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# Rethinking the "Indigeneity" of Hijikata Tatsumi in the 1960s as a Photographic Negative Image of Japanese Dance History

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# 5

# RETHINKING THE "INDIGENEITY" OF HIJIKATA TATSUMI IN THE 1960S AS A PHOTOGRAPHIC NEGATIVE IMAGE OF JAPANESE DANCE HISTORY

*Inata Naomi (translated by Bruce Baird and the author)*

## Introduction: Hijikata Tatsumi and butoh

Hijikata Tatsumi (1928–1986), dancer and choreographer, is one of the founders of butoh, a new dance form created in Japan. He called his dance *ankoku butoh*, which literally means darkness dance, and symbolized it with the aphorism "Butoh is a dead body desperately standing up."

Hijikata was born in 1928 in Akita in northern Japan (Tohoku) and died in 1986 in Tokyo. He first studied modern dance, and then ballet, jazz, and cabaret dancing. From the late 1950s to early 1960s, Hijikata created works one after another that defied the mainstream modern dance and ballet of the Japanese dance world. His works featured themes that were taboo at the time such as homosexuality, cross-dressing, perversion, and crime, and the choreography disregarded existing dance forms and techniques. These activities caught the attention of influential members of the postwar Japanese literati, such as Mishima Yukio, Shibusawa Tatsuhiko, and Tanemura Suehiro, who wrote essays introducing the dances and contextualizing them as avant-garde dance. The discourses surrounding butoh reflected the society of resistance and rebellion in the 1960s, and described a philosophy of existence, and the fundamental crisis and dark side of humanity in the modern age.

However, Hijikata's work changed gradually in the late 1960s, and after 1970, there were profound transformations in the style, motifs, and physicality of the works. Many of the previous critical responses have taken this transformation to stem from Hijikata seeking the basis of *ankoku butoh* in the culture and body created by the poverty and cruel climate that he experienced in the farming village in Akita in northern Japan (Tohoku), where he was born and raised. Specifically, the posture of bow-legs and bent waist, characteristic of bodies deformed by farm work over many years, were adopted in the dance as forms (*kata*), and interpreted by the intelligentsia as essentially Japanese. Tohoku readily provides images of Japanese stereotypical farming villages and rural areas, which seem "premodern" or "indigenous," especially to intellectuals who grew up in Tokyo.

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In addition, the impression of Hijikata's body as tightly connected to the Tohoku climate was created by the photo book *Kamaitachi* published in 1969 by photographer Hosoe Eikoh,[1] and numerous other photos in weekly magazines. Hijikata gave interviews and wrote texts as if to guide reporters to this interpretation and to further it.[2] Led by this discourse and these iconographic images, it became more and more common to interpret butoh as a dance rooted in the Tohoku climate, and as a return to the "pre-modern" "indigenous" body lost in the process of Western modernization.

In this way, even I myself repeatedly employed a simplistic oppositional framework in which the main characteristics of butoh in the 1960s were "anti-modern" and "avant-garde" and the characteristics of the 1970s were "pre-modern" and "indigenous." However, I did not interpret "indigeneity" in an essentialist manner that constricts "indigeneity" into a signifier for the essential oneness of the "Japanese body" (Inata 2004; Inata 2009).[3]

Moreover, conventional discourse almost entirely accorded to Hijikata and butoh a privileged position by isolating butoh from Japanese dance history and for the most part not referring to Hijikata's connections to ballet and modern dance. However, he began dancing by learning modern dance in Akita, and then learned ballet after he came to Tokyo. It was only after acquiring these disciplines and methods and beginning his own performance activities that he challenged them. For that reason, rather than contextualizing butoh in relation to Hijikata's childhood and the avant-garde art of the 1960s, I will attempt to rethink Hijikata from the perspective of the history of Western dance (ballet and modern dance) in Japan. On the other hand, I am still troubled by the ambiguity of the word "indigeneity" that has often been used in regard to butoh. Today, butoh – which is said to have the "indigeneity" of a specific place – has acquired an artistic universality and is now is spoken of highly around the world. The purpose of this chapter is to reconsider the "indigeneity" of butoh in the context of Japanese dance history. Because I want to consider the things Hijikata chose not to use, as well as the things he chose to use – the "indigeneity" that Japanese dance has eliminated – you could say that this will be a depiction of Hijikata as a photographic negative of the history of western dance in Japan.[4]

## What is "indigeneity" (*dozoku*)?

The word *dozoku* (土俗) might be translated into English as "folk," "local," or "local customs." However, the Japanese language already has the word *minzoku* (民俗), which has a nuance closer to "folk," and a homonym *minzoku* (民族), which is close to the English word "ethnic." So I usually translate *dozoku* as "indigenous," even though I feel it does not sufficiently capture the nuance of *dozoku*. *Dozoku* is composed of the Chinese characters "土" (soil, earth) and "俗" (profane, vulgar). According to the dictionary it means "The people of a place [land], the customs of a place, the practices of a place. The folk."[5] However, in general usage, it differs from the "folk."

In the context of *dozoku*, soil or earth indicates not only the material soil or land, but also the specific nature and environment of a region. It is close to climate "風土" (which is composed of the Chinese characters for wind (風) and the same soil (土) as *dozoku*). When the soil/earth is combined with *zoku* (俗-profane/vulgar"), a vague image is born at the level of sensation of something like a smell or scent which one cannot precisely visualize nor put into words but which can certainly be perceived, and which is represented by the clichéd expression, "smell of the soil." Therefore, the term *dozoku* (indigeneity) implies the quotidian, profane, rustic, vulgar culture of a certain region or climate. It is the unrefined, naive, crude, popular, and common. It is the intangible but perceivable smell that cannot be wiped off the body.

