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Contesting the Streets : Shelter Resistant Homeless Men and Encampments in Japan, America and Britain

メタデータ	言語: eng 出版者: 公開日: 2012-04-10 キーワード (Ja): キーワード (En): 作成者: ギル, トム メールアドレス: 所属:
URL	https://doi.org/10.15021/00003882

Contesting the Streets: Shelter-Resistant Homeless Men and Encampments in Japan, America and Britain

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路上をめぐる争い——日本, 米国, 英国のシェルターを拒む
ホームレスの人々および路上生活者——

トム・ギル

The streets are contested space. According to context that contest can take many forms, but this paper, written as part of the Minpaku project on “anthropology of the streets,” deals with a particularly literal form of street contestation: that which occurs between homeless people and other players in the urban environment—mainstream society and the city authorities. Using case studies from Japan, the U.S.A. and Britain, this paper studies individual and collective responses to the challenges of living on the streets—broadly defined to include other public spaces—in 21st century industrialized cities. Homeless people are often portrayed as passive victims of modern urban society. In fact they show a range of strategies in their frequent encounters with the authorities, ranging from reluctant accommodation to active resistance.

路上は争いのスペースである。そこでの争いは様々な形態を取り得るが、本稿では、文字通りの意味での路上をめぐる争い、すなわち、都市環境においてホームレスの人々とその他の当事者——社会の主流をなす人々と都市当局——との間で起こっている争いについて論じる。日本, 米国, 英国のケース・スタディーを利用し、21世紀の工業都市における路上（広義には他の公共スペースも含めると定義する）での生活をとがめられた場合の、個人および集団としての対応について検討する。ホームレスの人々は現代の都市社会の受動的被害者であるとししばしば表現される。しかし現実には、彼らは自治体との頻繁な衝突の際、シェルターへの収容を渋ることから積極的に抵抗するという場合まで、様々な戦略を取っている。

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Key Words : street, homeless, shelter, resistance, Japan

キーワード : 路上, ホームレス, シェルター, 抵抗, 日本

Introduction: Refusing Shelter	5 Homeless Settlements in Japan: Collective
1 Active Resistance: Hotoke	Contestation of Space
2 Passive Resistance: Tsujimoto	6 Japanese Encampments and Expulsions
3 Active Resistance: David	7 American Encampments and Expulsions
4 Passive Resistance: Mark	8 Conclusion

Introduction: Refusing Shelter

This paper is one of the products of a Minpaku project on “anthropology of the streets.” The leader of that project, Yasumasa Sekine, describes the streets as “contested space.” Streets, of course, are used as ways of getting from one place to another, but they are also social areas where people spend part of their lives and interact with one another. Sometimes the different functions of public spaces can create conflict. In this paper I will look at how that contestation of space plays out between urban homeless people and the local societies and authorities with which they co-exist.

Struggles over the rights and obligations of homeless people are among the most dramatic forms of street contestation, since homeless people are among the few who use streets and other public spaces as places to dwell and not just as passageways between other forms of space in the modern city. At the same time, however, it is an interestingly ambiguous contest, since the rhetoric of both sides in this contest says that homeless people should be *off* the streets. Homeless people usually say that they want to be properly housed; local authorities will say, with varying degrees of sincerity, that they want the same thing. When homeless people defend their right to dwell in public spaces, they are sometimes characterized as illogical or unreasonable; whether that is so depends on what alternatives are available.

When people ‘choose the streets,’ that is not the same as saying that they prefer the streets to any other lifestyle. For many, it is the least unattractive among several unattractive options. They may have come to a realization that living on the street is preferable to living in a crowded shelter where they fear their personal possessions may be stolen or they may come under physical threat. The street may be seen as preferable to living with a family member who resents their presence. In hot weather particularly, it may seem preferable to living in a small and stuffy room. In short, living on the street may, under certain circumstances, be the outcome of rational-choice decision-making.

A lot of work has been published in various languages on homelessness. All too often, however, the English-language academic community has ignored work done in other languages and argued in generalized terms in which there is an unspoken assumption that one may generalize from Euro-American case studies. The

Japanese authorities, meanwhile, have shown little interest in learning from the experience of other countries, perhaps because of the unconscious assumption, still surprisingly strong, that Japanese society and culture are “uniquely unique.” This paper is an attempt to bridge that gap, by reporting on fairly intensive fieldwork in three countries—Japan, the USA, and Great Britain. Admittedly I am myself open to charges of over-generalization from these three countries; my only defense is that I have focused on countries that I can study at first hand, without resort to interpreters. This is a very important precondition to carrying out qualitative research on a sensitive topic like this one. Fieldwork, like politics, is “the art of the possible.” Let me start, therefore, by looking at my adopted country, Japan.

In a perceptive paper, Tsumaki (2003; English version, 2004) problematizes the attitude of the Japanese authorities toward homeless people who decline to go into shelters. That refusal is seen as “refusing a decent civic life” (*shakai seikatsu no kyohi*). Under the 2002 Homeless Autonomy Support Law (*Hōmuresu Jiritsu Shien-hō*), such people are contrasted with two other groups of homeless people—those willing and able to work and those too old or weak to work. The needs of the other two groups are addressed by the legislation, but the refusers are ear-marked for ‘reform or exclusion’ (*kyōsei/haijo*) in Tsumaki’s words (Tsumaki 2003: 21). In this attempt to distinguish between ‘good homeless’ and ‘bad homeless,’ the Japanese authorities follow a pattern that may be widely observed around the world. The British distinction between the ‘honest poor’ and ‘sturdy beggars’ dates back to the Middle Ages, while in the United States, homeless people who decline to use facilities are described as ‘service resistant.’

The assumption underlying this bureaucratic language is that such people are acting in an irrational manner. However, government officials tend to neglect the other possibility: that there may be a problem with the facilities, rather than with those who refuse to use them. As Tsumaki points out, one of the many ironies of homeless policy in Japan today is that despite its heavy emphasis on ‘support for autonomy’ (*jiritsu shien*), the system as presently constituted seldom succeeds in taking homeless men off the streets and enabling them to get a job and rent an apartment. Instead, many men undergo a transitional period in a shelter (*ichiji hinanjo*) and/or autonomy support center (*jiritsu shien sentā*) but are unable to find steady employment—partly because they are inured to an irregular lifestyle of occasional irregular labor and life in a series of temporary places of accommodation and on the street. Consequently, when they complete the period specified by the autonomy support center, they may well end up back on the street or on welfare (*seikatsu hogo*). Thus men who are in fact living with a high level of autonomy (building their own dwelling, supporting themselves through informal economic activity such as aluminum can recycling, etc.) may end up living in more orthodox dwellings but entirely dependent for their survival on welfare payments from the government. As Tsumaki puts it, “‘independence through welfare’... to them, is no kind of independence

at all, since it entails the abandonment of the value of self-sufficiency” (Tsumaki 2004: 27). I will further discuss the ironies implicit in the government discourse on ‘autonomy’ in section V below.

In this paper, I will consider the cases of several homeless men who probably could get off the streets if they wanted to, but who, for various reasons, continue to live the homeless lifestyle. I have chosen four case studies to illustrate the issues involved. Two of my case studies are taken from Japan, and may be taken as examples of ‘active’ and ‘passive’ resistance to social norms and public authority. I will also look at one case each from Britain and America, which form a similar pairing. Finally I will move from the individual to the collective and look at the contestation of space in the case of homeless encampments.

