

## The UNESCO Effect: Confidence, Defamiliarization, and a New Element in the Discourse on a Japanese Island

**ABSTRACT:** The 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* established a “Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.” In 2009, seventy-six traditions from around the world were inscribed as the “first elements” on this list. One of these was Toshidon, a New Year’s Eve ritual performed on the island of Shimo-Koshikijima off the southwest coast of Japan. How does recognition by an international body affect the way this small community perceives and performs its “heritage”? In this article, I contextualize the UNESCO selection of Toshidon, describe the ritual itself, and then focus on the discussion that occurred on the island in 2009–10, as the UNESCO designation became a new factor in a long-running and complex local discourse on tradition. Observing the on-the-ground effects of UNESCO’s recognition on this one island community provides insight into the broader interaction between global cultural policy and local tradition.

SINCE 1999, I have regularly visited Shimo-Koshikijima, an island of approximately 1,700 households located about twenty-five miles off the west coast of Kagoshima Prefecture in southwestern Japan. There I have been researching a New Year’s Eve ritual known as Toshidon, in which masked demon-deity figures go from house to house scaring and disciplining children. In making my plans to return for December 2009 through January 2010, I called my closest contact on the island,



Figure 1: Map of Japan, with Shimo-Koshikijima indicated.

a man named Ozaki Takakazu, who works for the village government. After catching up on news regarding friends, family, and various island happenings, Ozaki casually mentioned that Toshidon might be a little different this year because it had just been officially inscribed in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The first thing that struck me was the incongruity of hearing the acronym UNESCO uttered in this context. The language of international cultural politics seemed somehow incompatible with the heavy island dialect, and the concept of an international "representative list" seemed out of place in this small, quiet community, so far from places like Paris, Abu Dhabi, and New York, where UNESCO decisions are made.

But of course, the infiltration of global, institutional language into local, everyday conversation is one effect of UNESCO's recognition of tangible and intangible heritage around the world.<sup>1</sup> After my initial surprise at Ozaki's news, I started to wonder how this new development would affect the way the islanders perform and perceive Toshidon, and I was all the more eager to return to the island to observe what on-the-ground effects, if any, the designation would have. How would

a global designation alter the way islanders think of their “heritage”? What would outside recognition by an international body mean to a small community in the East China Sea?

In recent years, UNESCO and intangible cultural heritage have been subject to more and more thoughtful research and theorization (e.g., Leimgruber 2010; Scher 2010; Smith and Akagawa 2009) and folklorists are playing an increasingly significant role at the global policy-making table (Noyes 2006, 28). The current article, however, does not focus on institutional decision-making processes themselves, but rather explores the effects of these decisions within a single, relatively bounded community. The Representative List is part of a new UNESCO policy instrument; because of its newness and the varied nature of the cultures it touches, field studies capturing the local voices of those affected by the policy are of particular value at this juncture. As far as I am aware, the present study represents one of the earliest efforts to explore the localized, micro-effects on a tradition (and community) selected for this List.

I begin by briefly outlining the context for UNESCO’s recognition of Toshidon and then describe the ritual itself, noting changes in procedures and attitudes between my first visit in 1999 and my visit in 2009. I then present the discussion about UNESCO and Toshidon that took place on the island immediately before and after the New Year’s event, as 2009 turned to 2010; here, I focus on the thoughts of those participants most actively involved in the performance. Not surprisingly, the islanders have distinct and nuanced understandings of Toshidon, and by extension, of broader theoretical questions about tradition and change. Their debates about these issues are just as complex, and sometimes as contentious, as those of UNESCO and its academic commentators. Bringing these island discussions to the fore demonstrates the ways in which the meaning of global policy is always contingent on local circumstances; it also shows how the islanders are grappling on their own terms with questions of tradition, change, continuity, cultural ownership, community, and identity. Furthermore, on Shimo-Koshikijima the elements of this discourse have been formulated through years of discussions that treat tradition as something simultaneously local and also part of broader systems of recognition. Ultimately, I argue, the UNESCO designation does not arrive in a vacuum. Rather, it fits into a set of existing assumptions and interpretations that have been part of the discourse of tradition on the island for decades.

It is, of course, too early to reach any broad conclusions about the benefits or liabilities of the UNESCO process in general, nor is it possible to delineate the long-term effects on Toshidon and Shimo-Koshikijima. One of my objectives in this article, however, is to take full advantage of this earliness: by exploring how the islanders responded in December 2009 as they performed Toshidon for the first time since its UNESCO recognition, we capture the moment in which a local tradition becomes part of a global heritage list. What emerges is a unique, on-location glimpse into the effect UNESCO recognition has on the people whose heritage is being recognized. In 2002, Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of UNESCO, stated that “[i]ntangible cultural heritage is not just the memory of past cultures, but is also a laboratory for inventing the future” (UNESCO 2002). That “laboratory” is located in places such as Shimo-Koshikijima; by listening in on island debates and concerns, we are reminded that the islanders are by no means passive participants in an abstract experiment. It is not some vague notion of tradition or “the future” that is at stake for them: it is their own future, and indeed, the everyday substance of their present lives. On the island, theory and lived reality are often one and the same.

Because “heritage” is an unfolding process on the island, I am reluctant to propose an overarching hypothesis from the outset. Rather, by listening to the islanders and synthesizing a wide range of their conversations and ideas in the pages that follow, I take note of critical points of discussion and concern about Toshidon specifically, and tradition more generally. Ultimately, I want to highlight three effects of the UNESCO designation that are of particular theoretical interest. The first is the very evident (but nonetheless very significant) fact that the global designation only has meaning on the island as an additional *element* in an already existing set of complex local discourses that have emerged from specific historical and political circumstances. Secondly, for some islanders the UNESCO designation brings with it a sense of *confidence*, a faith in the tradition that has been emboldened because of its validation by outsiders. And thirdly, this confidence emerges in part from a kind of *defamiliarization*, the effect of considering one’s own tradition through the eyes of another. None of these points, of course, is necessarily unique to Toshidon, but by identifying them within this specific context I hope I can contribute to their elucidation elsewhere—and help to unpack the complex play between global and local interpretations of this intangible thing called heritage.<sup>2</sup>

## Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

In October 2003, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, commonly known as UNESCO, adopted the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (hereafter ICHC or Convention). The Convention is the most recent in a long series of UNESCO policies concerning intangible cultural heritage (ICH), including the *Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural, Natural Heritage* (1972), the *Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore* (1989), and the *Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity* (1998). As is evident from the titles of these instruments, not only have policies been varied (i.e., recommendations, proclamations, conventions) but the very subject itself—traditional culture, folklore, masterpieces—has also proven to be remarkably slippery. The negotiations, both practical and theoretical, that went into the 2003 ICHC are notably complex (Aikawa 2004; Aikawa-Faure 2009; Hafstein 2009; Kurin 2004; Miyata 2007), but the end product has been recognized as “a significant intervention into international debate about the nature and value of cultural heritage” (Smith and Akagawa 2009, 1). One aspect of this intervention is an effort to better acknowledge non-Western and local conceptions of heritage. This is facilitated in part through a mechanism by which individual states submit examples of heritage to be inscribed on a list established within the ICHC.<sup>3</sup>

Establishing the parameters for this list, formally known as the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, was one of “the most controversial issues” of the 2003 ICHC negotiations (Hafstein 2009, 93).<sup>4</sup> Lists are inherently problematic (Hafstein 2009; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004). As normative constructs, they can be wielded as political tools of exclusion or privilege. Moreover, selection for a list can alter the context in which a local practice is understood by its practitioners. The ICHC Representative List itself was developed from an earlier instrument, the *Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*, which encouraged individual states to submit one nomination each round (every two years) to be considered, through a complex system of review (Seeger 2009), for proclamation as a Masterpiece, that is, “a space or form of cultural expression . . . of outstanding value” (UNESCO 2000).<sup>5</sup>

Nineteen cultural masterpieces were proclaimed in 2001, twenty-eight in 2003, and forty-three in 2005, for a total of ninety. Three cultural forms so designated were from Japan: Nōgaku Theatre (2001), Ningyo Johruri Bunraku Puppet Theatre (2003), and Kabuki Theatre (2005).<sup>6</sup> When the ICHC took effect in 2008, the ninety proclaimed Masterpieces were incorporated into the Representative List of the Convention; this included the three forms of Japanese theater mentioned above. It is worth noting that these three performance traditions have long been internationally recognized dramatic forms. They are deeply embedded in the cultural imaginary of Japan, practiced in major urban centers, and studied by scholars of literature and drama throughout the world.

Whereas inclusion in the Masterpieces program required a “cultural expression or cultural space” to demonstrate “outstanding value as a masterpiece of the human creative genius” (UNESCO 2001, 12), a significant feature of the 2003 Convention was its conscious effort to be more inclusive. As Director-General Matsuura pointed out, “The notion of ‘outstanding universal significance’ was deliberately excluded from the Convention” (2007, 179). Instead, the Convention defines intangible cultural heritage in relatively open-ended terms, as

the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills—as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith—that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. (UNESCO 2003, 2)

Accordingly, after the existing Masterpieces were incorporated into the Representative List in 2008, criteria for subsequent nominations became much more flexible.

With these Convention parameters in hand, UNESCO’s ICH Committee convened in Abu Dhabi from September 28 through October 2, 2009, to inscribe the “first elements” into the Representative List (see UNESCO 2010). Included among the seventy-six nominations from twenty-seven countries were thirteen traditions from Japan. In contrast to Nōgaku, Bunraku, and Kabuki, most of these new Japanese additions were extremely localized, performed in only one or two

communities, and largely unknown to the general population in Japan and elsewhere.<sup>7</sup> One of these traditions was Toshidon.

