

ONE OVER THE SEVEN:
'SAKE' DRINKING IN A JAPANESE POTTERY COMMUNITY

Introduction

Anyone who spends any length of time in Japan soon discovers that drinking is an indispensable social activity. It is almost as if two worlds exist side by side in Japan's cities - one with its department stores and office blocks, peopled by housewives and 'salarymen'; the other with its less permanent buildings in which these same businessmen carouse away the hours of darkness, soothed by the murmured sweet nothings and occasional caresses of attractive hostesses who pour their drinks. There is a world of light and a world of darkness (known as *mizu shōbai*, or the 'water trade'), the Siamese twins of Japanese industrial capitalism. Foreign businessmen recount (not without a trace of nostalgia) tales of how they have been taken to expensive bars by their Japanese hosts and of how it is in the friendly, informal and sexually suggestive atmosphere of these bars that they have been able to conclude many a business deal. If our politicians would only take the Japanese hint, 1984 might yet prove George Orwell (or Zamyatkin) wrong.¹

When I went to do fieldwork for the first time in Sarayama, a community of potters in Kyushu, I soon discovered that people drink more seriously in the country than they do, perhaps, in cities.² As a newcomer to a rural community, I was feted at

¹ For the record, we might note Sir William Harcourt's words in 1872: 'As much of the history of England has been brought about in public ale-houses as in the House of Commons.'

² I would like to thank the Social Science Research Council and the Japan Foundation for funding these two periods of fieldwork in Japan.

first almost every night as the local inhabitants began checking out my weaknesses. Could I hold my liquor? Was I able to sing and dance? Was I really what I pretended to be - an anthropologist - or was I, perhaps, a government spy or local tax inspector in disguise? Above all, was I a good drinking companion?

Before describing these drinking sessions, I wish to make two points by way of introduction, both of them concerning a person's behaviour while 'under the influence'. It has often been suggested that, in Japan, what is said during the course of a drinking session is soon forgiven and forgotten. Drinking acts as an outlet for repressed feelings, seen to be brought on by the way in which the individual is expected to subordinate his own interests to those of the group in Japanese society. It is only while drinking that a junior may forcefully criticize a senior to his (or her) face, and only while drinking that a senior will accept such open criticism. Drinking is seen to break down all social barriers. It is a 'frame'³ for egalitarian relations which nicely counter-balances the hierarchy of everyday life.

In the valley in which I lived and studied for four years between 1977 and 1982, I soon discovered that this was *not* exactly the case. Of course, people occasionally *said* that it did not matter what you told them while you were yourself under the influence of drink, but this was just an ideology designed to pull the wool over the eyes of an unsuspecting anthropologist. In fact, local residents not only remembered what was said during drinking sessions; they stored this information away, to use for their own political ends. Nothing was forgotten, since anything said under the influence of alcohol might, at some time or other, prove useful to people involved in the competitive reality of community life.

This disparity between ideals and reality became more obvious when I considered the way in which people would speak to one another while drinking together. The Japanese in general make a vital distinction between what they call *tatemae* and *honne*, or *honshin*. *Tatemae* refers to the language which is used in public as a matter of 'principle'; *honne* to words that 'come from the heart' and express an individual's innermost, private feelings. It is this distinction which ultimately clarifies the relationship between group and individual in Japanese society, for *tatemae* is the language of out-group, and *honne* that of in-group, communication.

I soon discovered that it was during drinking sessions that my informants shifted from *tatemae* to *honne*, from - to use Bernstein's distinction⁴ - 'public' to 'private' language. There appeared to be no taboos concerning subject-matter and, as the evenings wore on and the *sake* flowed faster, so I found myself

³ See C. Nakane, *Japanese Society*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1970.

⁴ B. Bernstein, *Class, Codes and Control*, New York: Schocken Books 1971.

listening to men talking about subjects which, during daylight hours, they had either refused to discuss or had evaded with an embarrassed laugh. At the same time, I discovered that some of the answers which I had received during the normal course of interviews were directly contradicted by these same informants as we drank together. As a result, I soon found myself paying frequent visits to the lavatory so that I could jot down in my notebook revelations which oncoming alcoholic inebriation threatened to - and sometimes did - erase.⁵

The Pottery Community of Sarayama

Sarayama is a small community (*buraku*) of fourteen households, of which ten make and fire a form of stoneware pottery known as *Ontayaki*, or Onta ware. Situated at the top of a narrow valley in the mountains to the north-west of the town of Hita, in central Kyushu, the community has become famous over the past three decades for a style of pottery which closely accords with the ideals of *mingei*, or folk craft, put forward by a scholar-critic, Yanagi Muneyoshi, from the late 1920s.⁶ Sarayama's potters have been praised in particular because they have steadfastly kept to traditional techniques of production - digging their own clay and glaze materials locally, using kick wheels to throw their functional wares, decorating the finished forms with certain old Korean techniques, and firing their pots in a wood-fired cooperative climbing kiln. In 1975, these techniques were designated an Intangible Cultural Property (*muzei bunkazai*) by the Japanese government's Agency for Cultural Affairs (*Bunkachō*).

