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Introduction

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The year 2003 was declared by the Japanese Government as the Year of ASEAN-Japan Exchange, and many commemorative events were held. As part of this nation wide felicitation, the National Museum of Ethnology (NME) in Osaka was commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs (*Bunkacho*) to organize a series of events between August and December 2003. They included concerts and workshops of Indonesian, Philippine, Cambodian and Vietnamese music, the screening of ethnographic film footage produced by Southeast Asian scholars and film makers, and an international symposium on Southeast Asian performing arts. This modest book is a report of the last mentioned, *Questioning Authenticity: Southeast Asian Performing Arts and Issues of Cultural Identity*, held in September 23-25, 2003, where scholars from Cambodia, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, the United States, and Vietnam were invited to present papers and contribute as discussants. The aims of the symposium were to identify the major issues facing the performing arts in Southeast Asia and beyond and to strengthen the network of scholars and performers working in Southeast Asian performing arts.

The term “authenticity” is frequently used in performing arts. A tradition, style or performer is often compared with others in terms of their degree of authenticity. One would encounter statements such as “The music of this area is more authentic than others,” or “His performance lacks authenticity.” In any of these cases, the notion is used or evoked when some kind of differentiation and/or hierarchization is attempted in terms of value (artistic merit), and is therefore connected to the process whereby certain forms, styles, performers, regions, or ethnic groups are selected over others. Authenticity often validates a certain tradition, genre, lineage, area, and/or individual/s with a rationale for receiving government funding or being included in textbooks.

The purpose of the symposium was not to seek an essentialist definition of authenticity in any given case. One issue at hand was how the notion of authenticity (discourse) affects performing arts (practice), for example in terms of various ways in which the appropriation of the notion promotes, suppresses, changes or conditions the actual practice of performing arts. We questioned the reason (why this notion is often used?), practitioner (who uses it?), manner (how is it used?), and the consequences (what effect does it have?) of the concept. Our objective was to attain a nuanced understanding of the interplay between the notion of “authenticity” and

the quotidian practices of performing arts by comparing detailed case studies with diverse geographical and cultural specificities.

The report contains eleven essays. Seven of these (by Gavin Douglas, Paritta Koanantakool, Phong Nguyen, Adelaida Reyes, Sam-Ang Sam, Takasi Sameda, and Tan Sooi Beng) are revised versions of the papers presented at the symposium, with the exception of Phong Nguyen who contributed a new essay inspired by discussion during the symposium. The three other essays are by panelists from three sessions: Robert Garfias and Yoshiko Okazaki each offer a commentary on papers presented in the session where they served as discussants, while Yuji Baba wrote an article based on his own research. The remaining essay is by Hideharu Umeda, who had been invited to the symposium but was unable to attend. Endo Suanda and Usopay Cadar also gave spirited presentations at the symposium, but they unfortunately were unable to pen essays for this volume for various reasons. In this report, Suanda's detailed synopsis and a transcription of Cadar's oral presentation are included instead.

The essays in this volume deal with topics that are broad and based on diverse interests. They are grouped in three parts, roughly corresponding to the three paper sessions of the symposium: 1) Cultural Policy, Nationalism, and Performing Arts; 2) Music of the Minorities; and 3) Challenges and Resistance.

Part I concerned the complex and frequently conflicting relationship between cultural policy, nationalism and performing arts. Paritta Chalermpong Koanantakool delineates the workings of one cultural policy as expressed in a single historic event. In her account of the 1935 tour by a Thai performing troupe to Japan, she examines the role of performing arts in imagining or shaping national identity, and the multiplicity of meanings for the diverse individuals and groups of individuals involved in the tour. A particular image of the state was consciously sought after, for example, by the selection of dance numbers, by the projected demeanors and etiquette of dancers, and by presenting regional dances in sophisticated court style. Behind this zest for image-making, there was an emerging notion of art as a means to attain prestige internationally—to convince audiences that “the Thai are not barbarians” as phrased by Luang Vichitr, who contributed greatly to the transformation of art and culture. Koanantakool's nuanced account is both informative and convincing as it demonstrates the way in which an exploration of a single event can be effectively elaborated into an analysis of national cultural policy.