Hijikata Tatsumi used the word "smell" to explain the perceivable but extra-logical characteristics arising from life and experience that distinguish a certain group from another.

> A gang of pals, exists at the level of *smell*. The word "world" was nothing but raving to me, who had spent my youth like a cur. Bleeding nature always overflows the allotments of history and sociology, and my gaze never wavered from it. The friends I made in Tokyo were, so to speak, inhabitants of the transparent, mechanical "world," without any ties to bleeding nature and even without *smell*. For some reason, I could not help seeing them as corpses.
>
> *translation modified from Hijikata 1987, 43, author's emphasis*

It was not just Hijikata who described difference using the idea of smell. When the renowned kabuki and traditional performing arts scholar Gunji Masakatsu compared Hijikata with the folk theater of the Flower Festival (*hanamatsuri*), he described the difference using the metaphor "the smell of the soil."

> Even if I do not consciously call it to mind, suddenly the firelight shadow dancing of the Flower Festival, and the dance of Hijikata Tatsumi spring into my vision. A kind of *smell of soil* pervades the atmosphere. In the Flower Festival, the smell of the soil was that of the spirit of the black mountain wet with snow. The smell of soil with Hijikata was smell of dust dancing up from the feet of the provincial body dried in sun.
>
> *Gunji, 1973, 121, author's emphasis*

On the other hand, eminent Japanese modern history scholar Kano Masanao considered the indigeneity (*dozokusei*) of Taisho democracy in the 1920s:

> The "indigenous" spirit – which had been crushed by the modernization policy of "Civilization and Enlightenment," chased underground, sneered at by the Japan that considered itself a major power, and even been obstructed during the era of Taisho democracy by the basic theme of rationalist enlightened thought – this indigenous spirit, smoldering under the surface, spouted up all at once.
>
> *Kano 1973, 25*

This modernization ("rationalist enlightened thought") was not seen only in the Taisho era (1912–1926) that followed the Meiji era (1868–1912) when Japan opened the door to the world after emerging from isolation, but was also seen after the Second World War. After the Taisho Democracy movement, Japan shifted to militarism, was eventually defeated, and then reoriented itself to a policy of economic development. The period when Hijikata was born (1928) and began his butoh activities (the 1960s), was an era in which indigenous spirit gushed forth again. However, such an "indigenous" spirit is not a unitary given simply by virtue of being Japanese.

> What I am calling the "indigenous" spirit for the moment refers to the whole value awareness that was fostered organically (that is, not as a consequence of Western culture) by the people (that is, not the intelligentsia) in their daily lives (that is, not by deduction from principles). It includes a tendency for the people to emphasize their own indigeneity even when they cannot deny the influence of the West.
>
> *Kano 1973, 25–26*



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The "tendency" Kano describes existed in the 1960s, about 100 years after the Meiji Restoration. I suggest that it was "indigeneity" that Hijikata stressed and the audience and general discourse tried to find. The background of accepting butoh, not as "folk" nor "ethnic" but as "indigenous" was a reflection of historical changes in Japan.

## A new dance – modernization for national music

Dance in Japan is roughly divided into Japanese dance (*hōbu*) and Western dance in Japan (*yōbu*). The term "Japanese dance" refers to traditional dances that have been passed down from before the Meiji era, and includes kabuki dance and *jiuta mai*. Western dance includes ballet, modern dance, and flamenco, which were all imported after the Meiji era. The distinction between domestic or Western arts suggests both a global perspective and dualistic thinking. This distinction can be found not only in dance but also in other arts.

The history of Western dance in Japan (*yōbu*) begins in 1911 with the opening of the Imperial Theatre. Beginning in 1912, Italian dance master Vittorio Rosi began teaching and directing ballet and opera at the theater. After five years, the attempt at importing and imitating ballet and opera ended in failure. The first generation of students abandoned ballet, transitioned to modern dance, and became the founders of Japanese modern dance, including Ishii Baku, Ito Michio, and Takata Seiko. The next generation, including Eguchi Takaya and Miya Misako, went to Germany to study with Mary Wigman or at the school of Dalcroze.

On the other hand, within the history of Japanese dance, a movement was born to transmit traditional dance, but at the same time to reform it based on both Western aesthetics and a consciousness of the modern nation-state. That movement began in 1904, when Tsubouchi Shōyō (1859–1935) published *New Music Drama Theory* (*Shin gakugeki ron*) to advocate the creation of a new musical drama modeled on Wagner's *musikdrama* (Tsubouchi 1904). He classified Japan's theater into noh, kabuki, and Japanese theatrical dance (*furigoto-geki*). He coined the term "Japanese theatrical dance" (*furigoto-geki*) to include broad range of dance and dance music. He urged the creation of a "new musical drama" as an "art of a civilized nation" by improving the pre-existing Japanese theatrical forms. So he repudiated the imitation of the theater of the West, while encouraging the preservation of noh and (some elements of) kabuki.