Sarayama's fourteen households consist of four name groups (Kurogi, Yanase, Sakamoto and Kobukuro) and are organized along

⁵ It would, perhaps, be tempting providence to declare that the whole of my Ph.D. thesis (and the book which derived from it) were written on the basis of information given under the benign influence of *sake*. I would, however, be attempting to delude all and sundry were I to suggest that I could have begun to write a thesis without participating regularly in the *sake* parties held so frequently in Sarayama. Those interested in the general topic of anthropologists doing fieldwork might like to glance at my forthcoming *A Country Diary: Portrait of a Japanese Valley*, to be published by John Weatherhill, Tokyo, 1986. (Title provisional!)

⁶ Cf. B. Moeran, 'Yanagi Muneyoshi and the Japanese Folk Craft Movement', *Asian Folklore Studies*, Vol.XL no.1 (1981), pp. 87-99; *idem*, 'Japanese Social Organization and the *Mingei* Movement', *Pacific Affairs*, Vol.LIV no.1 (1981), pp. 42-56.

the customary lines of main house/branch house relations. Cross-cutting ties between name groups have been established through marriage, residential and cooperative labour groupings, together with a seniority system of age-grades whereby the oldest men have generally been in charge of community affairs.⁷

Until approximately 1960, there was little demand for Onta ware; the potters were primarily farmers who turned to pottery in their spare time or when the weather was too bad for them to work in the fields. In the 1960s, however, there began what came to be called the 'folk craft boom' (*mingei bumu*). Potters found that, for the first time ever, they could sell whatever they made. This increase in market demand happened to coincide with a Government policy curtailing the production of rice (*gentan seisaku*) and, during the next fifteen years, potting households began one by one to give up farming entirely. By 1979, ten of Sarayama's households were specializing full-time in pottery production, while the other four pursued such occupations as carpentry, plastering, rice farming, the cultivation of oak mushrooms (*shiitake*), running a noodle shop, a *sake* shop and a family inn (*minshuku*).

Occupational specialization has been accompanied by a considerable disparity of incomes between potting and non-potting households. Prior to the folk craft boom there was not that great a difference in the incomes of all households in Sarayama. Because they shared a cooperative kiln, potters fired and marketed approximately the same number of pots and earned more or less the same amount of money from them. Twenty years later, however, potting households were earning on average almost twice as much as non-potting households (Y8 million as opposed to Y4 million). This disparity was accompanied by an ever-widening income gap among potting households, for increased demand led to some potters leaving the cooperative kiln and setting up private kilns which they could fire as and when they pleased (household incomes ranged from Y16 to Y5½ million in 1979).

Every rural Japanese community is ideally organized in such a way that the individual subordinates his or her interests to those of the household to which s/he belongs, and each household its interests to those of the community as a whole. A set of historical incidents has led to the Japanese rural community forming a closed social group whose inhabitants tend to see the outside world as starting a few hundred yards down the road. Sarayama is no exception to this ideal, but the recent development of the Japanese market economy has led to a number of strains in the residents' notion of community solidarity. In particular, we find that the hitherto accepted division between elders and younger men is being challenged, while the emerging economic differentiation between potting and non-potting households has further upset the much valued emphasis placed on harmony. It is

⁷ See B. Moeran, *Lost Innocence: Folk Craft Potters of Onta, Japan*, Berkeley: University of California Press 1984.

when Sarayama's men start drinking that these strains tend to break out into the open. At the same time, it is through drinking that they try to patch up their differences and recreate a feeling of 'togetherness'.

Sake drinking parties

Drinking in Sarayama occurs on any number of pretexts and may in some exceptional circumstances start from as early as 9 o'clock in the morning. A pottery dealer, for example, may visit a potter's workshop after a kiln firing and be invited into the house for 'refreshments' at the conclusion of business. Alternatively, a forester from a nearby hamlet may drop by on his way home from work and invite one of Sarayama's inhabitants down to the local *sake* shop for a few bottles of beer. A potter may have to discuss firing schedules with other potters sharing the cooperative kiln, and they may decide to share a few drinks together at one of the potters' home, in the community noodle shop, or even down in one of the bars of the local town, 17 kilometres away. Here, however, I wish to discuss formal drinking encounters, when either the community as a whole, or the ten households forming the potters' cooperative, gather together to celebrate Sarayama's ceremonial occasions. Some of these ceremonies involve fixed amounts of *sake*: the Mountain God festival (*Yama no kami*), for example, is limited to one *gō* of sweet sake (*amazake*) per household; on New Year's Day, only one *shō* of *sake* is drunk at the villagers' annual greeting. Most ceremonies, however, do not limit the amount of alcohol to be consumed, and it is these which I shall discuss here.