1 Active Resistance: Hotoke

There is a homeless man in Nagoya who calls himself ‘Hotoke’ (‘Buddha’). It is a matter of principle with Hotoke not to tell anyone his real name. If asked his age and place of birth, he says ‘zero years old, born on Planet Earth.’ I do not know why Hotoke is so secretive about his identity; perhaps things happened in his youth that he would rather put behind him.

I first met Hotoke in 2002, the year the Homeless Autonomy Support Law was passed. At the time there were close to 1,000 homeless men living in the three great parks of central Nagoya—Wakamiya Ōdori Park, Shirakawa Park and Hisaya Park. Hotoke was living in a large shack with a tent-like awning attached to it, stuffed with furniture, bric-a-brac and books. The city government was building a homeless shelter in Wakamiya Ōdori Park and officials were making the rounds of the park dwellings, trying to persuade their owners to use the shelter when it opened¹⁾. Hotoke stoutly refused, and predicted that most of the other men would too. But after a two-year campaign by the city authorities, including groundless threats of fines and imprisonment for those who refused to move, Hotoke was one of only eight men still living in Wakamiya Park when the city authorities and police came on January 25, 2005, to forcibly expel the die-hard resisters. Hotoke was dragged from his dwelling, which was then dismantled and removed, but still refused to leave the park. Six of the eight went into the shelter, and one, a man with disabilities, went into hospital. Hotoke, however, carried on living in Shirakawa Park, using a tree for shelter and retrieving from police storage only those possessions he could carry with him.

His one-man show of resistance lasted until June 3 of that year. Two city officials interrupted Hotoke while he was making his breakfast and tried, yet again, to persuade him to leave. In a moment of irritation, he flicked some miso soup at them. A brief tussle ensued, and though no visible injuries resulted, Hotoke was arrested for allegedly assaulting the two city officials. At his trial in the Nagoya

District Court, Hotoke, true to form, refused to give his real name, age, or date of birth. He was consequently denied bail, and had to spend the entire duration of the trial in detention. It lasted 17 months, during which, by his own account, Hotoke made life a misery for his captors by incessantly complaining about prison conditions, demanding to see the governor, etc. Finally he was convicted and sentenced to the maximum penalty, a fine of 300,000 yen, converted to two months of prison time at a rate of 5,000 yen per day. This meant that Hotoke was free to go as he had already served far more than that.

Hotoke appealed the decision to the Nagoya high court, where in September 2007 he won a small victory when the judge upheld the assault charge but turned down a second charge of causing actual bodily injury, and reduced the fine from 300,000 to 200,000 yen. Hearings in both court cases were held before packed courtrooms, as Hotoke's friends and supporters packed the gallery.

After his release from detention after the first trial, Hotoke spent a month or so resting up in the room on the fourth floor of the Sasashima Workers' Hall, which is owned by activists and the local day laborer union. He then moved to his present residence, a small hut in Wakamiya Ōdori Park. He did not build it himself—it was loaned to him by one Makiguchi-san, known to homeless people in Nagoya as a 'shack landlord.' Makiguchi, originally from the Osaka day laboring district of Kamagasaki, has built some 30 shacks in Wakamiya Ōdori Park, of which over 20 still remain, according to Hotoke. They are small but robust dwellings, ingeniously designed with wheels underneath. This means that when police or city officials tell the owner to move long, they can make at least a token show of compliance by moving the shack a little further along the park²). By this device, and careful cultivation of acquaintances in the city government, Makiguchi has managed to create a sort of moral force field around his wheeled shacks. His approach is an interesting case of an alternative position between the two extremes of abject compliance and uncompromising resistance when responding to pressure from the authorities to leave a location.

Stubborn as a mule, Hotoke has fought a one-man crusade against the authorities long after most men would have given up. But his self-reliance is not total: he has drawn on alternative sources of support, such as the day-laborer union and Makiguchi-san with his homeless vehicles. He also receives gifts from a number of supporters, including at least one real Buddhist monk, that help to sustain his campaign. And when he has fallen ill, Hotoke has on occasion used hospitals where his bills were covered by the medical arm of the livelihood protection program. So here a powerful expression of individual resistance is made possible partly by a pragmatic willingness to accept certain forms of assistance.

2 Passive Resistance: Tsujimoto

My next case study is drawn from one of the clusters of ad hoc dwellings to be found on riverbanks in Japan. The riverbank lifestyle is one that appeals to homeless men in search of peace and quiet. Compared with the park communities, dwellings are less likely to be removed and their residents less likely to be harassed by police or city officials. As well as being locations with fewer passers-by than city parks, rivers have a complex administrative structure: the two banks of the river may be in different cities or prefectures, and the bridges, areas under bridges and recreational areas on riverbanks may all be under different city, prefectural, or national jurisdiction. This tends to result in administrative paralysis and benign neglect of homeless colonies. On the other hand, riverbanks are at risk of flooding³⁾, and the same loneliness and administrative neglect that makes them peaceful locations can be dangerous when fights break out or gangs of youths come to harass homeless men.

Born in Saitama in 1944, Tsujimoto-san was 63 when I got to know him in 2007, and had lived on the riverbank for some ten years after many years of wandering around Japan. Thin and slight of build, he has glasses and a much lined face that frequently creases further with a smile or laughter. A scavenger or *jimiya* (literally one who looks at the ground for a profession), Tsujimoto has had some success in finding jewelry, fine china and other valuables in household garbage, and in repairing electrical machinery. He tours neighborhoods on the day of the month when ‘large-scale general garbage’ (*sodai gomi*) is being put out, and has a good eye for hallmarks and other signs of value. He says he recently found an 18-carat gold necklace which he sold for 80,000 yen to one of the scrap dealers who periodically comes around the homeless colony. Even so, he estimates his average monthly income at just 15,000 to 20,000 yen.

Tsujimoto has a sheaf of technical qualifications, permitting him to work as an electrician and operator of various kinds of construction machinery. He also claims to have a second-class diploma in abacus (*soroban*), and certificates for flower-arranging (Katsura Koryū) and tea ceremony (Ura Senke). His neat and tidy hut somewhat recalls a tea ceremony room, and when conversing with visitors, he kneels in front of it in the upright *seiza* style, which he says he finds comfortable. He has time for hobbies such as reading historical fiction and playing *shōgi* with his friends or video games on his Gameboy. He has a small TV and a friend recharges his car battery from time to time. He has oil lamps for lighting and camping gas for cooking.

There are about ten men living in the immediate vicinity, and he says they get on very well, though one thing he never does is share food with them. To him, that is a symbolic indicator of excessively intimate friendship. Like many homeless men, including homeless author Ōyama Shiro (Ōyama 2000; 2005), he says he deliberately avoids intimate friendship for fear of the obligations it might entail⁴⁾.

Occasionally he will make fishing trips, travelling vast distances on his bicycle, though he says the fish in the Muko River itself are not worth catching.

Tsujimoto had a working career that was far from the *lumpenproletariat*. The youngest son among seven siblings, he graduated from senior high school and started out working for a firm that maintained and repaired printing presses. He traces his wanderlust to the frequent business trips that this rather specialized profession entailed. He quit after five years and drifted from job to job thereafter. His electrician's qualifications enabled him to earn good money—sometimes he could make 10,000 yen without lifting a finger, just by allowing some maintenance company to put his name on the safety certificates for electricity sub-stations, “which never break down anyway.”