Strictly speaking, Toshidon is inscribed on the List as “Koshikijima no Toshidon.” The nomination submitted to UNESCO reads:

They have a common faith that a deity of a peculiar appearance, called Toshidon, visits the human world on the night of December 31. This simple and innocent faith has sustained the Toshidon practice on Shimo-Koshikijima as an annual event, transmitted from generation to generation up to the present time, and thus it is recognized as part of their cultural heritage collectively transmitted by the community. (UNESCO 2009a)<sup>8</sup>

The nomination was submitted to UNESCO by the Japanese national government, not by the islanders. In fact, in 2009 the islanders themselves had very little direct involvement with the UNESCO selection.

### Toshidon: From National Heritage to Global Heritage

To understand how the selection came about, then, we should begin in 1950, when the Japanese federal government established the Cultural Properties Protection Law (*Bunkazai hogohō*). In 1954 this law was amended to include “intangible” properties, though the designation was limited to “artistically sophisticated classical performances preserved by experts” and did not include “folk performances practiced by the general public” (Ōshima 2007, 19). Not until a 1975 revision did folk performances, and much of what we might now characterize as ICH, get “their place in the sun” (Thornbury 1997, 57). This revision came in the wake of Japan’s rapid postwar economic resurgence, when the nation was experiencing urbanization, industrialization, and a concomitant depopulation of rural communities. Starting in the 1970s, as small towns struggled to survive, these circumstances led to a nostalgic rediscovery of rural ways of life: government initiatives encouraged the (re)establishment of local folkways, and community members were eager to preserve traditions they felt were disappearing.<sup>9</sup> Within this context, several Shimo-Koshikijima leaders—particularly one village official and one schoolteacher—mustered local support to nominate Toshidon for national recognition. On May 17, 1977, the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkachō) selected “Koshikijima no Toshidon” as one of the first “important intangible folk cultural properties” (*Jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai*) in the nation.<sup>10</sup>

For more than three decades, then, Toshidon has been associated with this national distinction. And then on July 20, 2008, Bunkachō announced that it would nominate Toshidon for UNESCO's Representative List, using criteria established in the 2003 ICHC. On August 18 of the same year an island representative signed off "to certify free, prior and informed consent to the nomination" (UNESCO 2008), and on September 30, 2009, at the UNESCO meeting in Abu Dhabi, the decision was made to "inscribe" Toshidon on the Representative List (UNESCO 2009b, 64).

This is all to say that Toshidon's inclusion as one of the "first elements" on the Representative List was due to its early recognition on the domestic level, which itself was made possible by the efforts of islanders during the 1970s. While current leaders, including the head of the town administrative office and employees in the educational section, have generally embraced the UNESCO recognition, they also suggest that there was a certain inevitability to it—that it was simply Toshidon's "turn" (*junban*) to be selected. Although they did not express any resentment, the island officials I spoke with remarked that they felt somewhat disconnected from the entire process; in fact, although they had been awaiting the decision, they only realized it was official when a newspaper from the mainland called to ask how they felt about it. Furthermore, they commented that they had not received any kind of official certificate from either UNESCO or the Japanese government, and noted that UNESCO itself provides no financial remuneration. In other words, whatever benefits the designation would eventually bring, in fall 2009 they were all, as it were, intangible.<sup>11</sup>

### Performing Toshidon: Before UNESCO

In Japan there are a number of rituals similar to Toshidon in which masked figures, almost always male, travel from house to house disciplining children. In many cases, the ritual takes place on New Year's Eve or sometime at the end or beginning of the year. In several places, particularly in the Okinawa region, similar events occur in late summer. Japanese folklorists have documented these rituals for years, often trying to connect different versions and variants geographically and historically. Such traditions are also, of course, intriguingly similar to mumming and other masked performances found throughout the world. In Japan, Toshidon is the first such ritual to be recognized by UNESCO.<sup>12</sup>

In their recent edited volume focusing on the ICHC, Laurajane Smith and Natsuko Akagawa point out that “the consequences of this Convention are yet to be fully realised or determined” (2009, 2). Of course, it will take many years to assess the ramifications of the Convention, and as with any global policy, the local effects will necessarily differ from place to place. So rather than speculate on generalized consequences, I focus here on the micro-effects—the very localized political, economic, and theoretical consequences—that resulted from Toshidon’s addition to the List. Because I was on the island immediately after UNESCO’s decision was promulgated, I was fortunate enough to talk with the people most deeply involved with what had rather suddenly become an internationally recognized performance tradition. First, let me describe Toshidon as it was performed a decade ago. What follows is a simplified account of one of the six household visits I experienced on the evening of December 31, 1999. Of course, each visit is different, necessarily specific to the individual household and its inhabitants; this one occurred in the Fumoto neighborhood of Shimo-Koshikijima.

Just past seven in the evening, a clear night. Gigantic stars blanket the sky, so close that you can imagine, as one islander puts it, the Toshidon stepping right down into the village. And indeed, this is what children are told: that a frightening demon-deity known as Toshidon-sama has been carefully observing their behavior all year round from an overworld in the sky (*tenjōkai*). On this night, the last night of the old year, the Toshidon will descend. The children are jittery and anxious.<sup>13</sup>

Toshidon, as will become clear, is a “disciplinary” ritual in which children are scolded for their “weak points” and praised for their “strong points.” The fact that the frightening figure of the Toshidon knows the intimate details of each child’s behavior only reinforces the children’s sense that these creatures have god-like abilities. In practice, of course, the Toshidon are played by community members; they know the children’s behavior not only because they know the children themselves, but also because the parents have submitted a “Toshidon application form” (*Toshidon mōshikomi-sho*), specifying the behaviors for which they want their children scolded or commended. While the Toshidon are visible only on New Year’s Eve, they are casually invoked throughout the year as a reminder to children to behave themselves. In this way, they are constantly present in daily life, and their brief actual appearance on December 31 is all the more visceral and intense.



Figure 2: Fumoto Toshidon posing outside before entering a household. December 31, 2009. Photograph by author.

Inside the house, the largest room has been cleared. Takashi, a six-year-old boy, sits on the floor with his parents, grandparents, aunt, and uncle. The florescent light hanging from the ceiling is at its dimmest setting, slightly darker than candlelight. Suddenly, from outside, there comes a clacking sound of wood against wood, and of *geta* (wooden sandals) against asphalt and stone, louder and louder, and then the sound of whinnying horses—or the sound of people making horse-like noises. Several harsh voices cry, “*Oruka?! Oruka?!*” (Anybody there? Anybody there?). Wild shadows loom up against the closed *shoji* screens of the room. The parents tell Takashi to let the Toshidon in and he cautiously slides open the screens.

In the semi-darkness, the Toshidon enter. Five of them kneel with their gloved hands on the floor in front of them, facing the boy, like animals ready to pounce (their legs, revealingly human, are hidden). Their large masks, made of painted cardboard with long, sharp, triangular noses, sport jagged white teeth frozen in bare-toothed roars; they appear rough and wild in the almost-darkness, a look emphasized by the *sotetsu* palm, *shuro* leaves, and straw around their waists and shoulders. The otherworldly visitors seem to fill the room completely, and there is a sense that even more Toshidon lurk in the darkness



Figure 3: Toshidon mask (Fumoto). December 31, 2009. Photograph by author.

outside—as if the house were surrounded by an army of unpredictable creatures. Their long red noses are trained on Takashi, sword-like, piercing. When the Toshidon speak, it is harsh and direct and in the island dialect; the grammatical form of their commands is sharp and condescending—these are words spoken in anger.<sup>14</sup>

First, they command the boy to stand up and recite his name, age, and grade in school. He stands reluctantly and in a quiet voice, says: “Takashi.” The Toshidon explodes: “Say ‘*desu!*’ (*Desu chuwan ka!*), angrily correcting the boy’s grammar and the politeness level of his sentence structure. After some stammering, Takashi, his voice quavering, succeeds in politely and appropriately reciting the required information: “My name is Takashi” (*Takashi desu*).

Then the Toshidon ask specific questions about his behavior: “You don’t brush your teeth after each meal, do you?”

“No, I don’t.”

“You don’t finish your rice at mealtimes, do you?”

“No, I don’t.”

The Toshidon make Takashi agree that he will correct these infractions, and then they go on to list some of the strong points of his conduct: “Recently you have been doing your homework.”

During this interrogation, only one or two Toshidon do the actual questioning, but the others contribute in small ways, grunting agreement with the speaker, telling the child to speak louder, to use proper grammar, and so on. The parents also play a role in the give and take, urging Takashi to answer and helping him understand the visitors' dialect.<sup>15</sup>

Next the Toshidon make Takashi step forward and sing a song. He fidgets nervously, opening and closing his mouth with no words coming, so the Toshidon suggest that he sing a song learned at school or from a television cartoon. When Takashi finally begins, his voice trembles and the words are barely audible; the Toshidon scold him and make him begin again. Finally, still struggling to hold back tears, he manages to complete a song he had learned in school.

Next, Takashi is instructed to choose his favorite (*sukina*) Toshidon and touch that Toshidon's nose. He stands and walks forward cautiously with his hand extended in front of him, coming closer, his fingers now only inches from the sharp tip of the long nose. Suddenly, the Toshidon roars and lurches toward him; Takashi shrieks and leaps back. Eventually, he recovers his composure, and with the encouragement of his mother, advances again. This time the Toshidon allows him to touch the nose, which he does tentatively, jerking his hand back almost immediately and returning to the safety of his parents.

Takashi is now commanded to stand up again and repeat his promises to behave better in the coming year. Finally, he is allowed to receive a "reward" (*gohōbi*)—a very large piece of *mochi* rice cake (about seven or eight inches in diameter). But the *mochi* is not simply handed to him; rather, he is ordered to get on all fours "like a horse" and crawl backwards toward the Toshidon, who place the *mochi* onto his back. He must then crawl to his parents without letting the *mochi* fall.<sup>16</sup> After this final ordeal, the Toshidon back out of the room, reminding Takashi to behave himself because they will be watching from above and will return the following year.