Such ceremonial occasions tend to follow a general pattern. Community gatherings rotate among households and are usually attended by one man (and sometimes one woman) from each household in Sarayama, the time of day being announced over the community's loud-speaker system. Special ceremonies, such as the potters' celebration of *Ebisu-sama* (God of Trade), held only once a year, are initiated by the sound of a conch shell, blown by the 'duty officer' (*sewa motokata*), whose job it is to look after community affairs for the year. At the appointed hour, representatives from each household gather at where the ceremony is to be held. On arriving, each representative takes off his shoes and steps up into the hallway, before making his way to the *nando*, or *kotatsu* room, an informal living room where the household's family gathers to eat, socialize and watch television. There he will be served green tea and be asked to help himself from a tray of candies or bowl of fruit. Idle conversation will ensue, centering mainly on the host's family, with comments on how big the children are growing, how well they are getting on at school, and so on. The emphasis here is on household members, or on events occurring in the outside world. Community affairs as such

are not discussed.⁸

Once everyone is assembled, the host will ask people to move into the main guest room (*zashiki*), where low tables have been laid out in an inverted U-shape. The *zashiki* in fact often comprises two rooms, separated by sliding screens which can be removed when many visitors are present. Tables are lined down each side of these rooms as well as across the top. I say 'down' and 'top' and 'inverted' U-shape for a reason. Behind the lateral row of tables is to be found the *tokonoma*, a slightly-raised 'sacred dais' which is built into every country house. The *tokonoma* is considered to be the most important part of the whole building and so only the most important people are placed with their backs to it along the top row of tables. In the event of casual visiting, a guest will always be placed with his back to the *tokonoma*, while the host will sit opposite him in an inferior position. On community occasions, the eldest household representative present is placed at the centre of the top table, the second eldest is placed to his right, the third to his left, the fourth to the second eldest's right, and so on right down the two lines of tables to the most junior men present. When women participate, they are placed below the men and adopt a similar order of seating by seniority. Younger women, however, seem to be less particular about the seating order and occasionally younger housewives find themselves 'above' somebody who is their senior by a year or so. In general, it can be said that the older a man or woman becomes, the more strictly he or she adheres to seating by age seniority, and that men tend to be stricter about seating order than are women.

Once everyone is settled and kneeling formally in front of his place (each place being marked by a side saucer, chopsticks and empty *sake* cup, together with a small covered lacquer bowl of clear fish soup, a porcelain bowl of boiled vegetables or *nimono* and a side dish of raw fish), the host, who is not included in the age seniority seating order but kneels at the bottom of the room, formally greets and welcomes his guests. The most senior member of those present then replies in a speech which is highly formalized, consisting of a number of set phrases thanking everyone for taking the trouble to gather together at such a busy time, and praising the elements for being so kind as to favour the occasion with good weather (this bit may be dropped when the weather is not so benign, or substituted by comments on how people must be suffering from the cold, snow, rain, wind, or whatever).

⁸ This format of conversational niceties is, of course, not limited to a remote Japanese valley community. I have noticed that English suburban dinner parties tend to go through a similar shift in conversational style as guests proceed from cocktails to food.

Having made these initial comments in reply to the host's greeting, the eldest man proceeds to blur the in/out group distinction hitherto present by informing everyone about why they have gathered together on this particular occasion. The rarer the occasion, the more detailed this information is likely to be and the more the occasion stressed. The host household will then be thanked for providing a place for everyone to gather. Everyone is thanked again for taking the trouble to come, and a toast is proposed. At this point, the women will get up and move away from their places at the bottom of the room to fill everyone's *sake* cup from the bottles of heated alcohol that stand already on the tables. The speaker raises his voice: '*Kanpai!*' (Glasses dry!) - or, on less formal occasions, '*itadakimasu*' ('for what we humbly receive'). The cry is taken up by all present as they, too, raise their cups and drink. For a few seconds there is silence as everyone drinks together. The contents of each cup are downed. There is a sudden exhalation of breath as people express their satisfaction with the *sake*.

This marks the end of the initial stage of the ceremonial gathering, and participants now find themselves slipping into informality as they shift from a kneeling to cross-legged position and refill their cups. They will start sipping soup and eating some of the food spread before them, but not too much, for drinking is the important activity and it is a man's capacity to drink and talk which in the end marks him out from among his fellows. The first cup or two of *sake* is poured out for him by those sitting on either side and he in turn will fill his neighbours' cups, since it is considered impolite to serve oneself. Frequently, the women will remain on the inner side of the inverted U-shape of tables and serve the men with rice wine as they join in the casual conversation. This starts with somewhat formalized exclamations on the weather, food and others' business, before shifting to more informal gossip and a discussion of recent community events. It is at this stage that a man proceeds to exchange cups with his neighbours.

