School to Work Transition in Japan: An Ethnographic Study.

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Tokyo, businessmen, market gardeners, and schoolteachers. So what's going on?

The trouble is that most descriptions of the Ainu, whether by the linguist, the eager museum collector, or the JAL advertising staff, fall victim to the anthropologist's grand narrative of 'the dying culture'. In this case it is a chronic misconception for which only the Ainu are forced to pay the price. The alternative view is the local, the particular: Geertz's 'thick description'. Ainu people also watch TV and drive Hondas. An Ainu event in the 1990s includes ballroom dancing to the crackly rendition of 'Begin the Beguine'. Their costumes, the watchful eye sees, display traditional Ainu textile design. Ainu jazz with Yukar adaptation is popular. And what the 'display' of Ainu does not need is the periodicization—the paradoxical and linear attempt to impose order on cultural diversity. Here are the Ainu pre-1890 and here are the Ainu 1900–1945, etc. When all else fails, stick them into 'historical context'. More than by ideology and the gun, people are more effectively enslaved by the narratives of 'history'—composed by others.

Teague's sensitive chapter on the Horniman collection of Ainu materials is the only paper to touch upon some of the critical issues involved, such as, 'the collective statements made among museum staff in the United Kingdom during the last years to the effect that objects are relatively meaningless out of context and that the collection and display of material culture reflects, and some would add, serves the interest of the collectors and exhibitors, that inevitably exhibitions distort cultures and are open to manipulation by powerful interests' (p. 172). In the postmodern critique, much genuine thought is being given to the nature of the museum and the structuring of the enthnographic image. Unless museums and museum visitors are made to reflect on the manner and rationale of museums' function ('reflexivity'), then the museum remains a pathological obsession, a capitalist dream, a celebration of power.

This is an informative book that fails to shed light on the Ainu as a living and contemporary people. Rather, in its babble about 'hunter-gatherers', its inability to link 'history' as a sociopolitical as well as archival concept, and uncritically presented acres of catalogue lists, *European Studies on Ainu Language and Culture* fails to speak to the most important issues facing the Ainu people today.

School to Work Transition in Japan: An Ethnographic Study. By Kaori Okano. Language and Education Library Series, 3. Multilingua Matters, Clevedon, Avon, U.K., 1993. 304 pages. Hardback, $99.00; paper, $39.95.

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THIS is an important and absorbing study that I fear will receive less attention than it deserves because it is published by a narrow-specialty press and priced outrageously. It is in fact a fascinating, detailed observation of the year-long occupational guidance and job-referral process at two public high schools in an urban industrial setting with the pseudonym Saki-city. Viewed from the perspective of large-scale surveys, this process by which students get jobs is usually portrayed as an automatic transition from one hierarchy—education—to another—workplace; it is a matter simply of schools

and companies, locked in long-term embrace, sorting out bodies and minds. All that is left to debate is whether this job-referral system is one more efficient mechanism of '90%-middle-class' meritocracy or a ruthless reproduction of inequality. Okano's ethnographic strategy is able to show that behind the facade of structural inevitability is considerable maneuvering, calculated decision-making, and a measure of resistance among autonomous actors. Her aim is to show that this differential sorting of students into employees is better understood as a dialectic of structure and action, which she formulates by drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's theory of practice.

Okano was educated in Japan, Australia, and New Zealand, and taught in secondary schools in Australia and New Zealand before beginning the doctoral studies that resulted in this dissertation research. This experience lends a comparative dimension to her insights, which are also well grounded in the social science literature on education. Clearly, in contrast to Australia and North America, the Japanese school-managed job search is more highly systematized and much more crucial for graduating seniors; Japanese schools have far more information on and networks with an employer pool; and the government employment agency is a more important third-party in regulating and standardizing these school-company connections.

