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The Rise of the Chapel Wedding in Japan

Simulation and Performance

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This article draws on the author's experience acting as a priest for Christian-style chapel weddings in Japan in order to investigate the structure of the ceremony, its ritual value, and the potential reasons behind the growing popularity of the chapel wedding style in contemporary Japan. The chapel ceremony has become increasingly popular in Japan over the course of the last ten years at the expense of the formerly popular Shinto ceremony. The chapel wedding phenomenon is approached using Jean Baudrillard's theory of simulation in order to understand the depth of its ritual function and its role as a commercial product. It is suggested that while the chapel wedding ceremony offers another example of the appropriation and recontextualization of a foreign cultural model into the Japanese cultural repertoire, its sudden rise in popularity marks a wave of dissatisfaction and rejection of previously dominant cultural motifs subsequent to the worsening economic situation.

Keywords: chapel weddings — glocalization — simulacra— *mitate* — imitation — *kata-dōri* — *kata-yaburi*

IN JUNE OF 1999, the *Tokyo Classified,* a free English magazine published mainly for foreigners living in Tokyo, carried an article in its "Job-finder" column on a new and popular occupation for foreigners seeking to do something other than teach English. The article explains that the rise in popularity in Japan of the Christian-style wedding ceremony at hotel and wedding hall chapels has created a demand for priests. However, since weddings in Japan are generally held on Saturday and Sunday mornings, when most priests are busy with regular duties, hotels and wedding halls have taken to hiring anyone who can play the part, the "ideal candidate" being someone who "fits the Japanese image gleaned from movies—white and male." Japanese speaking ability is useful but not essential, the article states, because the parts of the wedding script in Japanese are written on a crib sheet in English letters (HINDS 1999a).

The Christian ceremony is indeed a rapidly growing phenomenon in Japan. In 1982 the Shinto ceremony, which was for a long time the most popular wedding ceremony style in the postwar period, accounted for 90 percent of the wedding ceremonies in Japan, while only 5.1 percent of the ceremonies were Christian. By 1996 the percentage of Shinto ceremonies had fallen to 47.6, while the Christian ceremony had risen to 46.8 (MOCHIZUKI 1997, p. 72). By 1998 the Christian wedding ceremony accounted for 53.1 percent, while the Shinto-style ceremony had fallen to 32.3 percent.[1]

This sharp rise in popularity seems to have taken everyone by surprise, especially since Christianity has historically failed to gain major ground in Japan, despite its success in neighboring countries. For example, the *Kirisutokyō nenkan* (Christian Yearbook) shows that in 1990 only 0.88 percent of the population in Japan had chosen Christianity as their religion (KAYAMA 1991, p. 525), and one contributing author suggests that there is no reason to hope that this situation will change in the foreseeable future (KAYAMA 1991, pp. 165–74).

In *Christianity Made in Japan*, Mark MULLINS responds to the sudden rise in the number of Christian wedding ceremonies, stating "the fact that Christian weddings are becoming increasingly popular among young couples today suggests that the stigma associated with Christianity may be declining" (1998, p. 192). Yet Mullins also acknowledges the fact that this rise may be due more to the publicizing of Christian ceremonies held by "TV personalities and movie stars" than a change in attitudes towards Christianity. He also notes recent criticisms of the commercialization of Christian weddings among some in the Church. Mullins ultimately speculates that, regardless of the motive, Christianity may have at last found its first "niche" in Japanese society, and claims that the trend "represents a natural Japanese appropriation of another religious tradition into the rites of passage in contemporary society" (p. 193). However, marriages in Japan have always been a secular matter and a union is only officially recognized when the couple signs a government registry at the local city hall.[2]

[1] For the most recent available statistics, see Nipponia, "Marriage Rites," *A Statistical View of Marriage in Japan*, at <http://jin.jcic.or.jp/nipponia/nipponia9/sp03.html>.

[2] It is worth mentioning here that some in the Church in Japan eventually moved to prevent the use of unofficial priests by attempting to make the practice illegal. However, since the wedding ceremony is an entirely secular affair, they could not appeal to the matter as a religious issue. In November 1999, a follow-up to the June article appeared in the same Jobfinder column. It explains the enforcement of a new law designed to eliminate the practice of using unofficial priests for Christian-style wedding ceremonies in Japan. This supposedly new law was neither entirely new at the time nor directed specifically at foreigners acting as priests. The law, as quoted in the article, simply states that "anyone engaging in any activity involving the management of a business or involving remuneration other than that permitted

Even the formerly popular Shinto ceremony was a late addition to the marriage rite and carried no more official religious value than the chapel wedding (SMITH 1995, p. 28).

Becoming a Priest

I accepted an offer from an acquaintance to introduce me to the wedding company where he had been working as a priest for nearly a year. The idea of working as a priest appealed to me from the beginning as a potential anthropological topic, enhanced perhaps by the idea that I, a Jew—and dual Israeli-American citizen—would be allowed to officiate Christian weddings without any real religious training. Aside from a basic awareness of the tremendous commercial value of weddings evidenced by the ubiquitous advertisements for wedding halls and chapel weddings that one encounters in the course of daily life in Japan, I had no firm notion of what the chapel wedding entailed.

