

Kanri Shakai - The Managed Society

(C. Douglas Lummis and Kogawa Tetsuo)

- Series 1 -

This dialogue focuses on kanri (usually translated as management or control): it is a difficult concept to explain in English as one can see from this dialogue. This is the second time Professors Kogawa and Lummis have met for a series of dialogues. The first time, in 1985 and 1986, they looked at the mass media. This is the first part of a five-part series.

Kogawa Tetsuo is a professor of Musashino Arts College. He is involved in the free radio movement and has a program of his own on Saturday evenings on one station in Tokyo. Douglas Lummis is an editorial board member of AMPO and a professor at Tsuda College. He has spent more than 20 years in Japan.

In future articles, we will try to understand the Japanese managed society through four localities: the school, the home and workplace, the city, and the media.

Kogawa: I'd like to begin by clarifying the meaning of kanri itself.

The *kan* in *kanri* comes from bureaucrat, and the *ri* means the world logic. So the meaning has something to do with bureaucratic logic. There is another word in Japanese, *shihai*, which also translates to the English word control, but it is usually translated into English as domination.

However, *kanri* sometimes means domination. Depending on who is speaking, the meaning changes. For progressives, it means a soft-type of control, usually without explicit violence. *Kanri* uses sophisticated devices like the media or legitimacy.

In this context, the word has a disagreeable meaning. People don't like it, and they work to erase or diminish the degree of *kanri*.

For the business world, however, *kanri* has a

positive meaning. For instance, business executives always say you need good *kanri*. The term is very popular in the business world.

Lummis: As a business term, how would you distinguish it from the English term "management"?

Kogawa: I think it's almost the same. *Kanri* means business management in that community.

Lummis: It can be seen as similar to "management," except that in the Japanese context *kanri* is used outside the business community. For example, there is a common term, the "*kanri shakai*," where the entire society comes under *kanri*.

Kogawa: But business people never use the word *kanri shakai* in a negative meaning. As a matter of fact, they don't use it at all. *Kanri shakai* is always critical.

Kanri has a double meaning. This is quite natural, as most words always have several meanings. But in the case of *kanri* it's very contradictory.

Lummis: I have the impression that the word *kanri* is almost never used as a transitive verb. It's almost always used in the passive form, as "someone is being *kanried*."

Kogawa: That's an important point. It's possible that the concept of *kanri* may have been introduced in order to erase the real relationship between *kanrier* and *kanried*. It makes it seem like an automatic process.

This is important, because the term *kanri* became very popular following World War II, when

new forms of control were introduced. Before the War, you had very strong, violent methods of control. They were very natural, even in the home. The father and mother were able to use physical punishment against their children without any hesitation.

Lummis: Yes. Children were beaten, wives were beaten, servants were beaten, workers were beaten, students were beaten.

Hirohito's Death

Kogawa: After the war, however, the situation became relatively more democratic, and in the midst of that situation new types of control systems were introduced at every level of our lives. I think the term *kanri* was introduced in this process.

There may be some critical meanings of *kanri*, but it has another negative meaning—of concealing the important relationship between controller and controlled. When I discussed this with my students, especially during the late 1970s and '80s, I had the very strong impression that students disliked the term. They used to say, "Who is controlling?" They would tell me I was making Leftist arguments, and say that it is nonsense in today's world to make the distinction between controller and controlled.

This kind of discussion was very popular then, and today people still dislike the term. People in the New Academic movement, the Japanese equivalent of the New Philosophers, argue that there is no more *kanri*, no more system, no more Left.

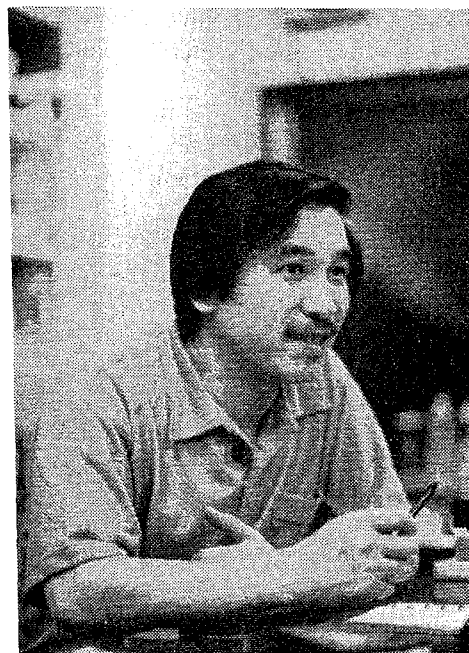
There has been a new consciousness, however, and the starting point was the period following Emperor Hirohito's death. Before he died, Japan was going through a period of high economic growth, and people saw Japan's future as full of cherry blossoms.

And when Hirohito died, the entire television system fell under some kind of coup d'état, and most people became aware of the basic structure of our media.

Lummis: For years before Hirohito's death, I would have a similar argument with students. I used to ask students what the Emperor System meant to them, and whether it had any control over their consciousness. Students would always say, "No whatsoever. We're beyond that. What the Emperor does or thinks, all that has nothing to do with our lives. We're a new generation, and we're beyond that control." And my answer always was, "You

will learn whether that's true on the day he dies."