Tsujimoto says he could quite easily get employment—labor recruiters have approached him several times. But like Melville's *Bartleby*, he “prefers not to.” Tsujimoto says: “I have no appetite for work. I'm tired of worrying about what other people think, tired of boss-underling relationships. Since coming here, I've felt at ease.”⁵⁾ He cheerfully described himself as ‘lazy’ in conversation with me. Yet he insisted that he had never applied for livelihood protection, and would never do so in future. When asked why not, he said “I don't want to live anymore” (*mō, ikitakunai*), and added that he had attempted suicide three times. Thus he did not *want* to have his livelihood protected. When a local volunteer encouraged him to apply for welfare when he got older and weaker, he replied that he would sooner throw himself into the river (*kawa ni hairu*) than enter an apartment (*apāto ni hairu*). Either that or he would hang himself from the tree we were sitting under. He said he was tired of life and was now living only by inertia (*dasei*). Yet this was said with a good-humored laugh, and I could not guess how serious his talk of suicide might be. Tsujimoto also had no interest in using the autonomy support centers in nearby Osaka. He did not trust any institution set up by the state: like Hotoke, he viewed politicians and bureaucrats with contempt.

It is tempting to think of Tsujimoto as a Japanese Thoreau, retreating to a semi-rural location and maintaining an ironic detachment from the society around him. One should not push the comparison too far, however. Tsujimoto has no particular concern with self-sufficiency, preferring to use income from his scavenging activities to buy food from a supermarket rather than cultivating crops or collecting berries. Indeed, I found very few cases of homeless men growing vegetables or keeping chickens, though admittedly in many locations legal obstacles would have made it difficult to do so. For most homeless men, self-reliance does not extend as far as detachment from the cash economy⁶⁾.

3 Active Resistance: David

David is a tall white man aged about 50, with a flowing mane of once-golden

hair, now turning to white. He has spent the last 15 years living homeless in various parts of Los Angeles, some of the time in Skid Row, the famous slum district in downtown L.A., but most of it in the Venice Beach/Santa Monica area.

In 1994, David found himself out of work after his family's business failed. He applied for a large number of jobs, failed to get any of them, and ran out of money. He was living in Orange County, south of Los Angeles County. His last attempt was at a Jack-in-the-Box fast food restaurant. When he failed to get that job, he realized he would have to spend the night on the street or in a shelter. He called the police department and said he was homeless but was told all the shelters were full. Nor was the county able to offer him a voucher for a cheap hotel room, or even a bus ticket to the next county. He was further reminded that it was illegal to sleep on the sidewalk in Orange County, which left it very unclear what he should do.

David had never been homeless before and decided that since he had to get shelter that night anyway it might as well be the jail. So he went to a Denny's Restaurant and ordered a meal, knowing that he could not pay for it—something he had never done before in his life. The manager called the police, but they refused to arrest him. Next he grabbed a shopping cart and shoved it through a bank window. At last he was taken to the city jail, fed, and given a blanket and a mat to sleep on for the night. David served three months in jail for this escapade. He emerged from jail far more politicized than when he went in, and he has since fought a series of legal battles in the L.A. area to establish and defend the rights of homeless people:

“Since then I've been arrested at least a dozen times. I got a jury trial over the right to use a public pay phone in a public shopping mall, and a civil law suit over the right to sit on a barren empty sidewalk in a deserted part of town and eat a muffin, and the right to walk through the Getty Museum without being forced to take off my necklace saying UNHOUSED that I'd slept with for over a year... and was the lead spokesperson in a 1999 ACLU law suit with eight other people from a group called Food Not Bombs arrested for insisting that homeless people didn't have to eat their food segregated at the back of Pershing Square (in downtown L.A.). The Reverend James Lawson, named as a mentor by Martin Luther King, who called him one of ‘the greatest theorists of non-violence in the world today,’ attended the press conference and introduced us to the media for our stand on civil rights. He asserted that homeless people at the back of the park were like Rosa Parks at the back of a bus. It was one of the greatest honors of my life.”

As this quotation from one of my conversations with David indicates, he sees homelessness in contemporary America as a major civil rights issue. He contests public space in the most literal fashion. His legal battles have been designed to assert the rights of homeless people to use public spaces the same as other people. Most of his battles have been fought in the seaside resort towns of Santa Monica and Venice. Both these districts have traditionally had a Bohemian atmosphere, and Santa Monica in particular has had a liberal local government⁷⁾. These factors, along

with their warm climate, and plenty of visitors sympathetic to beggars and volunteer groups willing to help, have turned Venice and Santa Monica into something of a homeless Mecca, in a classic case of the so-called ‘magnet effect,’ whereby cities that try to help their homeless populations end up with bigger homeless populations as people from less sympathetic cities are attracted to them or indeed sent to them by those less sympathetic cities.

The degree to which homeless people in Santa Monica are outsiders is hotly disputed—the definition of ‘locals’ and ‘outsiders’ is hopelessly blurred. However, in 2002 the city authorities decided that the number of homeless people had reached about 1,000 (in a township of 85,000, swelling to many times that number on sunny weekends) and that they should be discouraged. The township passed two ordinances, one banning people from sitting or sleeping in doorways in the downtown business district at night; the other banning the feeding of homeless people without an official permit. This sharp swing to the right set the stage for a series of confrontations between the authorities and the homeless people and their supporters which continues to this day. Reflecting the legalism prevalent in American society, these battles have mainly been fought in court rooms rather than on the streets.

David himself strikes many people as too intelligent to remain homeless. He himself calls his homeless condition ‘voluntary’ in a very different sense, as a condition chosen by the state, not the individual:

“The homelessness I’ve experienced is unique in human history; because for the first time in history, in a way unlike any other, now, it’s intentional—and not in the sense that we, we homeless people ourselves are ‘choosing’ to be homeless—in fact, it’s exactly the opposite. In our lifetimes, it means something entirely different than ‘poverty’ and ‘homelessness’ ever did before: because now it’s a matter of the *intentional* human policies of the *policymakers*; those people in *power*, the ones—and not we homeless—with the power to actually *change* things.” (Field notes, 27 December 2007).

In fact there can be little doubt that David does not have to be homeless. For example, he inherited some \$60,000 from an aunt and donated much of it to homeless support causes when he might have used it to regain a toe-hold in housed society. Thus there is definitely an ideological aspect to his homeless condition.

David has spent time in the Santa Monica public homeless shelter (SAMOSHEL), but in recent years has lived in a small tent which by day he carries with him on his bicycle. He has a bulky old laptop computer in a wooden carrying case which he has padded with grey carpeting, which he uses to send out press releases by wireless internet. Though not ideologically opposed to accepting food handouts from volunteers or charities, he eats mainly out of dumpsters. He says the food is generally better, or at least it is if you know which dumpster to look in. He is not concerned about his appearance, thought he will apologize if he thinks he has become smelly—or ‘musty’ as he puts it. He does not beg, though he will never

condemn those who do. Instead, he gets a little cash by giving people home-made necklaces consisting of a length of string and a piece of cardboard with MORE LOVE written on it in felt-tip pen, and accepting donations which he does not, however, ask for. In this way, David is forever negotiating a difficult position between homelessness and middle-class activism.