The Christian-wedding ceremony company I was introduced to, which for the sake of this article I will call H-company, is relatively small in comparison with other such companies. The owners of H-company claim that the music and choir they use distinguishes them from the other companies. H-company is subcontracted by a company that owns a chain of large and expensive hotels to perform the chapel services in two of its hotels. Other services surrounding the wedding, such as the beautician work for the bride and groom and photography, are also subcontracted. Finding a priest, organ player, and two to four choir members to conduct the service is entirely H-company's responsibility.

In each of the nearly thirty weddings I performed over the course of four and a half months, I was introduced to the bride and groom and respective families as "the priest who will perform today's service." My "authenticity" was never questioned. This was not because I succeeded in deceiving the guests and families by projecting such unequivocal sacred authority in my performance. Rather, as I was able to learn later through interviews with informants, most likely neither the bride or groom, nor the guests or the hotel staff, and certainly not my employers, were concerned with whether or not I was an ordained priest. This in part was due to the fact that in most cases the couple and their families and guests had absolutely no affiliation with the

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by his status of residence without obtaining permission may be subject to punishment" (HINDS 1999b). Rather than being aimed at the Christian ceremony priest, the law was developed to curb a number of highly profitable black market industries, which were either managed or mostly occupied by foreigners—including Chinese, Iranians, and Israelis.

Christian faith. Moreover, as will be seen in the course of the following overall discussion, the chapel wedding in Japan involves the use of the Christian-style ceremony for reasons other than its sacred value. Thus, as the manager of H-company, K-san, stressed repeatedly during my job interview, I would not be a "fake" priest, but rather a performer, something like an actor. The word "fake," he told me, had no relevance in the Japanese context. I was told that if I could not understand this I would not be able to do the job. Although I assured him at the time that I understood, he was apparently unconvinced and launched into an explanation of Japanese history since the Meiji period. He claimed that an understanding of this history was vital if I was to perform the role.[3]

In the following discussion I will draw on my experiences performing as a priest for Christian-chapel weddings, as well as interviews with people married in a chapel ceremony, and with members of the H-company staff, in order to examine the phenomenon of chapel weddings from three angles. First, the chapel wedding in Japan is seen as an appropriation and recontextualization of a model for ritual from the putative West into Japanese culture. In accordance with this approach, the chapel wedding will be shown to manifest a combination of ritual forms characteristic of both a Euro-American Christian chapel wedding and ritual forms found in Japanese culture. Identifying how the chapel wedding has been actively and independently selected and adapted by the wedding industry in Japan comprises a subthesis of the overall discussion that aims to demonstrate the inadequacy of theories that posit cultural homogenization under Western cultural imperialism as the essential element of globalization. In other words, the ritual will be identified as a clear example of *glocalization*.[4]

A second approach to the chapel wedding involves exploring the imperative behind the effort to maintain (and even emphasize) a religious veneer in the adaptation of the Christian-chapel ceremony despite the use of an actor priest and the participant's otherwise lack of affiliation with Christianity. Furthermore, in view of the decidedly unofficial nature of the priest, how are we to see both the ceremony and the priest as anything other than a "fake"? In responding to this issue I will employ Jean BAUDRILLARD's theory of simulation from *Simulacra and Simulation* (1995). By viewing the chapel wedding in terms of

[3] It is important to mention here that during my four and a half months of working as a priest the only objections to what I was doing came from my non-Japanese colleagues. Some of these colleagues claimed I was contributing to the loss of culture in Japan.

[4] See RAZ (1999) for a discussion of glocalization theory and its application in relation to Tokyo Disneyland.

Baudrillard's definition of simulation, I aim to show the insignificance of such concepts as "fake" or "imitation" in relation to the ceremony as well as suggest that the formative strength of the chapel wedding emanates from its function as a simulacrum.

Finally, it will ultimately be suggested that the sharp rise in the popularity of the chapel wedding, to the growing near exclusion of other forms, points to an increasing desire to engage in a performance of what will be identified as a non-Japaneseness in contrast to a previous ideal of Japaneseness in the Shinto wedding ceremony. This approach will involve a consideration of the symbolic meaning of the Christian wedding ceremony in contemporary Japanese society.

From the Eyes of the "Priest"

As in any society, weddings in Japan are a central event in the human life cycle. Advertisements for wedding services in Japan, from ceremony locations to caterers, are ubiquitous in trains, train stations, and magazines (See GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI 1997, pp. 128–29), and marriage is often a central theme for popular television dramas. Furthermore, one needs only to look at the amount of money spent on weddings to be convinced of the importance ascribed to the event.[5]

The weddings in which I performed as a priest for H-company were held in the hotel chapels at the two locations in which H-company operates. The hotel chain offers several different wedding plans that are not unlike those offered by hotels and wedding agencies in Europe and North America—except perhaps in the thoroughness of their services, which range from catering to clothing rental and beautician work. Twice a month the hotel also presents "Bridal Fairs" in which a prospective couple may view a wedding ceremony staged by members of the hotel staff in the roles of bride and groom. In contrast to the regular weddings, the Bridal Fairs are nearly flawless performances. Bridal Fairs are also made available on video by the hotel for potential clients.

