamwork, in addition to being pragmatic, allows the odaiko to be showcased and also represents a motif of “togetherness” that is further developed throughout the piece.

2.7.2 OPENING SOLOS

After the processional ends, the two performers on the odaiko (A and B) take turns soloing for four bars each (mm.25-32). All of the solos in “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” are improvised. Performers A and B then switch sides, taking nearly two bars to dance around the odaiko and take their partner’s place on the opposite drum head (mm. 33-34). A and B then play a two bar pattern of swung eighth-notes in which A plays on the downbeat and B plays on the offbeat, thus creating a hocket effect and alternating to fill in a composite line of eighth-notes (mm. 35-36). They then switch sides again (mm. 37-38), after which they each solo for two bars. This exchange between A and B reinforces my earlier suggestion that the piece is about togetherness and group cohesion. In almost all taiko pieces, it is necessary to listen to ones fellow group members; the parts often tend to be interrelated, with different *instruments* and different performers each playing a part that contributes to a composite whole. Additionally, the musical strategy of call and response is employed to great effect in “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” as soloists respond not only to other soloists, but to other performers who cheer them on with *kiai*. This principle is especially true in “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” as the end of one solo leads directly into the next, and movement around the odaiko is performed as a duet (at least between performers A and

B). The piece is choreographed in detail, and a keen awareness of one's fellow performers is essential to creating a seamless performance.

From mm. 43-52, other performers, who have until now remained in their crouching position around the odaiko, clicking their bachi and rooting on A and B with kiai, now take turns soloing on the odaiko for two bars each. At m. 53, performer C takes his place on the odaiko, playing a four bar solo cue that leads into the vocal section. A crescendo, coinciding with the rush of eleven performers upstage, signals the start of the vocal section.

2.7.3 VOCAL AND DANCE SECTION

The vocal section consists of set lyrics, choreographed dancing, fue melody, and supportive rhythm played by the odaiko (performer C), cymbals, and chudaiko. The lyrics for this particular performance are taken from two different pieces, Yoko Fujimoto's lyrics from "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" and PJ Hirabayashi's lyrics from "Tottemo Yoi." Essentially, the only words used in this performance are "Tottemo Yoi," "Sore," "Hai," and "Ei Ja Nai Ka," and their abstractions (mm. 57-84). "Sore" is a common vocalization used during taiko performance that has no semantic meaning in this context; it is basically a common kiai. "Hai" means "yes," but in this context serves to reinforce the main phrases, "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" and "Tottemo Yoi" as another kiai. The frenzied repetition of "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" and "Tottemo Yoi" culminate in a vocal abstraction of the phrase "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" (mm. 81-84) in which the odaiko drops out and the performers rapidly chant "Ei Ja Nai Ka" inserted with "Tchya" on numerous offbeats. This breaking

up of a textual phrase with rapid, staccato sounds that have no semantic meaning is, as PJ Hirabayashi puts it, an example of “crazy *gaijin* (foreigner) creative expression.”⁵¹

Although the full lyrics for “*Ei Ja Nai Ka?*” are not utilized in this performance, I include and analyze them here as they have significant bearing on the choreography of this performance. According to Hirabayashi, San Jose Taiko performs different versions of “*Ei Ja Nai Ka?*” with different lyrics depending on the performance. The full set of lyrics, composed by Yoko Fujimoto and translated by Yukie Nakanishi, are as follows:

I.

Ha---yume wo kakaete, Ha---aranami koeta.

Hold onto the dream, going over the rough waves

A sora ei ja nai ka—Grandpa---ei ja nai ka

Ei ja nai ka ---Grandma---ei ja nai ka

Asemizu tarashite, Honemi wo shimazu,

Sweat dripping, working hard without sparing yourself

Ushiro sugata de oshiete kureta ---Nihon no kokoro

You taught me showing your back to me—the Japanese heart

II.

Ha---Asamo Hayo kara, Ha---Kibako wo katsugu

From early morning, carrying a wooden box

A sora ei ja nai ka—Ichigo tsumi---ei ja nai ka

Picked strawberries

Ei ja nai ka—Hito hako nan sento ---ei ja nai ka

One box, how much?

Makka na minori ni teyubi mo somaru,

The red harvest dyes our fingers

Senaka nobaseba yuuhi ga akaku, nakama wo someru

The red sunset dyes the stretched backs of our comrades

III.

Ha---kemuri hakidashi, Ha---unari wo agete

Smoke puffs out, making a roar

A sora ei ja nai ka—Railroad---ei ja nai ka

Ei ja nai ka—Steam engine---ei ja nai ka

Nishi kara higashi e nobiyuku senro ni,

The railroad expands from west to east,

Kyou wo tsumikomi hakonde yukuyo, ashita e mukatte

Carrying today's load toward tomorrow.

IV.

Ha---taiko tatakeba, Ha---ukitatsu kokoro

If the taiko is hit, hearts are gladdened

A sora ei ja nai ka---Don Don---ei ja nai ka

Ei ja nai ka---Teretsuku Ten Ten---ei ja nai ka

Odoru ahou to iwaretatte, ei ja nai ka

Even if we're called dancing fools

Kore ga yameraryoka, yameraremashouka

How can we stop? How can we ever stop?

Tatako yo, Odoro yo!

Let's beat the taiko! Let's dance!

The lyrics are in line with Hirabayashi's goal of creating a piece depicting the struggles of hard manual labor that many Japanese Americans underwent along the Pacific coast. For example, the second verse describes picking strawberries in the fields, with vivid imagery detailing the physical impact on the Japanese American body: the red dye of the strawberries staining fingers, and the red sun coloring the backs of the workers as they lean over the fields. The third verse describes railroad work, and the role Japanese American workers played in expanding the rail from the West coast to the East, "Carrying today's load toward tomorrow." In the first verse, a sense of gratitude is expressed toward the Issei, the grandparents of the Sansei, for their hard work in their new country. This verse honors Issei immigrants who worked hard in order to create a stable life for future generations; it also suggests the transmission of knowledge and work ethic through the final line of the first verse, "You taught me showing your back to me – the Japanese heart."⁵² Finally, the fourth verse incorporates the taiko, drawing upon the taiko's power to lift people's spirits. Additionally, this verse includes kuchishoka (mnemonic syllables used in learning taiko) such as "Don Don" and "Teretsuku Ten Ten," framed by shouts of "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" and thus bringing the taiko as an instrument

into the piece. The final lines, “Even if we’re called dancing fools / How can we stop? How can we ever stop? / Let’s beat the taiko! Let’s dance!” illustrate the role of taiko in creating a positive source of energy among Japanese Americans.⁵³ Through the performance of “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” San Jose Taiko honors first-generation Japanese American immigrants who struggled to maintain ethnic identity even in the face of adversity. As such, the taiko in this song is strongly aligned with Japanese American ethnic pride.

As I mentioned before, the combination of staccato, syllabic chanting, not commonly found in Japanese music, with simple Japanese language in “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” suggests that this version is a hybridized taiko piece; it incorporates elements that are referential to Japanese as well as American culture. However, the use of fairly common and mainstream Japanese phrases such as “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” and “Tottemo Yoi” indicate that San Jose Taiko may be trying to simplify the text in order to reach a larger audience, and one that is less likely to understand more complex Japanese text. One performance of this piece at the San Jose Japantown Obon festival included the full set of Japanese lyrics, sung enka-style by a microphoned woman accompanied by taiko. However, both of the formal concert hall performances I observed included only this limited text. It seems as though in a formal, onstage setting, San Jose Taiko uses the abbreviated lyrics, in a more broken-up staccato chant style, in order to energize both the group and the audience, whereas in more intimate settings where the number of Japanese speakers is likely to be higher, such as Obon festival, they include the full set of lyrics.

The dance accompanying the vocal section derives from the dances choreographed for both “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” and “Tottemo Yoi.” The dancers are positioned

in two rows, six in the back, and five in the front, with the cymbal player at the center. As Hirabayashi points out, the backline dancers perform the choreography for “Tottemo Yoi” when the chant occurs, while the front line consistently performs the choreography for “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” The choreography is consistent with the full set of lyrics that depict the hard physical labor performed by Japanese immigrants. The dancers perform gestures such as shielding their eyes from the sun, digging in the soil, and carrying heavy baskets. However, although the dance reflects hardships, it also maintains a positive mood, as the dancers continue to move in time with the swung eighth-note ostinato, and counteract the movements of labor with loud, energetic chant. I argue that the juxtaposition of the portrayal of labor, represented by certain dance moves, with the upbeat lyrics, sends a message of resilience and survival. This piece is a cathartic performance and a tribute to the struggles of previous generations of Japanese immigrants and Japanese Americans.

2.7.4 CLOSING SECTION

“Ei Ja Nai Ka?” moves into the closing section at m. 85, when the dancers move into a circle upstage and, dancing around in a circle, take turns hitting the odaiko (which, during a two bar break from mm. 81-82, was turned 90 degrees so that one drum head is facing the audience). The circle of performers leap around the drum head, each hitting it twice, contributing to a composite quarter-note pattern (mm. 85-89). From m. 90, the performers hit the odaiko only once each, on beats 2 and 4, and the circle gradually shrinks as one performer leaps out at each rotation (mm. 90-97). Finally, only one

performer (D) remains, who plays the closing solo (mm. 98-108), after which the four performers remaining onstage (fue, odaiko chudaiko, and cymbal players) pose briefly before springing into the next piece.

As I have shown in Chapter 2, ethnic revitalization movements have played an important role in the development of taiko in America. The historic racialization of Asian Americans led to a sense of solidarity based on a shared history of socio-political oppression. In the 1960s and 1970s, a resurgence of ethnic pride led in part to the development of taiko groups which allowed Asian Americans to counter stereotypes and engage in the renegotiation of their personal and ethnic identities. Through analysis of San Jose Taiko's "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" I have shown how the American taiko movement created a space for an Asian American awareness, offering the flexibility to frame personal history within a musical context. The performance of "Ei Ja Nai Ka?" is reflective of the past while showcasing the collaborative nature at work in many of today's taiko ensembles. The sense of musical and physical collaboration will be further explored along the lines of gender constructs in the following chapter.

¹ John Tateishi, "The Japanese American Citizens League and the Struggle for Redress," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry Kitano (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 191-95.

² Harry Kitano, "The Effects of Evacuation on the Japanese Americans," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry Kitano (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 156.

³ The "model minority" trope has been criticized in recent years for its "determination of Asian Americans as a homogenous group" (Lowe 1996: 68) and its "divisiveness vis-à-vis other ethnic groups" (Yano 2006: 251). According to Lowe, in light of the history of exclusionary acts toward Asian Americans, "The 'model minority' myth that constructs Asians as the most successfully assimilated minority group is a contemporary version of this homogenization of Asians" (1996: 68).

⁴ Yasuko Takezawa, "Children of Inmates: The Effects of the Redress Movement among Third-Generation Japanese Americans," *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader* (2000): 300.

⁵ Kelsey Furuta, email correspondence with author, November 26, 2006.

⁶ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 6.

⁷ Lowe, *Immigrant Acts*, 31-2.

⁸ Amy Iwasaki Mass, "Psychological Effects of the Camps on the Japanese Americans," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry Kitano (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 161.

⁹ Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York: Routledge, 1986), 69.

¹⁰ William Wei, *The Asian American Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 45.

¹¹ Wei, *The Asian American Movement*, 46.

¹² Yuta Kato, email correspondence with author, February 10, 2008.

¹³ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992), 10.

¹⁴ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*, 11.

¹⁵ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*, 6.

¹⁶ Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity*, 25.

¹⁷ PJ Hirabayashi, email correspondence with author, August 26, 2007.

¹⁸ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 85-6.

¹⁹ Omi and Winant, *Racial Formation in the United States*, 69.

²⁰ Lon Kurashige, *Japanese American Celebration and Conflict: A History of Ethnic Identity and Festival, 1934 - 1990* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 6.

²¹ Ronald Radano and Philip Bohlman, *Music and the Racial Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 29.

²² James Clifford, *Routes* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997), 251.

²³ Clifford, (1997:251).

²⁴ www.taiko.org/main.html (accessed November 27, 2007)

²⁵ See note 24 above.

²⁶ See note 24 above.

²⁷ See note 24 above.

²⁸ See note 24 above.

²⁹ Roy Hirabayashi, interview by author, June 12, 2007.

³⁰ PJ Hirabayashi, email correspondence with author, August 27, 2007.

