

ICHIGŪ KAI
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
(English translation)

with

Masayuki Chikuma (MC)

Interviewers: Rev. Ryokan Ara (RA)
plus unknown others (Unk1, Unk2, etc.)

Interview Date: July 6, 1979

This interview is one of a series of video interviews conducted in Japanese by Hawaii Ichigū Kai, a Buddhist service organization, led by Bishop Ryokan Ara. The group made video recordings of 100 Issei sharing their life stories.

Note: An unclear word or sentence is shown by ((?)). A comment by translator or transcriber is enclosed in a bracket []. Names of persons are entered in the Japanese way, i.e., surname followed by given name.

RA: Today is July 6, 1979. We are going to listen to Mr. Chikuma Masayuki sharing his life story. Mr. Chikuma, please begin.

MC: Thank you. I was born in Onomichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture [in Japan]. Since my father was engaged in a contracting business, we moved around frequently. While we were in Onomichi, we moved three or four times until we came to Nishigosho where our house was built. I stayed there until I graduated from higher elementary school. Although my birthdate was April 21, 1902, according to the family register, I was actually born in 1901. This discrepancy in my birth year resulted in some problems at school when I was in third or fourth grade, but nothing was done by the time I graduated. When I took the examination for conscription, I was with guys one year younger than me. Although it is of no use to pursue this matter, my official age is 77, while my true age is 78. I was not fond of studying in school, but I really enjoyed the traditional performing arts since I was little. To begin with, my birth mother was a professional singer of *shinnai*, *kiyomoto*, *yoruri* and *nagauta*. My father was an ukiyoe artist who employed many workers. You might be able to guess what kind of person I became in that kind of environment. I grew up among rough-natured workmen. I had an elder brother, who was my mother's son-in-law, and I was ((?))... two of us were ((?)). After I graduated from elementary school, I applied for a commercial school in Onomichi. At that time, we could apply during the last two years of elementary school. I applied twice, but I failed both times. I had an uncle and an aunt on the maternal side in Okayama, and I went to live with them to attend a commercial school in Okayama. It was not easy for me to attend school while working. In the end, when I was 18 years old in Taisho 8 [1919], I left with my suitcase, looking up my relative in Osaka. There was a theater called Yaeza in Nanchi, and Soganoya Ichiman led a comedy troupe there. I turned to Hanazawa Shunraku who was *onnagata* [a female-role actor]. He took care of me in a lot of ways. At the time, Namura Shunso was

the leader of *Tokyo Kikageki-dan* ["Tokyo Musical Comedy Troupe"]. As some of you may know, his real name was Noshō Hisaharu. His father was Noshō Denjiro, who gave lessons in piano to famous members of the Imperial Family, and his daughter taught nursery songs. His son organized a musical comedy troupe at Rakutenchi in Osaka, and I joined his group. I had been performing from time to time, travelling around the country. As some of you may know, an opera company was performing at Kinryu-kan in Tokyo, featuring Rossi from Italy. At the same time, Shimizu Kintaro and Taya Rikizo organized their own opera companies. However, musical comedies were not that popular at the time. In a typical scene, for example, a man was in trouble with repaying a loan shark. Piano and orchestra made a loud and startling sound when the loan shark appeared to collect the money, singing, "Are~you~in?" He sang, "Good~morning~how~are~you?" Then, from the inside of a house, "Well~well~Mr. Ice, such bad timing~ so early in the morning. What~do~you~want?"[singing in opera fashion] Musical comedy was like this.

RA: Was it an opera?

MC: Yes, it was an opera.

RA: I see.

MC: And so the audience said, "What is this? It's like an amateur show." However, in big cities such as Osaka and Tokyo, there were some people, including many school students, who came to see the show. Urabe Kumiko was a member of the troupe I joined. She was already a middle-ranking member. As you know, she was the daughter of a Buddhist priest. She was a serious, chubby, and lovely person who sang songs. She always had tears in one eye and we teased her, saying ((?)). When we asked her what was wrong, she told us her lacrimal gland was broken. She was rather smart, and later joined Nikkatsu [movie production and distribution house] and then married a wealthy man. She was one person I remember well. There were many other actors such as Izumo Yaeko, but I hardly remember them. I became an apprentice to Kawai Marumero, who was from Aomori or something. Master Marumero gave me the stage name "Maruo." Yamada Ichiro, son of Yamada Shohei who lived in Kajiwara-cho, Tokyo, was a middle-ranking member in the company. His stage name was the same as his real name. He teased me, "How come your name is Maruo [*maru* means 'round']? You have a square face." When I was in the troupe, people used to say, "Your face is cut out for a pro since you look like a foreigner." In our opera play, we disguised ourselves as Caucasians or Italians. When I first joined the troupe, Mr. Kawasaki Chocho, well-known comedy actor, was a subleader there. He said, "Wow, you look like raccoons!" We were made up [with circles] around the eyes, and a line down the nose, making our faces look like Caucasians. However, my role was simply to be a member of the chorus. In the beginning, I just kept in tune with the others without knowing the lyrics, and gradually learned what to do. Women were quick learners who soon became proficient in acting, advancing to middle-ranking members. On the other hand, men were slow to reach a higher status unless they were well grounded in singing. In the meantime, Mr. Sato Koroku, who was a well-known personality [author and poet], organized *Nihonza* ["Japan Troupe"]. He was a famous master of *shinpa* [also rendered *shimpa*, literally meaning "new school" to contrast it from *kyuha* ("old school" or kabuki)] drama. He had been a stage director when Ii [Ii Yoho], Kawai [Kawai Takeo], Kitamura Rokuro, and Takata Minoru performed on stage. He often presented drama based on his own books such as Ushio and ((?)). He used to sit

in the wings watching performances and criticizing this and that after the play was over.