While the various wedding packages are uniform for the two hotels, there is a dramatic difference in the chapel designs. The chapel where I saw the first wedding as part of the job interview is designed in a conservative style, with about ten rows of light brown wooden pews. Facing the front of the chapel, one sees an opaque window with a gold-colored metal cross on it and two sets of matching candelabras to either side. Between the candelabras is a small table, which is always

[5] See Nipponia, "Average Cost of Getting Married," *A Statistical View of Marriage in Japan*, at <http://jin.jcic.or.jp/nipponia/nipponia9/sp03.html>.

adorned with fresh flowers. A small podium with a weighty, oversize Bible (translated into Japanese) occupies the center of the scene while organ pipes cover the walls to either side of the window. The actual organ is off to the right, only a leg's length from the front pew. The second hotel chapel in which I worked is more modern. It has an almost science fiction feel to it, with plastic off-white walls that look like actual marble, a white floor, and huge glass cases that run the length of the chapel. Inside these cases are thousands of glass beads hung from threads against a black background. When the beads turn they reflect the bright lighting from the ceiling, creating a sparkling effect. The ceiling over the center aisle is a long convex white glass surface with lighting on either side, next to which there are also thousands of little glass tubes hanging from a ceiling of mirrors. The tubes are all of different length and emit a faint light that changes color (purple, green, blue, yellow, and white) at regular intervals. The ultimate effect is a kind of massive futuristic chandelier. My employer and informant, K-san, said the chapel was actually designed with the intention to render a feeling of being in space (*uchū mitai*).

The typical ceremony is held between eleven in the morning and three in the afternoon. Only a few were later than three in the afternoon. The wedding ceremony, including the rehearsal, takes about 45 minutes to complete. Fifteen minutes before the start of the wedding, the staff from H-company, including the organist, choir members, manager, and myself, would assemble in a line just inside the entrance to the chapel. I wore black pants, a white shirt, and a white tie under a long black satin robe. Over the black robe I wore a long white cloth with two embroidered gold colored crosses on it that went around my neck and hung down on both sides in front. The choir members wore simple black pants and white shirts, and K-san wore a suit. The bride and groom, witnesses, parents, and two female assistants (dressed in simple pink kimonos) would then line up opposite us before the entrance to the chapel, with the groom standing two steps in front of the bride. The bride always appeared in a traditional white wedding dress with white gloves, veil, and a small bouquet held in both hands. Most often the groom would appear in an old-fashioned tailcoat tuxedo (*enbifuku* 燕尾服) that was popular in the Meiji era, holding two small gloves in his right hand. The bride's father usually appeared in a regular suit or tailed tuxedo with a white tie. The other men also wore suits and white ties but it was not uncommon for the female witnesses or the mother of the bride to appear in a traditional ceremony-style kimono. At this point K-san would step forward and greet the bride, groom, and entourage with a bow, which we then each did in kind. He would then announce the beginning of rehearsal under "*sensei*

Maikeru Fisu." I was then required to issue a formal greeting in Japanese, take three steps forward to shake the groom's hand and say "*omedetō gozaimasu*" (congratulations).

The staff and I would then all take our proper places and the rehearsal would begin. K-san would orchestrate the rehearsal, leading the participants through a step-by-step quick practice of the actual wedding. Every action, including the manner in which the groom and bride were to carry themselves as they entered the chapel, the motion of the groom's hands while lifting the veil, and the direction each was to turn upon my cue as required in the ceremony script, was explained by K-san with practiced proficiency using a highly honorific form of Japanese. Most often the couple would simply nod in acknowledgment to each instruction. The slow, one-step–one-step manner in which the father was required to walk while accompanying the bride and the method for lifting the veil always proved to be troublesome points that demanded more explanation and practice until the performance was to K-san's satisfaction. During this time I stood at my pulpit prepared to practice the handing of the rings to the groom and bride.

Once rehearsal ended, the couple and their entourage would exit the chapel, leaving us five minutes to light the six candles in each of the two candelabras and take our places. K-san would also then exit, remembering always first to dim the lights to a romantic glow.

During the actual ceremony, I sat to the side of the pulpit waiting as the choir sung a traditional tune in Latin to accompany the entrance of the witnesses, followed by friends and family of the bride and groom. The participants would file in quietly in pairs and take their respective seats in rows to the right and left of the center aisle, called *bājin rōdo* ("virgin road"). When the song ended and I saw the groom standing at the entrance, it was my cue to stand and greet the audience, first using honorific Japanese followed by two lines in English, and then Japanese again, as I introduced myself and told the groom to enter. The two large doors, which were shut after the groom's entrance, would then be opened on my cue for the bride to enter with her father, accompanied by Wagner's wedding march. The groom would meet the bride and her father two meters before my podium, at which point the father and groom would exchange bows before the father would be seated and the groom assume his place beside his bride.