This New Year's Eve visit took approximately fifteen minutes. That evening the Toshidon also went to five other households in the Fumoto neighborhood. The Toshidon were all men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-nine; they were accompanied by a small entourage of junior and senior high school boys and several older men. In 1999, I was the only outside visitor present at the event—that is, the only person not born or living on the island.

## Neighborhoods and Photography

The island of Shimo-Koshikijima has a population of just under three thousand people, with Toshidon performed in six different *shūraku*, a word that I translate here as “neighborhood.” Each neighborhood organizes and performs its version of Toshidon in a fashion slightly different from the others, and while the islanders often discuss these distinctions, very few individuals have actually experienced another neighborhood’s Toshidon. In the hamlet of Teuchi (population 791), where my research is based, Toshidon is performed in all three neighborhoods: Minato, Fumoto, and Motomachi, with the latter two being the most populated and therefore generally most active in terms of Toshidon. My descriptions in this essay are derived from the Fumoto version, with reference to the Motomachi version.

Although Minato, Fumoto, and Motomachi are geographically contiguous, there is a remarkably deep-rooted historical and class component to these neighborhood divisions. Fumoto was the original location of Samurai families sent to govern and protect the island during the Edo period (c. 1600–1868). Located in the geographic center of Teuchi, Fumoto houses the administrative offices and the elementary school—both central meeting points for all Teuchi residents. In contrast, the people of Motomachi historically made their living through “half agriculture and half fishing” (*han-nō/han-gyo*), scraping by through all sorts of farming, fishing, and manual labor. Even today, despite the physical proximity of the neighborhoods and the fact that residents work together and intermingle socially and commercially on a daily basis, there are still minor dialectal differences in the spoken language. Furthermore, until the 1950s, intermarriage between natives of different neighborhoods was rare. Fumoto residents particularly tended to choose mates only from within Fumoto or, alternatively, from the mainland (Fujioka 1964, 91–2).

Residents of both Fumoto and Motomachi often claim that their version of Toshidon is the “original.” These claims are, to be sure, somewhat lighthearted: people from each neighborhood express a vague curiosity that extends to asking each other about their respective traditions, comparing levels of darkness during Toshidon visits, and discussing the color and size of masks. To outsiders, the distinctions involved may seem inconsequential, an example of “the narcissism of minor differences” (Noyes 2006, 33). To insiders, however,

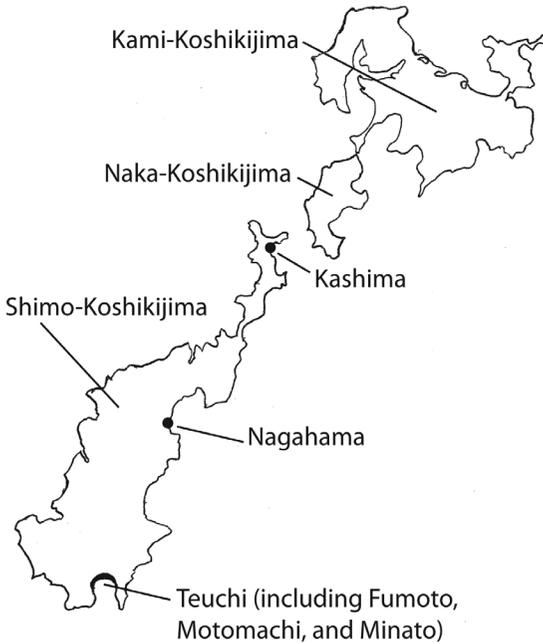


Figure 4: Map of Koshiki Archipelago.

these differences reflect each neighborhood's distinctive historical character. In Fumoto, for example, the way Toshidon is performed emphasizes the neighborhood's exclusivity: the Toshidon enter all the way into the room and perform in almost complete darkness. For the most part, photographs are forbidden. In Motomachi, on the other hand, Toshidon is "open and welcoming" (*kaihō teki*). The room is brightly lit and the Toshidon cluster near the entranceway rather than entering all the way inside. Photography and videotaping are welcomed.

I mention photography here because the idea of visually capturing the Toshidon during their fleeting appearance is particularly emblematic of different local attitudes toward the event and also suggests a flashpoint, as it were, through which effects of the UNESCO designation may become visible. In Fumoto, where the ritual takes place in near darkness, I was told that the flash of the camera would distract the participants. Aware of the cameras, the Toshidon might perform for the visitors rather than for the children, and the ritual would transform from "happening" into spectacle.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, if photographs were permitted, children would be able to see the Toshidon at any time of the year and the impact of their brief New Year's Eve



Figure 5: Child receiving a reward of *mochi* in Motomachi neighborhood. Copyright UNESCO/Satsumasenndai City, 2009.

visit would be attenuated. The fact that one cannot gaze on the Toshidon except during the emotionally intense ritual itself underscores the visitors' mysterious and sacred power.

The current practitioners in Fumoto ban photography for these practical reasons. I have also been told, however, that the prohibition only began after the 1977 Bunkachō designation. At that time, one Fumoto leader argued vehemently that if Toshidon was to be considered intangible (*mukei*, formless), it could not be preserved in any tangible way—for example, through photographs.<sup>18</sup> While current leaders generally do not accept this literal reading of the language of intangibility, they continue—albeit less rigidly—to enforce the photography prohibition.

In 1999, aside from family members, the only person in Fumoto allowed to take pictures was a professional newspaper photographer who was originally from the island and whose daughter also happened to be “receiving” the Toshidon that evening.<sup>19</sup> Practically speaking, prohibiting photographs served to limit the number of outside spectators. In contrast, that same year five professional and amateur photographers attended Toshidon in Motomachi, where photography is allowed.<sup>20</sup>

## Performing Toshidon: After UNESCO

With all this in mind, now I fast-forward ten years, to December 31, 2009. I am again in Fumoto. It is a cold, windy night, with an occasional spattering of chill winter rain, and a full moon intermittently shrouded by fast-moving clouds. Inside the house, it is warm and comfortable, but there is tension in the air. The whole family is present—grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, and two children—a five-year-old boy and a three-year-old girl. At about half past seven, there is noise outside, and then movement, and rough cries of “Oruka?! Oruka?!” The boy, Kiyoshi, is told to slide open the *shoji*, which he does quickly, then runs back to his parents. The room is filled with five large, frightening Toshidon. They call on Kiyoshi to stand up and state his name. The boy is scolded for such infractions as not putting away his toys and not finishing his dinner. He is praised for not missing a single day of kindergarten and for participating enthusiastically in a walking event for children. His younger sister is too frightened and tearful to be scolded or praised for anything, and the Toshidon do not spend much time with her; however, both children receive a huge mochi rice cake as a reward.

In short, the general contours of the 2009 event were similar to Toshidon visits I had witnessed during the previous decade. As in the past, there were no tourists. This time, however, a number of other people were present, including two photographers, a newspaper reporter, a cameraman from a Kagoshima-based TV station, and a video crew. These additional people were there because of the UNESCO designation.

One photographer was Harasaki Iwao, the head of the town administrative office, who also happens to be a local scholar and professional photographer. The second photographer was the same man I had met ten years earlier; this time his own children were not participating in Toshidon, but he had returned to take pictures for his newspaper (the *Minami Nippon shinbun*). Working with him was a young reporter who had grown up on the island and was related to many of the people involved in Toshidon. The single cameraman from a Kagoshima TV station had come because of the UNESCO recognition and subsequent publicity. Several other TV stations had also asked to film the proceedings, but they were redirected to Motomachi. In the end it was decided that it would be all right to have one cameraman filming in Fumoto as long as he agreed only to show the Toshidon



Figure 6: Cameraman filming Toshidon (Fumoto) preparation. December 31, 2009. Photograph by author.

from the front so the fact that they are actually humans would not be visible.<sup>21</sup>

The three-person video team was part of a larger professional crew hired by the Shimo-Koshiki village office to film in all six neighborhoods.<sup>22</sup> They were charged with documenting as much of the proceedings as possible, including the dressing of the Toshidon, their advance through the night from one house to another, and of course the ritual inside each household. The goal was to create a DVD record of the events on this particular day, the first performance of Toshidon after its UNESCO recognition. The resulting DVD would not be sold, but would be kept as a record (*kiroku*) in libraries and in the village office.<sup>23</sup>

There was clearly a sense that this year's Toshidon was a little different. Because of the filming, for instance, in Fumoto the lighting was significantly brighter than in the past. After the event, when participants discussed the evening, one person commented that the children were so focused on the Toshidon they did not seem to notice the cameras.

年越しの晩  
僕らの家に  
神さまが  
やってくる。

ユネスコ無形文化遺産  
“TOSHIDON” in KOSHIKIJIMA  
**甕島のトシドン**

「トシドン」とは、鹿児島県甕島町内市の下甕島に伝わる鬼のような妖怪の習俗です。習俗は天降りにて、下甕の子供たちの夢遊を食っていく。毎年、大晦日の夜になると山の上に集り立ち、寝切れぬ間に寝て目を覚ましながら家々を回り、その年に暮らした子供を驚かしめ、そして饑餓という罰を与え、去って行くそうです。饑餓は人一つ歳を取らせる罰といわれ、これを見わぬいと歳を取ることができないといわれています。そしてトシドンが天へ帰って行くと共に、甕島には新しい年が訪れるのです。

「甕島のトシドン」は、この伝承をもとにした下甕島の年中行事です。伝承内容に大晦日の夜、中学生、青年、お祭りの人が集る若い鬼、賢や鬼の親、黒いマントなどトシドンの家に扮し、3歳-8歳頃の子供の家をまわり、その子供たちが年内に仕出した悪戯などをいっしょに天から見ています。とばかりに笑い声を聞かされ、懲らさねばなりません。これは事前に家族がトシドン役の人々に対し、眠って欲しい内容を知らせているのだが、子供にしてみればなぜ知っているのかと恐ろしくおのきな、反省を促されることとなります。鬼の脅した後、年内に感謝を上げたことなど、自かつことについて謝りあげ、変化も良い字でいるようにと約束を交わします。そして寝かぬ鬼を出して子供の前に隠し、子供がそれを見たと立会いに家族のもとへ帰るのを見届けると、トシドンは去って行くのです。子供の幸福を願う貴重な文化行事であり、子供たちの親や保護者教育に役立っているともいわれています。1977年には、民間団体の重要無形民俗文化財になりました。

鹿兒島初となる、国連教育・科学・文化機関(ユネスコ)の無形文化遺産への登録が決まりました。

ユネスコ無形文化遺産の登録が完了した「甕島のトシドン」について(鹿児島新聞 平成21年10月11日(木)掲載されました)

Figure 7: Poster celebrating UNESCO recognition of Toshidon.