In contrast with noh and kabuki, which were to be retained almost in their entirety, Shōyō identified the "deficiencies" of Japanese theatrical dance (*furigoto-geki*), namely that the plots were "incoherent and illogical" and "based in sensual hedonism," and that because the music was based on songs of the pleasure quarters, there were a great number of "frail, obscene and cowardly" songs, and the lyrics were "unrefined, vulgar, . . . frivolous, and barbaric" (Tsubouchi 56–58). Shōyō was especially dismissive of the various schools of music accompaniment such as Tokiwazu, Kiyomoto, and Nagauta, which he saw as "faddish products of single classes, societies, cities and eras" and therefore, "not appropriate for national nor global tastes" (Tsubouchi 70). In sum, during this era, Shōyō had a global perspective, and in order to create a "New Music Drama" that could stand shoulder to shoulder with the arts of the West, he sought to excise the deficiencies of the theaters specific to Japan and fuse regional variations into one "New Music Drama." This would not be a local product, but must be suited to the nation-state and the global.

Unfortunately, his vision did not come to fruition, but it was connected to a movement within Japanese dance called the "New Dance Movement." For the intellectuals of that era, the only way to modernize Japanese arts so that they could become comparable with Western arts was to improve traditional arts by following the Western arts. Thus, Japanese dance oscillated between trying to preserve and reform traditional Japanese dance while mimicking the past. On the other hand, Western dance in Japan continued imitating the West, before eventually interweaving with

Japanese elements to create "semi-Western style." Moreover, in the process of modernization, both Japanese dance and Western dance eliminated their "deficiencies" (which Shōyō had pointed out): hedonism, irrationality, vulgarity, unsophistication, and locality. The modern dance and ballet that Hijikata learned and eventually resisted should be contextualized in this history of the modernization of Japanese dance.

## Citing folk dance in modern dance

While Japanese dance continued preserving and improving traditional dance, there was a category of traditional dance that did not fall within the category of Japanese dance (*hōbu*). This was "folk dance," which was also called "regional entertainment," and is one of the folk performing arts that has been formed and passed on by people in each region. Folk dance is rooted in people's lives, customs, locality, and faith. It includes dance, music, and theater, often associated with festivals or ceremonies. Over hundreds of years, it has been performed by ordinary non-professionals in each community. Therefore, it is regarded as public entertainment rather than as an art. Since the 1930s, its worth has been gradually recognized because researchers began paying attention to it. In 1954, it was recognized as an official cultural property and given protection through governmental policy. At the same time, almost to the extent that it has been protected by the government, it has been exposed to the danger of decline. In addition, it has come to be regarded as one of the performing arts that can be performed in the theatre, and thus it might be separated from its background in its climate and community.

It was such a period when a representative of Western dance in Japan (*yōbu*) met the folk performing arts. Eguchi Takaya (1900–1977) was one of the kingpins of modern dance at the time, and the teacher of Hijikata's first teacher, Masumura Katsuko. In 1951, Eguchi began a series based on "local dances from each place in Japan" (Eguchi 1989, 439). Eguchi's dance *Japanese Drum* (1951) cited a "deer dance" and became one of his masterpieces. Eguchi encountered the "deer dance," a typical folk performing art, in Iwate Prefecture, which is to the east of Akita prefecture where Hijikata was from. He described the process of incorporating this dance into his own as follows:

> There is no meaning if I dance it just as it is. Also it is impossible to express the peculiar rustic feeling of local dance. I have to create a piece appropriate to perform in a modern theater, accompanied by an orchestra.
>
> *Eguchi 1989, 440*

Because Eguchi was impressed by the dynamics of the movement, the stirring music, and brilliant costumes of the "deer dance," he used it as a basis for his dance but made significant alterations. He did not intend to represent the indigenous "smell of the earth." Instead, he choreographed a new modern dance by altering the movements and composition, adding orchestral accompaniment composed by Ifukube Akira, and downsizing the costume of the "deer dance" so that his dancers could move more freely. The dance critics evaluated this piece as follows:

> Having the composition of modern dance, it captures with modern sense the behavior of a deer like one might see in the movie *Bambi*. But I still hope for a more lively modern expression, and a more deformed shape, based on this sketch.
>
> *Yamawaki Kameo, Asahi Newspaper November 19, 1951, quoted in Eguchi 1989, 431*



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> Eguchi took up the deer dance, a local dance from the northeastern Tohoku region, and injected a modern spirit into it, thereby inaugurating a new phase in creative dance, and showing remarkable talent in collecting the material.
>
> *Kageyasu Masao, Jijishinpo November 21, 1951, quoted in Eguchi 1989, 432*

A record of a different way of looking at the dance came from a local Aomori newspaper. We can get a glimpse of rural pride in how the reviewer rejoices that Eguchi found a universal value in creating a modern dance from an entertainment that has its roots in the local; but the reviewer also warns against falling into nostalgia for the good old days, or regional-centric thought.

> I am exceedingly grateful to this person for showing us that there is a universal value in that which we have done and seen in our everyday lives from time immemorial. . . . It is still the case in the postwar era that there is novelty in the old, and goodness in the regional areas. However, in saying so, there is no room for pointless nostalgia for the good old days, or for exclusionary self-righteous rural centrism. Simple nostalgia is an extravagance of civilization, and exclusionary self-righteousness is an obstacle to a global view.
>
> *author unknown, Tō-o nippō, November 21, 1951*

While the piece was appreciated because it modernized folk dance, Eguchi confessed that it was difficult for the modern dancers in Tokyo to sustain the physicality of folk dance.