All together the ceremony included the following events in the following order (all parts were in Japanese except where noted otherwise): Hymn 312 (for which I was required only to move my lips); an invocation to God in English; a reading from I Corinthians 13: 4–7, 13; another invocation to God and Jesus; an explanation from Ephesians 5: 22–33

concerning the husband's duty to love the Church and his wife and the wife's duty to serve her husband and the Church; a standard swearing of nuptial vows under God; the exchange of rings (narrated in English); another invocation to God and Jesus to guide the couple and grant them happiness (half in Japanese and half in English); a proclamation and blessing of the event (for which the bride and groom would turn to face the audience while I held my hands above them in blessing); signing of the marriage certificate accompanied by Hymn 429; and finally, presenting the new couple to the audience (half in English), followed by their exit accompanied by Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." The witnesses would then sign the marriage certificate after the couple had left. (In accordance with the secular nature of marriage in Japan the certificate itself carries absolutely no authority.) Following the ceremony, the audience promptly exited in the same quiet two lines. Some of the older members would turn to bow once before exiting the chapel.

About half of the weddings I performed were videotaped using cameras installed in the walls. The video cameras are operated by remote control from a production room and move to follow the movements during the various events in the ceremony. In many cases, the slightest imperfections in the ceremony (which K-san confessed always exist despite the attempts to achieve perfection), such as a missed cue or mispronunciation, can be touched up through editing. During an incident involving a taped ceremony in which one of the candles went out during the ceremony (which apparently could not be touched up in the video), there was considerable maneuvering by both H-company and the hotel to determine exactly who was responsible for the mishap.[6]

K-san instructed me that the most important thing for me to do in the ceremony was to smile and provide an easygoing (*yasashii*) feeling. Despite my attempts to smile and relax, however, the atmosphere tended to remain fairly somber. Even the groups of sometimes very young friends of the bride and groom conversed in hushed voices among themselves only rarely before the ceremony but never during.[7] K-san also suggested that during the narration in English accompanying the exchange of rings it was important only to emphasize the words "love" and "faithful," since most likely apart from these key

[6] See GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI 1997, pp. 73–78, for a discussion of the importance of the video camera and the likelihood of monetary claims being made to the hotel for photographic imperfections.

[7] I heard of one instance from a colleague in which all the groom's friends wore sunglasses and catcalled during the ceremony to the point of drowning out the choir.

words the couple would not understand the English.[8]

Overall, the chapel ceremony is a very tightly controlled and produced event in which the participants are expected to follow a rehearsed script. Incidents in which the ceremony departs from the script are few. Yet even in the case of a radical departure, the rigid frame of the event prevents any serious damage from occurring in the structural integrity of the ritual. In my own experience I witnessed only one such radical departure during a wedding that was attended only by the parents of the bride and groom. In this particular case, after the groom had responded to the marriage vows with the standard *"hai, chikaimasu"* (the equivalent of "I do"), the bride responded unexpectedly saying, "I will do the best I can" (*sō to naru yō, doryoku shimasu*). Despite a short moment of uncomfortable silence the ceremony proceeded as usual. In another instance, a colleague, who eventually took over my position as a priest for H-company, reported that he accidentally skipped page six of the eight-page script. Fortunately, page six contains only a hymn and prayer and thus no one noticed.

Ritual and Adaptation

In the effort to understand the chapel wedding, it is initially important to mark the points where the event conforms to essential principles comprising a ritual and wedding ceremony.[9] The careful attention devoted to aesthetic details, from the classic hymns, to the clothing and rigid choreography, demonstrates the central imperative of ritual to persuade its participants of its power and significance through symbols that operate on an explicitly sensory level. The element of persuasion here involves also the participant's voluntary suspension of belief as a means for suppressing the realization of the constructed nature of the event or any inherent contradictions (MYERHOFF 1977, pp. 199–200), such as the fact that the priest is only acting and the participants are not Christian. The chapel wedding also clearly creates a ritual frame that demarcates the event from regular social space and time. In this context, the formal introductions that take place before and during the ceremony, the use of a highly honorific language toward the guests and participants, and the exchange of bows that occur between the participants are all established patterns of ceremonial propriety within the cultural system of Japanese society that punctuate

[8] The full narration being: "This ring, he gives to you as a symbol. A symbol of his promise to love you and to remain faithful to you as long as you both shall live."