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- ³¹ Martin Stokes, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), 19.
- ³² PJ Hirabayashi, interview by author, June 12, 2007.
- ³³ Roy Hirabayashi, interview by author, June 12, 2007.
- ³⁴ Stokes, *Ethnicity, Identity and Music*, 12.
- ³⁵ PJ Hirabayashi, interview by author, June 12, 2007.
- ³⁶ Radano and Bohlman, *Music and the Racial Imagination*, 8.
- ³⁷ Gabrielle Angeles, email correspondence with author, November 26, 2006.
- ³⁸ Stephen Fugita and David O'Brien, *Japanese American Ethnicity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1991), 37.
- ³⁹ Harry Kitano, *Generations and Identity: The Japanese American* (Massachusetts: Ginn Press, 1993), 93.
- ⁴⁰ Roy Hirabayashi, interview by author, June 12, 2007.
- ⁴¹ 2007 Intercollegiate Taiko Invitational Program Notes
- ⁴² See note 41 above.
- ⁴³ <http://www.kodo.or.jp/kasa/frame.html>, (accessed November 25, 2007).
- ⁴⁴ Mikhail Bakhtin, *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986.)
- ⁴⁵ Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978.)
- ⁴⁶ Yuta Kato, interview by author, February 10, 2008.
- ⁴⁷ Chizuko Endo, email correspondence with author, November 26, 2006.
- ⁴⁸ PJ Hirabayashi, email correspondence with author, October 9, 2007.
- ⁴⁹ "Ei Ja Nai Ka?," *San Jose Taiko: Celebrating Three Decades*, DVD, 2007.
- ⁵⁰ See note 48 above.
- ⁵¹ PJ Hirabayashi, email correspondence with author, January 21, 2008.
- ⁵² This line could also be referencing the way young children are carried by their parents in Japan: in contrast to America, where children are usually carried facing their parents, in Japan children are often carried on their parents back, looking forward over their shoulder and thus taking the same view as their parents.
- ⁵³ Additionally, the term "dancing fools" is a reference to *Awa Odori* (阿波踊り, or Awa Dance), occurring at the Tokushima Bon Festival on Shikoku. This song accompanying this dance includes such lyrics as "Crazy dancers."

Ei Ja Nai Ka?

PJ Hirabayashi/Yoko Fujimoto

PJ Hirabayashi
Transcribed by Sarah Carle

♩=144

5

9

The musical score is written for five instruments: Fue, Voice, Cymbals, Chudaiko, and Odaiko. The score is divided into three systems, each starting with a measure number (1, 5, 9). The Fue part is in treble clef with a 4/4 time signature. The Voice part is in a simplified staff. The Cymbals, Chudaiko, and Odaiko parts are in a simplified staff with a 4/4 time signature. The Odaiko part includes a 7-measure rest in the first system and a 7-measure rest in the second system.

System 1 (Measures 1-4):

- Fue:** Treble clef, 4/4 time. Notes: G4, A4, B4, C5, D5, E5, F5, G5, A5, B5, C6, D6, E6, F6, G6, A6, B6, C7, D7, E7, F7, G7, A7, B7, C8, D8, E8, F8, G8, A8, B8, C9, D9, E9, F9, G9, A9, B9, C10, D10, E10, F10, G10, A10, B10, C11, D11, E11, F11, G11, A11, B11, C12, D12, E12, F12, G12, A12, B12, C13, D13, E13, F13, G13, A13, B13, C14, D14, E14, F14, G14, A14, B14, C15, D15, E15, F15, G15, A15, B15, C16, D16, E16, F16, G16, A16, B16, C17, D17, E17, F17, G17, A17, B17, C18, D18, E18, F18, G18, A18, B18, C19, D19, E19, F19, G19, A19, B19, C20, D20, E20, F20, G20, A20, B20, C21, D21, E21, F21, G21, A21, B21, C22, D22, E22, F22, G22, A22, B22, C23, D23, E23, F23, G23, A23, B23, C24, D24, E24, F24, G24, A24, B24, C25, D25, E25, F25, G25, A25, B25, C26, D26, E26, F26, G26, A26, B26, C27, D27, E27, F27, G27, A27, B27, C28, D28, E28, F28, G28, A28, B28, C29, D29, E29, F29, G29, A29, B29, C30, D30, E30, F30, G30, A30, B30, C31, D31, E31, F31, G31, A31, B31, C32, D32, E32, F32, G32, A32, B32, C33, D33, E33, F33, G33, A33, B33, C34, D34, E34, F34, G34, A34, B34, C35, D35, E35, F35, G35, A35, B35, C36, D36, E36, F36, G36, A36, B36, C37, D37, E37, F37, G37, A37, B37, C38, D38, E38, F38, G38, A38, B38, C39, D39, E39, F39, G39, A39, B39, C40, D40, E40, F40, G40, A40, B40, C41, D41, E41, F41, G41, A41, B41, C42, D42, E42, F42, G42, A42, B42, C43, D43, E43, F43, G43, A43, B43, C44, D44, E44, F44, G44, A44, B44, C45, D45, E45, F45, G45, A45, B45, C46, D46, E46, F46, G46, A46, B46, C47, D47, E47, F47, G47, A47, B47, C48, D48, E48, F48, G48, A48, B48, C49, D49, E49, F49, G49, A49, B49, C50, D50, E50, F50, G50, A50, B50, C51, D51, E51, F51, G51, A51, B51, C52, D52, E52, F52, G52, A52, B52, C53, D53, E53, F53, G53, A53, B53, C54, D54, E54, F54, G54, A54, B54, C55, D55, E55, F55, G55, A55, B55, C56, D56, E56, F56, G56, A56, B56, C57, D57, E57, F57, G57, A57, B57, C58, D58, E58, F58, G58, A58, B58, C59, D59, E59, F59, G59, A59, B59, C60, D60, E60, F60, G60, A60, B60, C61, D61, E61, F61, G61, A61, B61, C62, D62, E62, F62, G62, A62, B62, C63, D63, E63, F63, G63, A63, B63, C64, D64, E64, F64, G64, A64, B64, C65, D65, E65, F65, G65, A65, B65, C66, D66, E66, F66, G66, A66, B66, C67, D67, E67, F67, G67, A67, B67, C68, D68, E68, F68, G68, A68, B68, C69, D69, E69, F69, G69, A69, B69, C70, D70, E70, F70, G70, A70, B70, C71, D71, E71, F71, G71, A71, B71, C72, D72, E72, F72, G72, A72, B72, C73, D73, E73, F73, G73, A73, B73, C74, D74, E74, F74, G74, A74, B74, C75, D75, E75, F75, G75, A75, B75, C76, D76, E76, F76, G76, A76, B76, C77, D77, E77, F77, G77, A77, B77, C78, D78, E78, F78, G78, A78, B78, C79, D79, E79, F79, G79, A79, B79, C80, D80, E80, F80, G80, A80, B80, C81, D81, E81, F81, G81, A81, B81, C82, D82, E82, F82, G82, A82, B82, C83, D83, E83, F83, G83, A83, B83, C84, D84, E84, F84, G84, A84, B84, C85, D85, E85, F85, G85, A85, B85, C86, D86, E86, F86, G86, A86, B86, C87, D87, E87, F87, G87, A87, B87, C88, D88, E88, F88, G88, A88, B88, C89, D89, E89, F89, G89, A89, B89, C90, D90, E90, F90, G90, A90, B90, C91, D91, E91, F91, G91, A91, B91, C92, D92, E92, F92, G92, A92, B92, C93, D93, E93, F93, G93, A93, B93, C94, D94, E94, F94, G94, A94, B94, C95, D95, E95, F95, G95, A95, B95, C96, D96, E96, F96, G96, A96, B96, C97, D97, E97, F97, G97, A97, B97, C98, D98, E98, F98, G98, A98, B98, C99, D99, E99, F99, G99, A99, B99, C100, D100, E100, F100, G100, A100, B100, C101, D101, E101, F101, G101, A101, B101, C102, D102, E102, F102, G102, A102, B102, C103, D103, E103, F103, G103, A103, B103, C104, D104, E104, F104, G104, A104, B104, C105, D105, E105, F105, G105, A105, B105, C106, D106, E106, F106, G106, A106, B106, C107, D107, E107, F107, G107, A107, B107, C108, D108, E108, F108, G108, A108, B108, C109, D109, E109, F109, G109, A109, B109, C110, D110, E110, F110, G110, A110, B110, C111, D111, E111, F111, G111, A111, B111, C112, D112, E112, F112, G112, A112, B112, C113, D113, E113, F113, G113, A113, B113, C114, D114, E114, F114, G114, A114, B114, C115, D115, E115, F115, G115, A115, B115, C116, D116, E116, F116, G116, A116, B116, C117, D117, E117, F117, G117, A117, B117, C118, D118, E118, F118, G118, A118, B118, C119, D119, E119, F119, G119, A119, B119, C120, D120, E120, F120, G120, A120, B120, C121, D121, E121, F121, G121, A121, B121, C122, D122, E122, F122, G122, A122, B122, C123, D123, E123, F123, G123, A123, B123, C124, D124, E124, F124, G124, A124, B124, C125, D125, E125, F125, G125, A125, B125, C126, D126, E126, F126, G126, A126, B126, C127, D127, E127, F127, G127, A127, B127, C128, D128, E128, F128, G128, A128, B128, C129, D129, E129, F129, G129, A129, B129, C130, D130, E130, F130, G130, A130, B130, C131, D131, E131, F131, G131, A131, B131, C132, D132, E132, F132, G132, A132, B132, C133, D133, E133, F133, G133, A133, B133, C134, D134, E134, F134, G134, A134, B134, C135, D135, E135, F135, G135, A135, B135, C136, D136, E136, F136, G136, A136, B136, C137, D137, E137, F137, G137, A137, B137, C138, D138, E138, F138, G138, A138, B138, C139, D139, E139, F139, G139, A139, B139, C140, D140, E140, F140, G140, A140, B140, C141, D141, E141, F141, G141, A141, B141, C142, D142, E142, F142, G142, A142, B142, C143, D143, E143, F143, G143, A143, B143, C144, D144, E144, F144, G144, A144, B144, C145, D145, E145, F145, G145, A145, B145, C146, D146, E146, F146, G146, A146, B146, C147, D147, E147, F147, G147, A147, B147, C148, D148, E148, F148, G148, A148, B148, C149, D149, E149, F149, G149, A149, B149, C150, D150, E150, F150, G150, A150, B150, C151, D151, E151, F151, G151, A151, B151, C152, D152, E152, F152, G152, A152, B152, C153, D153, E153, F153, G153, A153, B153, C154, D154, E154, F154, G154, A154, B154, C155, D155, E155, F155, G155, A155, B155, C156, D156, E156, F156, G156, A156, B156, C157, D157, E157, F157, G157, A157, B157, C158, D158, E158, F158, G158, A158, B158, C159, D159, E159, F159, G159, A159, B159, C160, D160, E160, F160, G160, A160, B160, C161, D161, E161, F161, G161, A161, B161, C162, D162, E162, F162, G162, A162, B162, C163, D163, E163, F163, G163, A163, B163, C164, D164, E164, F164, G164, A164, B164, C165, D165, E165, F165, G165, A165, B165, C166, D166, E166, F166, G166, A166, B166, C167, D167, E167, F167, G167, A167, B167, C168, D168, E168, F168, G168, A168, B168, C169, D169, E169, F169, G169, A169, B169, C170, D170, E170, F170, G170, A170, B170, C171, D171, E171, F171, G171, A171, B171, C172, D172, E172, F172, G172, A172, B172, C173, D173, E173, F173, G173, A173, B173, C174, D174, E174, F174, G174, A174, B174, C175, D175, E175, F175, G175, A175, B175, C176, D176, E176, F176, G176, A176, B176, C177, D177, E177, F177, G177, A177, B177, C178, D178, E178, F178, G178, A178, B178, C179, D179, E179, F179, G179, A179, B179, C180, D180, E180, F180, G180, A180, B180, C181, D181, E181, F181, G181, A181, B181, C182, D182, E182, F182, G182, A182, B182, C183, D183, E183, F183, G183, A183, B183, C184, D184, E184, F184, G184, A184, B184, C185, D185, E185, F185, G185, A185, B185, C186, D186, E186, F186, G186, A186, B186, C187, D187, E187, F187, G187, A187, B187, C188, D188, E188, F188, G188, A188, B188, C189, D189, E189, F189, G189, A189, B189, C190, D190, E190, F190, G190, A190, B190, C191, D191, E191, F191, G191, A191, B191, C192, D192, E192, F192, G192, A192, B192, C193, D193, E193, F193, G193, A193, B193, C194, D194, E194, F194, G194, A194, B194, C195, D195, E195, F195, G195, A195, B195, C196, D196, E196, F196, G196, A196, B196, C197, D197, E197, F197, G197, A197, B197, C198, D198, E198, F198, G198, A198, B198, C199, D199, E199, F199, G199, A199, B199, C200, D200, E200, F200, G200, A200, B200, C201, D201, E201, F201, G201, A201, B201, C202, D202, E202, F202, G202, A202, B202, C203, D203, E203, F203, G203, A203, B203, C204, D204, E204, F204, G204, A204, B204, C205, D205, E205, F205, G205, A205, B205, C206, D206, E206, F206, G206, A206, B206, C207, D207, E207, F207, G207, A207, B207, C208, D208, E208, F208, G208, A208, B208, C209, D209, E209, F209, G209, A209, B209, C210, D210, E210, F210, G210, A210, B210, C211, D211, 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A258, B258, C259, D259, E259, F259, G259, A259, B259, C260, D260, E260, F260, G260, A260, B260, C261, D261, E261, F261, G261, A261, B261, C262, D262, E262, F262, G262, A262, B262, C263, D263, E263, F263, G263, A263, B263, C264, D264, E264, F264, G264, A264, B264, C265, D265, E265, F265, G265, A265, B265, C266, D266, E266, F266, G266, A266, B266, C267, D267, E267, F267, G267, A267, B267, C268, D268, E268, F268, G268, A268, B268, C269, D269, E269, F269, G269, A269, B269, C270, D270, E270, F270, G270, A270, B270, C271, D271, E271, F271, G271, A271, B271, C272, D272, E272, F272, G272, A272, B272, C273, D273, E273, F273, G273, A273, B273, C274, D274, E274, F274, G274, A274, B274, C275, D275, E275, F275, G275, A275, B275, C276, D276, E276, F276, G276, A276, B276, C277, D277, E277, F277, G277, A277, B277, C278, D278, E278, F278, G278, A278, B278, C279, D279, E279, F279, G279, A279, B279, C280, D280, E280, F280, G280, A280, B280, C281, D281, E281, F281, G281, A281, B281, C282, D282, E282, 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D306, E306, F306, G306, A306, B306, C307, D307, E307, F307, G307, A307, B307, C308, D308, E308, F308, G308, A308, B308, C309, D309, E309, F309, G309, A309, B309, C310, D310, E310, F310, G310, A310, B310, C311, D311, E311, F311, G311, A311, B311, C312, D312, E312, F312, G312, A312, B312, C313, D313, E313, F313, G313, A313, B313, C314, D314, E314, F314, G314, A314, B314, C315, D315, E315, F315, G315, A315, B315, C316, D316, E316, F316, G316, A316, B316, C317, D317, E317, F317, G317, A317, B317, C318, D318, E318, F318, G318, A318, B318, C319, D319, E319, F319, G319, A319, B319, C320, D320, E320, F320, G320, A320, B320, C321, D321, E321, F321, G321, A321, B321, C322, D322, E322, F322, G322, A322, B322, C323, D323, E323, F323, G323, A323, B323, C324, D324, E324, F324, G324, A324, B324, C325, D325, E325, F325, G325, A325, B325, C326, D326, E326, F326, G326, A326, B326, C327, D327, E327, F327, G327, A327, B327, C328, D328, E328, F328, G328, A328, B328, C329, D329, E329, F329, G329, A329, B329, C330, D330, E330, F330, G330, A330, B330, C331, D331, E331, F331, G331, A331, B331, C332, D332, E332, F332, G332, A332, B332, C333, D333, E333, F333, G333, A333, B333, C334, D334, E334, F334, G334, A334, B334, C335, D335, E335, F335, G335, A335, B335, C336, D336, E336, F336, G336, A336, B336, C337, D337, E337, F337, G337, A337, B337, C338, D338, E338, F338, G338, A338, B338, C339, D339, E339, F339, G339, A339, B339, C340, D340, E340, F340, G340, A340, B340, C341, D341, E341, F341, G341, A341, B341, C342, D342, E342, F342, G342, A342, B342, C343, D343, E343, F343, G343, A343, B343, C344, D344, E344, F344, G344, A344, B344, C345, D345, E345, F345, G345, A345, B345, C346, D346, E346, F346, G346, A346, B346, C347, D347, E347, F347, G347, A347, B347, C348, D348, E348, F348, G348, A348, B348, C349, D349, E349, F349, G349, A349, B349, C350, D350, E350, F350, G350, A350, B350, C351, D351, E351, F351, G351, A351, B351, C352, D352, E352, F352, G352, A352, B352, C353, D353, E353, F353, G353, A353, B353, C354, D354, E354, F354, G354, A354, B354, C355, D355, E355, F355, G355, A355, B355, C356, D356, E356, F356, G356, A356, B356, C357, D357, E357, F357, G357, A357, B357, C358, D358, E358, F358, G358, A358, B358, C359, D359, E359, F359, G359, A359, B359, C360, D360, E360, F360, G360, A360, B360, C361, D361, E361, F361, G361, A361, B361, C362, D362, E362, F362