> First of all, if I stand straight up with my legs extended and my knees straight, as in normal dance, then my calves become limp. It is powerfully beautiful to squat with one's heels separate and strike the knees deeply. . . . This form is good for standing still and walking, so we use it all the time in dance. But the modern dancer finds it hard to maintain this form. . . . In the beginning, it was painful to maintain this form for a long time without moving, and I wanted to yell out "Save me!"
>
> *Eguchi 1989, 444–442*

The basic form of this dance is similar to "tucking the pelvis" (*koshi o ireru*) in noh and kabuki – which is the polar opposite from the balletic Western form of extending the legs and back straight to the heavens – and is regarded as a typical form of Japanese performing arts. This form is frequently taken to stem from the same source as one of the characteristic "forms" of Hijikata's butoh.[6]

Even the eminent modern dancer Eguchi, who was born in Aomori located in northeastern Japan, found it difficult to maintain what was supposedly a typical "Japanese form." Other modern dancers also realized that their own embodiment differed from that of the folk dancers. However, the audience and the critics appreciated the work as a modern improvement of folk dance. As a result, the Eguchi-Miya Dance Institute was awarded the prestigious Art Recommendation (*geijutsu senshō*) of the Agency for Cultural Affairs that year. The work was reproduced many times, and starting in 1953, became an annual part of the New Year's program of NHK, Japan's public television station (Nikaido 2013, 50).

The success of this work was due to the modernization – removing the folk dance from its locale and climate, and making the dance, music, and costumes more showy. That is to say, removing the indigenous "smell of the soil," developing and refining it (to use Shōyō's words), and turning it into a widely known modern dance.



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At that time, Hijikata moved from Masumura Katsuko's Tokyo dance studio to Andō Mitsuko's studio. Ando was making a name for herself with her work with jazz music. Shortly after, he became a member of Ando's troupe, and danced in modern, jazz, and ballet works for TV programs. Around 1958, he left Ando's studio and moved to the modern dance studio run by Yoneyama Mamako (1935–) and Imai Shigeyuki. Yoneyama was a disciple of Eguchi, so Hijikata had the opportunity to visit Eguchi's studio, get acquainted with Eguchi's disciples, and perform in their pieces. Hijikata might have seen *Japanese Drum* in rehearsal there, and gotten a feeling for one way of appropriating folk dance.

In December 1958 Hijikata appeared in and choreographed a scene for Yoneyama and Imai's dance *Hanchikik*, which was an epic poem telling the story of the Ainu myth of the Sparrow God. The Ainu are an indigenous people of the northernmost part of Japan. From the early modern era, they were subject to Edo *bakufu* and Tokyo governmental control and forced assimilation policies, and were in the process of losing their culture, language, and customs. Yoneyama, Imai, and Hijikata repeatedly visited the home of the Aini authority Kindaichi Kyosuke and collected materials and listened to him speak about the Ainu. The dance of the minority Ainu was not even included in the classification system of the time (with its two categories of Japanese dance and Western dance), but it was a chance for Hijikata to encounter an indigenous dance.

## Ethnic dance and socialist realism in ballet

Ballet, another pillar of Western dance, became popular beginning in 1946 when the first Japanese *Swan Lake* was performed. Many individual ballet studios were established bearing the name of ballerinas, and aimed to perform typical classical ballet pieces created in the 19th century, along with original etudes set to classical music. In the 1950s some ballet companies created original pieces based on Japanese traditional stories, folktales, and music. A few companies created pieces with contemporary themes.[7]

On the other hand, the Matsuyama Mikiko Ballet (now Matsuyama Ballet), created many "ethnic ballets." Its masterpiece *The White Haired Girl* (1955) is based on the eponymous Chinese propaganda film. The piece represented the hero as a typical poor peasant in China, and the choreography cited Chinese ethnic dance, thus it follows Stalin's thesis of socialist realist arts as "nationalist form, socialist content." The next year the librettist and co-choreographer Ishida Taneo went to the Soviet Union for short-term ballet study. After he came back to the company, he choreographed several classical ballets influenced by the Stanislavsky method and ethnic ballet based on socialist realist themes. In fact, when he choreographed his first piece *The Tale of Ukinuno* in 1956, he cited the folk dance from his hometown in Shimane Prefecture, instead of other more widely known forms of Japanese ethnic dance. The dance became the impetus for him to study folk dances from various places in Japan (and especially from Shimane). For example, *Gion Festival* (1963) portrayed the village elders of Kyoto who revived the Gion Festival in the Muromachi period. Ishida choreographed by citing folk dances and customs that he had seen in his childhood in his hometown.

> I was born in the remote countryside of Shimane Prefecture, and this rural upbringing was unexpectedly helpful in choreographing *Gion Festival.* When I listen to the music of the *Gion Festival* I am reminded of the rural scenes of my childhood. In the summer, at the festival for the *jizo* (guardian deity of children) on the embankment behind of my house, we chanted a prayer to Buddha while passing a large rosary in a circle. I adapted this for *The Dance of Amitabha Group* in the first act. The feature of the dance for the O-Bon Festival of the Dead is shaking one's hips – I adapted this for the *Dance of*

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> *Village Elders*. The stone kicking that we did on a side street rarely used by automobiles became the *Peasant Dance* in the second act. I turned my memory of being mobilized to the countryside in my junior high school days into the *Rice Planting Dance*. And so it went one after another. If I had set out to specifically create a Japanese-style ballet, and looked only at famous Japanese masterpieces of old, I think I could not have made this work. By observing the present more deeply, Japanese ballet will be born, and I think I have to become an even more minute filter of the present.
>
> *Ishida 1967, 149*

Ishida tried to create an original ballet, not by using the famous paintings of the past or the "folk dance" that had already become representative of the country, but by using the "folk dance" and the indigenous customs that were still practiced in various locales. This was neither the vector based in socialist realism of creating "ethnic ballet" by quoting stereotypical "folk dances" nor Tsubouchi Shōyō's vector of developing and refining traditional dance by eliminating unsavory elements. It was an attempt to create a "ballet rooted in Japanese climate" and born out of real life.