[9] See MOORE and MYERHOFF 1977, pp. 3–10 and 199–203 for a detailed explanation of the characteristics of secular and religious ritual.

any formal occasion and create an awareness of the ritual space.[10] Such patterns of behavior are sometimes referred to in Japan as *kata* 型 but are hardly unique to Japanese culture. When the performance of a participant in ritual matches these predetermined patterns, it is said to be *kata-dōri* 型通り (proper form) and deviation is called *kata-yaburi* 型破り (breaking form). *Kata-dōri* emphasizes continuity and conformity to tradition while *kata-yaburi* signals discontinuity. It is important for a ceremony to contain both these aspects as the continuity provides the overall ritual pattern while the discontinuity establishes an element of uniqueness.[11]

One can also argue that the separation of the wedding from the regular time/space frame is augmented through the significance of the chapel space in Japan. While the chapel in America, Europe, or South America engenders an alternative time/space frame through its presumed association with a transcendental deity, the chapel in Japan operates through a slightly different criterion. That is to say, the failure of Christianity to gain a real foothold in Japanese society renders it as something outside the space of Japanese culture. Thus the chapel space embodies not only a separation from regular life, but also a separation from Japan. At the same time, the chapel described as built under a "space-like" motif may indicate that the growing popularity of the chapel wedding has already rendered the chapel space more or less familiar, thus demanding the design of an even less familiar environment.

The Chapel Wedding as a Simulacrum

In *Simulacra and Simulation* Baudrillard posits that the contemporary era is marked by supersession of the real by simulation as a result of the production of the real through technology. According to BAUDRILLARD, "the real is produced from miniaturized cells, matrices, and memory banks, models of control—and it can be reproduced an indefinite number of times from these" (1995, p. 2). In this context, simulation, which was formerly confined within the parameters of imitation or representation, "is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal" (BAUDRILLARD 1995, p. 1). In other words,

[10] See MOORE and MYERHOFF 1977 for a discussion of the ritual frame and propriety.

[11] I owe this observation to direct comments by Ochiai Kazuyasu, professor of anthropology at Hitotsubashi University. Ochiai also suggested to me that the lack of such patterns to serve as signposts announcing the required behavior from the participants would no doubt create a feeling of uneasiness, as the participants would not understand what is expected of them.

the one-to-one relation between sign and the real (the signified) that characterizes representations gives way in simulation to an endless signification as simulacra (i.e., models without real origin) that constitute references to previous models rather than in relation to the real. The real is thus usurped, or simply superseded by what BAUDRILLARD calls "the precession of the simulacra" (1995, p. 6). If we can eschew subscribing to the generalizing apocalyptic tone and the sense of despair and nostalgia over the loss of an ambiguously defined "real" that ultimately plagues *Simulacra and Simulation,* Baudrillard's theory can be instrumental in understanding the chapel wedding in Japan. Identifying the chapel wedding in terms of Baudrillard's notion of simulation and simulacra initially provides a method for understanding the source of power of the ritual for its participants. Moreover, this approach allows for an understanding of the event as something other than simply an imitation or "fake" and exposes the assumptions behind the critique of the event as such.

Simulation, as Baudrillard defines it, surfaces on a number of levels in the ceremony to render chapel weddings as simulacra. Initially, the numerous references to God, Jesus, and the Bible throughout the ceremony demonstrate a tremendous effort to simulate a religious (in this case Christian) experience, despite the unequivocally secular structure surrounding the event and the fact that it does not lead the participants toward a deeper affiliation with Christianity. The actor priest, whose only qualification for the role is his *gaijin* face, renders the religiousness of the event as simulation while also clearly demonstrating that the reference model of simulation is not necessarily religion but Euro-American culture. This is complicated, however, by the fact that there is obviously no *single* authentic Western ceremony model that can serve as a referent. Furthermore, the chapel wedding is clearly a creolized form in its adaptation of clothing styles (in particular that of the groom) to suit local tastes as well as the integration of patterns of ceremonial propriety found in Japanese culture, such as the exchange of bows. It is safe to say that the image-laden Bridal Fair, along with movies and the other various models created in the context of media and advertising, are what serve as the "real" referents for the chapel wedding. Thus, while the chapel wedding is a form of cultural borrowing, it is also a model that has been reformatted within the interstices of the cut-and-paste technology of advertisement and cinematic images. That is to say, it is a simulacrum par-excellence, and, in the absence of the rigid borders imposed by adherence to a "real," it harbors the potential for tremendous diversity. In support of this point, it is worth mentioning that a number of couples that had married in a chapel wedding in fact responded during my interviews

to the question of why they had chosen a chapel wedding by saying that they wanted something "like in the movies." A similar sentiment is revealed in an article from *Asahi shinbun* in which the popularity of the chapel wedding is ascribed to its "picturesque" (*e ni naru* 絵になる) qualities (30 June 1995, morning edition). The choice of old-fashioned suits worn by the groom, the traditional dress worn by the bride, the tight script of the event as well as the classical music performed by the staff of H-company all support this idea of the ceremony as an attempt to create a movie-like scene.

Another particularly revealing aspect of the simulacrum character of the chapel wedding can be seen in the emphasis placed on the taping of the event. Since the chapel wedding is the product of a series of media-generated models (including the Bridal Fair), the video produced from the event is the closest manifestation of the "real" that can be attained. In accordance with the principle of the perpetual and infinite generative character of simulacra, the hyperreal chapel wedding is superseded by the hyperreal of the video of the event, rendered nearly perfect through the technology of editing. In several weddings in which I performed where no guests attended, the ceremony was held strictly for the sake of creating a video recording. Informants who were married in chapel weddings overseas also responded that the inaccessibility of the ceremony for family members was insignificant as the wedding was performed only for the pictures.