4 Passive Resistance: Mark

It would appear that I personally know all the street homeless people in the British city of Liverpool. I base that claim on the fact that the last official survey (March 2010), found a total of *three* people sleeping rough in this large industrial city—fewer than I got to know on field trips to Liverpool in 2004, 2006 and 2010. The British government delights in publishing extremely low figures for its street homeless population, or ‘rough sleepers’ as they are known in British parlance. The official government figure for the whole of England in 2010 was 440 on any given night, of whom about half were in and around London⁸⁾. Everyone knows these figures are understated, because they refer to the street-sleeping population on a single night. When the definition is changed to ‘people who slept on the street at least once in the last year’ the number is estimated to rise by a factor of about ten. The new coalition government elected in summer 2010 has pledged to improve the counting methods; the new minister of housing, Grant Shapps, stated that the outgoing government’s figure of 440 was “far too low.” He was shocked to find that only councils that deemed themselves to have a problem were obliged to carry out a count, and many major cities had simply not been counting. He asked non-counting regions to produce estimates of their population of rough sleepers, and thereby raised the official rough sleeper population to 1,247⁹⁾.

Despite these serious methodological problems, there is no doubt that Britain has a lower street homeless population than Japan and a much lower one than the United States, and there is a lot of infrastructure available to help people get off the streets. Liverpool alone has about 80 assorted residential facilities for homeless people¹⁰⁾.

One therefore wonders, even more so than in other contexts, what sort of people are still sleeping rough in Liverpool. One way of answering that question is to spend some time at Saint Luke’s Church. Known locally as ‘the bombed-out church,’ this famous landmark took a direct hit from an incendiary bomb during the German bombing of Liverpool in 1941. From the outside it looks unharmed—a handsome 19th century church surrounded by well-tended gardens. But the church is a roofless empty shell, which has been left intact as a war memorial somewhat comparable to the atomic bomb dome in Hiroshima. During my visits to Liverpool I found it was a main center of activity for homeless people, and that some of them slept there at night, apparently preferring a roofless church to the many shelters

around Liverpool.

One of the men at Saint Luke's was Mark, a tall, powerfully-built man in his thirties, quite handsome. Mark had developed a well-defined daily schedule, which largely consisted of walking around Liverpool from one feeding place to another:

7:00 a.m. The Mount Pleasant mission opens for breakfast (8:30 Sundays)

8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The Whitechapel Project (a public drop-in day center) is open. 'Dinner' (lunch) is served at 12:30. (On Sundays, dinner is served at a different location in Hanover Street, near Liverpool Central Station.)

4:30 p.m. The Sisters of Mercy (Roman Catholic nuns) serve 'tea' (a substantial meal).

5:30 to 8:30 p.m. Basement Night Drop-in Center on Bolton Street open. Served noodles at 10 pence a serving.

10:00 to 11:00 p.m. Lime Street station. Another mission serves hot dogs and soup.

4:00 a.m. Proprietor of Krunchy Fried Chicken restaurant puts out box of leftovers for homeless people.

As the above shows, Mark was not averse to using facilities designed to support homeless people, or to receiving charity. The main reason why he slept rough was because of his drug habit, which had got him expelled from some shelters and made it impossible to live with the rules at others. He said he owed his youthful looks to the effects of cocaine and heroin (though he also stressed their many destructive effects). He said he'd been on drugs for 16 years but was now reducing. "I stopped taking every day eight weeks ago, and now I just occasionally indulge." He showed me the needle scars inside the crick of his elbow. They were deep but not fresh.

When Mark did get off the street, it was to do time in prison. He said he'd been in prison ten times, including several occasions when he deliberately got himself arrested, out of desperation for his messed-up life. In prison he would get a roof, regular meals and a bed, along with a forced break from drug use. Over the years he had developed a cycle lifestyle in which street life was punctuated by periodical stays in prison. He was in prison in December 2002 when his girlfriend of 15 years died during a heart by-pass operation. "She died on December 18 and I buried her on December 23... I've been homeless ever since."

Grief for his dead girlfriend, and worry about their daughter, now married and living in the nearby town of Bootle, drive Mark's lifestyle today. He has never told the daughter that he is homeless, though he says she probably suspects. He keeps clean by using the showers at the Whitechapel Center, and frequently changing his clothes—he says very good clothes can be found in rubbish bins. His stress on that reminds me of David's advocacy of dumpster food. He phones his daughter every day and sees her occasionally.

For Mark, the bombed-out church was a rather literal sanctuary. Though it had no roof, and was therefore of little use on rainy days, its walls would still protect

the homeless people who slept there from the wind, and from the prying eyes of passers-by. His affection for the church was evident. The police regularly drove around the outside of the church in their patrol cars, and would sometimes warn people about their behavior through megaphones, but they never came into the church while I was there, and the homeless people there said that they were generally left alone in the church, by the police at least. In Britain, as in Japan, drinking alcohol in public is not illegal, and this removes the most obvious reason for police intervention observable in the U.S. situation. At Saint Luke's, as in Oxford's Bonn Square, another case known to me, it is common to see people drinking from cans and bottles. Only when fights break out or people start shouting at each other will the police intervene.

However, the use of this space was contested by another party—the local ruffians, known as ‘scallies’ in Liverpool slang, who would often bully homeless people. On one occasion I was sitting with Mark and half a dozen other homeless people in the garden of the bombed-out church when a pair of scallies urinated on us from the top of a high wall. They then threw a full bag of rotting garbage at us before running away laughing. This was a minor incident, but there was an undertone of violence on the streets of Liverpool that made me feel more nervous than in downtown Los Angeles.

Within the walls of the bombed-out church, most nights a small group of homeless people would sit and drink and smoke. It felt safer in there than on the streets of Liverpool outside. In choosing this ancient and roofless sanctuary, in a city with dozens of state-sponsored sanctuaries, and preferring jail to a homeless shelter at other times, Mark and his friends were silently rejecting the extensive public support system for homeless people now characteristic of British cities.

5 Homeless Settlements in Japan: Collective Contestation of Space

In the final two sections of this paper, I want to move from the individual to the collective, and consider contestation of space by settlements or colonies of homeless people. Many of Japan's homeless men live in clusters of tents and shacks in parks and on riverbanks. Men who live this way are difficult to fit into English-language homeless terminology, with its bipartite distinction between ‘street homeless’ (or in UK terminology, ‘rough sleepers’) and ‘sheltered homeless.’ Japanese shack dwellers are not exactly on the street, or in a shelter as usually conceived. Their dwellings are homemade; they are mostly quite well-built; and though most are small, some are big enough to bear comparison with a small apartment. Some have furniture; some have guard dogs or pet cats. Many have gas from camping stoves, some have water supplies from nearby fire hydrants, drinking fountains etc., and a few have electricity from car batteries. At least one case has been documented of a homeless dwelling with a solar panel supplying electricity¹¹⁾.

There is considerable interest in the design of Japanese homeless dwellings, including several art/photography exhibitions and at least three published collection of photos, sketches and text—Sogi Kanta's *Asakusa Style* (2003), Sakaguchi Kyōhei's *Zero-Yen House*¹²⁾ (2004), and Nagashima Yukitoshi's *Cardboard House* (2005). Together these books bear eloquent testimony to the resourcefulness and skill of the men who build, maintain, decorate and live in them. Nagashima, for example, distinguishes at least ten different architectural templates: shack, tent, shack + tent, prone sleeping-bag type, mobile camping car type, rope type, two-by-four, built round trees or other natural features, built out of owner's possessions, and 'spineless.'¹³⁾ His detailed sketches and analyses have been featured in architectural journals. As well as admiring the skill of the design, one is also struck by the air of domesticity, the *homeliness*, of these dwellings. I have been inside quite a few of them and the interiors range from spotlessly clean to a complete mess—rather like other people's homes, they faithfully reflect their owner's personality. When there are large numbers of them gathered together in village-like communities, one begins to wonder to what degree 'homeless' accurately describes these men.