Gavin Douglas analyzes the cultural policy in Myanmar where culture is not the main criterion of those who create such policy. He first situates the increased state patronage in the context of overall political interest in evoking pre-colonial heritage as source of national culture, a move toward particular definitions of “Myanmarness.” Douglas then argues that three projects of state patronage to arts

that emerged in the early 1990s (the establishment of the University of Culture, the use of western notation to standardize the repertoire, and annual performing arts competition) do not manifest so much the government's concern for the welfare of performing arts as their desire to create "a central point of musical and cultural authority" to replace the politically charged symbol of Aung San. For practicing musicians, such state patronage is a mixed blessing to say the least: standardization of repertoire, for example, kills diversity and might create a single voice of authority which can be easily manipulated for non-musical purposes. Douglas argues, however, that although these projects may have been initiated by political motivations, the framework established as such can be appropriated for the benefit of performing arts.

Hideharu Umeda analyzes the way in which Indonesian national cultural policy was enforced by a local agency in Bali. LISTIBIYA (the Commission for Evaluating and Promoting Culture) was established out of the national policy for developing tourism. In Bali, tourism and performing arts make awkward bedfellows: performing arts can not survive without tourism, which in turn is considered a cause for declining standards of performance. Umeda argues that while stimulating local appreciation of Balinese culture, LISTIBIYA was also assigned to the covert role of monitoring cultural activities. Sometimes even labeled as the Art Police, it controlled what can be played and who could play, to ensure that cultural activities in Bali would conform to the national ideology. Here political surveillance was practiced in the name of maintaining artistic quality. Similar to Douglas' finding in Myanmar, cultural policy has been created and enforced mostly or exclusively from political motivations. Given the compelling power of governmental machinery, resistance cannot be an easy option for artists, but one is led to marvel at the existence of artistic creativity that can not be contained within such controlled environments.

The cultural policies discussed in all three papers are reflections of the nationalistic desire to establish a unique cultural identity, and thus often contradict the customs and aesthetics of locally practiced traditions. In the representation of a national culture through performing arts, certain forms, genres and ethnic groups are highlighted over others, and authenticity is often an important criterion in the process of such selection. The authors identify various forces that come into play when the notion of authenticity is negotiated or manipulated in cultural policy.

Part II contains four essays that deal with the construction of cultural identity among minority groups through performing arts. Tan Sooi Beng compares lion dances in two Chinese communities (one in Penang, Malaysia, and the other in Medan, Indonesia) to assess the degree to which performing arts are significant for expression of identity. Although of Chinese origin, the lion dance has assumed new meanings in these two localities. In Indonesia, the lion dance has been revived after many years of cultural suppression, and its original role of warding off evil spirits

has been reinterpreted (localized) so that it serves now as a social performative for the protection of Chinese culture against pro-assimilationist policies. In Malaysia the situation is similar, but the government's emphasis on multiculturalism since the 1990s has brought the lion dance of Penang into the national and international limelight, thus bringing in innovation and changes toward grandiosity in form and presentation that fit perfectly with the new attempt to project the image of Malaysia as an advanced nation. We learn from Tan that "Chineseness" is not fixed, but rather constantly recreated: Chinese in Medan and Penang no longer consider China their homeland and traditions are selectively used as "emblems of ethnic identity." Importantly, however, Tan maintains a critical distance from post-modern writers who (over) emphasize the flexibility of identities when discussing people in diaspora.

Takasi Simea reflects on his involvement in music making among *orang ulu* minorities in Borneo and the role of ethnomusicologists like him as a bridge between and among minority groups. He first points to the existence of conflicting orientations toward performing arts among *orang ulu*: the tendency to de-emphasize internal cultural diversities for greater political and economic gain and the desire to preserve and develop individual cultural heritage. Simea then describes two cases in which such conflicts are manifest: a project conceived by urbanized Kenyah Lepo' Time people in Sarawak, Malaysia to reunite with remote relatives living in Indonesian part of Borneo for a session of improvisatory singing (*ketenak*), and a project to develop a new style of singing in (not local but) national languages. In both cases, Simea is not a passive observer but an active participant, thereby directly involved in the process of musical change. Through this personal involvement, he finds the ethnic identity of *orang ulu* to be "operational and selective." While he justifies his possibly controversial involvement by pointing to the will of the people he works with and by advocating the concept of "copyleft," the role of an outsider is a delicate issue with considerable ethical and political ramifications, and it needs further discussion.