In terms of the relation between the actual participants and the ceremony, Baudrillard points out that the efficacy of simulation, as opposed to the act of pretending or imitating, lies in the power of simulacra to produce the actual symptoms associated with the "real." BAUDRILLARD compares the simulation of an illness to the faking of an illness to explain this point: "Whoever fakes an illness can simply stay in bed and make everyone believe he is ill. Whoever simulates an illness produces in himself some of the symptoms" (1995, p. 3). Thus the simulation of a ritual, as opposed to pretending or imitating, invokes a deeper, if not genuine, reaction on an emotional and physical level from the participants.

What should be evident thus far from viewing the chapel wedding as a form of simulacrum is the insignificance of the notion of "fake" or "imitation" in relation to the phenomenon. Yet when K-san attempted to explain the inapplicability of the term "fake priest" he did not draw, as I have, on a postmodern interpretation of simulation but rather on a review of Japanese history, citing the various use of Western models in Japan. However, K-san failed to provide the final reasoning behind his method, leaving me to draw my own conclusions as to the relation between Japanese history and the concept of imita-

tion. In the effort to understand K-san's method, it is helpful to look briefly at Yamaguchi Masao's discussion of the "poetics of citations" (*in'yō no shigaku* 引用の詩学). Like K-san, Yamaguchi draws on the history of appropriations of foreign models in the formation of Japanese culture in order to suggest a reevaluation of the argument that sees Japan as simply imitating without creating. Aside from exploring a possibility behind K-san's interpretation of the chapel wedding, the point is to identify some crucial similarities between Yamaguchi's argument and Baudrillard's theory, which I hope will also serve to ground the methodology of my discussion.[12]

Citing Gunji Masakatsu, Yamaguchi argues that, in contrast to European discourses of culture, the notion of creativity in Japanese culture does not presuppose the production of an *original* object or model. In place of the imperative of originality, the concept of *mitate* 見立て is employed to express the method whereby a new model or object is produced by drawing on elements from a previously existing entity (or entities) and recontextualizing them in relation to the immediate environment. The previously existing model is not considered to be an original, but rather the latest expression in a chain of items produced in a similar mode; a successfully produced new item is not an imitation but rather a separate entity with equal or greater qualities (YAMAGUCHI 1987, pp. 24–27). In support of his argument, Yamaguchi cites the method employed in the borrowing and adaptation of cultural items and models from China, the production of classic Japanese song, and finally the use of American and European cultural models and ideas. Although Yamaguchi's objective is to identify a mode of production in Japanese culture, he describes the existence of a similar structure that governs individual modification and internalization of social behavior patterns as well as the appropriation and recontextualization of historical models in society at large.[13]

Similar to simulacra, in the production of models through *mitate* the idea of an original, along with the notion of fake or imitation, is simply absent or altogether insignificant. Instead, a system of inter-

[12] It is important to note here that the object of highlighting the similarities between Baudrillard's theory and the method outlined in Yamaguchi's article is not to demonstrate the existence of an intrinsically postmodern mode in Japanese culture. As will be seen, Yamaguchi shows that the method he discusses is not exclusive to Japanese culture. Furthermore, the technological characteristic of Baudrillard's notion of simulation, which is absent in Yamaguchi's article, is an integral element of its postmodern quality.

[13] Yamaguchi seems to vacillate between identifying a method of production specific to Japanese culture and finding a similar phenomenon in other cultures. If read in the context of the *Nihonjinron* (discourse on Japaneseness) debate that was dominant at the time, Yamaguchi's argument can ultimately be seen as either supporting or refuting a notion of Japanese uniqueness.

reference is posited as the structure through which a potentially infinite number of qualitatively equal models are produced in response to perpetually shifting imperatives.

In this context it is possible to begin to understand assumptions behind the negative response from my colleagues concerning my performance as a priest. Most often the criticism drew on the assumption that I was contributing to the Westernization and corruption of Japanese culture. The notion of an "original" Japanese culture that is being polluted by cheap imitations from the West clearly forms the base of this argument. Yet the situation is made more complicated by the fact that while most of these colleagues either quietly accepted or even applauded other instances of appropriation and recontextualization of so-called Western models, they could not accept the use of the chapel wedding. It is safe to assume from this that it was the simulation of religion, in particular Christianity, that offended them. Indeed, their opposition to the chapel wedding was often supported by the claim that if the couple is not Christian they should not be having a Christian ceremony. Baudrillard's discussion of simulacra suggests that the simulation of the divine (Judeo-Christian-Muslim culture) was forbidden precisely because of the potential for simulacra to become equivalent in value to the divine, thus enacting an erasure of the supreme notion of a single original as well as lowering the value of the divine referent and the general religious structure: "But what if God himself can be simulated, that is to say can be reduced to signs that constitute faith? Then the whole system becomes weightless, it is no longer itself anything but a gigantic simulacrum" (BAUDRILLARD 1995, pp. 5–6). While any speculation can only be inconclusive, it is possible to suggest that what my colleagues feared was in fact the potential loss of meaning precipitated by the notion that a ceremony of certain divine significance for them was being simulated for reasons other than its religious value.