What does an exchange of *sake* cups consist of? When his cup is empty, a man will pick it up and, holding it by the foot rim balanced between the tips of his fingers, he will present it to someone sitting nearby. As he presents the cup, he will call the other's name and raise the hand with which he is holding the cup very slightly once or twice, in order to attract the other's attention. This gesture is at the same time a sign of humility from a man offering a gift. The receiver will take the cup - usually with an exclamation of slightly feigned surprise - bow his head slightly, again raise the cup in his hand in a gesture of humble acceptance, and allow the donor to fill it for him from one of the bottles on the table between them. The receiver then downs the *sake* and almost immediately returns the cup with a similar set of formal expressions and gestures.

When a man exchanges cups with his immediate neighbours, the flow of conversation is not immediately affected in any appreciable way. However, the first exchange is a signal for

those concerned to shift from informal gossip to somewhat more intimate conversation about how events, previously touched upon, affect those concerned. When a man has exchanged cups with those sitting immediately next to him, he will proceed to pass cups to others sitting further away. Each time, the same formalities are gone through, but here the purpose of the exchanges is for the donor to take the opportunity to initiate a conversation with someone else (or, possibly, to draw him into a continuing conversation). A man may well have to go through a preliminary round of formal pleasantries but will, with a second exchange of cups with the same person, proceed to informal and more intimate conversation.

Provided that the people with whom he is exchanging cups are within arm's reach, a man will tend to remain seated in his initial position according to age. However, as the gathering gains a certain alcoholic momentum, men will find themselves exchanging cups with others several feet away, since it is considered rude to drink on one's own without exchanging cups and since every man wants to spread and reinforce his web of contacts as widely as possible. In this case, a man may have to pass a cup along the table via his neighbours; or he may prefer to get up and walk along behind where everyone is sitting in order to exchange cups. Sometimes, he may step across the low table in front of him into the middle of the room and proceed to exchange cups with a fellow drinker from the inside of the inverted U-shape (previously occupied only by the women). This point in the cup exchanges can be said to mark the third stage of the ceremonial gathering, and it is usually by this time that the women will have withdrawn to talk, drink and eat among themselves at the bottom of the room.

This third stage usually begins within ten to fifteen minutes after the proposal of the formal toast, and it is from this time that the gathering starts to become a 'serious' drinking session. It is marked by complete informality of speech, with virtually no restrictions on who says what to whom. Whereas the initial formal opening was probably conducted in standard Japanese (or as closely approximating the standard as local elders can manage), both the second and third stages are characterized by use of dialect. Potters and other residents of Sarayama speak in their own language, not in some idiom imposed on them by ephemeral outsiders in Tokyo or wherever.

In the past, it is said (a vague term which can refer to any time between ten and fifty years previously, depending on the speaker's age), a man could exchange *sake* cups only with someone sitting below him. He was strictly prohibited from passing his cup up the table to anyone older than himself. This meant that, to some extent, the shift from the second to third stage of the gathering was determined by the elders, since it was they who made the first move in getting up to exchange cups with others junior to them who were sitting out of arm's reach lower down the tables. It was, of course, possible for a certain amount of lateral movement to occur, since people of very similar ages

found themselves on opposite sides of the room as a result of formal seating arrangements and they were permitted to cross over to exchange cups with one another. Nowadays, however, it is possible for a man to pass his cup 'up' the table to someone his senior, although it would still be slightly presumptuous for a man of - say - thirty to exchange cups with his neighbours and then step across the table, walk up to the top of the room and present his *sake* cup to one of the elders at the top table. He would be expected first to present cups to at least one or two of the older men sitting between him and those at the top. Once the third stage has begun, however, and has been continuing for five or ten minutes, a young person can suddenly break away from his drinking group and walk straight up to the top of the tables to exchange cups with men there. The breakdown of formality permits this. At the same time, many of the oldest men will have 'come down' to sit in the middle of the room, so that a younger person can join and exchange cups with an elder much more unobtrusively by first presenting his cup to - say - a forty-year-old man and talking with him (although codes of politeness presuppose an elder to be accorded first cup when he is talking in a small group).

I have used the word 'unobtrusively' here for a reason. People do not just exchange cups during these drinking sessions; they talk. And they do not talk just about local gossip and other trivia. As the *sake* flows, they tend to talk about those affairs which are closest to their hearts and which rankle in their minds. Hence, conversation is political in the context of the community, and a man is constantly alert during the course of drinking, weighing up who is talking to whom, putting two and two together from his background knowledge of local affairs, and frequently using the custom of cup exchanges to join a conversation in which he feels that he might well have a vested interest. To a certain extent, those who really wish to make use of the gathering to further their intra-community political interests will do their best to move about unobtrusively and to make their membership of certain drinking groups seem as casual as possible. They will decide what they want to talk about and who the best person would be to talk over the matter. They then proceed to plan a route towards drinking with that person in as 'natural' a manner as possible, so that when they do meet, their conversation will not attract the attention of others. This may prove difficult, especially when both men concerned are moving about the room independently, perhaps with completely different strategies, but during the course of the third stage (which can last for an hour or more) they are bound to get together sometime and the matter in hand will be discussed. There are, after all, only fourteen households in the community and, even when both father and son attend a drinking session, there are rarely more than twenty-five men present at any gathering.