When the day finally came, it was interesting because I think you could argue either way, that the death of Hirohito showed the weakening of the *kanri* system of the Emperor, that it showed its ending strength. In other words, you could see the weakness in the fact that on television everyone was crying, mourning people were brokehearted, talking about how wonderful he'd been, how much he'd done for the country, praying, but as soon as you turn



away from the TV set you couldn't see it anywhere. I never saw anyone outside of television show one trace of sorrow or even concern.

On the other hand, when I asked students how they felt both at the Freedom School here, and at Tsuda College where I teach, they told me they felt a vague fear. When I pressed the conversation, the answer would typically be "the fear of *murahachibu*," or "banishment," being expelled from society and treated as an outsider.

The impression I got was that the mass media created a standard for what you're supposed to feel, as common sense, and people looked in their hearts and discovered they didn't feel it. But mass media were able at least to create the impression that everybody but you felt it. The fact

you didn't feel it was enough to generate a fear of banishment.

Kogawa: I agree with you. I had the same feeling. I went to the Imperial Palace and saw a lot of buses from the countryside. The old men and women were laughing and talking as if they were sightseeing. But when I came back home and watched television, everybody was in mourning and was talking very seriously.

"Common Sense"?

Lummis: I have the feeling one of the most important devices for managing people and for making the management invisible is a very skillful and strong control exercised by the managers over something called common sense, or *joshiki* in Japanese. People are often managed by their own acceptance of "common sense" and a terrible fear of doing something that goes against it.

There are certain ideas that people don't want to doubt, ideas learned in school and through the media. I know many young people who, when they graduate from college, take jobs that they hate, that they don't respect, and they can't respect themselves for taking them. And yet they take them, and they do the work. I know men as well as women who have accepted this because the idea of not doing it is somehow unimaginable. Having a job with a good company with a good salary and a guarantee is just "what you do," and the idea of quitting it and doing something you'd rather do is somehow unthinkable except as a dream.

It's not economic and nobody is forcing them to make these choices. But there is a management of common sense which says "you must follow a certain path, no matter what." We might call this the invisible atmosphere of management?

Kogawa: Yes. when people are interviewed on the

street for TV, they have a tendency to use the expression *yahari* usually translated as "after all," or "all the same." It has a special connotation that "If I accept your supposition, I can say something like this." When I carried out research into these words on TV when Hirohito was dying, most people used these terms before starting their comments on Hirohito.

They would say, "*Yahari*, the Emperor is Japan's symbol," or "*Yahari*, the Emperor lived and suffered with us, so I'm sad he died...."

Lummis: I have the impression that the word *yahari* in Japanese is an announcement, that "Now I will

say what common sense is," or "Now I will say what the official version is. I will return to what is proper or what everyone accepts as proper." And whether the person means it or not is another question.

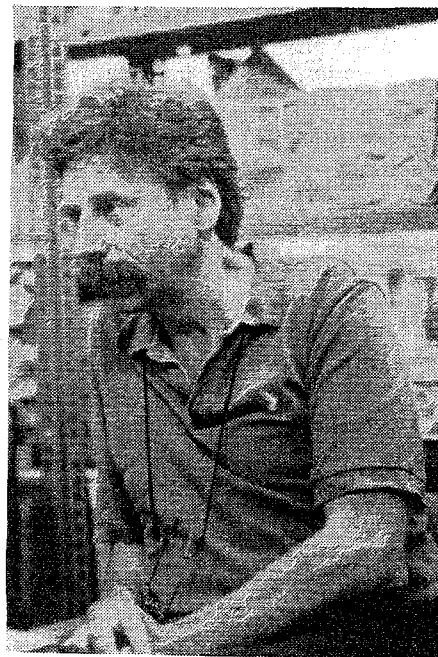
The question is not how much *tatemae* (what one ought to say, as opposed to *honne*, or real feeling) exists in the society, but rather the extent to which people are aware of the difference between that and their personal feelings. It seems to me that what you're saying is that the concept of *honne*, the awareness of one's own difference from the public

formalities, is quite well-developed, and quite well-protected at the level of daily life.

Kogawa: I'm not against the basic relationship between *honne* and *tatemae*. The *honne/tatemae* relationship is quite natural in every society and every language. But the problem in Japan is that *tatemae* usually belongs to the government, the state, the authorities. There is an insistence that to be public one must belong to the state.

Paths of Resistance

Lummis: Perhaps that is another way of saying that the authorities are very skillful at controlling



common sense, as the *tatema* world, the public world, public spaces and public meanings. Every time you say *yahari* you go back to something the government wants you to say. It's very difficult to generate a common sense that's independent of that.

But I think it's important to emphasize that this control we're describing is not fully successful. Outside the rear window of my house, they built a park about six or seven years ago. It was built by the ward government, as a Japanese garden, and there is a little path which is the only place you're allowed to walk. There is a sign that says, do not walk on the grass, don't bring your dog here, do not play, don't bring your bicycle. What you're supposed to do is walk in at one side, down the path, or out the other side. You can also sit on the bench. There's a big heavy trellis to hold the wisteria, and there's a little hill.

It's interesting, though. The first thing the local children discovered was that it was easy to climb the wisteria trellis, and they could sit on top. Two young men in the neighborhood used to come out on summer evenings and lie on top the trellis staring at the stars and talking until late at night. I could hear them talking about their girlfriends or about life. That was one discovery.