Another participant, however, responded that he observed one boy looking directly at the camera by the end of the ritual. Apparently the children had been anticipating the coming of the Toshidon for some time—but nobody had warned them about the camera crew. Otherwise, procedures were followed as in previous years.<sup>24</sup>

But what other changes did UNESCO bring about? After the designation was announced in late September, the town office invited a professional folklorist to lecture on Toshidon. The folklorist in question was Shimono Toshimi, a retired professor and probably the leading authority on the folklore of southern Japan. On November 14, Shimono spoke in the village hall to an audience of more than 150 people.<sup>25</sup> At his lecture, the professor predicted that the UNESCO designation would encourage visits from more and more off-island spectators; it might take several years for word to get out, he said, but then the tourists would pour in to see Toshidon.

So in short, these were the most noticeable effects of the UNESCO recognition: an academic lecture, the acceptance of a little more publicity than usual, and formal documentation of the ritual on DVD. In addition, posters about Toshidon were placed in various public spaces, such as the town hall and neighborhood community centers; three banners celebrating the designation were also hung, two on the façade of the town hall and one at the ferry terminal.<sup>26</sup> But beyond these visible signs, what effect did UNESCO recognition have on how the islanders perceived Toshidon? Did they feel that this unsolicited acknowledgement boded well or badly for the future of the tradition, or were they simply indifferent to it? In the following pages, I explore these questions broadly.

## Island Politics and Local Discourse

Throughout this essay, I have written quite generally of the “islanders” or “residents” of Shimo-Koshikijima. But it goes without saying that notions of *community*, *group*, and *identity* are anything but simple, even (or especially) within the bounded space of an island.<sup>27</sup> The advent of the UNESCO designation, with its explicit and laudable emphasis on the importance of “community,” underscored something I had often observed about Toshidon in Shimo-Koshikijima: to talk about Toshidon is to talk about smaller groups within larger groups, and ultimately to talk about the individuals who make up the mutable networks that form these groups. In the case of Toshidon, the most easily identifiable smaller

groups are the six neighborhoods in which the officially recognized Toshidon is practiced. My own fieldwork, as mentioned earlier, has brought me closest to the residents of Fumoto and Motomachi, between whom there has long been a quiet rivalry based on class and ancestry and expressed to a certain extent in the performance of Toshidon and the discourses surrounding it. Even within a given neighborhood, of course, agreement is far from absolute, and lively discussion of topical local issues is common at formal and informal social events. I mention this now not because my objective is to dissect the historical and political issues that undergird neighborhood rivalries and individual disagreements, but because I soon realized that the UNESCO designation only has meaning on the island within an already existing set of local concerns and conflicts.

Being selected for the Representative List has had a concrete effect on the island—as manifest in the invitation of Professor Shimono and the hiring of a film crew—but it has also profoundly influenced local theoretical discourse, which is as nuanced as any UNESCO conversation. The islanders are anything but naïve players in the heritage game. Many of their comments, whether critical or supportive, parallel the concerns of the architects of the ICHC as well as its academic critics. Furthermore, the current discourse on Toshidon is complexly layered, predicated on earlier exchanges on the island, with frequent reference to past discussions and disputes. In other words, present circumstances are received into an existing template of ideas about tradition and change, and while grounded in local realities, these ideas are as intricate as those that went into the development of UNESCO's global instrument. Toshidon may be one of the “first elements” in the ICHC, but from the islanders' perspective the UNESCO designation becomes, as it were, one of many “elements” in an already lively island discourse. And despite the official UNESCO description of Toshidon as a “simple and innocent faith,” island interpretations of Toshidon are anything but simple and innocent. In the pages that follow, I attempt to distill some major points of these discussions into several interrelated themes.

### (In)formal, (Im)personal, (Im)mutable

Many people I spoke with expressed concern that UNESCO recognition will make the performance of Toshidon stagnant. They stress that such fossilization runs counter to Toshidon's own history and

nature. It was always, they argue, an “informal” and “personal” procedure: “in the old days” (*mukashi*) you would just ask a neighbor or friend to dress up in a scary fashion “with whatever was at hand” (*aru mono de*), cover his face with something, and come scold your children for various infractions. It was a form of community discipline and a communal enactment of concern for the individual. There were no set behaviors or costumes—Toshidon was truly intangible, with everything created anew each year. The reason it has lasted so long, the argument goes, is because of this flexibility and readiness to improvise as needed. Some islanders fear that the UNESCO designation will freeze the performance of Toshidon at this particular instant in its history—and this will become the reference point for future negotiations of tradition. To a certain extent, it is said, this is what happened in 1977 after the practice was recognized by Bunkachō.<sup>28</sup>

Significantly, local concerns about fossilization were clearly anticipated by the drafters of the 2003 Convention, who describe ICH as “constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history” (UNESCO 2003, 2). Aikawa also points out that as early as 1992, when an expert meeting (“The International Consultation on New Perspectives for the Intangible Cultural Heritage Programme”) was convened to evaluate ICH instruments, advice was given “not to crystallize this heritage whose nature is to be permanently evolving” (2004, 139). Indeed, as Matsuura puts it, the Convention “deliberately” takes into account the “ever-evolving and changing” nature of local tradition (2007, 179).

So why is there such a disconnect between the clearly stated intentions of the ICHC and how the islanders interpret the UNESCO recognition? One reason, I would argue, is that the actual text of the Convention is irrelevant to most island residents, who have neither read it nor directly participated in its development. They understand it only from their own perspective as the recipients of this recognition. Instead of treating the ICHC as a fresh approach to tradition, they interpret the UNESCO designation within an existing template of “important intangible folk cultural properties” forged through three decades of thinking about Toshidon in its local and national context. Scholars have suggested that UNESCO’s ICH project is paradoxical: an effort to create a global system to stave off the effects of globalization (Nas 2002, 142, 145). But perhaps what is more paradoxical and problematic is that despite UNESCO’s purposefully open-ended

language, with its acceptance of heterogeneity and change, the islanders tend to see the designation as a challenge to the mutability of their tradition. On the island, the specific *content* of the Convention, with its carefully crafted definition of ICH as something “constantly recreated,” is overshadowed by the *fact* of the designation.

Regardless of the rhetoric and intentions of the Convention itself, then, crystallization is a real concern for the islanders. Toshidon’s inscription on the Representative List distinguishes it from traditions that are not on the List, and even distinguishes it from itself *before* it was recognized, when it was only one of several hundred traditions in a Japanese national inventory. Islanders are aware of the power of the list and recognize it as a double-edged sword. On one hand, they celebrated the moment of recognition with Professor Shimono’s lecture, the Toshidon posters, banners, and the DVD documentation. At the Coming-of-Age Ceremony (*Seijinshiki*) held on January 3, 2010, the UNESCO designation was specifically invoked as “good news” from 2009 and one reason young islanders should feel pride in their home.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, however, many people I spoke with emphasized the fact that the informal, mutable, personal nature of Toshidon was at particular risk in this moment. They were very much aware that something they conceived of as informal had been “inscribed” (the received UNESCO term) on a *formal* list where it is described in *permanent* written form, in addition to being publicly available on a website. Moreover, something they considered personal and individual was listed as a *community* tradition—*Koshikijima no Toshidon*, a broad designation that not only elides the personal and distinct neighborhoods with which it is locally identified, but also expands its association beyond Shimo-Koshikijima to include the other two islands of the archipelago.<sup>30</sup>

### Recognition of Tradition Creates “Tradition”

Having said this, even on Shimo-Koshikijima itself there are at least two versions of Toshidon that do not fall within the purview of *Koshikijima no Toshidon* as recognized by both Bunkachō and UNESCO. Toshidon is “officially” performed in six neighborhoods, but many islanders know that there are also versions in Nagahama (where it is called *Shōgatsudon*) and Kashima. These two neighborhoods did not participate in the original submission to Bunkachō in 1977 and accordingly are not included in the 2009 UNESCO designation. I sensed no resentment about

this during brief visits to these two communities; in fact, several people suggested that it allowed them a certain liberty from the responsibility of conforming to set standards. Being under the radar, they pointed out, permits them to change and experiment at will.

In the six neighborhoods where Toshidon *has* been recognized by UNESCO, attitudes toward Nagahama and Kashima are complex—at once mildly condescending and slightly envious. Our Toshidon is more serious, the thinking seems to go, because it has been recognized internationally. But because it has been recognized internationally, we have a responsibility to treat it more seriously—and that limits its flexibility. Again, this concern that UNESCO recognition will cause Toshidon to resist innovation is frequently expressed; formally designating something as tradition, a number of islanders pointed out to me, is the very thing that threatens the tradition. At this moment of recognition, I was told, it is critical that mutability and informality also be recognized. To be sure, they are creating a DVD of Toshidon this year, but that is only for the record: a snapshot of this particular moment. In other words, they insist that the idea of change, and the readiness for change, should—ironically—become an unchangeable part of Toshidon.