13

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

13 14 15 16

17

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

17 18 19 20

21

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

21 22 23 24

25

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

soloist A

29

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

soloist B

33

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

A and B switch

A and B switch

38

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

A

B

42

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

A

B

46

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

50

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

54

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

Ei-ja-nai-ka hai

58

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

so-re so-re Ei-ja-nai-ka hai so-re-so-re-so-re so Ei-ja-nai-ka hai

62

Fue

Vox

so-re so-re Ei-ja-nai-ka hai so-re-so-re-so-re so Ei Ja

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

66

Fue

Vox

Nai Ka To - te - mo

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

70

Fue

Vox

Yoi Yoi Yoi Yoi Sah To - te - mo

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

74

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

Yoi Yoi Yoi Yoi Sah Ei-Ja-Nai-Ka Ei-Ja-Nai-Ka

78

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

Ei-Ja-Nai-Ka Ei-Ja-Nai-Ka Hai A so-re-so-re-so-re so Ei-Ja-Nai-Ka Tchya Tchya

82

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

Ja-Nai-Ka Ei Ja-Nai-Ka Ei Ja-Nai-Ka Tchya Tchya Ja-Nai-Ka Ei-Ja-Nai-Ka

2 hits each

86

Score for measures 86-90. The score is for five parts: Fuc, Vox, Cym., Chu, and Odaiko. Fuc and Vox are silent throughout. Cym. and Chu play a continuous eighth-note pattern. Odaiko plays a pattern of quarter notes with rests.

Fuc

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

91

Score for measures 91-95. The score is for five parts: Fuc, Vox, Cym., Chu, and Odaiko. Fuc and Vox are silent throughout. Cym. and Chu play a continuous eighth-note pattern. Odaiko plays a pattern of quarter notes with rests.

Fuc

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

96

Score for measures 96-100. The score is for five parts: Fuc, Vox, Cym., Chu, and Odaiko. Fuc has a melodic line starting in measure 96. Vox is silent throughout. Cym. and Chu play a continuous eighth-note pattern. Odaiko plays a pattern of quarter notes with rests, including some eighth-note patterns in the final measures.

Fuc

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

101

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

105

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

106

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

101

Score for measures 101-104. The Fue part (treble clef) features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The Vox part (soprano clef) is mostly silent. The Cym. (cymbal) and Chu (chime) parts play a steady eighth-note pattern. The Odaiko (taiko drum) part features a pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

105

Score for measures 105-106. The Fue part has a melodic line with a long note in measure 106. The Vox part is silent. The Cym. and Chu parts play a steady eighth-note pattern. The Odaiko part features a pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

106

Score for measures 107-110. The Fue part has a melodic line with a long note in measure 107 and a more active line in measure 110. The Vox part is silent. The Cym. and Chu parts play a steady eighth-note pattern. The Odaiko part features a pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

Fue

Vox

Cym.

Chu

Odaiko

GENDER AND PERFORMATIVITY IN AMERICAN TAIKO

Although ethnic identity has been a formative process in the creation and maintenance of taiko groups, one of the most notable features of American taiko is the large number of women who participate. Why does taiko appeal to women? Taiko performance is loud, powerful, and dynamic: the energy and physicality of playing taiko offers a stark contrast to the stereotype of the submissive Asian American female. In fact, although taiko in Japan has traditionally been male-dominated, its practice in America reflects changing attitudes toward the perception of both Asian American women and men in American society. In this chapter I apply Judith Butler's¹ theory that gender is performative to show how taiko serves as a locus for the construction and renegotiation of gender and represents a multiplicity of meaning for both performer and audience.

3.1 TAIKO AND THE FEMALE BODY

Many women taiko practitioners say that taiko provides an opportunity for women to express themselves. This self-expression has several layers: self-expression of the Asian American female body, in which taiko, as a loud and physical art form, appears

to counter the historical trope of the shy, submissive Asian woman, and self-expression of the non-racialized female body, in which taiko serves as a space for creative exploration and artistic development. Taiko is indeed remarkable for its sheer number of women practitioners. However, in my research I noticed that although many women say that they don't see a difference between men and women in taiko, they also go out of their way to say that taiko is empowering for women and that female audience members comment on the strength and dynamism of women performers.

Cristine Sato, who has played taiko in numerous groups in America and trained with Kodo in Japan, notes that she doesn't see a difference in gender roles in American taiko, but also makes the point to say, "It sounds so cliché...it is about being able to be in a powerful expressive activity, for a female...taiko is that outlet...I think that's what's really great for females...it is an opportunity."² Although most of my informants have a relatively positive opinion about the status of gender equality in American taiko, the fact that many of them single out the opportunity provided to females through taiko performance implies an inherent and deeply-rooted inequality of the sexes.

One informant remembers a situation when audience reception was related to her identity as a woman: "I was approached by a Japanese college student who was very excited at a piece I had performed with Stanford Taiko in which the odaiko was played by two girls and the shimedaiko (on sitting stands) were played by three men. She was very excited to see us girls perform in such a dynamic and dramatic juxtaposition to the men."³ One Japanese American informant told me that watching taiko was the first time she had ever seen a Japanese American man as sexually attractive. Many of my female informants have named the muscles, exposed chest, and sweat as the most sexually

attractive aspects of a man playing taiko. Additionally, several women taiko practitioners have told me that playing taiko makes them feel sexually aroused due to being in a position of perceived power and performing in such a physical way. Despite the enjoyment women get from playing taiko, many women taiko players I talked with have noted their hesitation to appear too muscular. Male taiko players, on the other hand, don't seem to mind the extra muscle acquired through taiko training. The general opinion among females is that although taiko is of course great for your physical health, building strength and endurance, it also tends to make the arms and torso thicker and bulkier. One informant, while training in Japan with Kodo, discusses the difficulty she had as a result of gaining weight during training. Although she acknowledges that she was also gaining muscle through intense workouts and practices, she struggled with bulking up and noted that the American men she knew in Japan didn't have the same problem.⁴ In effect, many women taiko players still want to conform to a traditional feminine physique, even while putting on a male-gendered aesthetic for taiko performance.

Deborah Wong's discussion of the role of taiko in the 1993 film *Rising Sun* suggests that taiko allows Asian Americans to challenge stereotypes and renegotiate cultural assumptions about the physical Asian American body as a cultural property.

"I would venture to guess that the qualities made threatening in *Rising Sun* are particularly attractive to – and transformed by – Asian American women: strength, control, loudness. Certainly these qualities speak to Asian American men in similar ways: given historical tropes that have consistently feminized Asian men...the strength and power expressed through taiko holds a particular performative appeal for Asian American men. Nevertheless, the overwhelming presence of Asian American women in North American taiko speaks to a certain reconfiguration of the Asian American woman's body and to a claim made on sonic and social space."⁵

For many taiko players, the performative appeal of taiko lies in its ability to transform.

Kelsey Furuta, a Yonsei from the Pacific Northwest who has played since childhood,

reflects on a similar situation where her day-to-day identity was renegotiated through playing taiko: "I was also a really quiet and shy kid, probably your typical little Asian girl, but when I played taiko, I changed. I remember thinking that all my friends at school would freak out if they ever saw me perform, because they wouldn't recognize the quiet little Asian girl playing big drums and screaming. But I loved it."⁶ Furuta describes two very different performances of femaleness: first, as her culturally constructed image of a soft-spoken Asian girl, and second as a loud and powerful Asian American taiko player. In both cases, the performance of Asian-ness is important to Furuta's identity.

As Wong further states about her own experience playing taiko, "When I perform, I am someone else,"⁷ a re-identification that implies a sense of physical and emotional transformation during performance. Wong incorporates Foucault's theories on the body as a site of regulation to describe the ways in which the state serves as a hegemonic power and dominates over the material body: "Recent theories suggest that bodies are socially constructed, often through performance; that gender, sexuality, and race are interconstitutive and dialectically related; and that the performative reality of such interpenetrations is often deeply contradictory."⁸ Wong contrasts Foucault's premise that the body is submissive to more recent theories that locate agency and revolt in the performative body:

"The social drama of the body is the focus of much interesting recent work that has prompted new ideas of performativity linking corporeality and social transformation. While Foucault located bodies in submission, scholars working in postindustrial, postmodern contexts look intently for signs of revolt, and performance has been identified by some as a means for locating agency."⁹

A study of the power relations at hand in taiko performance practice suggests the potential for social transformation in both the physical body and the way it is gendered.

Furthermore, as I discussed in Chapter 2, for many taiko practitioners the concept of the material body contributing to a larger performative work of art is central to taiko performance practice. As Wong states, becoming a body that constitutes part of the group provides a linkage to group identity and the Asian American experience: “My body changes, automatically...I am thinking not of myself but of how to stay in the group, with the group...I am trying to let you in on my experience...those moments of heightened heart rate and physical exertion and friendship that are all related to being Asian American and playing taiko.”¹⁰

3.2 GENDER AS PART OF HISTORICAL TRADITION

If “Among minority groups, Asian Americans in particular are feminized, producing exotically sexualized submissive women and emasculated men,”¹¹ then why do taiko practitioners comment more frequently on women’s gender roles than men’s? In light of the historically all-male taiko tradition in Japan, its attraction to females in both Japan and America today provides sharp contrast and reflects changes in self-identification. I argue that since taiko is historically a male tradition in Japan, its recent development in America, despite always having been popular among women, continues to reflect a gendered tradition.