As I mentioned earlier, so far as the formal organization of Sarayama is concerned, it is the elders who officially hold the reins of authority in the community. It is the men over sixty

years of age whose opinions are publicly respected and whose commands are generally obeyed. These men still remain heads of their households, even though they may have sons living and working with them who are in their mid-thirties and in the prime of life so far as their physical strength is concerned. The point of interest about drinking sessions, therefore, is that when the third informal stage is reached, it is not the elders but the middle-aged men who are the most active in the exchange of *sake* cups. The first to get up from their seats and move about the room are almost invariably younger heads of households, aged between forty and sixty. Some men are slower to get up than others, perhaps, but in the end it is the middle-aged group of men who are talking, arguing and consuming the most *sake*. The oldest men remain more or less rooted to the top tables with their temporary visitors seated before them.

In the meantime, potters up to their mid-thirties generally form their own drinking groups at the far end of the room, very often sitting with the women. This means that the centre of the *zashiki* becomes completely empty, so that the third stage in the drinking session is marked by a complete separation of participants into two groups. Those at the bottom of the room keep their conversation light and trivial; they discuss such things as local and professional baseball games, fishing, popular music and their occasional outings to bars in Hita (and appraise the hostesses working there). Those at the top of the room generally discuss community affairs, local valley politics, problems surrounding Sarayama's pottery production and other matters seen to be important for the community as a whole (see figures 1, 2 and 3 on the next page).

By this time the women will have begun clearing some of the unoccupied tables of dishes, and use kitchen work as an excuse to retire from the main room to the back of the house (where they indulge just as earnestly in their own gossip and political manoeuvring). A number of men will be getting very drunk. (The only thing that prevents them from getting drunk sooner is the fact that they are provided with large ashtrays, into which a man will tip out much of the *sake* poured for him when his interlocutor is not looking. Although frowned upon by those who can hold their drink, this 'bad' habit is generally accepted since complete drunkenness is not thought to be conducive to a good party.) There is a tendency at this point for many of the eldest men to retire quietly (frequently by way of the lavatory) to the *kotatsu* room. There they will sit and watch television over a cup of tea, talking once more in restrained voices about the nothing-in-particulars of life in a country valley. One of their peers or juniors may stagger in and make an attempt to drag them back into the main room and then use their refusal as an excuse for himself to stay in the *kotatsu* room and drop out of the drinking. It is generally at this point that the gathering enters its fourth stage.

This stage is marked, then, by the departure of the elders and by the introduction of singing, and sometimes dancing. Sing-

Key	Households	Potting	Non-potting
1-4 = 60+ years		Kaneichi 1, 19	Yamamaru 2, 9
5-7 = 50+ "		Yamani 3, 14	Kaneyo 18
8-11 = 40+ "		Yamasai 15	Maruta 8
12-16 = 30+ "		Irisai 10	Yamamasu 16
17-21 = 20+ "		Kanemaru 7, 21	
		Yamasan 6, 20	
		Irisan 5, 13	
		Yamaichi 11	
		Iriichi 12	
		Yamako 4, 17	

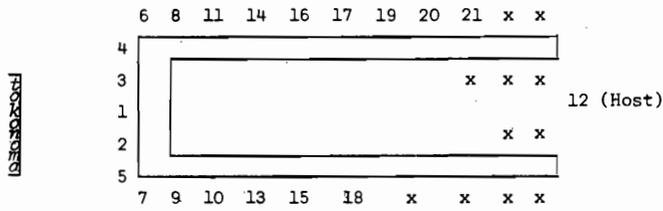


Figure 1: Formal Seating Arrangement (Stage 1)

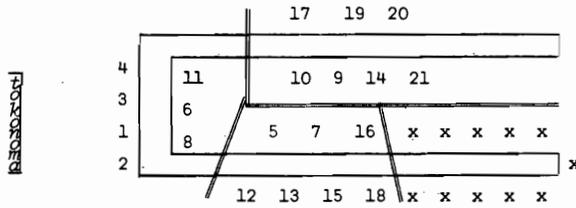


Figure 2: Informal Seating Arrangement (Stage 2)

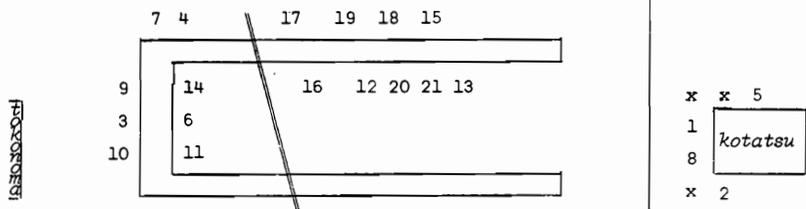


Figure 3: Informal Seating Arrangement (Stage 3)

ing is important for it enables one man to claim the attention of others. This means two things: not only do men break off their conversations in order to listen to one man singing, but a man's ability to attract attention by standing up and singing may well stand him in good stead later on during his own political arguments with others. Singing in itself livens up the party. A successful singer will find himself at the centre of attention, and he may well be able to turn this attention into support in order to help him present, and win, an argument at a later stage when a quarrel breaks out.