As if to drive this point home, in the Minato neighborhood a new procedure was instituted in 2009. Instead of the children receiving mochi rice cakes on their backs, they now receive them on a tray. One rationale for this innovation is simply to distinguish Minato from the other neighborhoods; at the same time, it demonstrates an openness to change. When residents of other neighborhoods heard of this alteration, they were curious but not critical. This attitude toward flexibility fits within what economic philosopher Tateoka Yasuo has recently termed a “process paradigm,” that is, the islanders express a willingness to modify their activities (and the meaning they give to their activities) for the particular demands of the particular moment. While Tateoka suggests that this mindset, as opposed to what he calls the “result paradigm,” represents a critical, postmodern shift in the Japanese business world, it seems clear that at least on the island, this is how traditions such as Toshidon have continued to remain relevant over the years (Tateoka 2006, 63–101). The islanders do not predicate their present behaviors on an unflagging belief in the correctness of past behaviors—except for an insistence that one vital, immutable characteristic of Toshidon has *always* been its ability to change with the times.<sup>31</sup>

## Continuity Derives from Function/Necessity

It is worth noting that this deep commitment to flexibility does not mean that Toshidon is completely unstable from year to year. In my own observations over the past decade I have seen remarkable consistencies; furthermore, when older members of the community recount their experiences as children, they often describe procedures very similar to what occurs today. Change comes in small ways and often reflects the current needs of the performers and the children. Indeed, I was told that no matter which neighborhood performs Toshidon, and despite differences in some aspects of performance, the “roots are the same” (*neko wa onaji*): the purpose of Toshidon is education (*kyōiku*) and the disciplining of children (*kodomo no shitsuke*). To fulfill these functions, the ritual must be flexible. If there are no children of appropriate age in a particular neighborhood, I was told, then Toshidon will not (indeed, cannot) be carried out that year in that neighborhood. (In fact, in recent years such situations are not uncommon in the smaller neighborhoods.) To follow the procedures of Toshidon just because they have been documented, just because it is a *tradition*, is meaningless. Toshidon has a real function in the community, and this function depends on the presence of children.

One evening in early January 2010, I asked three islanders involved in the performance of Toshidon to share their thoughts on the ritual at this juncture in its history. The oldest member of the group was Ozaki, who is from Fumoto and employed at the village office. Now in his late forties, Ozaki acts as a leader during Toshidon, providing guidance from behind the scenes but rarely wearing the mask himself. Another member of the group from Fumoto was the father of Kiyoshi, the five-year-old described earlier. In his early thirties, this man sat with his son as a family member when the Toshidon visited his own house; he then donned the mask himself and joined the Toshidon as they continued on to other households. The third discussant, in his late twenties, is an employee of the ferry company from the Minato neighborhood, where he has been involved with Toshidon for years. As we talked late into the night, my own specific questions were soon forgotten and the conversation became an impassioned debate about the future not just of Toshidon, but also of the island. Many concerns arose—local politics, a proposed bridge to link Shimo-Koshikijima with Naka-Koshikijima, lingering disagreements about the recent

administrative merger of the islands with Sendai City on the mainland, and anxieties about ongoing depopulation. This last issue—the fact that there are fewer and fewer children on the island—brought the conversation back to Toshidon. All three men, passionate about their hometown, insisted that if there were no longer any children to be disciplined (something they saw as a possibility within the next two or three decades), then Toshidon itself would disappear. It should not, they all agreed adamantly, persist only as a tourist attraction. Although this staunch position was most ardently expressed during this particular late-night discussion, in one form or another the same idea was expressed by almost everyone I spoke with on the island.<sup>32</sup>

Folklorist Ōshima Akio has suggested that a given example of ICH can be perceived as having two qualities: “tradition of form” (*katashi no denshō*) and “tradition of spirit” (*kokoro no denshō*).<sup>33</sup> The former is generally shaped and maintained within the community or group context and can be subject to laws and conventions concerned with preservation and safeguarding. The latter, on the other hand, is a much more personally understood quality and therefore beyond the mandate of cultural properties protection laws (Ōshima 2008, 60). With regard to Toshidon, it is clear that most participants feel that “tradition of form” without “tradition of spirit” is no tradition at all.

### Traditions Divide/Unite

Whenever Toshidon comes up in discussion—and it comes up often, particularly at year-end gatherings of family and friends—much is made of the differences between neighborhoods. The attentiveness to these differences reflects a tension between localized traditions within informal neighborhood structures and the larger formal community, which is legally and bureaucratically organized. For example, in the conversation described above, one man brought up a certain traditional dance that was being taught to students in the elementary school. He complained that the dance is from Fumoto but that *he* is not from Fumoto, so why should his children have to learn a dance historically associated with another neighborhood? Why should a Fumoto tradition become an *island* tradition?

Such concerns are explicitly discussed and deeply contested. Often the question of *community* becomes a question of neighborhood affiliation. As mentioned earlier there are historical and class prejudices

at play here, along with a dense and intricate network of relations among individuals. Toshidon is one factor in the power politics of this broader discourse of local and regional affairs; the UNESCO designation adds another shade to the discussion and perhaps raises the stakes a bit. Now the meaning of being the “original” or “scariest” Toshidon carries with it the added cachet of international recognition and adds fuel to the simmering competition among neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the job of keeping neighborhood interests balanced falls primarily on the shoulders of the local government office. While UNESCO itself plays no actual administrative role in the practice of Toshidon, the UNESCO *designation* serves handily as an umbrella under which the different neighborhoods can be brought together for common purpose—a function in evidence when the designation was invoked at the Coming-of-Age Ceremony for young adults from all the neighborhoods on the island.

### Tourism and Commercialization Are Not Inevitable (or Necessary)

In his lecture, Professor Shimono had suggested that tourists would soon start coming to the island. For most people I spoke with, this seemed to be neither a desire nor a concern. They felt they had very tight control of Toshidon; they also realized that Toshidon would always be difficult to experience as an outsider because of its enactment inside private households. Again, the distinction between neighborhoods is an issue here: in Fumoto tourists are not accommodated, but in Motomachi they are encouraged. Not only was Motomachi particularly open to filming by the official team and by newspaper and television crews, but recently residents have also begun inviting tourists to witness the event. In 2009 this group was limited to twenty preregistered individuals. The plan was to give them a brief lecture on the history of the tradition and its importance as an educational procedure. Then they would be divided into groups of two or three people and allowed to observe the ritual from inside a household. On the day itself, however, the weather was rough; ferries from the mainland were canceled and half the tourists could not make it to the island. For visitors, then, there are still practical obstacles—from being given a vantage point within a private household to actually getting to the island in the first place. Furthermore, Shimo-Koshikijima has very

limited hotel accommodations, and it is unlikely that more will be built just for the short New Year's season.<sup>34</sup>

I should stress here that despite its natural beauty and rich history, the island has few explicit tourist attractions and a very limited tourism infrastructure. Two ferries service the island on a daily basis, but cancellations due to inclement weather are not infrequent, and only one of the ships has the capacity to carry cars. The largest hotel has just fourteen guestrooms, and these are often occupied by extended family visiting relatives on the island. Furthermore, there are very few shops or restaurants—and all of these are closed for the New Year holidays. In short, this is a very small, remote place with few facilities; many other destinations are more accessible to Japanese domestic tourists with only a few days of vacation. Tourism is not discouraged on the island, but it is not a major source of income and there are numerous impediments to its development.

Thus, the attitude toward tourists is one of conditional welcome: if they come, we will build it. But even in Motomachi, few people suggest there is a need, or the enthusiasm, for actively constructing a tourist industry around Toshidon. On the contrary, several people referenced a similar ritual—the Namahage of Akita Prefecture—as suffering a kind of commercialization and trivialization that they themselves did not want to experience. They did not want to sell Toshidon key chains and masks; they did not want Toshidon to fall victim to “folklorization,” detached from its place on the island and its moment of New Year's Eve.<sup>35</sup> They point out that Toshidon is not a “festival” (*matsuri*) for visitors to watch; if people really want to see it, one of my interlocutors joked, they should raise their kids on the island. To be sure, several people repeated Professor Shimono's comment about the onslaught of visitors, but they seemed to be taking a wait-and-see attitude. The quiet reluctance to commercialize Toshidon is to a certain extent ideological, but also ultimately practical. As one islander confided to me, “The only people who will come all the way out here to see Toshidon are fanatics—you know, like you.”<sup>36</sup>

## Confidence

Noriko Aikawa, former director of the ICH Section of UNESCO, concludes a chronology of the development of the 2003 Convention by noting that “respect” is a critical aspect of UNESCO's attitude toward

heritage and that this respect “inculcates in the mind of artists and practitioners a ‘sense of pride’” (Aikawa 2004, 146). This sense of pride has long been part of the rhetoric and reality of UNESCO instruments—whether World Heritage Sites, Masterpieces, or elements on the Representative List—and it is not surprising that islanders might express pride about Toshidon’s selection (see Nas 2002, 143; Noyes 2006, 38). When I mentioned this to my friend Ozaki, however, he immediately said he would *not* characterize his own feelings as pride (*hokori*). Rather, he felt—and he struggled to find the right word—a sense of confidence (*jishin*). To a certain extent, the distinction here is a linguistic one: implicit in the conception of *hokori* is an image of boastfulness within a comparative context—“ours is better than theirs.” The word *jishin*, on the other hand, implies a quiet, positive faith or belief in the self (indeed, *self-belief* might be a literal translation) that exists regardless of comparison with others and does not need to be (or should not be) flaunted. Such confidence provides the self (and community) with agency and infuses value into what one chooses to do; in this way, *jishin* inspires a desire for continuity and simultaneously imbues every act, each new performance of tradition (or ICH), with vitality and meaning in the present tense. In the case of Toshidon, outside recognition by a transnational institution gave Ozaki a sense of confidence because it posited a seemingly objective value in something he had always subjectively, personally, valued. The complexity of this emotion is difficult to articulate because, I think, it is at the heart of the issue—part of the intangibility, the *feeling*, of heritage.