The analysis up to this point has concentrated mainly on understanding the function of the chapel wedding ceremony itself. In the next section I will look at the ceremony in terms of its consumer value in Japan in the attempt to understand the force behind its sudden popularity.

The Chapel Wedding as Performance of Non-Japaneseness

In a study of the wedding parlor industry based on research conducted just prior to the rise in popularity of the chapel wedding, Ofra Goldstein-Gidoni identifies the wedding parlor as one of a number of sites of cultural consumption in which a sense of traditional Japanese

cultural identity is produced and consumed together with a subtheme of an imagined West. GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI's work (1997, pp. 30–31) looks at the Shinto wedding ceremony, focusing on the production of the wedding rather than the participants, and it posits an interdependent relationship in the wedding production between content and form. According to this approach, the aesthetic and symbolic meaning of certain customs and paraphernalia used in the wedding are interpreted as interdependent. For example, the cake cutting ceremony is successful due to the industry's ability to respond to consumer demands for the image, and because of the symbolism that the ceremony appeals to, rather than as a referent to a rigid system of innate social values.[14] As GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI states, the importance of this view is that it sees the production of a certain symbolic system as emerging through a negotiation between the consumer and the producer rather than just being "imposed on a passive consumer" (1997, p. 153). The commercial wedding thus emerges as a symbolic commodity that involves continuous negotiation between its producers and consumers regarding "the Japanese" and "the Western" (1997, p. 149). It is worth noting that the notion of *mitate* and simulacra can be seen to be at work here as the wedding ceremony model is constantly being modified according to circumstances.

If we accept Goldstein-Gidoni's thesis that the Shinto ceremony essentially concerns producing an imagined "Japaneseness," then we can read the chapel ceremony, with its lack of "traditional Japanese elements," as involving the production of something else: namely, "Westernness." GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI points out that the consumption of items marked as Western is more about the consumption of "symbolic meaning" rather than simple use of an item or image (1997, p. 152).[15] In this sense, things identified as Western in Japan have always to a large extent been used for projecting a certain image related to social class as well as a notion of cosmopolitanism and "individuality," which is defined as the freedom to choose one's own lifestyle (GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI 1997, p. 125; Nancy Rosenberger, in GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI 1997, p. 134).

The symbolic meaning of things marked as Western is also closely

[14] Goldstein-Gidoni is responding here to previous studies of weddings in Japan, such as Walter Edwards's work. Edwards examines the Shinto wedding ceremony as a social ritual that expresses a rigid ideal image containing symbols of gender and the marital bond that articulate for the new couple the "proper shape of relations between husbands and wives, and the role of the individual, as a married person, in the larger society" (EDWARDS 1989, p. 37; for further discussion of Edwards's work, see GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI 1997).

[15] Goldstein-Gidoni is citing BAUDRILLARD (1981, p. 5) here, suggesting that "'consumption' has become a kind of labor, 'an active manipulation of signs,' a sort of *bricolage* in which individuals desperately attempt to organize their privatized existence and invest it with meaning" (GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI 1997, p. 152).

related to the aesthetic meaning accorded to the items. For example, the use of English, either in the form of actual English characters being inscribed on an item, or by using the English name for an item, is said to have the effect of transforming it into something special (Tanaka Yasuo, author of *Nantonaku Kurisutaru* and currently governor of Nagano Prefecture, cited in STANLAW 1992, p. 67). Another example of this aesthetic value, which also relates to the position of Christianity in Japan, can be seen in the recent trend of wearing necklaces with crosses among young Japanese woman. The trend is the result of a Western supermodel's appearance with similar jewelry and has absolutely nothing to do with the sacred value of the emblem. One need only make a brief survey of everyday life in Japan to find numerous other examples.

Both the symbolic and aesthetic aspects are operative in the chapel wedding within the parameters of identity symbols as described here. A number of couples questioned concerning their reasons for choosing the chapel-style ceremony stated that they felt it is simply a more beautiful and elegant event compared to the "old" style. However, the majority of couples, including K-san and his wife, stated that they choose the chapel ceremony since it allowed them to avoid all the "tediousness" (*mendōkusai-koto*) involved in the Shinto ceremony. Some described this tediousness as the somberness of the Shinto ceremony in comparison to the cheerful image of the Christian ceremony. (This always seemed ironic to me since, as mentioned, the weddings I witnessed and performed never had what I would call a "cheerful" feel to them.) Other couples described the tediousness as the sometimes messy politics and obligations involved in choosing the person to perform the role as the ceremonial go-between or *nakōdo* 仲人 in the Shinto ceremony.[16] For K-san, not having a *nakōdo* was particularly important as he claimed it is usually expected that men working in a company will choose their department senior, which implies a sense of mutual obligation beyond the immediate working relationship. He wanted to avoid such obligations as he intended to quit his job after the wedding. A number of the women also claimed that the Western wedding dress was simply more comfortable to wear, as well as more beautiful, than the cumbersome ceremonial kimono and headdress used in the Shinto ceremony.