Based on his multi-sited research on Tai Lue people, Yuji Baba explores why their folk song genre (*khap lue*) faces divergent situations in northern Thailand and Yunnan, China. As the guardian spirit ritual changes its character toward tourism, the *khap lue* in Thailand has lost one of its traditional performance contexts and is therefore disappearing, despite the cultural revivalism since the 1990s. Women were not previously allowed to enter ritual sites, but they are now active in singing as their traditional clothes became a focus for attracting tourists. Baba reports that the national sense of loss over traditions triggered the Thai government to pass a constitution to preserve local culture, which is concretized locally in the formation of music groups with a different musical style that now replaces *khap lue*. In China, although it is marginalized in the national representation of music, media and

audiovisual reproduction technology play a significant role in making *khap lue* accessible in Yunnan.

In all three cases above, the authors identify the conditions in which an increasingly conscious use of performing arts on the part of minorities intersects with the majority's propensity for comprehensive representation and changing social, cultural and political environments. The culture of minority groups may be neglected or suppressed in some cases, while in others it may also be supported and patronized by individuals and institutions of the majority as part of national or regional heritage. In either case, it creates a powerful framework that cannot be ignored and within which the performing arts of the minority groups are practiced. In addition, the essays deal with minority groups that live on both sides of national borders: Malaysia and Indonesia (Tan and Sameda), and Thailand and China (Baba). This fact may be coincidental, but has a symbolic importance. The papers collectively demonstrate that studying a minority group within the framework of a nation state alone is irrelevant, as its identity often transcends national boundaries.

Adelaida Reyes's essay stands distinct from others in this report: it is not a case study on a particular minority group, but a theoretical exploration of paradigms (as defined by Thomas Kuhn) in the history of ethnomusicology and related disciplines that have determined the positions and contours of the study of music and minorities. Although her written text covers enormous ground and thus defies facile summary, it can be read as a powerful manifesto for situating the study of minority and music as the mainstay of ethnomusicological inquiry. Reyes describes her own projects on minority music culture as reflecting the orientations of this changing field. For example, in her studies in Harlem in the late 1960s, she demonstrated the importance of intergroup dynamics by investigating the interactions between African Americans and Latinos which would usually have been studied separately according to what was then the accepted practice. Her study in the 1980s on Vietnamese refugees problematized the common notion of authenticity: "what may be considered authentic by Vietnamese in Vietnam may not be authentic to those who are Vietnamese minorities elsewhere and vice versa." Her focus on the "second majority" questions the validity of simplistic minority-majority dichotomy and should be relevant to many similar studies.

Part III contains four essays: three exploring the challenges of transmitting traditional performing arts, particularly in formal education, and one dealing with music as an expression of resistance against oppression.

Sam-Ang Sam describes multiple difficulties in transmitting traditional music and dance in Cambodia: the infamous Khmer Rouge nearly annihilated the infrastructure and human resources of traditional performing arts, while the inroads of Western popular culture further alienated the youth from them. Sam describes the multitude of activities to preserve (or revive in some cases) Khmer traditional music

and dance both in and outside Cambodia. The case of Cambodia is a strong reminder that preservation can be attained only through activities in many areas undertaken simultaneously, and one is also struck by the tenacity of Cambodian artists and scholars (such as the author himself) who are dedicated to reviving the traditional arts in the midst of such difficulties. It is also a case in which authenticity is virtually a non-issue, as the conditions for transmitting the arts are still so dire that discussing it is considered a luxury.