Gendering in classical Japanese drumming and theatre is part of historical tradition. For example, Sukeroku Taiko of Tokyo initiated a style of taiko based on the *mie* (poses) of the popular male kabuki character Sukeroku. The male-gendered postures of Sukeroku Taiko have since been transmitted to several American taiko groups, where

they are performed by both men and women. However, although Sukeroku was a male character, he was also a skilled imposter who possessed several stereotypically feminine attributes such as being stylish and fashionable. According to one performer,

“In the Sukeroku style, we are playing a style that was developed by men in the spirit of a manly man who was also adored by women. Sukeroku is a kabuki character, a kind of people’s hero – a samurai, sophisticated, stylish, handsome, a dandy. So I think even the women are performing a man’s aesthetic in the Sukeroku style.”¹²

I suggest that by incorporating historically gendered musical roles and theatrical postures, women taiko players at times enact masculinity by “putting on” emblematic gestures.¹³

Yuta Kato, a Yonsei who has played taiko since childhood, also cites taiko’s male-dominated history as a divisive influence. He claims to see a difference between the way men and women play taiko, “mainly due to bodily differences and how we are culturally trained to hold ourselves as men or women since we are small.”¹⁴ Bodily training from a young age is embedded in patterns of *kata* (form) and cultivated through developmental stages of socialization.¹⁵ He goes on to note that “taiko was traditionally used for ritualistic purposes and in Japan most rituals were carried out by men. So the taiko we see today is more masculine for sure. Traditional pieces were based on and composed by the male body. (I’m) not saying that females are not capable of playing in such a style though.” Are female taiko players at an inherent disadvantage when playing pieces composed by men? Is each gender less capable of relating to the other’s physical self than to their own? In the practice of taiko, innovation is encouraged, tradition is valued, and physical conformity is essential to creating a stylized and cohesive group presentation. This confluence of stylistic factors can at times problematize the alignment of select techniques according to gender. In looking toward the future of taiko, Kato gives significant power potential to women taiko players:

“If taiko were to evolve greatly from here on, I feel as though it will be due to the strength and influence of female taiko players. I consider myself a more feminine taiko player than a masculine taiko player, and although a lot of players cross both borders, I would like to see a more feminine side of taiko growing. In the end, we all possess both qualities, and what’s important is the balance of both, not negligence nor the feeling of supremacy.”¹⁶

For Kato, drawing on both masculine and feminine qualities is important in the practice of taiko. His remarks also lead to the question, “What constitutes feminine taiko?”

3.3 “GENDERING” TAIKO

The “putting on” of stylized acts and gendered gestures has been discussed by feminist theorist Judith Butler, who claims that gender is an illusion and is real only to the extent that it is performed. In her book *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler argues that the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality are culturally constructed through the repetition of stylized acts that establish the appearance of a core gender. Furthermore, she points out that since gender is constructed in different ways, and in different times and places, it “intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. As a result, it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.”¹⁷ Within Butler’s framework, modern taiko can prove problematic to American women who negotiate the performance of a masculine aesthetic through the adoption of ascribed gender patterns and markers, or for men who, like Kato, claim to play in a more feminine style.

Many American taiko practitioners I talked with reluctantly agree that even in American taiko, certain aspects are seen as more masculine than feminine, creating an atmosphere of gender inequality. Yurika Chiba of San Jose Taiko claims that in general,

but not in San Jose Taiko, she still sees taiko performance parts assigned according to gender more often than she would like, and points out that “there seems to be a connection between odaiko and testosterone.”¹⁸ Barakan’s 1995 publication of a discussion between a Miyuki Ikeda, a Japanese female taiko player, and Akitoshi Asano, her group’s managing director, reveals that in Japan, women are considered to be at a physical disadvantage to males when playing odaiko and that odaiko performance and taiko itself is male territory. Ikeda states: “Women definitely have disadvantages, like having less immediate power and a weaker grip...Japanese drums are, in fact, rather masculine. You have to open your legs very wide. I never think about not wanting to be surpassed by guys in any way.”¹⁹ For Ikeda, not only taiko performance, but also the drums themselves, are male gendered. Moreover, Asano reinforces the belief that odaiko performance falls under the canopy of manhood: “Playing a big drum, the fight comes to the fore. At the same time, I think it’s an all-encompassing art that appeals to the five senses. It requires a woman to go beyond womanhood and get closer to manhood. But the opposite is impossible. I think when a woman gets closer to manhood, it radiates something terrific. It’s also great to have a glimpse of the world of a woman who is prepared to go beyond womanhood. For me, the world of the big drum can be said to be the entire universe.”²⁰ The statement that a woman must “go beyond” womanhood to get closer to manhood in order to be a successful taiko player is certainly problematic for those who strive to be equal performers. The fact that Ikeda and Asano are Japanese implies that the traditional way of thinking about gender roles still exists in Japan today, even among taiko practitioners. However, although women taiko players in Japan may have once been an anomaly, they are now becoming more prominent, and in American

taiko, women have always had a strong presence. Female audience members in general love to see other women performing taiko. As Chiba recalls, “I always hear women say, ‘I’m so happy to see women up there with power’...I heard the comment that the girls are really pretty but really scary too!”²¹ This quote suggests that women taiko players are viewed positively for their performative displays of strength and power. At the same time, however, the fact that they can also seem “scary” to audiences indicates that women taiko players go against the standardized, albeit stereotypical, images for females.

Chieko Kojima, a member of Kodo and Hanayui in Japan who frequently tours and teaches in America, is both a dancer and taiko player. She developed a style of taiko called *Hana Hachijo*, in which the performer wears kimono and plays one side of a horizontally placed odaiko, all the while keeping her legs together. An online workshop description for “Chieko’s Onna-uchi (Women’s style taiko) Basics” declares that “You will learn how to stand and drum wearing a kimono, and the secrets to playing taiko with femininity, elegance, grace and power...of course, men are also welcome to join!”²² The development of so-called “women’s style taiko” is indicative of the recent trend toward female empowerment through the expressive movement and music of not only taiko, but also Japanese song and dance.

Kojima, along with Yoko Fujimoto, another Kodo member, and Mitsue Kinjo, an Okinawan dance expert, form the group Hanayui. In 2002, San Jose Taiko collaborated with Hanayui on a project called Himawari (sunflower), which combined the three female members of Hanayui with three female members of San Jose Taiko for performances comprised of song, dance, and taiko. One of the four stated purposes for this collaboration was to “Expand the possibilities of women’s performance on stage for

both San Jose Taiko and Kodo.”²³ The development of the Himawari project by Japanese and American female taiko players aimed at cultivating women’s roles in performance. This suggests that gender roles continue to be a factor in taiko performance, a concern that persists in groups across America.

Another project developed out of the pseudo-feminist movement in taiko is The Triangle Project. Developed by San Jose Taiko in conjunction with Great Leap, The Triangle Project includes three women music pioneers, PJ Hirabayashi (Sansei) of San Jose Taiko, Yoko Fujimoto (Japanese) of Kodo, and Nobuko Miyamoto (Sansei), artistic director of Great Leap, a performing arts theatre in Los Angeles. According to San Jose Taiko’s website, The Triangle Project

“culminates with a newly created song/dance, in the Buddhist tradition of Obon, engaging local musicians and community members in residency. In Japan, people would return to their hometowns to observe the Buddhist tradition of Obon—to dance in a circle and remember their ancestors. Today in America Obon still thrives with Japanese Americans dancing across the border of time and culture, connecting past with the present.”²⁴

The sense of transcultural artistic creation is clear in The Triangle Project. Tracks on the CD (released 2005) include vocals, spoken word, taiko, and synthesizer, among other instruments. Notable tracks include a minimalist version of “Ei Ja Nai Ka?” with drumming, singing and chant framed by spoken word introduction and conclusion, a version of “Etenraku Imayo,” a well-known gagaku piece, and “We are the Children,” a dissonant account of Japanese immigrants and their succeeding generations in America.

When I asked Hirabayashi about the development of The Triangle Project, she said:

“Our collaboration started in 2000 when I introduced Yoko to Nobuko. I deeply felt that the two of them just *had* to meet, because of their similar interests, outstanding artistry, unadulterated energy, and sincerity in working with people to tap into finding their ‘spirit.’ The three of us are veterans in our particular fields and with our own companies. It was perfect timing to be able to create a support of three sisters to come together to explore the potential of their next level of artistry... The *best* part of The Triangle Project is that it challenged each of us to find a way to work together to make beautiful music with a message of peace.”²⁵

The Triangle Project represents another interaction in the field of taiko in which women desire collaboration with other women. Hirabayashi's use of the term "sisters" is interesting as well for its gendered implications; her words suggest a sense of solidarity along the lines of gender.

As we have seen, although the American taiko movement has developed in a way which has welcomed and accommodated both men and women, gendered roles still exist. Many groups have tried to eradicate gender inequality when formulating the ideology of their groups. For example, Roy Hirabayashi notes the importance to the founding members of San Jose Taiko to have an egalitarian structure that differed from the traditional gender and hierarchical relationships of Japanese art forms:

"We didn't restrict, and traditionally no women did traditional Japanese art forms like kabuki...it was important (for us) not to bring into the art form some of the baggage that comes from Japanese classical art forms because we are talking about unity and equal rights...it was an opportunity for women to express themselves."²⁶

Thus, although taiko may reflect historically gendered roles, both women and men in certain groups are valued as both innovators and carriers of cultural tradition.

Furthermore, the establishment of women-only taiko projects or taiko groups, such as The Triangle Project and Jodaiko of Sacramento, California, speaks to the desire of female artists to collaborate, at times exclusively, with other women. Rather than a reactive feminist response to a perceived male domination, I suggest that this trend reflects the opportunity for creative growth that many women have located in their taiko experiences. Next, we examine San Francisco Taiko Dojo's "Tsunami," a piece featuring odaiko solos.

3.4 ANALYSIS OF SAN FRANCISCO TAIKO DOJO'S "TSUNAMI"

The trademark piece of San Francisco Taiko Dojo's repertoire is "Tsunami," composed by Seiichi Tanaka in 1986. I chose to analyze "Tsunami" because in performance, the soloists are primarily male. The lack of female soloists in "Tsunami" suggests that a masculine aesthetic is still preferred in certain styles of taiko performance. As I will show, some taiko practitioners still believe that certain styles of taiko music are gendered and therefore more suitable for men to play. By analyzing the piece "Tsunami" and integrating my informants' thoughts on the piece, I argue that "Tsunami" promotes a masculine aesthetic, even when including female soloists. "Tsunami," meaning "tidal wave" in Japanese, features numerous solos on an odaiko, with a steady rhythmic pattern, mainly composed of eighth-notes, played by the shimeshaiko, uchiwadaiko, tetsuzutsu, and drum set. "Tsunami" is in 4/4 time, played at a fast tempo, and designed to feature the odaiko solos. As such, the role of kiai is essential to encouraging the soloists and features prominently in this piece. I transcribe and analyze a version of "Tsunami" performed in Berkeley, California in 2003 to commemorate Tanaka's 35th anniversary playing taiko. The performers include members of San Francisco Taiko Dojo as well as several of Tanaka's former students. I analyze this piece musically and physically in four sections: solo A (the only female soloist),²⁷ solo B, solo C, and solo D.

3.4.1 NOTES ON EDITING OF “TSUNAMI”

It is important to note that the DVD recording I used for this transcription is from the Japanese American National Museum’s “Big Drum” exhibition of 2005, which I discuss in chapter four. As I have indicated in the transcription, there are several edits in which a solo is cut from the footage. Thus, this DVD only shows four solos, although at the actual performance, there were more than four solos. In “Tsunami,” one person plays the *ji* (rhythmic pattern) on one side of the odaiko while another person solos. At the end of the solo, everyone plays the cue together, and the soloist has one bar to step forward, bow, and then run upstage, while the next solo is played by the person previously playing the *ji* on the odaiko and the following soloist steps into position and takes over playing the *ji* on the other head of the odaiko. In this way, a smooth rotation of soloists and steady *ji* are ensured. In this performance, as solo A begins, a Caucasian male takes his bow on the left side of the screen, yet his solo was cut from the DVD. Another cut of an Asian American soloist occurs at the beginning of solo B. Over the course of the DVD, at least two Caucasian male soloists can be seen crouching behind the odaiko, the position soloists take when they are finished. Therefore, they soloed during the live performance but were cut out of the commercial DVD. I argue that the Japanese American National Museum’s production of this DVD had an agenda to promote the Asian American side of taiko, hence the exclusion of non-Asian American soloists and the inclusion of only Japanese American soloists A, B, C, and D.

3.4.2 LONG PAUSE IN THE “TSUNAMI” SOLOS

There are several commonalities in each “Tsunami” solo. First, each soloist takes a significant pause, during which they hold a solid pose (with the exception of soloist C, who walks around the stage), right before the ending phrase of their solo leading into the precomposed cue. However, the pauses become longer and more dramatic as the piece goes on. Solo A pauses for two bars (mm. 24-25), solo B for 2.5 bars (mm. 99-101), solo C for 7 bars (mm. 174-180), and solo D for 9 bars (mm. 282-290). The likely explanation for this is that as the song continues and the solos likewise continue to build musical tension, the length of dramatic pause before entering the closing portion of the solo is extended. However, when taking into account the soloists’ body language, the length of the pause seems also to correlate with performer ego. For example, soloists A and B both take relatively brief pauses, during which they hold a traditional pose in keeping with the *kata* (form) of taiko. Soloist C, on the other hand, actually turns away from the drum and walks roaring toward the audience, all the while being cheered on vigorously by the other performers. This is hardly an effective way to gather one’s thoughts before entering the closing phrases of one’s solo, as when soloist C finally returns to the drum, his rhythms are off the beat and he struggles to stay with the beat. Soloist D takes the longest pause, possibly in part because his is the closing solo, and during the pause he grimaces and bares his teeth at the drum while slowly leaning back, jutting his hips forward, and bringing his arms overhead. This gesture seems overtly sexual; it is almost as if his dominance over the drum suggests a kind of masculinized sexual dominance. It is significant that soloist A, the only female soloist, performs

several physical gestures that are unique to her performance. These gestures include turning to the right and striking the drum laterally, rather than overhead (mm.12-14), and rotating the bachi overhead (mm. 19-21). These movements are a physical expression of a different sort: rather than being aggressively masculine, they are artistic in that they seek to explore the different timbres of striking the drum from a different angle.