The second thing the kids discovered with their bicycles was that if you ride around the path, you can build up speed, ride up the hill (where you're not even supposed to walk), and then make a right turn and there's a beautiful stone, which is supposed to be decorative, but which becomes a jump for the bicycles. They go round and round, breaking through the hedges, climbing the hill, making a turn, and jumping off the stone, and they've worn out all the grass.

In the early morning about six o'clock there are about six families that bring their dogs and they keep them there for about half an hour. The dogs run around and play, jumping over the sign that says "No dogs." These are adults, not kids.

And late at night, the couples come and make love, sometimes right under our window. We can hear them. There's a hill, and they can hide there.

So it's totally unsuccessful. It's a wonderful park, and people have a lot of fun there. They do everything they're not supposed to do.

Kogawa: I'm conscious of this radical aspect of the people. That is why I say that we live in Japan in

spite of this control. The problem is that everybody knows about this, but when people enter the system, even provisionally, for a day or for hours, they become small bureaucrats. Outside of companies, in the bars and the streets, people have strong criticism against the state or against current policy. But when they get back into the company or the school, they quickly become conservative or reactionary. How do you explain this kind of chameleon-like character?

Lummis: That's one of the mysteries. The critique against *kanri* society has been made for years in this culture, and the level of awareness of the problem is extremely high. Everybody has heard or understands the expression *kanri shakai*, including people in the business world. I've heard it for thirty years, not just from people on the Left, but from ordinary businesspeople as well. And yet for many people there's a tendency for the awareness itself to be associated with a kind of fatalism, and people will say something like, *Yahari*, this is a managed society. Therefore there is no sense trying to resist." Or, "This is a managed society" as a way of explaining their own managed behavior.

The awareness itself turns away from being a criticism into being an excuse. In other words, how can I, as one person, stand up against this whole managed society that has been so beautifully analyzed by the critics. Who am I to stand up to what the Leftists have demonstrated to be the world's most powerful managed society?

I feel it's important to say that when we talk about *kanri*, we're not talking about some unique, peculiar characteristic of Japanese society. I think the whole industrial world is moving in the direction of forms of managing people: industrialism, industrial capitalism, industrial socialism require the management of people—management of workers, management of consumers—and it seems to contain both rational and irrational desires to manage. Of course, in each culture, this desire takes a different form as it adopts and adjusts to indigenous cultural forms and tries to transform them into forms of management.

Kogawa: We need to be conscious, also, that today's control system is transnational rather than national. The two societies of Japan and the United States work together, not only in politics but also at the level of everyday life.

The Managed Society

(C. Douglas Lummis and Kogawa Tetsuo)

- Part 2 -

The City and Control

In this second dialogue, Kogawa Tetsuo of Musashino University and Douglas Lummis of Tsuda College discuss the issue of control and the city. In particular, they focus on the changes that have occurred in Tokyo since the '60s. They focus on the question of the new Tokyo, what effect it has on the mind and on the feeling of "place," and how it can be used as a mechanism of control.

Kogawa: Tokyo has changed a lot since the Tokyo Olympics. Before then there were no highways in the city, and afterwards we ended up with a lot of ugly highways. High-rise buildings sprung up. The sixties seem to have been an age of transition, both visually and structurally.

It's small, but there's one interesting change I'd like to mention. After the sixties, the sidewalks were changed from stone pavements, or cement blocks, to smooth sidewalks. Now you can't pick up the individual blocks. The authorities were worried about riots.

Lummis: Yes, I remember that the students used to break those blocks and make them into stones and throw them at the police. Then the city covered it all over with asphalt, which doesn't make good stones.

I think you have to begin with another transition, at the end of World War II, when Tokyo was bombed flat. That's a vital transition.

I first came to Tokyo in 1968, and in those days I mostly visited apartments of students and young people who didn't have much money. They were dark, narrow, greasy, small apartments. Everything was greasy. At the time, I thought it was a miserable existence, but we always seemed to have a good time.

Today in my neighborhood in downtown

Tokyo, there are always places where these apartments are being torn down by machines just crush and smash them to fragments and scrape away the trash into a truck, and then replace them with ferroconcrete residences, usually very clean and very sanitary. And I find myself feeling a nostalgia for the greasy, miserable, post-war apartments. These were the houses of the post-war period, and you could feel the history of the place and the place in those apartments.

Kogawa: Yes. But I think a more important transformation occurred during the late 1960's. Before the sixties, the architecture was much more natural, closer to nature, and closer to the body. It was more appropriate to our symbiotic or communal style of living than it is now. But after the seventies, it became slicker and slicker. The city has become more rationalized. It really started in the city center, and gradually has started to spread out toward the outskirts.

But I think there should be more disorder.

This disorder would be more appropriate to our living, especially our mental living. I felt a transformation during the late 1970's in Tokyo when I went out on the streets. Everything was slick and polished.

In my understanding, the city should not be so rationalized. It should have some disorder so that various kinds of people can get together.

Lummis: I would still like to say I think there was a great transformation from the prewar to postwar period, even though I wasn't living here in either of those times. But I live in a prewar apartment and I have lived also in what they call a *sangen* or a three-unit longhouse, which is a rather interesting class type of housing.