Living without women and with very little cash obliges shack-dwellers to acquire skills long since lost to most Japanese men. In a society where many men can barely make a sandwich, they must learn to cook for themselves. They also have to build, maintain, furnish and repair their own living space, unlike most men, who will pay professionals to do these things for them. So although they have very little in the way of income or possessions, and may on occasion join lines of people waiting for food hand-outs, in some ways they actually seem more self-reliant than most mainstream men.

What is society like in these almost exclusively male settlements? This varies greatly, but some kind of community structure may sometimes be found. Perhaps the most formalized version I came across was in Osaka's Nishinari Park, which has had a homeless settlement for a couple of decades now. It includes a community meeting room, which would be called a *chōnai kaikan* (neighborhood association meeting hall) in orthodox communities, but is known here as the *danketsu-goya* (solidarity hut). As that name suggests, a macho left-wing ethic prevails here, largely derived from the nearby day-laboring district of Kamagasaki. There are no formal leaders, but there are representatives: Ito-san, a veteran day-laboring radical from Okinawa, usually handles negotiations with the police or local authorities. There are also heroes. In the summer of 2007, a man known as Kaku-san, given to fighting but generous and helpful to new arrivals in the village, had just died under mysterious circumstances. The framed photograph of a burly face with beard and bandaged head wound was on display in the solidarity hut with incense burning by it.

Though I doubt whether most settlements have this degree of formal organization, they do have rules and are not open to all. On Osaka's Kizu River settlement, near Nishinari Park, I learned that about a third of the hundred or so shacks lining the

rivers were in fact vacant. There was a high enough level of organization to maintain the appearance of vacant properties (to prevent the authorities from removing them and closing off the space to future would-be residents), and an understanding that newcomers could only be admitted to them by invitation of existing members. It seemed that many men had not built their dwelling—they had inherited a vacant property or had one built for them, for cash or friendship, by a more skilled builder.

The authorities show an ambiguous and changeable attitude towards these dwellings. In the case of riverbanks, a blind eye has usually been turned¹⁴). Sometimes the park communities too have been tacitly permitted. In Shinjuku Central Park in Tokyo, homeless dwellings have even had mail delivered to them, further blurring the homeless/non-homeless distinction.

In recent years, however, city governments have gradually turned against the park communities. Indeed, the language of homeless policy has regularly included references to making the use of public spaces ‘more appropriate’ (*tekiseika*). Article 11 of the Homeless Self-reliance Support Law specifically permits park administrations to remove homeless people’s dwellings where ‘appropriate use of the facilities is being obstructed’ (*tekisei-na riyō ga samatagerarete iru*). This has led to a complex game of cat and mouse between local authorities and homeless men, as the former combine carrot and stick in their attempts to remove the latter.

In Osaka and Nagoya particularly, the usual approach has been to set up temporary prefabricated shelters in big parks, and encourage the men to abandon their shacks and tents and live in the shelters instead. The *quid pro quo* is that their dwelling will be removed and destroyed; and that fresh construction of dwellings is not permitted. The shelters are supposed to be dismantled after two or three years, and it is not made clear what will happen to any remaining residents at that point. In practice, while a small number of men have made it into mainstream employment and residence from the shelters, a far larger number have exited either to life on welfare, having had their livelihood protection applications approved at last; or have gone back to being homeless, only in many cases on the street rather than in a park community. The authorities go to great lengths to prevent anyone setting up a new dwelling in a park, with 24-hour guards and elaborate arrangements of fences and barriers, festooned with signs prohibiting construction of dwellings.

By such methods have the authorities gradually whittled down the park populations. In Osaka, for example, Nagai Park has been totally cleared; Osaka Castle Park had been reduced from 650 dwellings to about 40; and even Nishinari Park, home of hardcore resistance to authority, is down to about 100 dwellings from a peak of about 400. The elaborate homemade dwellings celebrated by Sogi, Sakaguchi and Nagashima are becoming steadily harder to find¹⁵). The irony of this is that—as Tsunaki (2003; 2004) observes—men who build their own houses and make a modest living from can-collecting are arguably models of self-reliance. Once they have been put through the shelter system, they will likely be either clients of the state (living

on welfare), or in a more desperate homeless condition, expelled from their park communities and reduced to living in cardboard boxes. Hence 'self-reliance support' may have the contrary outcome of stripping men of their personal autonomy. The figures released by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in March 2010, showing a 26.6% reduction in non-sheltered homeless people to 13,124, down by nearly 50% from the 25,296 seven years earlier, largely reflected the gradual war of attrition on the park settlements. Some of the evicted men may well still be homeless, but away from the more noticeable concentrations.

6 Japanese Encampments and Expulsions

Perhaps the most famous case of mass expulsion of homeless people in Japan to date was the January 1996 incident in which Tokyo governor Aoshima Yukio ordered the eviction of some thirty homeless people from the covered promenade by the west exit of Shinjuku station, ostensibly to allow the construction of a moving walkway in the promenade. There had been over a hundred people living in cardboard boxes there, but most had left before the eviction, many of them to the alternative accommodation offered by the city authorities, a prefabricated dormitory in Ota ward. When the police arrived to carry out the eviction, they were met by a force of some 200 people, many of whom were activists who had come in from other parts of Tokyo to support the resisters¹⁶. The event is documented from an activist perspective by Shinjuku Renraku-kai (1997) and Kasai (1999), while the question of how the movement related to the homeless people in Shinjuku has been studied briefly by Malinas (2004) and at length by Hasegawa (2006).

For now, however, I want to focus rather narrowly on the fact that a significant minority of the homeless people in this settlement rejected an offer of shelter and fought the police to defend their right to live in a windy and uncomfortable station concourse. This insistence on what Hasegawa calls 'spatial maintenance' (p. 118 etc.) appears more rational when one considers that there was no clear guarantee of long-term residence for those who accepted the offer to use the Ota shelter, and that two men had died in the Ota shelter about a year before. However, the disastrous fire that swept through the concourse two years later, on February 10 1998, killing four homeless men, was a stark reminder that this was a far from ideal dwelling place. It may be worth noting that both Kasai (1999: 361, 365) and Hasegawa (2006: 121) gloss over the fire, despite the fact that it was, without a doubt, a far more tragic event than the expulsion of 1996. Kasai does not even mention that four men died in the fire, merely observing that after the fire there was a mutual agreement between the homeless people and the city government that the men would leave this time. To my mind, the fire casts a long shadow over Kasai's earlier claims that the resistance movement was a triumph.

The Shinjuku station fire also reminds us that many homeless people had come

back to Shinjuku station, albeit to a slightly different part of the complex, after the 1996 expulsion. Territorial contests are not necessarily over when the losers are driven from the field. They may return, as they did after the earlier Shinjuku expulsion of 1994, and as Japanese homeless people often do after being expelled from a site. In Ueno Park, and on the banks of the Sumida River, this practice has become so entrenched that homeless people regularly move their dwellings and possessions off site for one day in the month and bring them back later the same day, once the authorities have photographed the ‘uninhabited’ site. This is a kind of complicity between homeless people and the authorities, in which the former endure a degree of extra, unnecessary discomfort and the latter give unspoken assent to the homeless people’s continued residence in exchange for a token appearance of compliance with the law.

