



Wednesday, 29. February 2012, 18.30 h

Yuki Fukiage and Jun Matsumura, Kwansei Gakuin University

**Continuity and Transformation of Cultural
Distinction in Contemporary Japan:
The Case of Classical Music Fans and Architects**

Both classical music and (modern) architecture, which are the themes of this session, are artistic endeavors that were first imported to Japan from western countries during the Meiji period. To a large extent, they functioned as forms of 'high' culture that represented the ideals of modernization and westernization. However, the social meanings of these arts are considerably different in contemporary Japan, both because the distinction of 'high' and 'popular' culture seems to have receded, and because far more actors have become involved in the respective cultures. In this session, two speakers who are conducting research on each of these two cultural fields will explore how this transformation has affected practices of cultural distinction in Japan.

1. Yuki Fukiage

Who is the Classical Music Otaku?

— Fanatical listeners to classical music in contemporary Japan —

The aim of this presentation is to explore how the social meanings of classical music have been changing in contemporary Japanese society, focusing on specific contemporary styles of listening to classical music, especially the style of those "fanatical" listeners to classical music called 'classical music otaku' ('Kuraota', in short). Some examples of the Kuraotas' listening style will be given and characterized. Then, in order to distinguish between these characteristics from a more conventional style of listening, previous listening styles will be discussed by referring to the historical process of reception of classical music. Finally, by comparing these two listening styles (the Kuraota style and the 'historical' style), this presentation tries to show that the characteristics of Kuraotas' listening style are understandable as a reflection of contemporary cultural conditions.

Yuki Fukiage is a doctoral student at Graduate School of Sociology, Kwansei Gakuin University. His research is concerned with cultural sociology and sociology of music.

2. Jun Matsumura

Country Architects

— Factors affecting the entitlement to claim to be ‘architect’ in Japan —

In Japan, ‘architect’ is not a protected title. The law only recognizes Kenchikushi, or ‘building engineer’. In fact, only about 1% of these Kenchikushi choose to identify themselves as an ‘architect’. Most of them are based in large cities. In general, they have ample resources to enjoy the prestige that comes with the title of ‘architect’, and get assignments because of it.

By contrast, ‘architects’ in rural areas have few economic opportunities and little professional infrastructure to sustain their identity as such. Nevertheless, some young people in these areas dare to become ‘architects’ under these relatively disadvantaged conditions. Based on interviews with ‘architects’ belonging to different generations in a provincial town in Kagawa Prefecture, this presentation investigates why this is the case. While this research is still in progress, it has provisionally been established that whether or not one becomes an ‘architect’ in rural areas correlates with the cultural and economic capital inherited from one's family.

Jun Matsumura is a doctoral student at Graduate School of Sociology, Kwansai Gakuin University. He is interested in architecture and urban studies, and is carrying out fieldworks on architects in a rural area of Japan. He is a second-class architect himself.

The DIJ Social Science Study Group is a forum for young scholars and Ph.D. candidates in the field of Social Sciences organized by Maren Godzik and Barbara Holthus. All are welcome to attend, but registration (godzik@dijtokyo.org) is appreciated.

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