There's a very great difference between

houses like the one I live in now, and the postwar apartments I was talking about. I think the element of efficiency, or rationalization, had already appeared in the cheap housing built after the War. The prewar apartments have some very pleasant aesthetic sense. They're built by good carpenters who took their time. There's always some wonderful irrationality in them. The *genkan* where you take off your shoes is too big, or inefficient. It seems the carpenter can't restrain himself from showing his craft somewhere.

The postwar apartments I saw were rather mass-produced, with poor quality wood, usually veneer, and absolutely no inefficient space. But the real change we're talking about starts in the 60's and goes through the 70's. You speak of it in terms of disorder versus efficiency. And I agree with you on that point.

But I would also like to mention the sense of place. These chaotic little districts, with narrow streets, where you can get lost. The things you can discover as you walk through the maze of the streets. They have an intense sense of place, and a culture that belongs to that place. One of the things that's destroyed in the new architecture is the sense of place. It's divorced of any place, and so I like to call it "nowhere architecture." When you live in one of these boxes, you're just living in that box. You're not living in any neighborhood, or in any place at all. You're living in a file cabinet.

I can tell you about one of the effects of this. In my neighborhood, there's a festival every year, a bit like the Rio Carnival. It's a wonderful festival, but most of the people participating are the people who live in the old buildings. When new apartments go up, the people who live there don't participate. They may take pictures, but they don't participate.

Our neighborhood is also involved with a city highway project. The city wants to build an arterial right through the center of my neighborhood. Ten years ago the movement against the project was too

strong, so the city put a freeze on it for ten years. But now, just last week, the local people had a meeting and most said they would not oppose the project any longer. In particular, the people who live on the strip which is slated to be destroyed, although they own their houses, cannot get permits to repair or sell their houses. Many are getting old, and they have decided to ask the city to build the highway quickly, so they can get the money and move somewhere else.

But this means that the heart of the neighborhood will be removed and replaced by a strip of concrete. It means the remaining neighborhood will be divided in two. I don't know whether the festival will survive this decision.

I think we're seeing the effects of the new city.

Once the sense of place is broken, then real cultural resistance is difficult to restore. Once you start living in file cabinets, if the government says they're going to destroy the apartment building you're living in, who cares? One place is just as good as another. You can reorder the people anyway you wish. In this sense, I think the uprooting of people from places, from communities and neighborhoods and from each other, and making them into interchangeable units, makes people far more manageable. You can knock down a building, or build another one, and the people will just come out in units, as if you'd pulled out a drawer and stuck it in another filing cabinet.



Picking up stones from the old city

Kogawa: Yes. I think the filing system policy is very indicative of the government's city policy. They don't consider the memory of people to be important. For them, history can only remain in a single place in Tokyo: the Imperial Palace. Every other place can be in constant flux. So for the rest of us, it's very difficult to maintain a sense of place. This has been dictated by regulations.

I can bring up the example of taxes. Even people who own their own land find it very diffi-

cult to maintain the ownership for several generations. The inheritance tax is very, very high. The children have to pay close to 50% of the price of the land. This amount is robbed by the government. This means that most people cannot keep the land, and they have to sell it, often to companies. This means that people cannot stay in one place over generations.

In Tokyo, especially, the name and the memory of place is gradually being forgotten.

Lummis: I think the tax question relates to another question, which is the "illusion of private property." We live in a capitalist society in which the ruling ideology teaches us that private property is freedom and power. Having private property used to mean having land to farm, or a place to work. But now it means owning your own home. The ideology dictates that owning your own home means you're a full-fledged human being. There's a world of difference in their minds between renting and owning. Young people get married, and take out a 30- or 40-year-loan.

Kogawa: Sometimes even children end up having to continue to pay for the loan their parents took out...

Lummis: Sometimes they pay off the loan with their retirement pay. But typically, young people who are active in political movements or resistance against the government decide they have to quit their activities when they take out a loan. Once they take out the loan, they say to themselves, "I can't afford to lose my job." The power of the home loan to manage people is incredible. But people don't think of it this way. People are depoliticized by home loans. These people become bonded servants to the banks and to their companies.

It's worse than that, though. Once the people pay the money back and get their house paid off, then the city can come along and have their houses knocked down.

Kogawa: The present government sometimes say, that in the future, the inheritance tax should be reduced, because at the present it's very high and you can't inherit land. In the future, the government plans to reduce the tax. But their concern is a very different one. They worked to destroy communal culture since the Meiji Period. But now they are worried the higher tax will damage the popular traditions that guarantee the conservative system. In other words, they see these cultures as resources to be protected and used. It is a very capitalistic solution.

There is another way of overcoming the illusion of private property, however. If the government introduces more public housing, the housing

situation will become healthier. The government might take over land, and rent the land out. This means the land can't be maintained privately, and can't be bought and sold. And this means everyone should live in public housing. But now, when the state has its own land, it sells it to private corporations. The break-up and privatization of Japan National Railways is a good example of this. In this case, property which used to be public has been made private.

This might sound socialistic, but the government could make private lands public.



Laying the groundwork for new filing cabinets

Lummis: I think it presupposes a very kind of government. Under an ideal of government, public housing could and should work. But now we're talking about the city as a tool of management. We're living under a government that manages, a managerial-minded government, and a rationalizing government. So if all housing becomes public housing, the government could use this to manage all things. Government housing could become a prison system; everyone in their cell. I could imagine a country in which everyone has a number, which is the same as their address.

All the citizens would be filed in alphabetical order. I could imagine public housing becoming a situation of perfect management.