3.4.3 CHEERING

Another commonality during the “Tsunami” solos is the relentless kiai and raucous cheering-on of soloists by other performers. The set-up showcases the odaiko at center stage, while the soloists, waiting their turn, or having already finished, crouch directly behind the odaiko with bachi in hand, vigorously shouting encouragement, bouncing on their heels, and shaking their heads in time to the music. One performer even excitedly lunges out at soloist C when he returns from his 7 bar break. While this cheering is certain a valid and time-tested way to encourage soloists, I argue that there is a sense of masculine domination driving both the solos and the cheering. Performers looking on, especially at superior soloists, take a vicarious pleasure in watching these solos; their aggressive cheering is a way in which they themselves can interact with the solo, and therefore bask in its reflected glory. During this performance of “Tsunami,” cheering always escalated the most during the gestures of male posturing (ie, during the pauses taken by soloists C and D).

Yuta Kato, who played under Tanaka as a child and has performed “Tsunami” on numerous occasions, posits the piece as a competitive expression of physical aggression:

"I always took ("Tsunami") more like soldiers going to war, or football players releasing their aggression on the field. And although the intentions are rooted in different places, maybe the way we show aggression is all quite similar. Kill, defeat, dominate...and to me recently "Tsunami" is a hard piece to play. I actually have trouble trying to find inspiration. The best I can do (when I am asked to play) is to surround myself in such energy and make sure that I don't lose against the rest of the group. In no way am I trying to make good music, or show good form. Sort of similar to physical survival, surviving through and not being eaten up by the energy created by the members...I am sometimes in awe by the sort of psycho-like mindset of the players when they really get into the piece...raw human energy."²⁸

Kato's interpretation of "Tsunami" supports my argument that the piece is about domination and physical aggression. While he doesn't see it as sexual domination, there are elements of male-ness, such as going to war or playing football (which, of course, women also do, but far less frequently than men) that suggest the perseverance of masculinity in the taiko tradition. As Kato says, "some of the music composed in the US is catered better towards men. Like 'Tsunami.'" Interestingly, Kato also notes that good music and good form are compromised in order to ensure survival within the piece. I notice form being compromised numerous times throughout the solos, for example, soloist C has an unsteady stance and rough lines with his arm positions, while soloist D breaks his form by hunching his back and thrusting his pelvis forward during his long pause.

3.4.4 RHYTHMIC VARIATIONS

The solos in "Tsunami" are, for the most part, rhythmically simple. It seems that the point is perform strongly and loudly, to physically dominate the drum and to not waste energy on rhythmic development. Furthermore, the piece is fast and the bachi are thick, both of which add to the challenge of rhythmic variation. However, soloists A and B incorporate more syncopation and hemiola than soloists C and D, thus crafting solos

that are more musical, if less showy. Soloist A frequently uses syncopated rhythms (mm. 5-9, 12-14, 16-17, 19-23, 32, 34-35, 38-41), as does soloist B (mm. 84, 86, 93-96, 111-113, 118-125). Three of the four soloists utilize the same hemiola pattern (two eighth-notes followed by an eighth rest, repeated any number of times thus displacing the accent pattern), but soloists A and B perform this pattern for 3 and 8 bars, respectively, while soloist C plays it for only 1 bar and D not at all. Of course, utilizing musical techniques such as syncopation and hemiola during solos is a matter of personal taste and capability, but it is interesting to note that as the solos progress from A and B to C and D, rhythmic variations diminish and dramatic histrionics increase.

The study of gender roles in taiko shows that the American taiko movement is influenced not only by historical tradition, but also by contemporary trends and innovations. Furthermore, the recent innovations of women in the field of taiko and collaborative performing arts implies a deeply-rooted sense of gender disparity that may, in some cases, still exist despite the efforts of many groups to promote equality. In the next chapter, we turn to the politics of representation within the taiko movement. I use the Japanese American National Museum's "Big Drum" exhibition of 2005 as a case study to illustrate the politics of memory and the role of community in the development of identity. Finally, I analyze Kenny Endo's "Winds of Change" as an example of musical hybridization that possessed cultural currency in both the local and global community.

- ¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).
- ² Cristine Sato, interview by author, July 17, 2007.
- ³ Informant F, email correspondence with author, November 26, 2006.
- ⁴ See note 2 above.
- ⁵ Deborah Wong, "Taiko and the Asian/American Body: Drums, Rising Sun and the Question of Gender," *The World of Music* 42 (2000): 74.
- ⁶ Kelsey Furuta, email correspondence with author, November 26, 2006.
- ⁷ Deborah Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 196.
- ⁸ Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*, 163.
- ⁹ Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*, 164.
- ¹⁰ Wong, *Speak It Louder: Asian Americans Making Music*, 196.
- ¹¹ Christine Yano, *Crowning the Nice Girl* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2006), 21.
- ¹² Chizuko Endo, email correspondence with author, November 26, 2006.
- ¹³ However, some performers are reluctant to disregard or try to lessen the gender divide. One informant is a Yonsei who performed with San Jose Taiko before traveling to Japan to train with Kodo. When I asked her if she saw a difference between men and women playing taiko in Japan, she replied, "In essence, no...In people, yes." Using the Japanese taiko repertoire standard "Miyake," she says, "This is so hard to say on record...There's something about that song that will not work with a girl...there's a rawness in that strength that they play with...I don't know if you could have a girl in there...there's some things that guys can do better, like...playing Miyake...but I don't know how that sounds to people" (personal interview, July 17, 2007). Her obvious reluctance to say something that would undoubtedly be an unpopular opinion among female taiko players striving for equality onstage suggests that gender roles are more strictly defined in Japan than in America.
- ¹⁴ Yuta Kato, email correspondence with author, February 10, 2008.
- ¹⁵ For more discussion of kata see Joy Hendry, *Becoming Japanese: The World of the Pre-School Child* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986) and Christine Yano, *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002).
- ¹⁶ See note 14 above.
- ¹⁷ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 6.
- ¹⁸ Yurika Chiba, interview with author, June 12, 2007.
- ¹⁹ P. Barakan, "Discussion: A Woman Playing Japanese Drums," *Wadaiko* (1995): 124-135.
- ²⁰ See note 19 above.
- ²¹ See note 18 above.
- ²² http://www.kodo.or.jp/ec/event_ws_04_e.html, (accessed October 9, 2007).
- ²³ http://www.taiko.org/himawari/pj_interview.html, accessed October 18, 2007).
- ²⁴ <http://www.taiko.org/triangle/>, (accessed February 28, 2008).
- ²⁵ PJ Hirabayashi, email correspondence with author, January 10, 2008.
- ²⁶ Roy Hirabayashi, interview with author, June 12, 2007.

²⁷ Solo A is performed by Tiffany Tamaribuchi, a former member of San Francisco Taiko Dojo who has gone on to start several taiko groups in Sacramento, including Sacramento Taiko Dan, Taiko Dan Children's Ensemble, and Jodaiko, an all-female taiko group. In 2002 she won the Odaiko Hibike Zenkoku Ippon-uchi (All-Japan Odaiko Competition). Tamaribuchi is the only female odaiko soloist in "Tsunami."

²⁸ See note 14 above.

Tsunami

Seiichi Tanaka
Transcribed by Sarah Carle

$\text{♩} = 208$

Shimedaiko
Uchiwadaiko

Tetsuzutsu

Odaiko support

Odaiko solo

Solo A

5

Shime
Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

9

Shime
Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

14

Shime
Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

19

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

23

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

28

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

32

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

36

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

41

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

45

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

50

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

cue

cue

cue

cue

54

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 54-57: Shime Uchiwa, Tetsu, Support, and Solo all play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

58

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 58-62: Shime Uchiwa, Tetsu, Support, and Solo all play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

63

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

(editing cut)

Solo B

Measures 63-67: Shime Uchiwa, Tetsu, Support, and Solo all play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests. Measure 63 has a rest for Tetsu and Support. Measure 64 has a rest for Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu. Measure 65 has a rest for Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu. Measure 66 has a rest for Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu. Measure 67 has a rest for Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu.

68

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 68-71: Shime Uchiwa, Tetsu, Support, and Solo all play a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes with rests.

73

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 73-77. Shime Uchiwa: continuous eighth-note pattern. Tetsu: quarter notes. Support: continuous eighth-note pattern. Solo: quarter notes with rests, ending with eighth notes in measures 76-77.

78

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 78-82. Shime Uchiwa: continuous eighth-note pattern. Tetsu: quarter notes. Support: continuous eighth-note pattern. Solo: eighth notes with rests, ending with quarter notes in measure 82.

83

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 83-86. Shime Uchiwa: continuous eighth-note pattern. Tetsu: eighth notes. Support: continuous eighth-note pattern. Solo: eighth notes with rests, ending with eighth notes in measure 86.

87

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 87-91. Shime Uchiwa: continuous eighth-note pattern. Tetsu: eighth notes. Support: continuous eighth-note pattern. Solo: eighth notes with rests, ending with quarter notes in measure 91.

92

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

96

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

101

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Tempo increase

106

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

110

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

115

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

120

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

124

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

128

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

132

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

cue

136

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

141

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Solo C

146

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

151

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

155

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

159

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

163

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo



168

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo



172

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo



177

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo



182

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 182-186: Shime Uchiwa and Support play continuous eighth-note patterns. Tetsu plays a sparse melody. Solo has a complex pattern with accents and rests.

187

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 187-191: Shime Uchiwa and Support play continuous eighth-note patterns. Tetsu plays a sparse melody. Solo has a complex pattern with rests and eighth notes.

192

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 192-196: Shime Uchiwa and Support play continuous eighth-note patterns. Tetsu plays a sparse melody. Solo has a complex pattern with eighth notes and rests.

197

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 197-201: Shime Uchiwa and Support play continuous eighth-note patterns. Tetsu plays a sparse melody. Solo has a complex pattern with eighth notes and rests.

202

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

207

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

C and D unison

211

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

215

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D *C*

219

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C

223

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C

227

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C

231

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C

235

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C

239

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C

243

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C

247

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C D C

252

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

D C D C

D solo

tempo increase

256

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

261

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

266

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

270

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 270-274: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support is silent. Solo plays a melody with eighth and quarter notes, including rests.

275

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 275-279: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support is silent. Solo continues the melody from the previous system.

280

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 280-284: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support is silent. Solo plays a melody. A crescendo hairpin and *ff* marking appear over measures 282-284 in the Tetsu staff.

285

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 285-289: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support and Solo are silent.

290

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

295

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

300

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

305

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

310

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 310-314: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support is silent. Solo plays a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with rests.

315

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 315-319: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support is silent. Solo plays a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with rests.

320

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Chudaiko enters

Measures 320-324: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support is silent. Solo plays a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with rests. A Chudaiko enters in measure 322.

325

Shime Uchiwa

Tetsu

Support

Solo

Measures 325-329: Shime Uchiwa and Tetsu play continuous eighth-note patterns. Support is silent. Solo plays a sequence of eighth notes and quarter notes with rests. A Chudaiko enters in measure 325.

MUSICAL IDENTITY AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM'S "BIG DRUM: TAIKO IN THE UNITED STATES" EXHIBITION

In this chapter I focus on the Japanese American National Museum's "Big Drum: Taiko in the United States" exhibition (July 2005 through January 2006) to consider the interrelation between popular musical culture and the representation of ethnic identity. By examining the National Museum's "Big Drum" exhibition, I show how the discourses on the politics of memory and the role of community are intrinsically linked to the politics of representation and the formation of identity. I further establish this connection by analyzing Kenny Endo's "Winds of Change," a contemporary taiko piece exemplifying musical hybridization, as a locus of musical identity in both the local and global community.

4.1 JAPANESE AMERICAN NATIONAL MUSEUM HISTORY

The Japanese American National Museum (JANM), located in the historic Little Tokyo district of Los Angeles, is the first museum in America devoted to the experience and history of Japanese Americans. Backed by Los Angeles businessmen and a group of World War II veterans, JANM became realized as a private non-profit institution in 1985.

After receiving generous funding from the California state legislature and the City of Los Angeles, JANM reached out to the Japanese American community for additional support in the development of curatorial objects such as artifacts, photographs, and written material from before, during, and after World War II. Opening in 1992, JANM aimed to “shed light on the Japanese American experience – a process of immigration and re-settlement common to so many Americans.”¹ Originally housed in an historic Buddhist Temple built by Japanese immigrants in 1925, the new museum is located across the street, facing the temple which serves as a “constant reminder of the museum’s roots in the community as well as the ‘culture of pain’ that marks Japanese American identity.”²

According to Leilani Nishime, professor of American Multicultural Studies, the formation of museums such as JANM helps create national identity for Asian Americans: “These museums emphatically mark the entrance of Asian Americans into the public sphere, literally institutionalizing their place in America.”³ One of the primary tenets of JANM exhibitions over the years has been to communicate and commemorate the experience of Japanese Americans through community-based interaction and outreach. For example, current exhibitions include “Common Ground: The Heart of the Community” (ongoing), which utilizes objects and various media to commemorate Japanese American history from the early Issei pioneers through the incarceration of World War II to the present. In conjunction with this exhibit is a “Lifelong Learning” five-part seminar series in which Dr. Mitchell Maki, author of *Achieving the Impossible Dream: How Japanese Americans Obtained Redress*, converses with scholars, activists, and artists about artifacts displayed in the exhibition *Common Ground: The Heart of Community*.⁴ Lectures and activities in the “Lifelong Learning” program are free to

museum members and free with admission to the general public, thus making diverse educational programming readily available to a wide range of visitors.