It is striking that a substantial number of men had returned to the Shinjuku concourse, although the added obstacle of the moving walkway, and other objects of ‘public art’ designed to make it harder to lie down in the area, had made life there more inconvenient than before. Indeed, on a late-night visit to Shinjuku station in spring 2007, I found several dozen men using the concourse as a sleeping location, though they would take their boxes away in the morning (in the days of the commune, the boxes were there permanently, and some had been decorated by local artists.)

Clearly, then, there is a powerful attachment to place here, and a willingness, by some homeless people at least, to defend their territory. In other cases, too, a hard core of homeless men have resisted government orders to leave public spaces, leading to government-ordered evictions (*gyōsei daishikkō*) in several large parks in Nagoya and Osaka. In these cases, too, shelter (albeit of a temporary, prefabricated nature, with long-term outcomes unclear) was made available to the men, but some chose to defend their tents and shacks even in the face of overwhelming government power—as we saw in the case of Hotoke.

Occasions like this dramatize the contest for space. Although these Japanese homeless expulsions have been heavily publicized and condemned, we should remember that they account for a very small proportion of cases. In far more cases, the Japanese approach is characterized by a degree of patience on the part of the authorities rarely found in other countries; and by a recognition that prolonged residence confers certain rights. It would be considered far more shocking to expel a homeless person who has been living in a park or on a riverbank for a long time than to expel one who has only recently arrived. In this sense, Japanese attitudes to homeless people parallel attitudes to people living in rented accommodation: tenants’ rights are quite strong in Japan, and strengthen with years. If a lease expires and the landlord forgets to renew it, the tenant is considered to have the right to live in the property indefinitely, unlike in Britain and the United States, where the tenant would have no protection from expulsion.

This partial acknowledgment of the rights of homeless people to dwell in public places results in some very long-lasting settlements. As I mentioned, the encampment in Nishinari Park, Osaka, has lasted some 20 years now. A prefabricated shelter set up in the park in November 2000 was closed three years later, although there were still well over 100 homemade dwellings left in the park. They are still there as I write, although Nishinari Park now looks more like a military base than a public park, due to the numerous metal mesh fences topped with barbed wire that have been put in place to divide homeless territory from civic territory and to gradually hem in the remaining shacks and tents. The policy may best be described as one of repressive tolerance.

7 American Encampments and Expulsions

In the United States there is a long history of homeless encampments, going back to the Great Depression and beyond, and it is fascinating to see how local authorities have responded to them and the varying ways in which the balance has been struck between autonomous government by homeless people and control by the local authorities. In this section I will discuss several cases known to me on the west coast of the United States. Los Angeles, California is the “homeless capital of the USA” and the destination of choice for many homeless men in states far beyond California. This has prompted a variety of ad hoc responses and experiments, two of which I will consider here—one in downtown LA, the other in Ontario, one of the satellite cities of LA, in the so-called “inland empire.” These are cases that illustrate both the interesting experiments that the Californian authorities are willing to try, and the limits of their willingness to maintain idealism over the long term. My other cases are from the cities of Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington, further north on the west coast. Along with their colder climates, these cities pride themselves on a more rugged, independent approach to life than that of Californians, and perhaps we can sense some of that in the more autonomous homeless encampments to be found there.

Perhaps the most famous experimental encampment in Los Angeles was Dome City, where residents lived in a cluster of white domes resembling igloos. I visited twice. There was a charismatic leader—Ted Hayes, a black Rastafarian given to calling himself ‘Moses’—who in 1993 succeeded in persuading an oil company (ARCO) to give him \$250,000 (American philanthropy makes strange bedfellows!) to buy and erect the domes and pay the rent on a plot of land in central L.A. The rent was set at a generously low level by a sympathetic local landowner and Hayes was able to set up a cluster of 20 domes, each roughly 3 meters high and 6 across. A wooden sign saying ‘JUSTICEVILLE, U.S.A.’ was attached to the wire fence by the entrance. Hayes’ community functioned as an alternative homeless shelter: families could stay together (unusual in U.S. shelters), pet animals were permitted, and there

was tolerance for drinking and some soft drug use. Despite this hippy atmosphere, Dome Village succeeded in getting government subsidies and was gradually incorporated into the L.A. welfare system. However, this interesting social experiment came to an abrupt end when the eccentric Hayes announced that he had joined the Republican Party. This controversial publicity stunt upset the landowner—a life-long Democrat—who massively increased the rent, leading to the closure of Dome Village in 2006.

More recently, another charismatic leader, Jack Tafari (a British-born white Rastafarian¹⁷⁾), set up a homeless village in Portland, Oregon, called Dignity Village. This movement started in December 2000, when Tafari and seven others defied a city ordinance banning camping in public places. Over the next year, the camp slowly expanded. It was raided and shut down by police five times, only to be set up again on a different patch of land. Finally the city authorities allowed the village to remain at a sixth site, a disused leaf-composting yard. It remains there today, with tents gradually giving way to improvised shacks. According to the Village's web-site, "a donated bus serves as a library, a windmill provides electricity and the villagers grow their own organic vegetables. The village is self-governed, drug and alcohol free, and built around principals of love and respect for self and others."

I have yet to visit Dignity Village and so do not know how accurate that glowing vision may be. I will merely note here that when these informal encampments win government consent, there is always a subtle balance to be struck in which a degree of autonomy has to be traded for legal sanction and in some cases financial support. In the city of Seattle, a few hundred miles further up the west coast from Portland, a tent city battled for legal recognition for many years, finally gaining limited legal approval in 2002. In twelve years, the encampment has moved location 30 times. It is run by an NPO called SHARE/WHEEL. Although the legal basis for maintaining the encampment is now accepted, it has no permanent approved location and continues to move site at irregular intervals. Moreover, winning acknowledgement of its legal status has meant accepting city regulations. For example, health and hygiene laws make it illegal to prepare food at Seattle's Tent City, leading to the oddity of a camp where no cooking is allowed at the camp fire¹⁸⁾.

This brief look at three homeless encampments on the Pacific coast of the United States shows some striking differences to Japanese homeless settlements. Phenomena such as charismatic leaders (not necessarily homeless themselves), utopian/biblical rhetoric, and occasional access to public- and private-sector funding set them apart from the Japanese settlements, which are generally ad hoc, not funded or licensed by anyone, and driven by a broadly socialist rhetoric of solidarity without the spiritual/religious tone sometimes found in the U.S. cases. And though they have their heroes, the Japanese settlements do not have individual leaders in the style of Ted Haynes or Jack Tafari.