### Conclusion: For Now

With the creation of the ICHC Representative List, we are at a critical juncture in the international bureaucratization of local practices and expressive cultures. Questions of authenticity, community, ownership, and safeguarding continue to inform discussions at both institutional and academic levels. One way folklorists can contribute to fresh thinking on these issues is by observing the local effects of global policy and by documenting on-the-ground practices as they change—or resist change. I have attempted to do this here. While my conclusions are anything but conclusive, I hope they add another perspective to the mix. Ultimately, I argue that UNESCO recognition can only be

understood within its local context, on the island, as one more layer in an existing complex of assumptions about what such designations mean. For the islanders, the UNESCO recognition represents a continuation rather than a beginning. Regardless of the intentions or actual wording of the 2003 Convention, the islanders' reactions emerge from lingering concerns about previous iterations of ICH on the domestic level, and from their own inextricable engagement with local political issues.

But what broader knowledge can be abstracted from the specifics of a single example? How can experiences on one small island be incorporated into better policy-making on the global level? By carefully observing the way things play out—how a “normative instrument” (Aikawa 2004) such as the ICHC takes on specific associations and inflections in the bounded micro-level space of a single island community in Japan—we can work toward something akin to Dorothy Noyes's notion of “humble theory”: “the middle ground between lived experience and putative transcendent laws” (2008, 37). Toshidon, of course, is just one case: the ritual is a small affair played out among people living in the relative comfort of a technologically advanced nation. Indeed, any Japanese example will be imprinted with the long domestic history of Japanese cultural properties law. But Toshidon's exceptionality among the seventy-six first elements on the List only proves the rule—that all examples are exceptional and the effect of global policy is always contingent on local circumstances. Paradoxically, in abstract and universal terms all we can say about the ICHC (and similar UNESCO instruments) is that its meaning is contingent on the concrete and the particular. This may be an obvious point, but it is worth remembering as we continue to explore the Convention's effects in the years to come.

It is impossible to know how things will unfold on Shimo-Koshikijima itself, but judging from this initial year we can discern several related effects of the UNESCO designation. The recognition of an outside authority—particularly one with a global scope—gives the islanders renewed “confidence” in Toshidon. Along with this confidence, however, is defensiveness—determination not to let the fact of the recognition interfere with the performance of Toshidon and with the changes that occur within any tradition as it adapts to the circumstances, desires, and needs of the moment. Even if UNESCO does nothing official, and national and regional governments promulgate no formal

directives, the islanders feel the designation threatens Toshidon's flexibility and discursiveness. By recognizing this danger and working vigorously against it, they use the designation to stimulate ongoing discussion about the meaning and practice of tradition. Indeed, if tradition is both process as well as product (Oring 2010), then the *discussion* of UNESCO and Toshidon becomes part of the (process of) tradition itself.

Of course, folklorists, anthropologists, and other cultural analysts have long accepted the fact that tradition is a living, discursive process. For most residents of Shimo-Koshikijima, I would argue, such a characterization is also a given. Toshidon is alive because the islanders themselves are alive; it changes because they themselves change. Certainly the long history of Toshidon, its presumed continuity with the past, is important and often cited (older residents, for example, readily criticize today's Toshidon for not being as "scary" as in their day), but most islanders seem to resist any teleological understanding of the practice. They insist that Toshidon is a pragmatic, ad hoc undertaking not confined by past standards or locked into unbreakable patterns. It is makeshift, a *bricolage* application of ingenuity and skills in order to fulfill a meaningful and relevant function using whatever resources happen to be at hand.

To be sure, these resources (material and human) include individual and communal memories and past experiences that provide a template, a sense of continuity, and a resonant symbolic grammar. But tradition is an enactment of *creative continuity*: as islanders stressed to me again and again, Toshidon's practitioners must respond to the here-and-now. The performance of Toshidon is tactical, in the sense that, as Michel de Certeau puts it, a tactic "must constantly manipulate events in order to turn them into 'opportunities'" (1984, xix). This is exactly, of course, what the Toshidon performers and the children do during the ritual itself. More importantly, such a characterization also allows us to see the broader tradition of Toshidon as a dynamic and opportunistic exchange, an improvisational framework with a different set of participants and slightly different objectives from year to year. It seems to me that this is how many of the islanders think of it, and the way it has always (or so they claim) been practiced. The recent UNESCO recognition itself becomes one of de Certeau's "events" to be turned into opportunity: the real possibility that the designation will lead to fossilization forces the islanders to assert the mutability

of Toshidon and work all the harder to make flexibility—the willingness to break with “tradition”—part of the tradition itself.

Ultimately, the Representative List decontextualizes Toshidon, lifting it from the complex social and political relations of the island, transforming it into a cultural artifact that can be neatly juxtaposed with diverse traditions from communities throughout the world (Hafstein 2009, 105). On the island, the List itself is less important than the fact that Toshidon is on the List. The residents of Shimo-Koshikijima are quite aware that they live in a rural and out-of-the-way place, and they know it would be natural if what they did on the island went unnoticed by the rest of Japan, to say nothing of the rest of the world. So to be recognized by a global institution, whether it brings any material consequences or not, carries with it powerful and complex feelings. When news of the UNESCO recognition was first announced in October 2009, one resident told the newspaper, “It is wonderful that the world knows about this event on an isolated island in the corner of Japan” (*Minami Nippon shinbun* 2009b). And this fact, the knowledge that people far away can identify their Toshidon as a venerable item in a global inventory, inspires the islanders to reevaluate their own actions. Perhaps then, the most significant local effect of the designation is *defamiliarization*: a chance for the islanders to imagine Toshidon through other eyes—in this case an imagined global set of eyes—and see the tradition they have grown up with as (they assume) others must see it.

What I am expressing here is my own interpretation, but I think it dovetails neatly with Ozaki’s language of “confidence.” By imagining the distant perspective of UNESCO, Ozaki can see his own island and its traditions in a different light—and it is a flattering light, inspiring him to have confidence in their significance and confidence in his own role in carrying them out. In this way, the designation promotes fresh self-consciousness and continued discourse not only about the meaning of Toshidon but also about the role of all tradition on the island, about the political divisions among neighborhoods, about depopulation, and ultimately, about what it means to live on Shimo-Koshikijima. In a sense, UNESCO—this distant body designed to “safeguard” local tradition—ironically replicates the Toshidon figures themselves: always, from on high, observing the islanders and reminding them that whether they like it or not, what they do in this out-of-the-way place has been recorded.

## Coda: Tradition, Fossilization, Dinosaur Bones

In 2009, the year of the UNESCO designation, another momentous event occurred on Shimo-Koshikijima. This did not happen in Teuchi (where Fumoto and Motomachi are located), but rather in the separate neighborhood of Kashima (population 532), situated at the very northern tip of the island. On June 26, 2009, it was announced that some fossils found in Kashima had been identified as a tooth and bone of a carnivorous dinosaur from the Cretaceous period.<sup>37</sup> This was the first-ever discovery of dinosaur fossils in Kagoshima Prefecture, and from July 26 through August 23 the finds were proudly displayed in Satsuma-Sendai City (the municipal center of the region) on the mainland. The fossils were not, however, publicly displayed on the island. In fact, although everybody in Kashima knows where the bones were discovered—a singularly unremarkable location—nothing marks the site. A friend who works in the community explained that this secrecy is because residents are concerned that dinosaur fanatics from around the country will come in search of more bones and defile the environment.

The discovery of fossils in Kashima is a big deal on the island, invoked as a source of pride, for example, at the Coming-of-Age Ceremony in January—indeed, in the very same breath as the UNESCO recognition of Toshidon. But it seems that the residents of Kashima are reluctant to cash in on the symbolic capital of the fossils if it means their community will be overrun by fossil hunters who, just like some tourists, may not respect the land and the people living there. To the residents of Kashima, the discovery is a source of confidence. The knowledge that this tangible piece of natural heritage was found right beneath their feet is more important than actually capitalizing on it, or even for that matter, physically keeping it there—the fossils have been removed to Kumamoto City for research.

To be sure, dinosaur fossils are a far cry from living cultural traditions. Not only are they tangible, but they are also so quintessentially representative of the dead and unchangeable that the words *fossil* and *dinosaur* are, of course, common metaphors for the outdated, inflexible, and irrelevant—exactly those traits so energetically resisted by traditions such as Toshidon. With that ironic caveat, however, the reaction of the residents of Kashima provides insight into the UNESCO designation of Toshidon. I generalize here, and perhaps I am unduly sanguine, but

most people I spoke with seemed to consider Toshidon's inscription on the Representative List to be less of a commercial opportunity and more of, as it were, an intangible benefit. Having Toshidon is akin to knowing there are dinosaur bones buried in the land—it is a hidden treasure that makes the place special. The islanders are pleased that people from all over Japan, and all over the world, will hear about Toshidon; yet they would also be pleased if nobody ever came to see it. Certainly such attitudes toward intangible (and tangible) cultural heritage are not unique to Shimo-Koshikijima. To paraphrase Noyes (2006, 50), the islanders, like people in analogous situations elsewhere, want to have their folklore and eat it too. They want to continue as is, with the added knowledge—the added *confidence*—that what they do in this place is known by people who have never visited, and who probably, hopefully, never will.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have welcomed me as a frequent visitor to Shimo-Koshikijima since 1999. Over the years, through formal interviews and countless informal discussions, many people have shared with me their thoughts on Toshidon. There is no room to thank all of them by name here, but the following islanders have particularly informed my understanding of the ritual and its history: Hamamichi Tokimori, Harasaki Iwao, Hashiguchi Izumi, Hashiguchi Yoshitami, Hironiwa Mamoru, Shirasaki Fueru, Torii Keijiro, Ueyama Masaru, and the families of Hironiwa Yoshitatsu, Hironiwa Hirokazu, Maruta Toyomichi, Megurida Toshifumi, Ozaki Takakazu, and Shirasaki Hiroki. In addition to those named above, the current article has especially benefited from conversations in 2009 and 2010 with Biwa Shigeru, Eguchi Konohiko, Hikasayama Shinya, Iseri Daishin, Uchi Kunihiro, Harazono Seiken, Hashiguchi Hō, Hashiguchi Saneaki, Kawabata Mika, and Takenaka Kenji. Most of all, my profound gratitude goes to Ozaki Takakazu for his personal friendship, professional enthusiasm, and deep insight into Toshidon and island life. As the present essay itself took shape many other people provided invaluable input, including Ariga Takashi, Ilana Gershon, Hyōki Satoru, Javier León, Susan Lepselter, Marvin Sterling, Suga Yutaka, and most of all, Michiko Suzuki. My sincere appreciation also goes to Moira Smith, Steve Stanzak, and Danille Elise Christensen of the *Journal of Folklore Research* and to two anonymous readers for their perceptive suggestions.