One of JANM's most important contributions to both the Japanese American and the larger community is their National Diversity Education Program, which engages students and teachers across the nation in developing a discourse and new way of conceiving the complexities of cultural diversity. The program's guiding principles are as follows:

"We, the people, shape democracy. I, too, shape democracy. Those who have struggled for freedom and equality have expanded democracy's reach for all people." According to the website, "equality is ingrained in American democracy. When the United States was founded, it was not just a new nation, but a new *kind* of nation – one in which all people 'are created equal'...no longer taught in isolation, diversity is now seen in context with multiethnic American history, civil rights – and more significantly – civic engagement, because improving the understanding of diversity requires *active participation* by all citizens."⁵

This approach to diversity education is in line with the mission of JANM and corroborates the museum's goals of preserving democracy by educating youth from all walks of life. Furthermore, the National Museum's Historic Building was renovated in order to support the National Center for the Preservation of Democracy, a National Museum project which is "an innovative educational institution that partners with classroom instructors and community-based mentors to inform young people about the many individuals from all back grounds who have shaped American democracy and to provide youth with the skills to become active participants themselves."⁶ As evidenced by such wide-reaching educational programming, JANM's mission ties into individual and community civic responsibility. These principles are also connected to the "Big Drum" exhibition, which included numerous elements of community collaboration and participation, such as organizing taiko groups from the Los Angeles area to participate collectively in a taiko performance at the opening of the exhibition.

4.2 “BIG DRUM” EXHIBITION BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

The exhibit “Big Drum: Taiko in the United States” opened from July 14, 2005 through January 8, 2006, and aimed to “explore the growing phenomenon of taiko (Japanese drum) ensemble performances through the use of several media presentation, historical photographs, artifacts, and even interactive opportunities for the whole family.”⁷ “Big Drum” divides the depiction of taiko into six areas: “Making Community;” “Making Music” “Making Taiko History;” “Making American Taiko;” “Making Noise;” and “Making it New,” each accompanied by supplementary video presentations.

Additionally, the Frank Watase Media Arts Center of JANM released a documentary DVD also named “Big Drum” that features media installations from the exhibit as well as other supplementary material. For this thesis, I examine the interviews, musical selections, and structure of the DVD to show the depth with which JANM addresses, or fails to address, taiko’s racial diversity in America. I also investigate the ways in which taiko is promoted in the larger transnational community as a “world-encompassing art form.” After analyzing the video, I found the main themes to be in line with the goals of the exhibition. The DVD is divided into seven chapters: Taiko in the US; Roots of American Taiko; Power to the Beat; Renewing Tradition; A Gathering of Joy; Making American Taiko; and Performances. The DVD is interspersed with numerous interviews, the importance of which I will discuss later.

“Big Drum” aims to historicize the taiko movement within the context of Japanese American cultural life and identity. One of the most notable features of the JANM “Big Drum” exhibition is the focus on ethnic revitalization movements of the 1960s and 1970s that were formative in the development and subsequent popularizing of taiko drumming in America. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, many of my informants have commented on the role of taiko in renegotiating ethnic identity in the post World War II era. For example, Cristine Sato, who has played taiko in both Japan and America, claims that “Taiko is Japanese American here, it’s totally different than what it is in Japan. It sprouted from a “quiet no more” type of generation, the Sansei who pioneered taiko. To be able to have that connection to the culture was the first reason, but then to be able to create culture was what it turned into...a way to be connected to your roots but also to rewrite that culture.”⁸ Sato’s statement speaks not only to the political potentiality of taiko groups during the post-war era, but also to the power of taiko as a tool in consciously renegotiating and creating culture.

4.3 SOCIO-POLITICAL MOTIVATIONS IN THE “BIG DRUM” EXHIBITION

As I discussed earlier, the period of liberal pluralism in the 1970s also coincided with the Civil Rights Movement and other ethnic revitalization movements in which ethnic minority groups reexamined their positions in American society and banded together through the solidarity of their shared histories:

“As Japanese Americans, we found it possible to examine our own history in relation to civil rights. During this period the consciousness-raising activities of groups such as the Manzanar Committee and the political and legal actions of organizations such as the Japanese American Citizens League and National Council for Japanese American Redress have provided channels

through which we could express the hurt, anger, and frustration we experienced during World War II.”⁹¹⁰

I argue that the taiko movement as depicted by the “Big Drum” exhibition shows how Japanese Americans renegotiated their ethnic and social identities by means of musical identity, which was shared across both local and global communities. According to National Museum curator Sojin Kim,

“As a consequence of their experiences with racism and discrimination, many disassociated themselves from aspects of their ethnic culture that might distinguish them as ‘foreign’ or ‘Japanese’ – and so in essence, Japanese Americans also had to rebuild their sense of identity in the post-World War II era. It’s not surprising, then, that for a younger generation of Japanese Americans, taiko provided a powerful and satisfying way to express cultural and community pride. What is remarkable is that so many other Americans are participating in taiko now. In this way, taiko also provides a meaningful way in which Japanese Americans can share their cultural heritage and history with everyone.”¹¹

Kim’s statement corroborates the earlier argument that taiko is used as a tool of individual and community identity. Furthermore, Kim notes taiko’s potential as a means of transnational communication, a concept that is in line with JANM’s goals of education, civic responsibility, and increasing communication. This echoes the increasingly common sentiment that the role of taiko in America has far-reaching potential and the ability to foster communication in the global arena.

Major financial support for JANM came about during the 1980s, when the Japanese American redress movement finally culminated in the payment of reparations to former camp interns. Redress recipients often put the money back into Japanese American community organizations as a gesture of continuing support and reciprocity. In fact, Nishime points out that donated reparations helped to advance the JANM while it was still young: “The recent entrance of JANM onto the national scene in the late 1980s coincided with reparations paid to Japanese Americans illegally imprisoned in American concentration camps during WWII. In a symbolic gesture some detainees donated part

of, or in some cases all of, their reparations directly to JANM, and the sudden infusion of money enabled the museum to grow from a small, local organization to a 'legitimate' national museum."¹² As most of the redress recipients were Nisei who generally aspired to Americanize their families in the spirit of conformity, the gesture of donating reparations symbolized the re-conceptualization of their own identities from Japanese to Americans. In addition, Nishime states that JANM's goal is to embrace the struggles of Japanese Americans across the generations: "Rather than rejecting a national American identity, JANM attempts to capture and use the emotionally powerful American narratives of loss and redemption to assert the place of Japanese Americans."¹³

4.4 DIASPORIC RELATIONS IN THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL COMMUNITY

The goals of the "Big Drum" exhibition include not only historicizing taiko in America, but also discussing the communication between local and global communities. Christine Kreamer has written about the role of the museum in fostering this kind of communication: "...museums and world heritage sites are modes of cultural production...the production of knowledge and memory...the interpretive work of museums animates the public sphere by fostering, among diverse constituents, lively and ongoing dialogues and debates that bridge the local and the global."¹⁴ This notion supports curator Kim's earlier statement that taiko can be used as a medium through which Japanese American cultural heritage is communicated. Additionally, Kreamer notes the role of diaspora in the construction of memory: "...memories of diaspora stretch across national boundaries and extend into the global arena, raising complex

problems and issues that must be resolved by taking the concerns of both local and global constituents into account.”¹⁵

The JANM “Big Drum” exhibition, as well as the museum itself, consistently highlights the importance of negotiating the identities of diasporic Japanese Americans not only within America, but also overseas in relation to the global community. By attempting to show how taiko has evolved from a grassroots movement to an international phenomenon (although concentrated in Japan and America), “Big Drum” shows how the complex network of diasporic relations both complicates and encourages dialogue among diverse taiko practitioners in the local and global community.

After World War II, and during the period of ethnic revitalization movements, Japanese Americans, especially the Sansei, were looking to reconnect with their ethnic identities and assert pride in their ancestral roots. According to San Jose Taiko artistic directors Roy and PJ Hirabayashi,

“taiko performance embodies a perfect melding of a Japanese cultural art and American and other world rhythms. It also broke the stereotypes about Asian Americans as quiet, physically timid and uncreative people, since it required strength, endurance, and artistry. Drawing from the local San Jose Buddhist Church and the San Jose State Asian American Studies program, San Jose Taiko emerged as a community-based organization.”¹⁶

Taiko groups across America have relied on community support to establish and maintain taiko groups. This involves a mutual reciprocity on behalf of both the taiko performers and the community members. For example, as I mentioned earlier, San Jose Taiko is entwined with the Japantown community yet also represents the larger multi-ethnic community through their attempts to bridge cultures through performance. This bridging of numerous kinds of communities is a common theme in the “Big Drum” exhibition as well, as “Making Community” is the first of six main subjects within the exhibition. Through media installations and objects, “Big Drum” portrays taiko as consistently

rooted in the community, from the first groups based out of the Buddhist Church to later groups whose members created their own communities out of the common bond of shared musical identification.

4.5 POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION IN THE “BIG DRUM” EXHIBITION

For Ivan Karp, the power systems at work in museum display have the potential to define groups of people: “The sources of power are derived from the capacity of cultural institutions to classify and define peoples and societies. This is the power to represent: to reproduce structures of belief and experience through which cultural differences are understood.”¹⁷ Indeed, while the “Big Drum” exhibition reinforces the importance of Japanese American communities, it also seems to diminish the role of non-Japanese Americans (or non-Asian Americans) in the taiko movement. Although written text on the exhibit accurately reflects the role of Japanese Americans in the taiko movement, it was not until I watched the “Big Drum” DVD that I heard the voices of non-Asian American contributors. Even in the DVD, the first two chapters focus on the role of Japanese Americans and Asian Americans in the taiko movement, and it is not until the third and final chapter that non-Asian American taiko performers are introduced. This problematizes the politics of representation within the “Big Drum” exhibition. Given the stated purpose of JANM to “share the Japanese American story with a national and international audience,”¹⁸ what happens when the Japanese American story not only comes in contact, but also merges with other cultural groups?

Karp theorizes that museums are the sites for the negotiation of social ideas:

“Social ideas often set up hierarchies of moral values in which communities and institutions are interpreted. Social ideas embody notions people have about their differences and similarities, and these are organized in terms of which is good and which bad, which superior and which inferior...Museums are one of a number of settings for these conflicting but simultaneously operating processes, which make social ideas understandable, but not always legitimate.”¹⁹

The notion that social ideas define how people perceive difference is problematized by the very fact that people often have multiple identities or implement code-switching in their daily lives. According to Karp, once museums address the public, they find their audience to have multiple identities, belonging to a “changing mosaic of communities.”²⁰ This is certainly true for JANM, who must count among their audience not only Japanese Americans from each generation, but also other Asian Americans, non-Asian Americans, Asian Americans of mixed descent, and other minority groups. Furthermore, since taiko is a hybridized musical culture, how does the “Big Drum” exhibition appeal to the many communities it must represent?

For Karp, “The museum experience is supposed to be intensely private and personally transforming. Communities are the setting in which the skills for appreciating museums are acquired, but museums’ audiences belong to many communities, often simultaneously. Part of the politics of museum-community relations involves the politics of asserting and legitimizing claims to identity.”²¹ Since JANM in general, and by extension the “Big Drum” exhibition, are enmeshed in and indebted to the Japanese American community, asserting claims to the necessary multiple racial identities portrayed in “Big Drum” proves problematic. The final chapter of the “Big Drum” DVD features non-Asian American taiko performers along with Asian American taiko performers talking about the present state and the future of taiko. Japanese American taiko practitioner Tiffany Tamaribuchi, winner of the 2002 *Odaiko Hibike Zenkoku Ippin-uchi* (All-Japan Odaiko Competition), notes the diminishing number of Japanese

Americans playing taiko. Although she feels this is sort of “freaky,” she also states, “we wanted taiko to be a household word.”²² A non-Asian American taiko performer is shown saying she feels taiko “is about to become a world encompassing art form.”²³ An Asian American practitioner claims, “taiko adds to the continuing interaction of different cultures.”²⁴ These statements, among others, are deftly spliced into the DVD in order to paint a picture of taiko’s increasing international exposure. Due to its hybridized nature, taiko is depicted as a melding of diverse musical cultures that appeals to all communities, even within a transnational context. The interviews used in the “Big Drum” exhibition and DVD thus portray taiko as a burgeoning art form poised for international prominence.