Ishida urged caution in the manner of quoting these materials:

> If it is only the movement that is necessary in *Gion Festival*, you can just watch a film. If you do so, the personality of the family lore has been already lost. A tradition is severed at once.
>
> *Ishida 1967, 140*

Ishida refers to the danger of a dance form becoming an empty shell if one extracts only the choreography and cuts it off from the life and climate of the background, and attributes the failure of creative ballet in Japan, to exactly this. For the dance *Gion Festival*, his dance troupe earnestly studied the history and costumes of the Gion festival, and consequently it was a great success. After Ishida left Matsuyama Ballet in 1968, he continued to create "ballet rooted in the Japanese climate," but it was not always easy for him, and few choreographers followed his lead. This tendency became all the more remarkable beginning in the 1970s when instead of creating original Japanese ballet, overseas ballets were popular and garnered critical attention. In other words, the movement in the 1950s and 1960s to create a ballet that incorporated Japanese culture and climate foundered and Japanese ballet again shifted to importing and imitating ballet from the West.

## "Indigeneity" and pop art in *Rose-colored Dance* (1965)

Even though Socialist realism did not take deep root in Japan, it still exerted an influence on some artists in the worlds of dance and the arts. One such artist was Nakamura Hiroshi (1932–), who later become one of Hijikata's collaborators. His interest in folk and indigenous elements stemmed from the principles of socialist realism. In the 1950s, he was active in socialist realist "reportage painting," which was considered another form of avant-garde art separate from "anti-art," Neo-Dada-ism, and Surrealism. Nakamura followed the principles of socialist realism to depict typical folk, landscapes, and workers, and this led him to an encounter with the pop-style elements of Japan, such as Ukiyo-e. Accordingly, he thought that pop art was a symbol of American indigeneity.[8] He said,

> Abstract Expressionism came directly to the United States from Europe; and it was very modern. Pop Art was, in a sense, a tremendous reaction against it. It's the indigeneity

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> of Marilyn Monroe that is great, and Warhol too. He is not at all modern, but rather indigenous. The thing about Lichtenstein, he was an American cartoonist. I do not know whether Pop Art can be called folk, but it was the result of awakening to the promotion of locality – "this is our country." I think there is nothing more uncouth than the United States.
>
> *Inata 2008, 204*

For Japanese people generally, the motifs of Andy Warhol such as Coca-Cola bottles, Campbell's soup cans, and Marilyn Monroe, were regarded as a symbol of prosperity, progress, and the consumer society of the United States.[9] However, Nakamura saw pop art in the context of art history, as a symbol of American "indigeneity," rather than considering them in relation to mass media images of reproducible products.

In addition, the graphic designer and Hijikata collaborator Tanaka Ikko (1930–2002), drew a connection between pop art and the stage arts in *Rose-colored Dance*. He said,

> American Pop Art motifs are things like the Coca-Cola bottle and Campbell's soup cans, but if you think about what would be the corresponding motifs in Japan, it could be the motifs of Yokoo Tadanori and Hijikata. They might be Japanese Pop. The Victor dog on stage might be pop in a Japanese style.
>
> *Inata 2008, 203*

Hijikata first collaborated with Nakamura in 1968, so he could not have gotten any ideas from Nakamura during the creation of *Rose-colored Dance* in 1965. Nevertheless, it is possible that Hijikata could sniff the smell of "indigeneity" in American pop art and considered how to achieve that indigeneity in Japan.

Hijikata first requested that Tanaka design the poster for *Rose-colored Dance*, but Tanaka, a renowned modernist graphic designer, could not do it. So, Tanaka asked Yokoo Tadanori (1936–), because Tanaka saw in Yokoo a style that matched with Hijikata's of "not refining, nor aiming to be sophisticated" (Ibid.). When Yokoo met Hijikata at the first time, he thought he understood Hijikata at once, because he saw Kimchō Mosquito Coils in the house. Yokoo captured the smell of "indigeneity" from Hijikata and his every day surroundings. Yokoo felt a sense of stagnation when he was oriented to the polished modern design of Tanaka, but he was inspired by Hijikata. Consequently, it was as if a dam had broken, and indigeneity overflowed in the poster for *Rose-colored Dance*. The Akebono brand canned salmon, which is regarded as a parody of Andy Warhol's Campbell soup can, represents Japanese pop "indigeneity." Designs of the rising sun of the naval flag, waves, clouds, and cherry blossoms portray retro Japanese pop of the Taisho era.

However, the idea underlying the design was Hijikata's. The idea was to incorporate the oil painting *Study of Pink and Green* drawn by Nakanishi Natsuyuki (1935–2016) on the basis of the Fontainebleau school painting, *Gabrielle d'Estrées and One of Her Sisters*. When Hijikata saw the picture, he spoke to Yokoo about the image of the Taisho era and the Taisho Emperor. Accordingly, Yokoo was inspired by those things. Hijikata also dictated the use other elements, for example, writing the title horizontally from the right to the left. This writing style inspires in Japanese people the retro image of the Taisho and Meiji eras. This poster has come to represent not only butoh and Yokoo in the 1960s, but also it has become an iconographic image that symbolizes the entire culture of the 1960s. And it was Hijikata who instigated this pop "indigeneity," and supplied many of the concrete suggestions for the elements to incorporate.