Apart from problems with interpersonal relationships, another

[16] The *nakōdo* is a ceremonial role of honor awarded to someone usually associated with the groom who is supposed to have introduced the couple. More often, however, the role is performed by a senior member of the groom's company or respected family member. See GOLDSTEIN-GIDONI 1997, pp. 18–19, for further discussion.

mendōkusai-koto that is seemingly avoided by using the chapel wedding involves the notion of *kata-dōri* and *kata-yaburi*. The notion of being able to escape the pressure of having to correctly perpetuate tradition by performing according to an established pattern (*kata-dōri*) produces a strong sense of appeal for the chapel-style ceremony. Furthermore, one supposedly does not have to worry about where and how to break this form in order to invest the ritual with an element of personal meaning. Many of the advertisements for chapel weddings that one finds in trains or in magazines exploit this theme, proclaiming the chapel wedding as an expression of individuality and originality.[17] Ironically, as one critic points out, the promise of "being oneself" that these advertisements offer ultimately ends with being like everyone else when everyone is choosing their "expressions of individuality" from a set list.[18]

What emerges from these descriptions is an understanding that the "symbolic" value connected with the (imagined) Westernness of the chapel ceremony involves a strong element of rejecting the formerly valued Japaneseness, which is seen as no longer worth the effort. One cannot help but notice that the rise in popularity of the chapel ceremony coincides with the end of the economic "bubble" period, a period in which the idea that the integration of traditional Japanese cultural values with management practice was the source of Japan's economic success had become a nearly universal mantra.[19] In other words, I want to suggest that the success of the chapel ceremony is not simply due to a successful initiative among large hotels in competing with the wedding parlors nor simply the price advantage in comparison to the cost of the Shinto ceremony, but the identification of a demand within society to which the hotels responded imaginatively. It is important to note here that this idea is supported throughout by the description of the reciprocal relation of supply and demand between the consumer and the wedding industry that was explained above.

The satisfaction gained from the international and local, or glocalized, character of the ceremony by its participants is ultimately similar to what Allison James suggests a customer in a place like Moscow gains

[17] For example, one popular advertisement for a wedding company used the slogan: "プライベートガーデンで私だけの NATURAL WEDDING" [Your own natural wedding in a private garden].

[18] See Kodama Ryōko's "The Modern Marriage Industry: 'Self-Expression' ending in 'Group-Expression'" at <http://www.city.yokohama.jp/me/yoke/theyoke/no.79/fl-3.html>.

[19] It is also important to note here that the drop in the value of the yen during this period made direct access to overseas experiences more difficult for many Japanese, prompting a demand for the chance to experience something "non-Japanese" without having to actually leave Japan.

from McDonalds. On one hand, the uniformity of the chapel wedding model allows the customer a feeling of security in that he or she knows exactly what to expect. In this sense, the "global is made manageable, rendered knowable" (JAMES 1996, p. 83). Yet at the same time, as shown above, the model marked ostensibly as "foreign" allows the customer to "take on, momentarily, a more transnational, differentiated identity and lifestyle through taking in the authentic taste of America" (JAMES 1996, p. 83). It is this element of the chapel wedding, conceived as a fixed representation of the Other while maintaining familiar elements, that serves as a vehicle of expression. Furthermore, it is possible to identify in this expression an attempt to reject the numerous discourses of cultural nationalism that emerged in force during the late 1970s and 1980s, which propounded the notion of Japanese uniqueness.

By identifying the creolized composition of the chapel wedding in exploring its function as a simulacrum and performance, we come to realize that the model does not represent a paradigm of global homogenization. A central motif of global homogenization in which a dominant culture provides an "original" model that, while perfectly copied into another cultural system is tainted through its existence as an imitation has been shown to be entirely absent in relation to the chapel wedding. While the popularity of the chapel-style wedding has been shown to be a result of its being identified as something European and American and *not Japanese,* it is clearly a model that has been created through a modality specific to the contemporary cultural environment in Japan. It is important to note here that a potential effect of the model's foreign inscription is to engender a clearer differentiation between what is "Japanese" and what is not. The necessity for the wedding to be confined within a space so clearly demarcated from everyday life and society in order for it to function as a ritual ultimately intensifies this aspect.

Furthermore, it is safe to assume that the moment the chapel wedding becomes a fixture that is too familiar within Japanese culture is the moment when the search for a new wedding model will begin. In other words, the chapel wedding will most likely suffer the fate of most fashionable trends that occur in any culture regardless of their deeper significance. Even K-san acknowledged this fact, stating that he expected his business to be able to succeed for only another five or seven years at the most before it would be forced to make considerable changes. Already, however, there are signs that the chapel-style wedding has become too familiar, or too "Japanese." Practices such as the "Bali wedding"—performed in Bali and involving elements from Bali "tradition"—have emerged recently, indicating that new forms

are already challenging the attraction and "foreignness" of the chapel wedding.

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