4.6 PROMOTION

The opening of the “Big Drum” exhibition was coordinated to coincide with the 2005 North American Taiko Conference, held at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center (JACCC), also in Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo. The North American Taiko Conference scheduled workshops over the weekend in addition to several concerts, two Taiko Jam concerts and the Taiko Ten Community Concert. JANM, who advertised these workshops and concerts to the public, intended to reach a wider audience by providing live entertainment and participation in workshops in conjunction with the educational exhibition: “The viewer’s participation in the exhibit’s ‘performance’ turns physical space into narrative, and narrative into a visceral, physical experience.”²⁵ Opening the exhibition at the same time as the North American Taiko Conference was a

savvy marketing move for both the JANM and the Conference organizers, as it provided both entertainment value and educational material to the numerous taiko enthusiasts either living in or traveling to Los Angeles during that weekend.

The “Big Drum” exhibition took care to ensure it appealed to visitors of all ages. The DVD clips show everyone from young children to elderly people playing taiko. Furthermore, the website provides a “Family Activity Guide” with condensed information and fun games for children. Additionally, the interactive elements of the exhibition are promoted:

“Visitors to the exhibition will also have the opportunity to try taiko for themselves through several interactive elements including small percussive instruments for visitors to shake, rattle, and strike; festival and performance clothing to try on; Sony PlayStation game ‘Taiko: Drum master’ for visitors to test their game playing skills...and during weekend afternoons, taiko drums will be available for visitors to play on the demonstration platform.”²⁶

These examples suggest that the promotional goals of JANM were designed to appeal to different generational groups in specific ways, implying an awareness on behalf of JANM staff of the Japanese American community’s tendency to base their identity on their generational affiliation.²⁷ For example, Issei are credited for their strength in spirit and cultural contribution to the Japanese American community; this is well documented in written and oral interviews, on the “Big Drum” DVD, and in the written text for the “Big Drum” exhibition. Nisei are credited for strength through the adversity of the internment camps. Sansei are recognized for advancing the taiko movement and participating actively in the ethnic revitalization of Japanese American ethnicity, while Yonsei and even Gosei are portrayed as the next generation of taiko players. This compartmentalized targeting of specific generations ensures that Japanese Americans of every generation will feel not only a sense of contribution to the cultural legacy of taiko in America, but also the synergistic contributions of all generations to the total

community's strength and longevity. Furthermore, it substantiates Nishime's claim that the Japanese American voice is essential to the politics of representation within JANM: "At JANM the 'average' patron and the major contributors are Nisei and the title appeals to the rarely satisfied wish that Japanese Americans play a major role in their own history."²⁸ At JANM, and in the "Big Drum" exhibition, the Japanese American voice is prominent as it speaks to the future generations of taiko practitioners. Indeed, I argue that the importance of asserting a multi-generational Japanese American voice may be one of the reasons the "Big Drum" exhibition fails to speak strongly to the participation of non-Asian American taiko performers.

However, "Big Drum" successfully posits taiko as a hip, up-and-coming art form that has credibility in the popular music genre. Chapter four of the DVD shows clips of various taiko groups incorporating diverse music and dance traditions: Kinnara Taiko is shown performing with sari-clad Indian dancers, Kenny Endo is shown playing the odaiko in front of the Honolulu Symphony at a formal concert, the Taiko Center of Los Angeles is shown performing with the Riverside Community College Tap Ensemble, and Shoji Kameda of On Ensemble is shown playing taiko alongside a drum set and turntables.²⁹ These examples suggest that taiko practitioners today are enthusiastic about collaboration with various artistic communities, and that hybridized compositions and collaborations have major cultural (and monetary) currency. Next we look at the analysis of "Winds of Change," an original composition by Kenny Endo. Although "Winds of Change" was not included in the "Big Drum" DVD, I have chosen to analyze it in this thesis because it represents both the hybridization of musical forms as well as the currently popular contemporary, Latin-influenced composition. An analysis of "Winds of

Change” will show how leaders in today’s taiko movement meld diverse musical and compositional techniques in order to create pieces that possess commercial viability as well as cultural capital.

4.7 ANALYSIS OF “WINDS OF CHANGE”

Kenny Endo’s original composition “Winds of Change” was composed in 2000 and embodies the concept of utilizing non-Asian musical material. “Winds of Change” centers on Afro-Cuban rhythms, namely, the rumba clave. The rumba style of music derives from African slaves and their descendents living in Cuba, illustrating another study of music in the diaspora, which I will discuss further later. The two major styles of clave rhythms in Afro-Cuban music are the son clave and rumba clave:

Fig. 1: Son Clave

1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
x			x			x				x		x			

Fig. 2: Rumba Clave (3-2)

1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
x			x				x			x		x			

Both patterns consist of two bars in 4/4 time, and are similar with the exception of the third beat. While the son clave pattern is usually associated with dance, the rumba clave is connected to folkloric rhythms.³⁰ Within the rumba clave style of rhythm and dance,

there are three main subdivisions: the yambú, columbia, and guaguancó. “Winds of Change” utilizes the rumba clave as well as the guaguancó (below), a form of the rumba rooted in folkloric dance:

Fig. 3: Guaguancó

1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
			x			x		x			x			x	

Additionally, within the rumba clave pattern there are two directions: forward and reverse, or 3-2 and 2-3, respectively. The numbers refer to the number of notes per bar, therefore, the 2-3 rumba clave is the same as the 3-2 rumba clave but with the bars switched:

Fig. 4: Rumba Clave (2-3)

1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&	1	&	2	&	3	&	4	&
		x		x				x			x				x

According to ethnomusicologist Christopher Washburne, in contrast to the 12/8 feel of some rumba styles, such as rumba columbia, the guaguancó pattern has a distinct 4/4 feel:

“Another later style of rumba emerged from urban areas in a quasi-4/4 feel instead of 12/8, called guaguancó. The duple meter feel may have been the result of the influence of marching bands and other Spanish styles often heard in the larger cities throughout the 1700s. The clave used in guaguancó appears to be an adaptation of the clave rhythm found in rumba columbia to fit the new metric feel.”³¹

Although the son clave, rumba clave, and guaguancó patterns are generally notated as two bars of 4/4 time, as I have notated above in Fig. 1-4, in “Winds of Change” Endo has

condensed the rhythms so that each fits into one bar: therefore, although the rhythms are compressed, they still have the same proportions.

4.7.1 INSTRUMENTATION AND DYNAMICS

Endo applies both rumba clave (3-2 and 2-3) as well as guaguancó in his composition “Winds of Change.” Interestingly, he uses both Latin and Japanese instruments as well as Western instruments. Japanese instruments include three shimedaiko (pitched to high, medium, and low),³² which play the main rhythmic part, the odaiko, which provides rhythmic punctuation, the *chappa* (a small, double cymbal instrument similar to a hi-hat) and kane, which add rhythmic accents, and the fue, which provides melody. It is important to note that the three shimedaiko are positioned closely in a triangle shape, so that those playing the shimedaiko are facing each other. This allows the performers to move between the shimedaiko easily, which I will discuss later. Latin instruments include the claves, which play the 3-2 rumba clave throughout, and the congas, which play throughout and solo during the guaguancó section. Western instruments include the shakers as well as various percussion instruments such as woodblocks, which, when played with the kane, create a consistent line of sixteenth notes through the piece. As we can see, although the style of “Winds of Change” is distinctly Afro-Cuban, Japanese instruments still dominate the piece, another strong indication of the melding of styles and hybridization found in contemporary taiko. This is also an example of the selective borrowing of numerous musical traditions discussed in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the compositional techniques in “Winds of Change” reinforce the

concept, championed in the “Big Drum” exhibition, that taiko has evolved from a grassroots movement to an international phenomenon.

The dynamics of “Winds of Change” generally follow a structure of soft, with a crescendo to loud, then a decrescendo back to soft. This dynamic pattern holds true for the larger structure of the piece, as well as for smaller internal units within the piece. For example, although the piece starts softly, becomes loud near the middle, and ends softly, it also crescendos and decrescendos within smaller phrases of the piece (as in mm. 23-43 and mm. 62-82).

4.7.2 TRIPLET-FEEL PATTERN

“Winds of Change” opens with a free-time space of about one minute in which the various percussion instruments improvise freely before the piece officially begins. The clave initiates the 3-2 rumba pattern (m.1) and the other percussion instruments gradually enter: the woodblock/kane section in m. 2, the shakers in m. 3, and finally the shimedaiko in m. 4. The three shimedaiko also enter gradually, starting with the highest pitched. The first shimedaiko plays the first note of the rumba clave pattern, and each subsequent measure another note is added on: therefore, it takes 5 bars (m.4-8) for the entire 5-note rumba clave pattern to be played in its duration. The rumba clave repeats until bar 11. Starting from bar 11, the shimedaiko begin to play three sets of a bar of sixteenth-notes followed by a bar rest (mm. 11-16). These sixteenth-notes illustrate the fundamental driving pattern behind the piece: the first set consists of accents every third note starting on beat one, while the second set shifts one sixteenth-note to the right, thus

starting on the second sixteenth-note, and the third set shifts one sixteenth-note to the right, thus starting on the third sixteenth-note. Therefore, although the same triplet-feel accent pattern appears in each of the three sets, it is displaced by one sixteenth-note each time. This temporal shifting of accent patterns is central to “Winds of Change.” Furthermore, it imposes a triplet-feel against the repetitive rumba pattern played by the claves, thus giving the piece a sense of rhythmic and temporal tension.

The next group of patterns played by the shimedaiko also consists of three sets of two bars (17-22). This time, however, rather than playing consistent sixteenth-notes, the shimedaiko play only their accented notes, starting from the respective shifted sixteenth-note positions. Therefore, for the first set, shimedaiko 1 (highest) starts on beat 1, shimedaiko 2 (middle) starts on the second sixteenth-note, and shimedaiko 3 (lowest) starts on the third sixteenth-note. The result is a composite sixteenth-note pattern with the accent pattern played by different pitched drums on different temporal locations. For the second and third sets, the shimedaiko parts change: whereas set one was played 1-2-3 (highest to lowest), set two becomes 3-1-2, and set three becomes 2-3-1. The order of shimedaiko indicates the place at which they start the pattern.

From bar 23 to 43, the shimedaiko performers play a complex series of the pattern while rotating in a circle, thus playing all three shimedaiko before returning to their own. Furthermore, this is carried out while each shimedaiko performer plays a consistent sixteenth-note pattern while accenting their respective notes in various temporal positions. Shimedaiko 1 plays the pattern starting on the first sixteenth-note in m. 23, the second in m. 24, and the third in m. 25, thus creating a 1-2-3 progression. Shimedaiko 2 plays 2-3-1, while shimedaiko 3 plays 3-1-2. After these three bars are completed, the

shimedaiko players step to the right and complete the same three bar pattern, this time sharing the drums and playing with the right hand on the right drum, and the left hand on their original drum (mm. 26-28). For the next three bar pattern (mm.29-31), they shift another step to the right, then play the complete pattern on the right-hand drum (1 has shifted to 2, 2 to 3, and 3 to 1). The next three bar pattern has them again sharing the drum to their right (mm. 32-34), then moving again to the right-hand drum (mm. 35-37), then sharing with the drum to the right, their original drum (mm. 38-40), then finally moving back to their original drum (mm. 41-43). This pattern is complex and difficult to play, but creates an unusual blend of texture based on the composite accent pattern of the varying pitches of the shimedaiko. This is also one of two places in the entire piece that the fue appears, playing a series of pitches starting on D-flat and ending on D-natural, mostly whole-notes and half-notes.

The composite rhythm of this triplet-feel pattern is described in the table below. As I mentioned earlier, although generally the rumba clave pattern consists of two bars, Endo has condensed the pattern into one bar, therefore, the rumba clave pattern shown in the lower row, along with the three shimedaiko lines (rows 1-3, highest to lowest) occupy only one bar. The accents are indicated by a capitalized X.

Fig. 5: Triplet-feel pattern (shimedaiko 1, 2, 3, and clave, top to bottom), first position

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X
x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x
x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x	x	X	x
X			X				X			X		X			

4.7.3 GUAGUANCÓ PATTERN

The guaguancó pattern (mm. 44-61) includes three major textural changes: first, the shimedaiko, playing the guaguancó pattern, start the progression from lowest to highest, rather than highest to lowest as in the triplet-feel pattern. Second, the chappa changes to a different rhythmic pattern, providing precise accents to complement the guaguancó. Third, the congas solo over the guaguancó. The guaguancó, an urban and modernized form of the rumba, traditionally includes vocals and couple dancing featuring the *vacunao*, a pelvic thrust symbolizing the man's sexual conquest of the female.³³ The traditional structure of the rumba guaguancó provides insight into Endo's compositional techniques in the guaguancó section of "Winds of Change."

"The Rumba Guaguancó consists of two main sections. The first, the canto, features the lead vocalist, who performs an extended text that is sometimes partially improvised. Underneath the vocal three interlocking rhythmic parts are played: one or two drummers playing on differently tuned congas perform an ostinato (recurring pattern), while another musician taps a pattern on the side of one drum with two hard sticks, called palitos. Another, usually the lead singer, plays a standardized clave part."³⁴

According to this description of the first section, the vocalist performs a somewhat improvised part, while the congas perform an interlocking ostinato pattern, another musician plays a sharp pattern on the side of a drum, and another plays the claves. In Endo's guaguancó section, I suggest that the conga player has taken the part of the vocalist, soloing over the three shimedaiko which play the interlocking ostinato guaguancó pattern. The chappa changes rhythm to play a sharper, more driving beat, while the clave remains on the rumba pattern, thus contributing to rhythmic and textural tension.