Okano followed closely almost a hundred students in three homerooms; almost half of them were in the data-processing track of a comprehensive public high school, while the other half were divided between the machinery and interior furnishing tracks of the city's technical high school. Significantly, Saki-city, and these two schools, had above-average proportions of students from *gaiseki* (the schools' term for Korean and Chinese residents in Japan), buraku, single-parent, and lower-income families. Only one of all the parents was a university graduate. More than 90% of the students in Okano's sample took jobs upon graduation—as office clerks, keypunch operators, bank tellers, check-out clerks, factory workers, and the like. A few found these jobs through family connections, but overwhelmingly the students used the schools' job referral process, the *shokugyō assen*.

At the ethnographic heart of the book are two long chapters that describe this process as extending over eight stages through the entire senior year. Chapter 4 tells the story from the teachers' point of view, focusing on their information-gathering from companies and dispersal to students; their crucial meeting in late August when they match company openings with students' ranked choices; their prepping of students for the company exams; and the post-exams negotiations to find jobs for the 10% or so who failed employment examinations. Okano's analytic concern here is properly on the degree of control that teachers exercise in the process. To my mind, she creates too simple a distinction between hard coercion (what it looks like from outside) and soft concern (the way teachers and students describe the teachers' control of the job referrals).

Chapter 5 then describes the same process from the students' experience. Here Okano finds important differences in job outcomes among the students, and adopts Bourdieu's framework of habitus, fields, and capital to account for this. Although I regard myself as a sympathetic reader of Bourdieu, I don't think that Okano's use of him advances our understanding so much as it unnecessarily translates a common-sense account into more abstract language. The problem, I suspect, is that 'habitus' becomes a black-box master explanation; it is never examined and problematized (see,

for example, p. 249) and thus everything that follows from it has a rather mechanical sound.

Rather than these analytical efforts, I was much more taken by Okano's many ethnographic insights. She shows, for example, that the schools took a somewhat independent and occasionally progressive role vis-à-vis companies as when they pushed companies to take disadvantaged students and challenged them to reconsider their discriminatory policies. Moreover, teachers were willing to risk their school's reputation in placing students, for instance, by agreeing to mistate upward poor absentee and grade records and by giving extra assistance to students disadvantaged by background. The author shows that even the technical high school did not emphasize specific skill acquisition, but rather saw its employment responsibility as providing detailed information and extensive contacts with employing companies.

Okano also has a fascinating discussion of *yōryōgai*, that is, students' many 'tactful' skills in opposing school dictates by quietly bending the rules. As she notes, these widespread skills of challenging authority without confronting it are in sharp contrast to the British 'lads' of Paul Willis's famous study, *Learning to Labor*, 1977, who flaunted their opposition to school authority. And finally, Okano gives us a sense of the historical shallowness of the present shape of employment guidance and job search. She includes revealing reminiscences of older faculty at both high schools who characterize the present patterns as far more elaborate and systematized than even those of the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Much is made of the stressful exam hell of that minority of high school seniors who are college-bound and white-collared. Okano takes us into the bittersweet experience of the majority of the graduating cohort, who are consigned at this transition point to a purgatory of participation without prestige in the same economy.

日本小文典. *Arte Breve da Lingoa Iapoa*. By Ioam Rodriguez. Edited and translated by Hino Hiroshi 日埜博司. Shin-Jinbutsu-Ōrai-Sha, 1993. Transcription and translation, 334 pages; facsimile, 200 pages. ¥13,000.

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IN 1604–1608 the Portuguese missionary João Rodrigues published in Nagasaki his famous *Arte da Lingoa de Iapam* (the frontispiece bears the date 1604, but the last page carries the date 1608). Running to 240 folios (or 480 pages), this grammar of spoken Japanese is a goldmine for anyone interested in how the language was actually spoken and pronounced four centuries ago. But not content with things grammatical, the indefatigable Rodrigues talks about poetry, literary style, inscriptions on letters addressed to the shogun and nobles, Zen ranks, nobles' names, *nengō*, the sixty-six provinces and their *gun*, money tables (going up to the astronomical fortune of 100,000,000,000 taels), weights, months, time, compass points, and a listing of the 108 emperors up to his time; he also devotes 36 pages to explaining how to write letters, oaths, and petitions.