Norman Mailer, the novelist, once suggested that governments should give money to homeless people, and provide them with a space and building materials, and allow them to build with their own hands. You'd get some failures, but you'd also get some wonderful, imaginative, crazy houses. You'd also get the rebirth of culture. People would not build filing cabinets.

Kogawa: A couple of years ago architect Ishiyama Osamu wrote a book on how to build your own house with the "Akihabara sense." Akihabara is the Tokyo district where you can buy electronic parts to make radios or other electronic appliances using a do-it-yourself method. And using this kind of DIY method, he suggested people could buy their own houses. Ishiyama argued that people could use huge water pipe, the kind they use in sewers, and used containers, to build houses. Many people were interested at the time, because it was very cheap. But there was a problem, regulations. In order to build, you need permission from the Ministry of Construction. It's a very bureaucratic process. It's very hard to get a license to build your own housing. Only professionals can get these permits. In addition, there isn't very much of a tradition in Japan of this kind of DIY activity. It therefore seemed like an original idea.

He had many ideas, but there were many problems involved with permits. It may be easy to build a house...

Lummis: It's not easy. It may be a pleasure, but it's not easy.

Kogawa: I'd like to add some comments about the filing system. I will insist that the government is only interested in the Imperial Palace as a memory bank for the people. The government didn't mind the loss of tradition or place. But in the last ten years, the population in the heart of Tokyo has increased. In the daytime, there are many people, but during the night some wards become no-man's-lands. In terms of business, these areas are very efficient. But in terms of culture, they are becoming voids. In many Tokyo wards, the populations are now declining.

You spoke of filing cabinets in a negative sense. But at the same time, it might have some positive aspect. Japanese people live in a kind of filing cabinet. But this hodgepodge which is so common means that every place is different from any other. The core, however, is similar. We still have a memory of the old cities and the old relationships. If we can exchange these memories, we may still find memories of cities which can't be exchanged like filing cabinets. This is our challenge. The government has tried to force us into filing cabinets. It's a very smart policy, but it won't work. We might accept it provisionally, but we will have to refuse it eventually. We still have more basic memories in our bodies.

Perhaps there are other possibilities. We have to prepare for alternatives. Even if every place is finished, we may find a final place: the body. The body is the last place. But electronic technology has intervened even into our bodies.

Lummis: But counting the body as a place fits beautifully into the managerial, file cabinet model of society, that you can fit into any of the file cabinets. There is no longer any contradiction between that notion of place and the filing system. There is another kind of memory, however. It may be a myth, but there's a story of an Indian tribe that lives near Atlanta, Georgia, in the United States, and during their annual initiation rite, they take the youngsters to downtown Atlanta, and the elders tell them that "this is our sacred spring. It's down there. We know that, because our ancestors told us it's there." They say that the White Man and his cities are only a passing place, that the spring will rise to the surface again. Young people remember this, and will remember it until the city is gone. That's different from saying the place is only in your body. It's an incredibly stubborn community.

It may be that people are ultimately unmanageable, and that whenever a scheme of total management seems at the verge of success, the people will somehow slip out of its grasp and start creating their own culture in their own peculiar, incorrigible, and unmanageable way.



— Kogawa and Lummis —

The Managed Society: Part 3

Control and the Media



In this third dialogue, Kogawa Tetsuo and Douglas Lummis discuss the issue of control and taboo in the mass media. Both have experienced media responses to articles they wrote which newspapers or magazines judged were in violation of the taboos.

"Managed Free Expression"

Kogawa: Let me start by asking you about a personal experience. You appeared on a television program called *Asa Made Nama Terebi*, a televised debate-style show. It is considered quite liberal, or even radical.

Lummis: It's an unexpected question.

Kogawa: I believe that when you went on TV, you thought that Japanese television was viable. But when I watched you, it seemed that you were very disappointed.

Lummis: Perhaps we'd better explain what that program is. It starts at 1:00 a.m. and continues until 6:00 a.m., for five hours. It's supposedly a free-wheeling debate giving all sides of controversial issues. The people like to shout, call each other names, interrupt each other. It's very rowdy.

One time I was asked to appear on it, one time only. The subject was the Japanese Constitution and Japanese participa-

tion in U.N. Peace-keeping Operations.

There was an audience of young people in the studio, and they seem to come for the purpose of enjoying the violent language. When people start to shout at each other, the audience gets very happy and claps. It doesn't matter which side.

The development of the discussion was completely controlled by the chair. It was impossible to carry it in any different direction. He had a plan in his mind of what he wanted to do, and he carried it out. I wasn't a moderator, but a manager of the discussion.

Kogawa: But in Japan, that kind of program is still considered "radical." That's very symbolic.

Lummis: I think the issue isn't so much whether it's left or right, but the fact that you watch it on TV, you get the illusion that you're seeing a free discussion. It is, in the sense that nobody tells you what to say, and if you get the floor you can say anything.

thing. Well-intentioned people sometimes appear, and say what they want to say. But the overall framework makes it a managed discussion. I said what I wanted to say, but within the framework of the discussion, my comments weren't relevant.

I think the program is basically a spectacle, judging from the people who really love the program enough to come to the studio and watch it there. They are like people coming to watch a pro-wrestling match. I think they root for one side in the trivial way that you root for one wrestler or another. I didn't get the impression that the people in the audience cared about the principle, which is the case of the Constitution is terribly important, and not something to be decided by pro-wrestling techniques.