Hijikata asked Kano Mitsuo (1933–) to design a "lick-able program" made of sugar candy, and looked for a confectionary shop that could make it. Hijikata likened it to the "celebratory *kinkatō*

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confection" (gold flowered sugar) used as a present ("makimono") for the audience. *Makimono* are a custom in the societies of traditional entertainers and geisha. The confections were made in the shape of lips, a hand, and a penis, then put into a cedar wooden box, and distributed to the audience at the venue. It was an exquisite combination of the rawness of severed body parts, fetishism, eroticism, the sweetness of sugar, the texture of melting and disappearing in the mouth, primary colors, and popular traditional customs.

In the performance itself, a Victor dog splashed with pink paint was placed upstage, and ten men were arranged in a line facing away from the audience as if they were taking a piss. Nakanishi drew a realistic vagina in full color on Tamano Koichi's back, and Tamano undulated his back during the piece. In addition, there were men at the side of audience who were going to be shorn by a barber during the performance. In this way, the stage art of *Rose-colored Dance* was avant-garde and at the same time pop, vulgar, bright, sweet, erotic, humorous, that is to say "indigenous." Today we only know the work from black and white photographs and film. However, the stage was full of colors such as pink, green, and red. It follows that we can think of *Rose-colored Dance* as being full of Japanese indigenous pop art layered in several levels with quotations of western avant-garde motifs such as heretical eroticism, violence, ritual, Happenings, and also the smell of Japanese vulgar customs.

As a keyword or symbol of the early period of Hijikata starting with *Forbidden Colors* (1959), Ichikawa Miyabi proposed "Western eroticism," (Ichikawa 1983, 161) and Shibusawa Tatsuhiko identified the "aim for an eroticism of ritualistic sacrifice" and the "method of expressing sculpturally, that is through the pure bodily language, metaphysical concepts" (Shibusawa 1983, 227–228). In the middle era starting with *Masseur* (1963), Ichikawa saw Hijikata as trying to "recover the gestures and passions that lurk in every corner of a Japanese house" (Ichikawa 1983, 61), and Shibusawa suggested that Hijikata was "influenced by American happenings" (Shibusawa 1983, 227–228). *Rose-colored Dance* was the moment when the characteristics of the early period and the middle period (as identified by these two fellow travelers) erupted in the indiscriminate shapeless "smell" of pop "indigeneity."

The symbol or key concept often theorized as a feature of the "indigeneity" of butoh in the late 1970s was the stereotypical image of the dark, harsh conditions of the rural northeast district. However, as described above, "indigeneity" already abounded in *Rose-colored Dance*, but it was a bright, sweet, vulgar, erotic, and ridiculous "indigeneity."[10]

## The "indigeneity" of Hijikata Tatsumi's dance

In order to further understand the pop "indigeneity" that emerged in the 1960s, and the "indigeneity" Hijikata himself brought about, we can rethink it from viewpoint of his collaborators. Artists perceived his "indigeneity" from his appearance and daily life, and were shocked by him. For example, Akasegawa Genpei (1937–2014) was deeply impressed when he saw Hijikata for the first time in a photograph in a weekly magazine. He went to watch Hijikata's performance, and subsequently collaborated in *Rose-colored Dance*. He said,

> At the time, everyone was infatuated with the West. We saw Duchamp's toilet bowl and Man Ray, and thought they were "so cool." Then Hijikata appeared. He was like a blast of "indigeneity." His name in Chinese characters can be read as both "Hijikata" and "dokata" [construction worker]. . . . Hijikata himself contained both something Western and something different, something strange that was Asian or Japanese. It was my first time encountering such a thing. In my world, if you saw some so-called Japanese thing, for example a Japanese painting or calligraphy, you'd wonder what was the point. But,

> Hijikata was the other Japan, but also not the West. If I were forced to find something like him, it would kind of mythological, like Yamato Takeru, or rice balls, clenched fists, miso soup, that sort of thing. Today it might be homeless people, outlaws from the world, people who live in the mountains, those who smell like they are trailed by something from the mountains of Japanese Shinto, or mountain worship. It's dirty, but connected to the world of the gods. Previously, I saw a tattered rain-soaked flag when I went to Bhutan, that kind of feeling. It might because of the talent of the photographer Hosoe Eikō, but Hijikata had both "indigeneity" and "style."
>
> *Inata 2008, 124*

Akasegawa saw Hijikata's "indigeneity" as something Asian or Japanese that relativized Western modern art. It was a fusion of daily life and awe that was different from sophisticated Japanese traditional arts.