The final case I want to discuss from the U.S. concerns a homeless encampment

which was first set up by city authorities and then had the majority of its residents expelled by those same city authorities. I was present for the last week before the mass expulsion, which occurred in the city of Ontario, California. This encampment lasted for less than a year, but became widely publicized during that time. Ontario is a mid-sized city about 60 miles inland from L.A., in San Bernardino County. Homeless provision is very inadequate in Ontario and the neighboring towns, and consequently there was a street homeless population estimated at 140 in summer 2007. As in so many American cities, the homeless people were frequently harassed and arrested by police for trivial offences. A couple of progressively minded policemen proposed a deal whereby the homeless people would be allowed to pitch tents on a certain patch of land next to Ontario international airport (the second biggest airport serving Los Angeles after LAX), and in between two railway tracks carrying freight trains across California. This dusty, barren piece of ground, surrounded by noise and pollution, and prone to fierce desert winds, had officially been declared unfit for habitation by the city planning authorities. The only facilities provided were six camp toilets (later increased to 12), a couple of skips for garbage, and a single cold-water shower. Nonetheless, this was the most attractive place available for many homeless people in the area, and its population grew rapidly, reaching about 400 in March 2008.

At this point the Ontario city authorities panicked. It seemed they were drawing in homeless people from other local cities and even, they alleged, from other parts of America—although I believe the number of out-of-state campers was actually very small. It seemed like a classic case of the magnet effect, and the authorities reacted by suddenly announcing that all non-local people would be expelled, with one week's notice. During that week, the local authorities set up tables at the camp site and interviewed the residents to see which of them qualified as 'local.' In any setting, the question of who is local and who is an outsider is likely to be complex. In California, where people tend to move house quite frequently in the course of their lives, it is even more fraught. The city authorities declared that there would be four criteria for establishing local status: (1) evidence of having gone to school in Ontario; (2) evidence of close relatives living in Ontario; (3) evidence of having owned or rented property in Ontario; and (4) being known personally to the police. Camp residents who succeeded in convincing officials that they met at least one of these criteria were issued with a blue wristband (similar to those used in hospitals; once attached, it can only be removed by cutting it off). Those who did not meet the criteria received a white wristband, meaning they had to leave within one week, and would be provided with transportation to the city of their choice (this was called "sending them home" by the authorities, though most of them had no home to go to in other cities). Those who might qualify but had to provide further documentation received an orange wristband and were re-interviewed later in the week.

This system was, of course, controversial. The criteria were extremely fuzzy—

for example, there was no clear definition of how many years one had to have attended school in Ontario, or how many relatives one had to have, or how recently and for how long one had to have resided in the city. The irony also arose that people who had been in frequent trouble with the law were “known to police” and therefore recognized as local and allowed to stay, whereas people who had stayed out of trouble tended not to be known to police and were therefore likely to be expelled. As for the wristbands, many compared that system with the color-coded badges issued to Jews, gypsies and homosexuals in Hitler’s Germany—though I should also mention that one younger, female resident said it reminded her of the wristbands used at nightclubs to allow people who had paid admission to leave and re-enter the club.

Once the non-locals had been expelled, the city plan involved re-launching the camp under much stricter control, with a high fence around it and a single gate, manned at all times by guards from an NPO to be selected by the city, and a strict curfew between 10pm and 6am. The fence, like all fences, was ambiguous. It was justified by the city authorities as necessary to protect homeless people (‘a vulnerable population’) from drug dealers, gangs, etc. But to many of the homeless people, it seemed like an authoritarian device that would turn the camp into something more like a prison:

Radio reporter: Will it be better here after the fence is put up?

Butch (a homeless resident): Sure it will. It’ll be much better. It’ll be Stalag 13. They’ll bulldoze all this and put up a concentration camp¹⁹⁾.

The contrast with the Japanese park expulsions is intriguing. This American city showed an obsessive concern with distinguishing between insiders and outsiders (a concern often portrayed as ‘quintessentially Japanese’ in *Nihonjinron* literature), whereas the authorities in Osaka, Nagoya and Tokyo have made little attempt to distinguish between locals and outsiders in their varying responses to homeless settlements. Instead, the most clearly distinguishable principle in the Japanese cases was length of stay—more tolerance for long-term residents than for newcomers. Also the Ontario authorities sought a far higher degree of control over the camp population than any Japanese authority has attempted.

Resistance to the Ontario boot-out was muted. Many campers left shortly after the announcement was made. Intimidated by the prospect of interrogation and formal expulsion, and by the very heavy armed police presence on the opening day of the registration process, they left voluntarily before they were made to go. Among the more tough-minded ‘non-local’ residents was a group of three Vietnam War veterans from the neighboring city of Pomona. Although their time in the military only accounted for a few years of their lives, it strongly influenced their identity; their leader affected a military cap and sometimes other items of military uniform, and they took great pride in the survival skills they had learned in the military. They had set up a first aid tent in the camp, and stressed self-reliance and mutual assistance

among the campers. They were very suspicious of authority, including the Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) and the local city authorities. On the other hand, their identity as soldiers also meant following orders, and they poured scorn on proposals for non-violent resistance made by other campers. In the end this instinct to 'comply' prevailed. Rugged survival skills would be practiced by facing homelessness on the road rather than in confronting the authorities. When the day of the eviction (March 24, 2008) came, the leading figure took down the large Red Cross flag flying in front of his tent and walked off carrying it over his shoulder, and followed by his faithful dog.

The eviction went fairly smoothly in the end, partly because of a clever tactic used by the authorities. Instead of arresting all the non-locals on the day of the eviction, they defined a central part of the site as the area for the new, fenced-in encampment, which was to be bulldozed on eviction day. Anyone who left that central area and went to the outer parts of the ground would be left in peace for at least a week or two while the new camp was being constructed. This meant that there were no arrests on the main day, when the media were out in force at Tent City. Any non-locals who failed to leave could be dealt with quietly later on, out of the glare of publicity.

8 Conclusion

Snow and Mulcahy, modifying Hirschman's classic analysis of ways in which members of a community can respond to problems with it (exit, voice, loyalty; Hirschman 1970) outline four different strategies that homeless people may take when contesting space with the local authorities: exit, voice, adaptation and persistence (Snow and Mulcahy 2001: 165). In this paper I have briefly outlined cases of all four responses. Tsujimoto, dwelling on the riverbank, has exited from the central locations where homelessness is controversial and attracts police attention, adapting to a hostile urban environment by moving to a more thinly populated location. Hotoke is a case of persistence and voice; he persisted in living in Shirakawa Park until he was put in jail, then fought the rap in court, using the courtroom as a theater to dramatize his voiced critique of the authorities. David is a semi-professional activist, again combining persistence with voice, while Mark has been adapting his lifestyle to accommodate his drug problems and to access life-sustaining resources.

Homeless encampments face these strategic decisions as collectives. In Japan, persistence has sometimes succeeded, as in the long-running Nishinari Park settlement. In the United States, persistence has tended to lead to the encampment being shut down, whereas adaptation and voice has been more successful, as in the case of the Portland and Seattle tent villages, which repeatedly shifted location in response to police sweeps, while loudly publicizing their victimization. At Ontario, the city authorities forced tent village residents into two groups, forcing 'local' people to

adapt to new, prison-like conditions while forcing ‘non-locals’ to exit altogether.

In this paper I have deliberately focused on individuals and situations that are not necessarily typical or representative of the homeless situation in Japan or the two countries chosen for comparison. For many more homeless people, exit and adaptation are the only realistic options. They leave a shelter when their time runs out, look for another one, and spend their lives moving in and out of facilities—a phenomenon known in the U.S. as ‘the revolving door.’ Local authorities change their ordinances; homeless people adapt their behavior to minimize the harassment they will experience, or exit to more tolerant environments. A passive resistance is the most that can practically be managed.