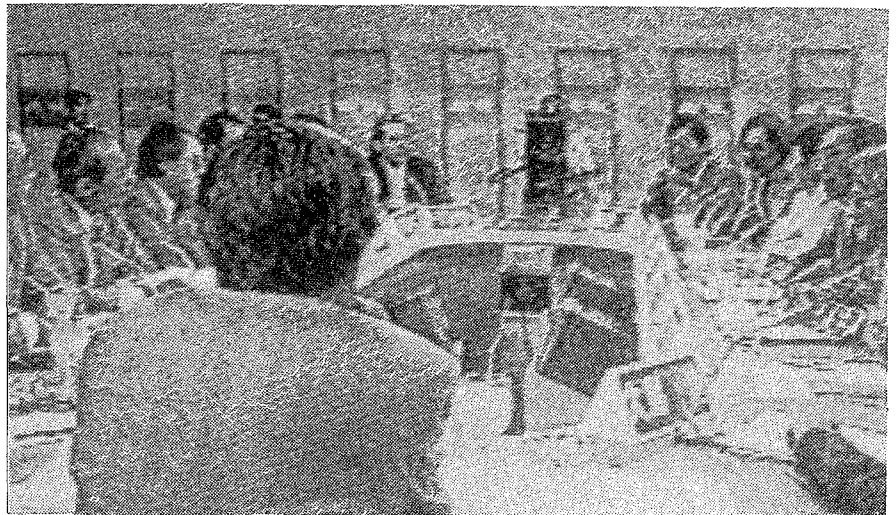
Kogawa: When that program was initiated, the producer was apparently trying to squeeze some radical ideas into the mass media, but the program became more and more popular, above the expectations of the companies, and eventually it became a show. The system realized it was safe, just a pro-wrestling match. But the initial intention was different. It was coopted by the system.

Lummis: That program symbolizes a problem generally applicable to mass media, which is that there is an illusion of freedom of speech, and there is a kind of freedom of speech in some areas, but there's a framework around the freedom, which can't be talked about. There is no one, to my knowledge, in prison in Japan for the simple crime of saying or writing something publicly. The government doesn't arrest you, and this is something precious. But there's a different, more subtle constraint which is difficult to see.

Kogawa: The system is structured by repressive logic. That TV show was organized with a sort of radical intention, and the topics and themes they deal with tend to be liberal or radical. But the basic framework isn't radical. It's very conservative, even reactionary. When they deal with telephones, they never make the line live. They receive the calls and summarize them. They like to use facsimiles rather than live calls. And they don't allow people to come into the studio.

Lummis: But there's the studio audience.

Kogawa: No, I mean unexpected guests. People from outside. The people on the show how to give their names and are checked. But a person who watches the show can't just come and enter the studio. The space for discussion is not open. It's terribly controlled. This is a totally different frame-



"Asa Made Nama Terebi"

work from a free space for discussion. Perhaps the framework itself is inappropriate for dealing with that subject.

In fact, mass media or television always follows this framework. The basic framework hasn't changed at all. I believe it could be possible to change that framework, by opening the studio to the public. But the system would never allow such openness.

Lummis: You're more optimistic than I. This may be a tautology, but it's a very important one. Anything that appears on television becomes television. So if you take your Mr. Anybody or Ms. Anybody, and they start to talk to the TV camera, they will change their way of speaking. When you see people being interviewed on the street, it already doesn't sound like the way people talk. People know how to talk like an announcer.

Broadcasting Laws

Kogawa: The basic structure of Japanese laws were established at the end of the 19th century, during the Meiji Period. Even the Airwaves Law basically is a law to control the people, to protect the government's right to intervene. It isn't a law for the people.

In terms of receiving airwaves, the present law says that you cannot talk to other people about things you have heard over the air unless you have the permission of the government. There are short-wave receivers which you can buy. You can listen to programs on the international airwaves, but you cannot repeat the contents. You can't talk about it.

Lummis: This is a law on the books which isn't enforced, isn't it?

Kogawa: Yes, but that's because it's impossible for the government to know who is listening to the airwaves. But in the pre-war and war period, it was very effective in controlling espionage activities. Someone was found listening to short-wave radios in his home, and he was arrested. He was arrested for irregular activities over the airwaves. Then his home was searched, and he was eventually accused of espionage.

The Law has been very effective, both politically and commercially. In terms of commercial reasons, they were able to use it for licensing. Every frequency is monopolized by the government, and you can't

use it without the government's permission.

Lummis: Not even ham radio?

Kogawa: Ham radio is defined as a bar for technical experiments. So, theoretically you can't chat about trifles. The Minist



Fading...

of Post and Communications can control practically all the bounds of the airwaves. The airwaves effectively belong to the government, and can't be used without permission. There are exceptions, but only for very low-power airwaves, and we use them for the mini-FM stations.

This system was first set up with political intentions, but now it has become a mixture of commercial and political interests.

In the present age, some problems are emerging, for example in terms of satellites. There's no law against having a satellite dish on your house, but it's illegal to receive airwaves from outside Japan.

Lummis: You mean you can have a dish but you can't plug it in?