In general, people tend to listen to the first songs that are sung, but to ignore later singers and continue their conversations uninterrupted. This means that it is to one's own advantage to initiate the fourth stage of the gathering by being the first to sing. The problem, though, is gauging when people are likely to want to listen to a song and timing one's own exuberation to coincide with the general mood of the gathering, for once a man has drunk too much he tends not to sing well, and if he has not drunk enough he may well be too self-conscious to put over his song effectively. The precise point when a man gambles on singing is a matter of delicate political finesse. Sometimes someone will suddenly decide to start singing, raise his voice in the hope of catching the attention of everyone present and find that in fact people are not yet ready for a song and ignore him entirely. The man who can stand up, claim the attention of one and all in a loud voice, and then keep that attention focused on him right to the end of his song, is also likely to be able to claim their attention when it comes to arguing community affairs. An effective singing voice is in some respects essential to winning an argument, and winning an argument is the prerequisite for a community leader.

Here we should note that it is the men in the middle age-group, and not the elders, who generally successfully initiate the singing. If a younger man starts singing, he is almost certain to be ignored. This is partly, perhaps, because younger men tend to sing popular songs, rather than the more 'classical' and accepted forms of *utai*, *shigin* or *minyō* folk-songs favoured by the older men. Men from the middle age-group have come to be known for their singing prowess: Shige \bar{k} i (11) for his Shimazaki Tōson songs, Moriyuki (9) for his *minyō*, and Toshiyasu (7) for his *utai*. Those who want to get ahead in community life have a tendency to perfect a certain style of singing which is acceptable to, and praised by, other villagers.

As the singing gathers atonal momentum, so do conversations among drinkers become more earnest. Men will by now have downed their quota of seven *gō* of *sake* (the amount considered equivalent to our 8 pints of beer), and their speech will be slurred as they no longer hold back on topics which they hold most dear to their hearts. One potter will accuse another of selling his tea bowls at five times the agreed retail price; another will upbraid a neighbour for maltreating his daughter-in-law and forcing her back to work immediately after a miscarriage; a group of potters

will get at one of their number who has arbitrarily had a woodshed built on a piece of land over which the bulldozer must pass to dig out all the potters' clay. It is at this point that major arguments, quarrels, even fights occur. Almost invariably, it is those in the middle age group (nos. 5 to 11 in the figures) who are most voluble, particularly potters, who are jostling for position as next leader of the cooperative and hence, in time, of the community as a whole. Frequently they fight amongst themselves and it is the junior age groups or those who (like 9) are not potters who act as intermediaries and try to stop the men concerned from coming to blows.⁹

It is about this time that most men make up their minds about whether they are really going to make a night of it, or whether they will slip away. Younger men in particular tend to leave now and soon there is only a handful of men left in the *zashiki*. By common consent, they may all move to the *kotatsu* room where they will continue to drink *sake*, or turn to tea. One or two men who, like the dormouse at Alice's tea party, have fallen asleep, may well be roused and made to join in what is left of the party. This is the fifth and final stage of the drinking session, and can be marked by more anger and quarrelling, or by a general sobering up of all concerned. Sometimes, when everyone is feeling in a particularly good mood, someone will phone for a taxi and the men will go down to Hita for further, more expensive, frolicking in the town's bars.

Conclusion

I have shown here that *sake* drinking parties in the community of Sarayama follow much the same pattern as that described for drinking among the Subanun.¹⁰ Drinking sessions can be divided into five discourse stages, each of which has a separate focus of speech act and separate language type (see figure 4). Among both the Subanun and the residents of Sarayama, drinking talk takes on importance in the context of the assumption of authority. Among the Subanun, verbal skills during drinking encounters

⁹ It should be pointed out here that there are some songs which are consciously sung in order to avoid or stifle quarrels and that these are folk-songs, like the *Tankō bushi* or *Kuroda bushi*, which immediately create a sense of community and harmony. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that it is frequently the man who is good at singing these folk songs (Moriyuki (9)) who acts as mediator in arguments which get out of control.

¹⁰ See C. Frake, 'How to Ask for a Drink in Subanun', *American Anthropologist*, Vol. LXVI no. 6 (1964).

enable a man to act as legislator in disputes and thereby to gain status in the eyes of his fellow men. Among the potters of Sarayama, the ability to talk and to sing well ensure a man a position of power in community affairs. The more mobile a man and the better able he is to talk to all, the more likely he is to assume authority. Drinking is thus a political activity.