## Notes

1. In Japan, this infiltration is particularly prominent with regard to the “tangible” sites on the World Heritage List, many of which have become popular

tourist destinations. The popularity of such sites is exemplified in Tobu World Square in Ibaraki Prefecture, an outdoor park featuring models of forty-five UNESCO World Heritage Sites built to one-twenty-fifth scale; without ever leaving the country you can, as the Tobu World Square brochure exclaims, take a “trip to visit world cultural heritage” (Tōbu wārudo sukuea, n.d.). For a list of sites, see <http://www.tobuws.co.jp/jp/about/heritagelist.html> (accessed June 10, 2010). As Sataki Yoshihiro points out, only twenty years ago most Japanese had never heard of “world heritage” (*sekai isan*), but now the phrase is known even by elementary school children (Sataki 2009, 4).

2. Although this article focuses primarily on the 2009–10 performance of Toshidon and the discussions surrounding it, my own understanding of the ritual (and life on the island more generally) is grounded in ongoing fieldwork conducted periodically on Shimo-Koshikijima since 1999. In addition to witnessing the Toshidon ritual itself, my research has included extensive individual and group interviews with residents primarily from, but not limited to, the Fumoto and Motomachi neighborhoods in Teuchi. I have also conducted less formal discussions with dozens of other residents and had the opportunity to observe and participate in numerous community events. For the current article, I spoke with a range of islanders, including employees of the Shimo-Koshiki and Kashima village offices, members of the Fumoto and Motomachi Toshidon Preservation Societies (*hozonkai*), fishermen, schoolteachers, housewives, construction workers, a ferry company employee, a karate teacher, the island postmaster, an island representative to the Satsuma-Sendai City council, and a Buddhist priest. Many of these people were directly involved (participants, family, etc.) in Toshidon during 2009–10; others did not participate this year but were very willing to share their thoughts on the subject.

3. “Intangible cultural heritage” has rightly been called a “technical, somewhat awkward term” (Kurin 2004, 67); I use it throughout implicitly in quotation marks, as the bureaucratic and currently most expedient expression for indicating an important but elusive concept. For valuable discussions of UNESCO’s terminology and definitions, see, for example, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2006 and the essays in Smith and Akagawa 2009, most explicitly Aikawa-Faure 2009. The Japanese equivalent of ICH (*mukeyi bunka isan*) is most commonly used in official, bureaucratic circumstances. The vernacular terms invoked on the island are *dentō* (“tradition”) or *denshō* (“transmission” or “tradition”) and sometimes *shūkan* (“custom”) or *shūzoku* (“customs” or “folkways”).

4. There is also a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, but discussions surrounding the Representative List were the most contentious; the latter ultimately represents “a compromise solution reached after intense confrontations between national delegates who wanted to create a merit-based ‘List of Treasures’ or ‘List of Masterpieces’ similar to the World Heritage List, those who would rather have seen an inclusive universal inventory of traditional practices, and those who wanted no list at all” (Hafstein 2009:93).

5. For official Masterpiece criteria, see UNESCO 2000. For more on the development, context, and review process, see Aikawa 2004; Aikawa-Faure 2009; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 2006; Kurin 2004; Nas 2002; Seeger 2009.

6. UNESCO’s use of long vowels and diacritics for Japanese romanized spellings is not always consistent with standardized romanizing protocol, but I have left

these names and subsequent elements as they appear on the UNESCO website to reflect their official inscription in the documentation (UNESCO 2010).

7. The exception to this is Gagaku, the court music of Japan. The other elements added in 2009 are Akiu no Taue Odori; Chakkirako; Daimokutate; Dainichido Bugaku; Hayachine Kagura; Hitachi Furyumono; Koshikijima no Toshidon; Ojiya-chijimi, Echigo-jofu; Oku-noto no Aenokoto; Sekishu-Banshi; Traditional Ainu Dance; and Yamahoko. For the entire Representative List, see UNESCO 2010.

8. Koshikijima is the broader name for the small archipelago of which Shimo-Koshikijima is the southernmost island. The other islands are Naka-Koshikijima and Kami-Koshikijima. “Koshikijima no Toshidon” (literally Toshidon of Koshikijima) as recognized by UNESCO is only performed on Shimo-Koshikijima.

9. As part of this growing valuation of local folkways during the 1970s, folklorists undertook sweeping surveys of communities throughout Japan; this coincided with the development of folklore programs at several major universities. On the local level, folklorists worked with residents to document customs and history and to establish museums (Schnell and Hashimoto 2003, 187–88). By 1984 the national government officially instituted a program of hometown-building (*furusato zukuri*) “as the affective cornerstone of domestic cultural policy” (Robertson 1988, 504). Much has been written on *furusato zukuri* and the political economy of this period; see for example Creighton 1997; Foster 2009; Iguchi 2002; Ivy 1995; Knight 1994; Robertson 1988, 1991; Schnell 1999, 260–79; Yasui 1997.

10. As of February 2011, there were some 265 designated important intangible folk cultural properties. For more details, see “Jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai” 2011. For more on the complex history of intangible cultural properties and preservation law in Japan, see Ōshima 2007. See also Cang 2007; Hashimoto 1998, 2003; Thornbury 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997:55–74. The similarities between Japanese cultural properties law and UNESCO’s understanding of ICH are no coincidence. Japan has long been “one of the leading voices” (Deacon et al. 2004, 1) in intangible cultural heritage issues, and the Japanese domestic system is often credited as the initial inspiration for UNESCO’s ICH conceptions and various programs (Kurin 2004, 67–68). In 1993, Japan also became involved with international ICH initiatives through the UNESCO/Japan Fund-in-Trust (Aikawa 2004, 139; Kawada and Hayashi-Denis 2004). Moreover, the Masterpieces Program and the ICHC were both formalized by UNESCO while the Director-General was Koichiro Matsuura, a Japanese diplomat who selected ICH as a priority for his tenure. For an up-to-date discussion of the ICHC as it becomes “operational” within a Japanese context, see Miyata 2010.

11. I am grateful to the employees of the Shimo-Koshikijima town office (*yakuba*) for sharing this information, and their candid feelings, with me. For the sake of simplicity, I only cite two islanders (Ozaki Takakazu and Hirasaki Iwao) by name in this article, but numerous others spoke with me about their thoughts, experiences, and theories; in some cases I paraphrase their comments and in other cases quote them directly with reference to the original Japanese. In the acknowledgements above I thank by name those with whom I worked most closely in 2009–10 and in previous years. All translations from Japanese, whether oral or written, are my own. Names of children have been changed.

12. The most famous of these so-called “visiting deity” (*raihōjin*) traditions in Japan is the Namahage of Akita Prefecture (see Foster forthcoming); for similar observances within Japan, see Endō 2009, 173–274; Ine 2005, 101–62; Oga no namahage hozon denshō sokushin iinkai 1997, 33–81; Taira 2008; Yamamoto 1978, 37–45, 136–9. For comparable masked performances elsewhere, see Bendix 1985; Buckley et al. 2007; Cashman 2000; Endō 1990; Glassie 1975; Gunnell 2007; Halpert and Story 1969; Jackson 1997; Suwa and Kawamura 1997; Warner 1998.

13. *Toshidon* is the general term for the ritual as well as the deity-demon figures themselves; I use it throughout this essay to refer to both singular and plural forms. The honorific suffix, “sama,” is a sign of respect often used when discussing the figures or addressing them directly. Following the custom of contemporary Japanese academic discourse, however, I refer to both the event and the figures themselves simply as “Toshidon”—my respect is implicit. While Toshidon is fairly well known among folklorists in Japan, with entries in directories of Japanese festivals (e.g., Satō and Yasuda 2008, 433) and also described in more detailed folklore surveys (e.g., Shimono 1978, 79–80), it has never been the subject of a comprehensive ethnographic study. For older documentation and descriptions of Toshidon, see, for example, Bunkazai hogo iinkai 1966, 37–39.

14. The mouths of the Toshidon do not move when they speak. The effect obscures the identity of the speaker and adds eeriness to the performance. It is as if the Toshidon are a unit, like a pack of growling dogs. Occasionally a voice erupts from somewhere outside the house, a reminder that there are even more of these deity-demons waiting ominously in the darkness.

15. The island dialect is somewhat different from that spoken on the mainland of Kagoshima Prefecture (itself known for its distinctive dialect). Currently, many older residents lament the attenuation of dialect use on the island, a situation attributed to a variety of factors, including the influence of television, the Internet, film, music, and other forms of popular culture. The fact that most public schoolteachers assigned to work on the island were born elsewhere in the prefecture also contributes to the lessening of dialectal distinctions.

16. Cakes made of steamed and pounded mochi rice are associated with the coming of the new year in many parts of Japan (Yasumuro 1999). In Shimo-Koshikijima the cake, often called *toshi-mochi*, is particularly large; in the past it was made with a mixture of rice and local sweet potatoes and called *koppa mochi*. One older resident recalled that the joy (*ureshisa*) of receiving this reward, particularly in the past when food was scarce, worked to balance the terror (*kowasa*) of being confronted by the Toshidon.