The aforementioned Tanaka Ikko (who was renowned for his constructivist modern design) recalled how surprised and puzzled he was when he encountered Hijikata:

> While Tokyo was rapidly modernizing, I looked only to the United States and Europe. Whatever was new came from the West, from New York. On the other hand, I was born in Nara Prefecture. Nara is the boonies compared to Kyoto, but civic culture has been refined for a long period of time, for example the placement of chopsticks and the arrangement of dishes, and so on. There is detailed sophistication in every corner. Northeastern rural culture, which is different from Kyoto-like refined culture and Kansai-based secular culture, came to Tokyo and blossomed in the '60s. Because it suddenly appeared in Shinjuku in Tokyo, we were surprised. When we encountered the culture of Hijikata Tatsumi, Terayama Shuji, and Kara Juro, we thought "where have we been looking all this time?" Consequently, we recognized ourselves as Japanese again. Hijikata was someone who give me that feeling the most. I had a feeling that we were defeated by what we had been trying to forget. There is a strange dual structure, in my mind and everyday life. Our secular culture is about, at the most, slapstick comedy; but rural culture is not lazy like that, and but rather there is something sharp about it. I guess it might be a religious issue. I can faintly smell elements such as kagura and Shinto rituals.
>
> *Inata 2008, 197–198*

Probably, the artists who were promoting the avant-garde and modernism at the time, shared the feeling of a "strange dual structure" that Tanaka refers to. Tanaka recognized this "indigeneity"-as-Northeast-rural-culture in Terayama Shuji (1935–1983), born in Aomori, and also in Kara Juro (1940–), born in Tokyo, and saw it as a general trend in the 1960s, but Hijikata was the one who really stood out. And in the same way as Akasegawa, he pointed out the folk religious awe of Hijikata.

Moreover, Hijikata's most intimate collaborator, Nakanishi, described the peculiarity of Hijikata's awe and spirituality.

> At that time, Hijikata was regarded as an extremely charismatic person, so I wondered how I could talk with him. Nowadays it is uncommon, but formerly there were people who believed that an uncontrollable power of nature or the power of God was somewhere above them, pushing them when they tried to do something, such as moving, working, screaming, or crying. Hijikata might be the last person who thought this. We



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> believe the foundation of the human being is at the molecular level, or in its chromosomal mechanism. But Hijikata-san was in contact with something uncontrollable. That might be why he chose to dance that way. He was constantly thinking about what it means to be a human. And the things he talked about provoked me to think about the same thing. There is a side of Hijikata that is very strongly inclined to dismantling things. But, if so, I wonder why he has such a serious side . . .
>
> Returning to the topic of his seriousness, he had an extremely strong personality, and long before groping for a way to create avant-garde dance, he had something like a fear of death. Of course, he considered how to create performance and dance strategically, I also think he was thinking about how to assemble a human being. Otherwise, I can't understand his seriousness.
>
> *Inata 2008, 240*

Nakanishi also recognized that Hijikata was awed by nature, spirituality, and death. Then, Nakanishi thought that such feelings made Hijikata's work change.

> In the 1960s, he considered himself avant-garde, and was regarded as such by people in the world of art. But, I do not think so. He was something after avant-garde has collapsed, having gotten out of control, and must be repaired with something different. He was that person. Considering the panorama of the 1960s, I think it had to come to that. The body was not dispersed; but even if the body were to disappear, there would still be something like breath. If breathing stopped, something like an aura would still appear. But not Chinese qi. The question of how to deal with that issue had sprouted already in the 1960s, I think. Hijikata was aware of question, and was trying to solve it, I guess. At that time, by chance, I depicted illustrations of reaching ecstasy while exchanging breath with someone. . . . At that time, we thought about the *objet*, while likening the body to a part of a machine. On the other hand, he had this side of him in which he temporarily assumed the existence of a sacred space, and then sought to leap there. I have such a feeling about Hijikata.
>
> *Inata 2008, 240–241*

Taking a panoramic perspective of the 1960s Nakanishi saw Hijikata as the one who recognized that the avant-garde had come to a dead end, and sooner than anyone else sought something new. He saw the new direction in Hijikata's seriousness born from spirituality. By combining the view of Nakanishi, Akasegawa, and Tanaka, we can see that Hijikata had not only the hipness of Western avant-garde but also an unconcealable "indigeneity," which was not just rural unsophisticated vulgarity, but also a traditional spirituality which penetrated his everyday life. The "indigeneity" of Hijikata that the artists above attempted to describe was something like a vague unavoidable "smell," rather than being a something which can be clearly presented visually or aurally. But this was not something one tastes nostalgically as with stereotyped forms, but has to be rethought in terms of awe.

## Conclusion

The discourse on Hijikata Tatsumi and his butoh tends to converge on some typical interpretations such a preoccupation with darkness, exploration of the unconscious, and anti-social themes, and considering it as post-atom-bomb spectacle. For the most part, the interpretation of the obvious "indigeneity" in Hijikata's post-1970 dances (as manifest in costumes, stage



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props, and choreographic elements) has centered again on darkness, combined in an essentialist manner with the coldness and poverty of Akita and the Northeast. On the whole, people did not look back at Hijikata's relationship to the world of Japan that he was both a part of and sought to escape.

However, as demonstrated in this chapter, a kind of pop indigeneity is visible in *Rose-colored Dance*. It is likely that Hijikata thought of this popular, sweet, bright, indigenous pop art as a power that could oppose Western modern art and culture that would take the place of surrealism, Neo Dada-ism, and anti-art. At the same time, throughout the 1950s Hijikata likely saw firsthand all of the elements of Western modernization of Japanese dance and Western dance, such as exclusion of various things from these two kinds of dance, the integration of some things into these dances, the quotations of folk dance and folk art, and the various reforms and blends. So, it is likely that he sought to use all the elements excluded from the two spheres of Japanese dance as power to contest the mindless imitation and refinement of the world of Japanese dance.