The point to be made about the community of Sarayama is that drinking encounters would appear to reflect the growing loss of power of the elders and the increasing influence of the middle-aged group of men in community affairs. What should be stressed here is that, although on *formal* occasions the eldest men assume authority through formal speeches and through such overt marks of deference as being seated at the head of the table at drinking parties, *informally* it is the group of men below them who wield most power. It is those between the ages of forty and sixty who manipulate to their own ends the conversations which occur during drinking sessions, and who argue out vital community matters. I would suggest that it is this middle age-group - in particular two or three articulate men - who covertly influence formal decisions overtly made by the elders. The loss of power of the latter can be seen in the fact that, firstly, the elders no longer determine the overall pattern of a drinking encounter, because they no longer have the prerogative to dictate the course of *sake* cup exchanges; and secondly, the elders cannot sing well and tend to remove themselves somewhat rapidly from major drinking encounters, leaving their immediate juniors to discuss and virtually to decide important community matters. Elders retain their authority in official *ex cathedra* statements, but in practice these comments are influenced by those junior to them.

Of course, it could be argued that the elders are able to leave *sake* parties early precisely because their sons are often present as well. They remain secure in the knowledge that information will be relayed to them from a trustworthy source. The trouble with this argument is that there are several drinking encounters where only *one* member from each household is present and yet the elders still leave early. In such cases, there is no guarantee that they will learn, let alone be able to influence indirectly, what happens in their absence.

Another criticism might take the line that, in fact, it is *usually* the middle-age group which is most influential in any small-scale society, and that the notion that the elders used to be in control of community matters is a typical idealization of a state of affairs which has never in fact existed. This is possible. After all, the elders have never been able to sing well, so did they leave drinking sessions early in the past? I cannot be sure about this, of course, but potters in Sarayama used to stress that in the past the main activity of the elders was drinking (*hikari*) and that they would frequently gather over a few bottles of home-made *sake* and come to decisions about community affairs without bothering to consult the younger household heads. It is claimed that one reason for this was that younger men were too busy farming to be able to get together very

Figure 4: Analysis of Drinking Parties

Encounter Stages	Discourse Stages	Focus of Speech Acts	Language Type
1. Formal Gathering	Formal opening speech & toast	Role expression	Standard
2. Immobile cup exchange	semi-formal introductory talk	Context definition	Dialect
	Local gossip; Intimate level discussion	Topic (household)	Dialect
3. Mobile cup exchange	Intimate level discussion	Topic (community affairs)	Dialect
4. Song drinking	Singing as verbal art;	Stylistic	Dialect/Standard
	Discussions and quarrels	Topic (community affairs)	Dialect
5. Informal separation	Incoherence (?)	Context closure	Dialect

much. It is here, perhaps, that the farmers' conversion to full-time pottery may have affected drinking habits, for the middle age-group of men are now always at home in their workshops, rather than scattered in distant fields up to three kilometres from Sarayama, and can gather at a few minutes' notice. Not only this, but the development of a market for folk craft pottery, together with the emergence of a notion of 'artistic talent' as a result of the external criticism of Onta ware, has enabled younger potters to have more say in the running of the potters' cooperative.¹¹ All in all, therefore, it would seem that the pattern of drinking parties described here reflects fairly the

¹¹ I have discussed, at some length, the way in which younger potters have gained control in the running of community affairs in my monograph (*Lost Innocence, op.cit., pp. 150-181*).

general pattern of the erosion of the power of the elders over the past quarter of a century.

A second point to be made in this connection is that drinking *per se* is not what really counts. By this I mean that it does not matter if a man is too old, or not physically strong enough, to hold his alcohol. Provided that he is prepared to stay with his drinking companions and not go home early, a man can still wield a lot of influence. In other words, drinking in itself is a desirable, but not essential, prerequisite for power. This point is best illustrated by one potter, Shigeki (11), who at one stage during fieldwork was suffering from a bad liver and had been advised by his doctor to stop drinking *sake* for a few months. This he did. But rather than delegate his wife or even son to go along to community *sake* parties, Shigeki himself attended them (complete with a supply of tomato juice). Not only this, but he used to stay until the fifth and final stage of almost every drinking session, and so participated in all the major discussions that took place. He even went so far as to feign a certain drunkenness and exclaim that tomato juice made him 'happy' because he drank it out of used *sake* cups. What I wish to stress is that Shigeki had no need to attend these gatherings in the first place; alternatively, he could have put in an appearance and left early at about the third stage (this is precisely what another man from a non-potting household, Osamu (8), who complained of a bad liver used to do - a fact which illustrates, I think, the way in which potters are more concerned with power than are non-potters). The fact that Shigeki chose to remain to the bitter end shows the importance he attached to the way in which community affairs were discussed during these gatherings. To have missed them would have meant a considerable weakening of his own position of power within the community. Drinking is thus the idiom in which decisions are made, and not necessarily their cause.