Usopay Cadar relates the story of his own journey as a teacher and performer of *kolintang* music that has come “in full circle”: from the Philippines to North America, then back to the Philippines and elsewhere. He is caught between his sense of responsibility toward his tradition and scholarly commitment on one hand and the realities of formal education and tourism on the other that make it difficult to realize his conviction. This dilemma is shared by many musicians who teach outside their immediate environments. In Cadar’s case, it eventually led to a realization that authenticity (and “appropriateness” as Cadar phrases it) is not fixed, but rather determined by the specificities of the occasion. This realization may be painful at first, but it may also offer a realistic option for traditional musicians. What remains to be considered is the degree to which ethnomusicological insights are useful in such situations.

Endo Suanda offers a contextualized description of the arts curriculum in Indonesian formal education. He identifies the internalized West-centrism (“ethnocentrism”) in public school education as a major problem for traditional arts: Western arts are accorded the position of universality while traditional music and dance are treated as “bad art” or “non-art.” Suanda also warns that the government cultural policy (often made primarily with political and economic considerations) can work as an agent to homogenize the local traditions, citing the shift in 2001 from centrism to local autonomy as an example. Suanda then describes the activities of the Institute for Arts Education of the Archipelago (LPSN), which he and his colleagues founded in order to create much-needed teaching materials and methodologies for public schools. Here the ethnomusicological paradigm of “music as culture” is put to work in actual teaching.

The authors in this part are all highly respected performers and teachers in their respective genres, and their perspectives derive from their long-term engagement in locally practiced music and dance, are of paramount importance when considering the transmission of arts. They question the relevance of formal education in transmitting individual local traditions, and identify the difficulties therein from the perspective of their practitioners. Sam and Cadar also address the impact of increasing globalization on the Southeast Asian performing arts, which are being disseminated and transmitted outside this region more widely than ever before. While the challenges they face are enormous and may even appear daunting, the

existence and continuous efforts of teachers and scholars like these is reassuring. The essays also remind us that the bottom-up approach is particularly important in this area of inquiry: practical considerations at the actual site of transmission should not be belittled for the sake of theorization.

Lastly, Phong T. Nguyen's moving tale of music and war informs us that music was considered a potent means to oppose the US invasion and violence against civilians in the 1960s and 1970s. Many songs written during the period reflect the agony of, and challenges facing, the nation, while they also buttress Vietnamese determination to end the war. Such songs were, however, composed in Western musical idioms, and the composers, fully aware of such historical irony, characterize this group of war songs as "revolutionary romanticism." The composers of these songs eventually played a decisive role in music education after the war, thus continuing their legacy to the present. The westernization of music in Vietnam has its origin in educated leaders of the resistance movements, and it spread through those leaders who later assumed positions at the influential conservatory in the 1970s. Nguyen's essay is an engaged portrayal of the way in which formal music education in Vietnam today has been shaped by experiences of colonization and war.

Part IV contains commentaries by Yoshiko Okazaki, Robert Garfias and Tomoaki Fujii. Those by Okazaki and Garfias comment on the papers presented in the sessions where they each served as a discussant. Their commentary is self-explanatory and any comment or summary by me is redundant here. The brief essay by Fujii that follows was delivered as a keynote speech at the symposium, and identifies four main areas of research in Southeast Asia.

While all the authors deal with the issue of authenticity, their approaches and perspectives are as diverse as their topics. I believe that this report collectively demonstrates the existence of diverse problems and concerns relating to authenticity that can be expanded or further explored with more rigorous engagement and theoretical elaboration. As editor of this volume, I would be enormously gratified if the papers it includes were to stimulate discussions on the topics they discuss.

I should not conclude this introduction without expressing my gratitude to all the individuals and organizations who contributed to the success of the conference. I would first like to thank the participants of the symposium, many of whom traveled long distances to Osaka. Apart from the scholars represented in this report, a few individuals require special mention. Alan Feinstein (Rockefeller Foundation, Bangkok) acted as a discussant during the entire symposium and his perspectives are incorporated into articles included in this report. Shota Fukuoka and Toshihiro Nobuta, my colleagues at the National Museum of Ethnology, served as members of the organizing committee. They and Naoko Terauchi (Kobe University) each

chaired a paper session. Lastly, on behalf of the organizing and executive committees, I thank the Agency for Cultural Affairs for its generous financial support, and the Senri Foundation for logistical organization.