Kogawa: Well, let me put it this way. There are television stations outside of the country in China, Korea... These airwaves spill over

into Japan, which means that you can receive the signals and watch the shows. It's technically possible. But the government does not allow you to do it. It is illegal under the broadcast laws. Also, you can't sell what you receive or even talk about it to other people.

In the modern age, it's impossible to enforce this law. It's very counterproductive even for the companies that build electronic devices. It's possible even now to buy satellite dishes. The big companies never go against the government line, so even in Akihabara it's very difficult to buy dishes that can pick up international transmissions. It's difficult, but possible. In specialized magazines you can find dishes on sale by mail order. It isn't the big companies, though, it's small ones.



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Media Consumers

Lummis: In Benedict Anderson's wonderful book *Imagined Communities*, he argues that the nation, the group of people under one state, is what he called an imagined community. You can't see all those people, and you can't gather them in one place. But you think of them as a group distinguished from other groups. His argument is that in

the formation of this imagined nation, mass media was crucial, that the growth of print media and newspapers created the phenomena of people reading the morning paper with the confidence that within this community, all the other people were reading the same thing. The nation-state is united as a mass media audience.

This is especially true in Japan, where the major newspapers are national, and where the local newspapers are secondary. When you read the *Asahi*, the *Mainichi* or the *Yomiuri*, you know that people all around the country are reading the same news. And increasingly, it's becoming a television community.

In this sense, the government's policy of erecting a decisive barrier between the domestic mass media and the international mass media isn't foolish. It may be based on a real understanding that the internationalization of the media could have the power to dissolve nations.

Kogawa: In Japan, as you've said, mass media is a kind of public space. This is my understanding. Also, over the last two decades, the public space has become much more mass-media oriented, taking over gathering space and even printed media. The public space has become much more television and picture media. In other places, you still have places for gathering and talking. And there is still some aural communication in public spaces. But in Japan, because the public spaces like parks are very controlled, and because there are no independent politics anymore, only the mass media, the imaginary mass media space, is the quasi public space.

Japan's Great Taboo

Lummis: This may bring us back to the beginning, in other words, the illusion of free speech versus the reality. The clearest

expression of a community consciousness that never changes is the emperor system. And when you come to the emperor system, this is where you come to the shocking limit to freedom of expression. In my writing career in Japan, I've had writing altered or refused only four times. And all of those had to do with the emperor system.

Once, I was called up by the *Weekly Asahi* during the time that Hirohito was dying, and asked to give my opinion. I said "There's a very great difference between the consciousness of the Japanese people as represented in the media, and the consciousness of people that you really meet in the world. In the media, everybody is mourning, but people in my neighborhood don't seem to care at all." My intention was to say "The media is lying about this." The *Weekly Asahi* turned it around and said, almost in the same words that I had used, that the Japanese people seemed to be very coldhearted toward their poor emperor. That was very skillfully done.

At the same time, I wrote a column for the *Student Times* about the emperor's dying, and they refused to print it. They did, however, print the footnote that I put in the next column saying that my column of the month before had been refused, and if anyone wanted a copy they could send me a letter. I got 141 stamped self-addressed envelopes. This shows that the freest mass media system is still the postal system.

The third case was the song, *Cinderella Blues*, which I wrote for the *Weekly ST* (the new name for the *Student Times*). (See page pp40-41)

The fourth case takes longer to tell. To me this was the most interesting. In 1989, the mayor of Nagasaki, Motojima Hitoshi, was shot (not fatally) by a right-wing terrorist, because he had said that Emperor Hirohito had some responsibility for World War II. I was called by a young woman reporter from the *Asahi Shimbun* who said, "We at *Asahi* feel responsibility for creating the atmosphere in which the mayor was shot. We feel we have not done our duty to establish the space in this country for freedom of expression." Several years before, an *Asahi* reporter had been killed

for criticizing the emperor. She said, "I interviewed a right wing man recently, and he said, 'the *Asahi* has been a very good newspaper since then, hasn't it?' This was very painful. Therefore, we want to have a page about the Motojima assassination attempt. We will have three people: you, a right winger, and a constitutional lawyer. And you can say anything you want."

I met her in a coffee shop, and I said, "There's a taboo in this country about what you can say about the emperor in print. To destroy this taboo, it's not enough to say, 'There should be freedom of speech.' Freedom of speech includes the freedom to say things that are wrong, and defenders of freedom of speech can be defending the right to have opinions they don't agree with. It's not an action in *solidarity* with Mayor Motojima just to say, 'He should have freedom of speech.' If you want to act in solidarity with Mayor Motojima, you have to say, 'What he said was right. I say the same thing.' And if everybody says the taboo



Televising the City

thing publicly, then you're creating free space. If you say, 'Somebody else has the right to say it,' that's different."

The second thing I did was, I said several taboo things intentionally. I said, "This incident indicates that the violence of the emperor system against the people of Japan has not come to an end. And, the present emperor bears personal responsibility for this incident, especially since he has made no comment since the incident." That's taboo. And she said, "That's very interesting," and she wrote it all down and went away.

The next day she called me up, and she said, "There's a question that I forgot to ask you: What is the comparison or the difference between terrorism in Japan and terrorism in the U.S.?" And I thought, "Uh, oh, something's funny." That's the question you ask people if you don't have any question to ask. And I said, "I don't want to answer that. If I answer that, I would have to talk about this, and this, and this..." And inadvertently, I answered the question. I made a mistake.