If the mochi falls when the child travels away from the Toshidon, he or she has to start again. In the case of a very small child who was having trouble keeping the mochi on her back, one of the Toshidon surreptitiously (literally behind her back) kept his hand on it until she had reached her parents.

17. “Happening” (*hapuningū*) is the term one mother used to describe Toshidon. She emphasized that despite the ritualistic behavior of the Toshidon and the family, interactions are unscripted; thus, much depends on the creative give and take between participants.

18. In 2001 this leader, then eighty-five years old, explained to me that in addition to photographs being forbidden, it was also critical that the masks not be

seen during the year; he had even contacted a museum in Kagoshima City to request that they remove a Toshidon mask from display.

19. The photographer in question worked for a newspaper on the mainland (in Kagoshima City) but still had family on the island and had brought his daughter back to experience Toshidon. He limited himself to approximately two pictures per household. Family members are also permitted to take photographs because, as one participant pointed out, it is “their ritual.” For a consideration of photography and intellectual property issues in the context of traditional performance, see Jackson 2010.

20. The Motomachi version is generally considered to be more “fun” (*tanoshii*). Because the Toshidon spend less time in each household and only come to the entranceway, it is a more spectator-friendly performance. This openness is a point of pride for residents of Motomachi. In contrast, some members of the Fumoto community expressed pride in the closed nature of their own performance, claiming that their version is conducted as it was in “the old days” (*mu-kashi*). Before my first visit to the island, I consulted with folklorist Shimono Toshimi, whose comments reflected these sentiments: he suggested that if possible I should observe the Fumoto version because it was the “best” (*ichiban ii*). In the same breath, he also noted that unfortunately photographs were not permitted (pers. comm., December 1999).

21. Harasaki, who made the decision to allow the cameraman to be present, was adamant about him not capturing the Toshidon from the side or back—in case children watched the TV broadcast. Eventually, when the footage aired in early January, there was actually one side-angled shot that revealed a tell-tale human leg. Harasaki lodged a complaint with the cameraman, who apologized profusely, explaining that the error had occurred during the editing process.

22. The administrative structure of the island is complex. Until 2004, the island of Shimo-Koshikijima consisted of two villages (*mura*): Shimo-Koshiki and Kashima. Shimo-Koshiki village itself consisted of seven *shūraku*, what I am calling neighborhoods. Three of these—Fumoto, Motomachi, and Minato—are contiguous and located in the hamlet of Teuchi (population 791). The other neighborhoods are themselves separate hamlets; they are Katanoura (population 170), Seiseinoura (population 203), Aosei (population 235), and Nagahama (population 924). One very small neighborhood, Kawauchikawa, is geographically separate but administratively connected with Seiseinoura. Kashima (population 517), at the very north of the island, was a separate village. However, all this changed in October 2004 when the island, along with the islands of Naka-Koshikijima and Kami-Koshikijima, merged administratively with Sendai City and several other communities on the mainland to form the single city of Satsuma-Sendai. Remnants of the old system remain; despite being physically on the same island, Shimo-Koshiki and Kashima are still separate administrative units (*chō*), but both are governed under the auspices of Satsuma-Sendai City. (All population statistics are from February 2011; see *chobetsu201102* 2011.) The merger has caused a number of important changes on the island, including decreased population, and is still the subject of conflict and discussion. Within this context, the definition of “community” is a particularly vexing issue. For a detailed account of Shimo-Koshikijima history through the early 1970s, see Shimo-Koshiki-son yakuba 1977; for more on the historical

distinctions between neighborhoods, see Fujioka 1964, 84–102; for more recent historical and social circumstances (before the 2004 merger), see Shimo-Koshikison kyōiku iinkai 2001.

23. The crew was very respectful throughout and asked careful questions before the proceedings. They even brought two bottles of *shochū* (sweet potato alcohol) for each neighborhood Preservation Society (*honzonkai*). In Fumoto, they filmed in all four households receiving Toshidon. The DVD production in 2009 parallels the filming of Toshidon in 1977, after it was first designated an “important intangible folk cultural property.” For more on the visual documentation of tradition in Japan, see Hyōki Satoru 2007.

24. Though not relevant to the UNESCO designation per se, it seemed (and my observations were corroborated by participants) that this year’s Toshidon were slightly unsure of themselves, tentative, and perhaps overly gentle. Several of them were quite young and performing for the first time; on a number of occasions, more experienced community members (not in costume) stood in the back and yelled in the voice of a Toshidon, cueing the newer performers and reminding them why the children should be scolded. Through this process the knowledge of Toshidon is transmitted from one generation to another, with the more experienced members of the community providing guidance literally from behind the scenes. It is also worth noting that this year the island dialect was somewhat attenuated; Ozaki explained that this was because dialect is less and less familiar to the younger generations performing as Toshidon.

25. There was some dispute as to how many people actually attended; some suggest there were no more than one hundred attendees, while others claim that including local government officials there were almost two hundred. Either way, the number demonstrates significant interest in the event. On his blog, Eguchi Konohiko, the elected island representative to the Satsuma-Sendai City Council, records his own visit back to the island for the lecture, noting that numerous officials from the mainland—including the Mayor of Satsuma-Sendai City and the Chair of the City Council—boarded the ferry with him. See Eguchi 2009.

26. The banners feature somewhat stylized illustrations of a Toshidon face. While the poster contains photographic images of Toshidon, care has been taken not to show the figures from the side in a way that would reveal they are human.

27. These terms have been productively deconstructed by Dorothy Noyes (2003, 2006). See Noyes 2006 for a particularly relevant critique of “community” as “the magic word around which consensus can take shape in international tensions over the uses of tradition” (31). Within the specific context of the ICHC, see Blake 2009. For an analysis of the “stakeholders” in a different Japanese case, see Cang 2007; for a wide-ranging discussion of cultural ownership, see Brown 2003. See also Yang 1994 and 2004 for insight into the development of cultural properties protection policy in Korea.

28. The film made on the occasion of the 1977 national registration represents the first systematic documentation of Toshidon. To a certain extent, it has become a reference source. For example, several of my interlocutors asserted that before 1977 the Toshidon’s costume was relatively flexible and subject to improvisation—performers wore blankets, old coats, and whatever else was around. However, because the Fumoto Toshidon in the film wear straw and other plant-based

adornments, this is now considered “correct” attire in Fumoto. At the same time, several people also pointed out that the filming, and the associated registration with Bunkachō, inspired people to revitalize Toshidon. Were it not for this attention, they suggest, the tradition might have ceased to exist.

29. The phrase was used by Harasaki Iwao in the opening remarks at the event. The Coming-of-Age Ceremony is an official event held in communities throughout Japan to honor young men and women who will turn twenty (the legal age of majority in Japan) during the coming year. In 2010, twenty young islanders participated in the ceremony held at the community hall in Teuchi.

30. The three islands together are referred to as the Koshiki Archipelago (Koshiki rettō). Despite their physical proximity, visits between islands are infrequent; it is much more common for islanders to visit the Kagoshima mainland where children attend high school (there are no high schools on Shimo-Koshikijima). The name *Koshikijima no Toshidon* was also used for the 1977 Bunkachō designation; according to Harasaki and others, this broader designation was chosen because of its slightly higher name recognition.

31. I want to stress here that this belief in Toshidon’s flexibility was held by the majority of people I spoke with, a group dominated by people from the neighborhoods of Fumoto, Motomachi, and to a certain extent, Minato. But not everybody was in agreement. One man in his early fifties, for example, strongly expressed his opinion that the people currently performing Toshidon have a “light” (*karui*) attitude and should study its history to better understand it. He hoped (but was not optimistic) that research into the “original” form of Toshidon would be one effect of the UNESCO recognition. This attitude corresponds more closely to Tateoka’s “result paradigm,” in which, simply put, behavior is designed to meet certain predetermined objectives regardless of changing circumstances and necessities. For an exploration of Japanese ICH and the “problem of change,” see Ōshima 2008; also Ōshima 2009 for a case study of change in a festival tradition.

32. ICH theorists have recognized the Convention’s limits with regard to “safeguarding” heritage. Kurin, for example, notes that “[p]ractices of the past are discarded when they cease to be functionally useful or symbolically meaningful to a community. UNESCO and Member States need not guarantee through financial and symbolic rewards the survival of those customs and practices, beliefs and traditions that the community wants to discard” (2004, 74).

33. I use *tradition* here with the premise that transmission is intrinsically part of the process of tradition.

34. One way of coping with lack of accommodations can be seen on the island of Akuseki-jima, further south in Kagoshima Prefecture. During a “visiting deity” festival called Boze that takes place in the late summer, tourists sleep on a ferry temporarily docked on the island. Boze differs significantly from Toshidon in that much of the ritual can be watched from outside.

35. The notion of folklorization, often associated with discourses in the anthropology and ethnomusicology of Latin America, is described succinctly by John H. McDowell as “a processing of local traditions for external consumption” (2010, 183). In the context of UNESCO, see Hafstein (2004 and 2009, 106). UNESCO itself is cognizant of this sort of risk; one of its brochures clearly states that with inscription on the List, “there is also a danger of freezing heritage

through a ‘folklorisation’ process or the quest for ‘authenticity’” (UNESCO 2009c, 7).

36. I shared these observations about tourism with folklorist Hyōki Satoru, Senior Researcher in the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage of the National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (in Japan), who is also interested in the effect UNESCO will have on small communities. Hyōki was not at all surprised to hear that the islanders did not anticipate significant increases in tourism. He stressed that the practical considerations of bringing tourists to the island would be overwhelming and, in the end, of limited economic benefit to the community. He also underscored the fact that Toshidon is only a once-a-year event; it is not feasible to build a hotel only for one or two nights of possible profits (pers. comm., March 1, 2010). As an addendum: in the following year (2010), extremely rough weather caused the cancellation of ferries on December 30 and 31; almost no tourists were able to visit the island to observe Toshidon.

37. The fossils were discovered in March 2008 by scholars from Kumamoto University. See *Minami Nippon shinbun* 2009a.

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