Nonetheless, cases of active resistance, such as those of Hotoke and David, and the solidarity shown in varying degrees by park and river settlements in both the US and Japan, remind us that homeless people are not just human punch bags. Long ago a team of elite American sociologists offered an encyclopedia definition of homeless people that included the following:

“Homeless persons are poor, anomic, inert, and non-responsible. They command no resources, enjoy no esteem, and assume no burdens of reciprocal obligations. Social action, in the usual sense, is almost impossible for them. Lacking organizational statuses and roles, their sphere of activity extends no further than the provision of personal necessities on a meager scale.” (Caplow et al., 1968: 494)

Though the styles and degrees to which homeless people contest the street vary widely according to individual character, social situation and cultural context, I hope that this paper has served to demonstrate the untruthfulness and unfairness of that statement. (How could three senior sociologists combine to make so many errors and insulting observations in a single paragraph?) Social action is very much possible for homeless people, at least some of the resources of modern society are available, and their sphere of activities may often extend well beyond the daily provision of personal necessities. In homeless encampments, a range of status positions and occupational roles may often be observed. Nor is this a new phenomenon: resistance to authority was certainly a feature of homeless life in the 1960s when Caplow et al were writing, but nowadays there are a lot more homeless people who need to practice resistance to the neoconservative authorities.

The present article is one outcome of a research project based at the National Museum of Ethnology entitled ‘Anthropological Research on Transnationalism and “Street” Phenomena’ (headed by Professor Yasumasa SEKINE), October 2004–March 2008.

Notes

- 1) Ironically, men who did *not* have shacks or tent dwellings were not allowed to use the shelter, a policy reflecting the shelter's objective of clearing the parks of homeless dwellings.
- 2) Wakamiya Odori Park is a long, thin park stretching for two or three miles under the elevated expressway that runs through central Nagoya. With busy roads on both sides and above it, it is a less desirable place for citizens to relax than the other two big parks, which probably explains why it is also the only one that still has homeless people living in it.
- 3) In August 2007, 28 homeless men were rescued by helicopter from the Tama River between Tokyo and Kawasaki after a typhoon caused the river to burst its banks.
- 4) Many homeless men will avoid using their surname and will also refrain from asking someone else their surname or other personal details. Patari (2008) quotes some informants in Ueno Park as describing this as 'homeless etiquette.' I found a small settlement in a park in Kamagasaki where the residents admitted they were embarrassed when a man they considered a good friend of theirs passed away and they were unable to tell the police *any* information about him that might help them contact his family.
- 5) *Shigoto ga yaritakereba dekiru. Demo yaruki wa nai. Ki o tsukau koto, jōge kankei nado ni tsukareta. Koko ni kitara, ki ga raku.*
- 6) There are a few exceptions. Among the spate of homeless books published in recent years is one entitled *Dōkutsu Ojisan* (Cave Man) [Kamura 2004], describing a man who reportedly ran away from abusive parents as a child and spent 40 years living in a cave, hunting and gathering for survival. The book includes illustrated advice on hunting techniques. Tales of rugged self-reliance are always popular in Japan; memoirs and accounts of the soldiers who stayed in the jungle on Pacific islands for decades after the World War II ended continue to sell well.
- 7) These two districts are adjacent to each other, although technically Venice is part of the city of Los Angeles and Santa Monica is an independent township of L.A. county. Hence Santa Monica has had a greater degree of self-government than Venice.
- 8) <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/corporate/statistics/roughsleepingcount2010>
- 9) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/aug/05/rough-sleepers-problem-housing-minister>
- 10) Shelter Young Persons' Team, *Merseyside Accommodation Directory*, 2004 edition.
- 11) Sogi 2003: 19; Sakaguchi 2004: 182-183.
- 12) Some of Sakaguchi's photos of homeless dwellings may be viewed at his home page: http://www.0yenhouse.com/en/Zero_Yen_House/
- 13) I have noticed at least one other type—the compound, with a relatively large area fenced off and a variety of shacks, tents and awnings providing shelter within.
- 14) An exception to this is Tokyo's Sumida River, where shack-dwellers have been made to clear away their dwellings once a month, though with a blind eye turned to their return later in the day. A relatively central location, with scenic walkways and cycle paths on both sides of the river, makes this riverside colony more of a challenge to officialdom than most.
- 15) In many countries, of course, this culture of alternative dwellings in city parks would never have been allowed to flourish in the first place. Tolerance, and respect for the de facto right to be in a place acquired by years of being there, are an overlooked aspect of Japanese officialdom's mindset.
- 16) Kasai (1999) says there were 200 homeless people there when the police arrived to evict them, but I believe the division between activists and homeless is roughly as stated in the text.
- 17) Tafari's similarities with Hayes are striking. He also uses Mosaic imagery, as in this extract from one of his pamphlets: "We may wander for a time in the wilderness. But as surely as night follows day, one day we shall reach a land flowing with milk and honey." See the settlement's home page at <http://www.dignityvillage.org/content/>
- 18) See the SHARE/WHEEL site at <http://www.sharewheel.org/>
- 19) Ontario field notes, March 21 2008.

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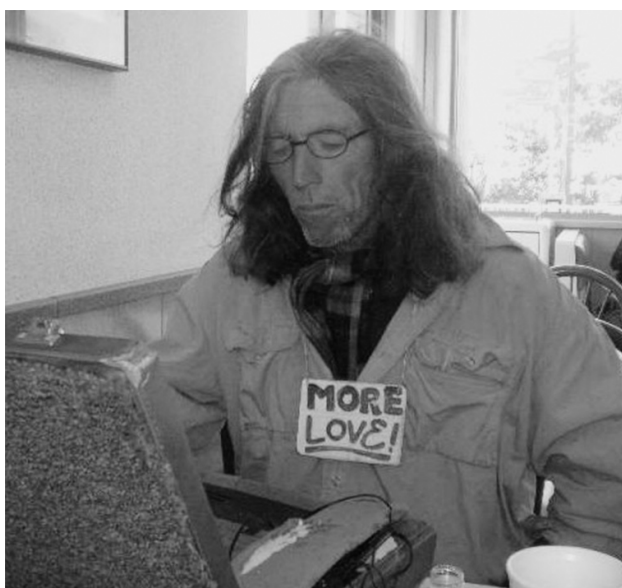
Picture 1 Hotoke



Picture 2 Hotoke's house on wheels



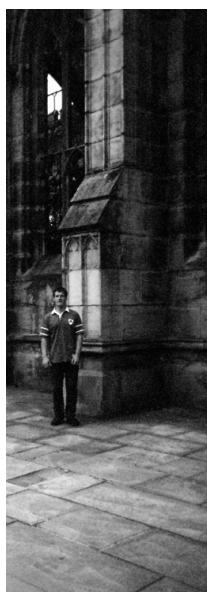
Picture 3 The Muko River camp



Picture 4 David



Picture 5 Saint Luke's Church, Liverpool



Picture 6 Mark in front of Saint Luke's



Picture 7 Interior of a shack in Nishinari Park, Osaka. Author on left



Picture 8 Nishinari Park: fences dividing homeless settlement from rest of park



Picture 9 Nishinari Park settlement, Osaka



Picture 10 Dome village, Los Angeles



Picture 11 Police visiting Ontario Tent City



Picture 12 Protest signs at Ontario Tent City



Picture 13 Veterans at Ontario Tent City



Picture 14 Leaving Tent City