The transformation in his work in the 1960s can be thought of as having occurred in response to Hijikata coming to understand the various kinds of trial and error experienced in the avant-garde arts and in the world of dance. It is probably not the case that he analyzed this with clarity and sought to consciously elaborate a strategy to do this, but rather that he looked at and considered matters from his position as an artist. And the thing which guided him was the "indigeneity" that he himself could not escape.

Hijikata discarded the bodily discipline of Western dance, and dismantled the rules and beauty of both Western and modernizing Japanese dance, and thus founded butoh. However, his collaborators noticed his smell of "indigeneity," which was a fusion of Japan and the West, with diverse aspects and peculiarities, and not simply the given "traditional folk arts." In the 1960s, both Hijikata and his audience were apt to find "indigeneity" in visible simple forms, or smell it. That intricate smell could be found in *Rose-colored Dance* and in Hijikata himself, as sweetness, brightness, humor, vulgarity, eroticism, cruelty, and pop art.

Writing in an impressionistic form, rather than in an academic manner, Gunji Masakatsu noticed a similar aesthetics in butoh to what Shōyō had pointed out in premodern kabuki.

> Where did the postures that oppose the beauty of dance, such as bowed-legs, bent spines, clenched hands and feet, first originate? . . . In fact, the conditions for accepting the beauty in such postures, lie in the traditional theater of kabuki. Boar necks (ikubi) and hunched backs, as Tsubouchi Shōyō has already explained, are linked to the beauty of cruelty and obscenity and form the basis for the beauty of late Edo kabuki. . . . In addition, Shōyō . . . confirms the existence of a beauty of irrationality and artificiality by recognizing the sadism and masochism and acknowledging the eroticism and violence in late Edo kabuki. And to the extent that such passion is acknowledged, butoh, of course, becomes the confirmation of such.
>
> *Gunji 1985, 88–89*

Gunji wrote this after he watched *Twenty-seven Nights for Four Seasons* in 1972. This kind of discourse, of assuming continuities in physical forms between arts separated by centuries, carries a risk because it easily leads to an essentialist interpretation (Inata 2001). However, the viewpoint of Gunji and Shōyō enables us to rethink the "indigeneity" that existed before Western modernization, and thus that differs from that of contemporary kabuki and artistic dance.

To only see the characteristics of Hijikata's butoh in anti-modern heretical literature and avant-garde arts, or in a return to the premodern indigeneity of northeast Japan is to end up in the cheap and easy intellectual framework of Western modernization. I want to think of Hijikata



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as having experienced the flow of the Japanese dance world in a process of Westernization and modernization; then, jumping out of that world; and, while being sensitive to the trends of the art world and the concerns of his fellow artists, opening up a new path for materials and forms by remaining connected to the indigeneity and popular culture that trailed behind him.

## Notes

1 From autumn 1965 to spring of 1968, Hosoe and Hijikata took photos starting in Tashiro village in Akita Prefecture, and at various places in and near Tokyo including the Tsukuba foothills, Shibamata, Kameari, the Kōganji Temple in Sugamo, and at the Meguro Immovable Wisdom King Temple. The photos were collected into the March 1968 photo exhibition, "An Extravagantly Tragic Comedy: Photo Theater Starring a Japan Butoh Dancer, Genius (Hijikata Tatsumi)." The following year, the photos were released as the photo book *Kamaitachi*. Hosoe Eikō, *Kamaitachi* (Gendaishichōsha, 1969). See the related chapter in this volume by Jonathan Marshall, "Bodies at the Threshold of the Visible: Photographic Butoh."

2 Editor's note: But also see Sara Jansen's argument in this volume about the ways that Hijikata also repudiated this connection in some interviews and articles, "Returns and Repetitions: Hijikata Tatsumi's Choreographic Practice as a Critical Gesture of Temporalization."

3 The turning point of the essentialist interpretation of Butoh was brought about by William Marotti's essay "Butō no mondaisei to honshitsushugi no wana," trans. by Kawamizu Mihoko, *Shiata ātsu* 8 (1997): 88–96, included here as Chapter 11, "The Problematics of Butoh and the Essentialist Trap."

4 This essay is a revision of two of my prior essays Inata (2011, 2016).

5 *Kojien* sb. "Dozoku."

6 Editors' note: For a discussion of "koshi o ireru" (tucking the pelvis), and an argument about Hijikata's supposed connection to this kind of movement, see Takechi Tetsuji and Tomioka Taeko, Chapter 10 in this volume.

7 Traditionally themed ballet included "Asuka Story" (Maki Asami Ballet, 1957), incorporating gagaku and bugaku (imperial court music and dance) and "The Tale of the Bamboo-Cutter" (Matsuo Akemi Ballet, 1962). Contemporary themed ballet included "Hikarigoke" by Youth Ballet Group in 1958, based on the Hikarigoke Incident of 1944, in which shipwrecked sailors resorted to cannibalism to survive.

8 Pop art was received rather negatively in Japan as can be seen from the "pop art debate" between Takashina Shuji and Tono Yoshiaki. Miyagawa Jun also criticized pop art and "anti-art" as "a descent into vulgar everydayness" (Miyagawa 1964).

9 Yanai Yasuhiro dissects the poster design thus: "salmon can (which was a reference to Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup Can Series)" and "images of the west and old and new Japan were fused together" (Yanai 2000, 29). Morishita Takashi writes, "Salmon can: in order to include a Pop Art element, this was an example of something that was a mass produced item in Japan that would correspond to Warhol's Campbell's Soup Can Series" (Morishita 2000, 33).

10 I analyze the choreography of the piece in Inata (2001, 2008).

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