Which brings me back to my original point about drinking acting as a licensed outlet for repressed frustration. When insulted on such an occasion a man is supposed to behave the next day as if nothing had happened. All is forgiven and forgotten, it is said. But to suggest this is, in my opinion, to take an extremely naive view of Japanese (or indeed any) society. It is clear from my fieldwork in Sarayama that people were offended by quarrels picked during the course of drinking sessions and that, although they did their best to pretend that they had not been offended, the old adage that what is said under the influence of alcohol is always forgotten was simply not true. I soon learned that people in Sarayama, even people who appeared at the time to be very drunk, remembered very clearly who had said what to whom and why during drinking parties. Not only this, but these discussions and disputes, which were not openly discussed during the course of everyday activities, were weighed and *used* in further arguments. Drinking arguments thus formed a covert discourse which people proceeded to draw on for the advance of their own political interests. There were, in other words, two dis-

courses in action in Sarayama. One was the overt daytime discourse, conducted mainly by the elders and in fairly formal situations. The other was a covert night-time discourse entered into by the middle-aged group of men, mainly under the informal influence of *sake*. It was vital for any man who wished to gain access to authority and power to be aware of the night-time discourse and to make use of it as and when appropriate. In other words, if he was to gain any position of authority in the community, a man was bound to drink, or at least keep company with drinkers.

Much of the discussion of drinking parties in Sarayama ties in with work done on political oratory in traditional societies. The way in which potters use informal occasions such as those described here to hammer out community problems is paralleled, for example, by the Maori in New Zealand, who make use of informal meetings to decide local and inter-tribal matters. In each of the two societies we find that some questions are perennial favourites for debate - the arguments about the production, marketing and aesthetic appraisal of Onta ware in Sarayama, the teaching of the Maori language and preservation of Maori culture in New Zealand *marae* - and also that these questions are never really settled, *because none of the participants wants to settle them*. We find, too, that the distinction between *tatema*e and *honne* is similar to the distinction made by Salmond between 'tight' oratory and 'loose' plain speaking, and to that made by Rosaldo between 'crooked' and 'straight' speech. Indeed, it ties in with the more generalized distinction made by Bloch between 'formalized' and 'everyday' speech.¹²

Bloch's notion that there is a correlation to be made between types of political oratory and types of political system has been shown to be wrong, and it has recently been reformulated by Borgstrom who has suggested that the mode of political address correlates with the type of power relationship pertaining between speaker and audience.¹³ In general, types of speech have been seen to reflect power relations between superior and inferior, and in this respect, perhaps, *tatema*e and *honne* are not so different. But they also encompass a second, frequently perceived distinction between *omote*, the 'open' where surprises should not occur, and *ura*, the 'back' which shrouds the wheeling

¹² See A. Salmond, 'Mana Makes the Man: A Look at Maori Oratory and Politics', in M. Bloch (ed.), *Political Language and Oratory in Traditional Society*, London: Academic Press 1975, pp. 62-3; M. Rosaldo, 'I Have Nothing to Hide: The Language of Ilongot Oratory', *Language in Society*, Vol. II no. 2 (1973); M. Bloch, 'Introduction', in *Political Language and Oratory*, op. cit.

¹³ B.-E. Borgstrom, 'Power Structure and Political Speech', *Man*, Vol. XVII no. 2 (1982).

and dealing which lead up to decision-making.¹⁴ What goes on in the Japanese Diet, for example, is *omote*; the real political bargaining amongst factions is all *ura*. This makes oratory as such unnecessary.¹⁵

The fact that *tatemae* is linked with *omote* also ties in with the Japanese sociological idea that the individual should subordinate his interests to those of the group,¹⁶ for *tatemae* is the expression of group ideology. In this respect, then, it is not simply a form of 'authority' speech, but a means by which an in-group shuts itself off from the outside world. *Tatemae* and *honne* represent both authority and power, public and private, politeness and intimacy, form and content, out-group and in-group. In other words, Japanese data suggest that we should not see relations of authority and power only in terms of a hierarchical structure, but also as a function of social distance (cf. politeness forms and Bernstein's restricted and elaborated codes) which extends *horizontally* between in-groups and out-groups.

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¹⁴ See C. Johnson, 'Omote (Explicit) and Ura (Implicit): Translating Japanese Political Terms', *Journal of Japanese Studies*, Vol. VI no.1 (1980).

¹⁵ For further discussion of spatial metaphors in Japanese, see B. Moeran, 'Inside Out: Spatial Metaphors the Japanese Live By', Unpublished paper given at the first Japan Anthropology Workshop, Nissan Institute, Oxford, April 1984.

¹⁶ Cf. B. Moeran, 'Individual, Group and *Seishin* - Japan's Internal Cultural Debate', *Man*, Vol. XIX no.2 (1984).