So the next day, they sent the galley to my door, and it was all what I said on the telephone. All the taboo things were gone. I called her up and said, "A lot of the things we talked about in the coffee shop didn't get in, did they?" And she said, "Yes, well the thing you said on the telephone was so interesting, and there wasn't space for the rest." And I said, "That means there was no particular problem with those other things, right? It was just a problem of space?" She said, "That's right." So I said, "In that case, I want you to put in the last part again, please." She said, after pausing for a minute, "I'm sorry, I can't."

I said, "I want it in." So she said, "All right, I'll negotiate again." Which means that she was trapped between me and her boss. She told me the deadline was 5:00, and asked me to call back before then. I called her again at 4:45. She said, "I'm sorry, I can't put it in." So I said, "I'm sorry, then, you have to take out my whole article. I won't let you have it." And she said, "But it's ten minutes before the deadline!" I said, "I'm sorry, you can paint it all black if you

want, but you can't have my words." She said, "All right, I'll negotiate one more time." I called her back in another ten minutes, and she said, "All right, we'll put it in."

Then I made my second mistake. I didn't ask her to tell me exactly the words that she would put in. I said, "Thank you" and I hung up.

The next day the paper came out. It didn't say anything about this being an incident of violence of the emperor system against the people. It said, "The present emperor bears responsibility for this event *insofar as* he has made no statement since the event." This is completely different, because the responsibility that I was talking about was responsibility *for* the violence, whereas all the *Asahi* could print was that he should have said something after it happened. So the newspaper quoted me as saying something I never said.

The *Asahi* is supposed to be the most liberal of the big newspapers. And this was an interview in which they were not printing *their* opinion, they were printing *my* opinion. It was perfectly possible for them to say, "Here's this fool who says this." It was somebody they interviewed. They had no responsibility for what I said. And yet they couldn't print it. To me, this is a perfect example of taboo.

Kogawa: This is the emperor system of the media.

Lummis: Yes, it's important to understand that this wasn't the government. This is all within the structure of the *Asahi*, at a moment at which they were saying, "We feel guilty about our failure to support freedom of expression, and this particular feature is to start reestablishing the space of freedom of expression."

Kogawa: I also had a problem with the *Asahi*. It was 1989, when Hirohito was dying. The *Asahi Journal* asked me to write a short piece, and I wrote a very sarcastic article using a right-wing style, saying that the Japanese people are not being polite enough towards the emperor system. I said

people talked about his intestinal bleeding, which was rude to the imperial family. It was an ironic style.

They refused, but they used an excuse. They said they had a lot of manuscripts, and said they couldn't carry my article. They paid for it anyway. But it was just an excuse.

Lummis: Yes, it's inconceivable that a weekly magazine would ask for an article and then say, "We have no space."

Kogawa: I had a similar problem just recently with a *Yomiuri* journal called *This Is*. It's basically reactionary, but the editor called me, met with me, and discussed the upcoming royal wedding. I said that in my understanding it was a very conservative magazine, and didn't think they could deal with such issues in their pages. He said, "Now the situation has changed. We welcome a diversity of topics. We need critical comments." I thought he was a good guy, and he was trying to squeeze something radical into their pages. I wrote a ten-page article on the "Emperor System in the Post-statism Age."

Three weeks later, I received a telephone call, and he said, "I wanted to use your essay, but our schedule has changed. We have to publish a special issue on the marriage ceremony in May. After that, the topic should be out of season." Now we have no room for your piece. It was a long piece. The excuse was based on business. But the reality was an editorial decision.

Lummis: There are two obvious places where this kind of pressure can come from. Beyond that, however, there is the vague area of taboo that goes beyond rational calculation. The first is the fear of right-wing terror.

The second is the way in which the Imperial Household Agency (*Kunaicho*) controls news about the imperial family. And especially for weekly magazines, it's very important to have pictures of the family and the children and so forth, because they sell. If you say any bad thing about the

imperial family, you can't get those pictures. All pictures and news about the imperial family comes from the Imperial Household Agency. There are no independent sources. So there's a strong business pressure (See *AMPO*, Vol.20 No.3, 1988).

The third is a vague, irrational feeling of fear with regards to bad things said about the emperor. Some people just can't bear to see it in print in their paper. This is the taboo aspect.

Kogawa: The Japanese power system is very clever in its use of the unconscious. In terms of the emperor system it's very skillful. We tend to have a very strong unconscious memory that tells us we can't be critical of the emperor. This was true in the war period, and it has lasted into the postwar period. Old people have strong memories.

Also, the laws haven't changed much since the war. These things that happen at the unconscious level are protected by these laws. Only the brave are able to break through these taboos.

Lummis: Yes. I tend to find a tendency among some liberals in Japan to say "there is no freedom of speech" as a way of excusing themselves for not breaking the taboo themselves. But in the most fundamental sense, there is freedom of speech. The government doesn't arrest people for what they write.

Kogawa: I think there is no freedom of speech at the national level, but it exists at the local level. I think, therefore, that the most important thing to do is to deconstruct the national level of mass media.

Lummis: The national level — that is, where the audience of the media corresponds to the imagined community of the "nation." And I think the way to deconstruct that level is to focus on media that does *not* correspond to state boundaries. That means not only local media but also trans-border media. The communities formed by these media are different from state formed communities and have a different kind of freedom to think and act. ■