The guaguancó pattern is played by the three shimedaiko, who again share the line by alternating beats, although this time, starting with the lowest-pitched drum and moving up to the highest: 3-2-1, 2-1-3, and 1-3-2 each for two bars for a total of six bars which is repeated 3 times (mm. 44-61).

Fig. 6: Guaguancó pattern (Shimedaiko 1, 2, 3, and clave, top to bottom), first position.

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
								X			X				
						X								X	
			X												
X			X				X			X		X			

4.7.4 ENDING

After the guaguancó pattern, the triplet-feel pattern resumes, and mm. 62-82 are the same as mm. 23-43. After the triplet-feel pattern ends, a reverse rumba clave, or 2-3 rumba clave, begins. As I mentioned earlier, this is an inversion of the 3-2 clave pattern where the second half switches with the first half:

Fig. 7: 2-3 Rumba Clave pattern

1	e	&	a	2	e	&	a	3	e	&	a	4	e	&	a
		x		x				x			x				x

This pattern again begins with the highest-pitched shimedaiko, and moves in a circular motion with each shimedaiko playing one note: therefore, in mm. 83 shimedaiko 1 starts

the pattern, in mm. 84 shimedaiko 3 starts it, and in mm. 85 shimedaiko 2 starts it.

Starting from mm. 85, a long and gradual fade out begins, with the instruments gradually becoming softer and softer. Furthermore, the shimedaiko playing the 2-3 rumba gradually drop one note off the end of the pattern bar by bar: mm. 86 has only 4 of 5 notes, mm. 87 has 3 notes, mm. 88 has 2 notes, and in the final bar, mm. 89, all instruments play a very soft eighth-note following an eighth-rest.

As we have seen, Endo's "Winds of Change" captures the present mood of taiko as a multicultural and multiethnic art form. By incorporating Afro-Cuban musical patterns and instrumentation in his composition, Endo has created a unique opportunity for artistic innovation at a time when taiko practitioners are only too willing to participate in such exploration.

¹ www.janm.org/about/history.php, (accessed November 29, 2007).

² Leilani Nishime, "Communities on Display: Museums and the Creation of the Asian American Citizen," *Amerasia Journal* v. 30, #3 (2004): 41.

³ Nishime, "Communities on Display," 42.

⁴ See note 1 above.

⁵ <http://www.janm.org/about/depts/education/ndep.php>, (accessed November 30, 2007).

⁶ See note 1 above.

⁷ <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bigdrum/about.php>, (accessed November 29, 2007).

⁸ Cristine Sato, interview by author, July 17, 2007.

⁹ Amy Iwasaki Mass, "Psychological Effects of the Camps on Japanese Americans," in *Japanese Americans: From Relocation to Redress*, ed. Roger Daniels, Sandra C. Taylor, and Harry Kitano (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1986), 161.

¹⁰ According to Yasuko Takezawa, "Internment and the consequent redress movement opened a new phase in the evolution of the Japanese American identity...In this process, pride gradually replaced past shame of the Nisei; just as the shame of the Nisei was once passed onto the Sansei, the pride of the Nisei has now been passed on to the Sansei."

Yasuko Takezawa, "Children of Inmates: The Effects of the Redress Movement among Third-Generation Japanese Americans," in *Contemporary Asian America: A Multidisciplinary Reader* (2000): 311.

¹¹ <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bigdrum/press.php>, (accessed November 29, 2007).

¹² Nishime, "Communities on Display," 42.

¹³ Nishime, "Communities on Display," 44.

¹⁴ Christine Kreamer, "Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain: Cultural Negotiations and Ghana's Cape Coast Castle Museum Exhibition: "Crossroads of People, Crossroads of Trade," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp, Corrine A. Kratz, Lynn Szwaja, and Tomas Ybarra-Frausto (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 439.

¹⁵ Kreamer "Shared Heritage, Contested Terrain," 460.

¹⁶ <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bigdrum/interviews/sanjosetaiko.php>, (accessed December 4, 2007).

¹⁷ Ivan Karp, "Introduction: Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture," in *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, ed. Ivan Karp, Christine M. Kreamer, Steven D. Lavine (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 1-2.

¹⁸ See note 1 above.

¹⁹ Karp, "Introduction: Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture," 6.

²⁰ Karp, "Introduction: Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture," 14.

²¹ Karp, "Introduction: Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture," 12.

²² "Big Drum" DVD, 2005.

²³ See note 22 above.

²⁴ See note 22 above.

²⁵ Nishime, "Communities on Display," 48.

²⁶ See note 7 above.

²⁷ During my research, I found that people were often referred to by their generation, implying that there are certain social norms standardized for each generation. Indeed, in my academic research I have come across countless (accurate and statistically proven) generalizations about generation norms.

²⁸ Nishime, "Communities on Display," 44.

²⁹ See note 22 above.

³⁰ <http://pertout.customer.netspace.net.au/lclaveac.htm>, (accessed February 29, 2008).

³¹ Christopher Washburne, "Clave: The African Roots of Salsa," *Kalinda!* (Fall 1995).

³² Sometimes in "Winds of Change" an okedo drum is substituted for one of the shimedaiko. The okedo is placed vertically flat on a stand so it is level with the heads of the shimedaiko.

³³ <http://www.cwo.com/~lucumi/history.htm>, (accessed February 29, 2008).

³⁴ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cuban_rumba#Rumba_Yamb.C3.BA, (accessed February 29, 2008).

Winds of Change

Kenny Endo
Transcribed by Sarah Carle

$\text{♩} = 76$

Fue

Shimedaiko 1

Shimedaiko 2

Shimedaiko 3

Shakers

Percussion

Clave

Odaiko

3-2 rhumba clave

(starts at 1:03)

4

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

7

Rue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odeiko

9

Rue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odeiko

12

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

15

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

17

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

19

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

The musical score is presented in two systems, each containing seven staves. The first system is for measures 17 and 18, and the second system is for measures 19 and 20. The instruments are labeled on the left of each staff. The notation includes various musical symbols such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings. The score is written in a style that is common for traditional Japanese music, with a focus on rhythm and melody. The instruments are arranged in a way that allows for a clear view of the ensemble's performance. The score is a detailed representation of the music, providing a clear guide for the performers.

21

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

23

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

26

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Parc.

Clave

Odasho

29

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Parc.

Clave

Odasho

32

Flute

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odeiko

starting 2

35

Flute

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odeiko

position 3

38

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odeiko

staring 3

41

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odeiko

position 1

44

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak. *Gua Guan Co*

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

47

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

The musical score is presented in two systems, measures 44-47. Each system contains seven staves. The top staff is for 'Fue' and contains rests. The next three staves are for 'Shime 1', 'Shime 2', and 'Shime 3', each with a different rhythmic pattern of notes and rests. The fifth staff is for 'Shak.' and is labeled '*Gua Guan Co*'; it features a dense, continuous pattern of eighth notes with accents. The sixth staff is for 'Perc.' and has a similar dense eighth-note pattern. The seventh staff is for 'Clave' and shows a repeating rhythmic motif. The bottom staff is for 'Odaiko' and contains a simple pattern of notes and rests. A double bar line separates the two systems at measure 47.

50

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

53

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

56

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

59

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

The musical score is written for a percussion ensemble. It consists of two systems, measures 56-59. The instruments are Fue, Shime 1, Shime 2, Shime 3, Shak., Perc., Clave, and Odaiko. The notation uses a variety of note values, including eighth, sixteenth, and thirty-second notes, as well as rests. The Shak. and Perc. parts feature dense, continuous patterns of sixteenth notes. The Clave part has a distinct rhythmic pattern with accents. The Odaiko part provides a steady, low-pitched accompaniment. The Fue part is mostly silent, with a few notes in measure 59.

62

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaliko

position 1

63

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaliko

sturing 1

68

Fute

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

position 2

71

Fute

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

sharing 2

74

Fue

Shine 1

Shine 2

Shine 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaliko

77

Fue

Shine 1

Shine 2

Shine 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaliko

position 3

starting 3

80

Rue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Pero.

Clave

Odeiko

83

Rue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Pero.

Clave

Odeiko

position 1

2-3 rhumba clave

85

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

all fade gradually

87

Fue

Shime 1

Shime 2

Shime 3

Shak.

Perc.

Clave

Odaiko

p

CONCLUSION

This thesis examines the interrelation of ethnic identity, gender, and musical hybridization in the modern American taiko movement. Although this is a preliminary work aimed at exploring potential avenues of research, the method of ethnographic research and analysis has proven useful. As we have seen, the American taiko movement, although of Japanese origin, is rooted in the shared experiences of Asian Americans. Furthermore, especially in recent years, the taiko movement has shown potentiality in becoming an encompassing art form that transcends cultural and national boundaries. As Deborah Wong notes, “The slippage between taiko as a specifically Japanese performance tradition, to its emergence as a Japanese American tradition, to its reformulation as a pan-Asian American tradition, to its placement as a tradition open to any participants from any background, is central to the place of taiko in America.”¹

Taiko’s position in America is unique since it has been influenced by many of the discourses of cultural studies, such as gender, race, ethnicity, nationalism, and diaspora. The frameworks of Lisa Lowe and Yen Le Espiritu have proven particularly useful in the analysis of taiko. Lowe challenges the narrative of cultural integration, stating that the formation of Asian American culture is a separate entity from the dominant American narrative, a framework that reinforces taiko’s long-standing position as a distinctly Asian American art form. Although taiko is not limited to Asian American participants, elements of resistance to the dominant narrative have ensured the continuity of this cultural form. Furthermore, Espiritu’s concept of panethnicity speaks to the sense of

solidarity shared within the Asian American movement that created an impetus for the formation of taiko groups along racial lines.

The study of gender in the American taiko movement is problematic on several levels. First, and on the most fundamental level, taiko reflects a historically gendered tradition. While most groups have tried to counteract this “baggage,” some practitioners maintain that certain pieces are better performed by men. Also, in my research I noticed that certain pieces, like “Tsunami,” generally include far more male soloists than female. While I don’t believe that this reflects an attitude that women are less capable players than men, I argue that it is easier for men to perform in certain roles due to the perception that it is more “natural.” Additionally, I have shown how women in both Japan and America have established all-women groups in order to explore other avenues of artistic creativity.

The taiko movement, noted for its incorporation of diverse musical material, continues to draw on varied instrumentation, musical techniques, staging, and collaborations with other artists and organizations. A study of this pattern shows how many taiko practitioners today feel that taiko is on the brink of becoming a world-encompassing art form. Taiko capitalizes on its hybridization by collaborating with artists from numerous genres and racial backgrounds, thus catapulting it into the global arena. Increased exposure through museum exhibitions, television commercials, and public performances have promulgated taiko into a sphere of increased influence and prestige.

Throughout this study, my own personal positionality played an important role. As a white American female taiko practitioner, I was forced to confront many of my own

issues concerning taiko in America. Although I had studied taiko in Japan for two years prior to studying in America, I felt like an outside observer of the American taiko movement. Despite my best efforts to “belong,” the true comfort and pleasure of feeling at home with my musical community evaded me. Although I had many close friends in the group and felt supported by my sensei, something was incomplete. Why did I feel more comfortable playing taiko in Japan, where I was the only foreigner in a small town, than I did in America, where my group had a more mixed racial makeup? Was this feeling unique to Hawai‘i, or to mainland America as well? When I started my study at the University of Hawai‘i, I fully intended to return to Japan and conduct field research on taiko groups there. However, as I started playing taiko in Honolulu, the incongruity of my dual experiences became intensely personal and I felt compelled to explore the issue further. My work in Cultural Studies has been integral to this project, and also led to my decision to focus on the Asian American experience in the taiko movement, rather than the non-Asian American experience. I am aware that this decision was likely a subconscious attempt to provide distance between my own personal experience, which was difficult, and something I felt I could study somewhat objectively. In the end, however, I realized that despite my best efforts, I could not separate out my experience from the Asian American experience. In the American taiko movement, it is the amalgamation of so many kinds of experiences coming together that makes it unique, incongruous, difficult, and valuable.

This thesis aimed to explore the meaning and motivations fueling the American taiko movement. As my research for this study was primarily conducted with taiko groups from the West Coast and Hawai‘i, another avenue for research would include a

more comprehensive study of taiko groups across America. Regional differences abound in the network of taiko groups in America. Racial demographics, socio-economic stratifications, and gender positionalities vary greatly according to region, and have significant bearing on the regional practice of taiko. It would also be worthwhile to conduct a comparative study of taiko in Japan and America, especially given the increasing collaboration between artists of both countries in both taiko and other Japan-rooted arts. This thesis intends to open further communication within the taiko community, and to encourage dialogue on the study of musical identity in the diaspora. My study does not intend to champion one style of taiko over another, or to pass judgment on any contemporary innovations taking place in the American taiko movement. Rather, I aim to address the interrelation of the personal and the political, acknowledging the deep sense of agency within many groups as well as individuals. The uniqueness of the American taiko movement lies in its ability to push through boundaries, carving out a place for itself in the global arena and ensuring its survival for future generations.

¹ Deborah Wong, *Speak It Louder* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 195-6.

APPENDIX A

A copy of the sound examples in CD format is on file in the University of Hawai'i Ethnomusicology Archives of the Music Department.

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