Anyway, he formed Nihonza. One of the members of the troupe was Yamada Kusuo, who was the father of the famous Yamada Isuzu. He was taller than I was, and some of us bad-mouthed him, saying his *tabi* [Japanese socks] was size 13 *mon* [31.2 cm] with a high instep. However, he was a female-role player, a famous one and a good actor. In the troupe, I became an apprentice to Hara Tatsuichi, and became a man Friday to Mr. Sato. It was at the end of Taisho 8 [1919]. There was a theater called Kakuza in Osaka. There was another theater called Bentenza nearby, where Mr. Sato presented his *shinpa* drama. Until then, so-called new-school drama had a vague style which could not be interpreted as either traditional or new-school drama. Under Mr. Sato, it was different, even in the way an actor spoke his lines. Even for one line, we did not intonate excessively. It was like present-day plays, actors speaking in natural tones. We were told, “Do not be theatrical! It is unrefined to act unnatural. You must be a down-to-earth player.” At the time, kabuki [Japanese classical drama] drew large audiences, especially when famous actors in Tokyo or Osaka performed. The stage was beautiful. It had a well-established reputation, things were thoroughly organized, and it had been advertised well. People often talked about famous actors such as Utaemon [Ichikawa Utaemon] and Kanjuro [Arashi Kanjuro]. Influenced by kabuki, actors tended to speak in a sing-song fashion saying, for example, “You~are~such~and~such...” with lots of modulation. On the other hand, in the new-school drama, we spoke our lines in an ordinary tone. This was the principle that Mr. Sato taught us in his *shinpa* drama. My first role on stage was to make a mail delivery in a drama called *Futatsu no Michi* [“Two Roads”], which was written by Mr. Sato [actually written by Mayama Seika]. It was not easy to be given a role on stage unless the master thought he/she had promise. There were some last-minute actors who joined our troupe. Although they had many years of experience, they were just “many others” in a large pool of actors. They were low-ranking actors playing workmen or captors in kabuki plays [pursuing a criminal]. They were pushed around, following orders like “Let's go!” “Come now!” but were not allowed to speak a single line. Newcomers were always treated in that fashion. They were eventually allowed to utter short lines such as “That's right!” in response to a line spoken by the head of the green room. That was how it was in those days. [*Futatsu no Michi*] was staged in Bentenza in Taisho 8 [1919]. It lasted a long time, doing well. We had many famous actors such as the aforementioned Yamada Kusuo who was the father of Yamada Isuzu, Moroguchi Tsuzuya who was well-known for his roles as a leading man at Shochiku [film and theater company], Satsuki Nobuko, and Otowa [Nobuko]... many famous actors in *shinpa* drama. My master Hara was... There were two men named Hara Tatsuichi. One of them was a well-known leader of the new-school drama in Hokkaido. He was blind and because of his blindness, his assistant led him to the wing of *hanamichi* [the walkway to the stage through the audience] or to the stage wings. When he entered the stage, however, he held himself firmly and performed like an ordinary person. He was well-known. He was not my master. My master, Hara Tatsuichi, was not blind and he was a good actor. He was old and was retired at the time. He and his wife lived with their two maids in their second house in Sumiyoshi, Osaka. He invited me to stay at his house instead of renting a room somewhere else. I stayed there while I trained to be an actor. Mr. Sato owned a house near Taisho-bashi in Sumiyoshi. During the daytime, he always spent his time in writing his novel on the second floor. When he completed his story, he

called - he used to call me Sakatani. When I went to see him, he gave me his manuscript, which contained ((*jōhō*?)), to be delivered to the post office. It was part of a serial novel published in newspapers such as the *Osaka-Mainichi*. I often ran that errand for him.

During the day I served my apprenticeship at Mr. Sato's in various ways. I swept his yard first thing in the morning, joined Mr. Sato when he took a morning bath, sometimes rinsing his back. While I was with Mr. Sato, he taught me various things. He taught me *jōruri* [dramatic narrative chanted to a *shamisen* accompaniment] face-to-face a few days a week. While I was training, Mr. Sato formed *Dainikai Shin Nihonza* ["The 2nd New Japan Troupe"], and he gave me a fairly good role after more than a half year's apprenticeship. When the troupe was on the road in the countryside, I was promoted to the middle-ranking status for the first time. Mr. Sato told me, "Since we are in a cheerful business, you need a gloomy name." "Master, I have no idea what it would be." "All right, I can give you a name." At the time, we were doing scenes from the opera *Carmen*. In one scene, many of us were milling around in a billiard parlor, some playing a game of pool. The female actors were arranging balls or keeping score. We sang songs such as "Let's smoke cigarettes," "Heaven or hell from a turned down dice cup," or "Missing a delicate harlot." Since I used to play in an opera troupe, I was conducting the singing without musical instruments. That's when Master Koroku [Sato Koroku] picked my stage name after a turned-down dice cup [*tsubo*] in one of the songs. He said, "You are 'Tsubo'ndo. This means ((?)). Therefore, you are Sakatani Tsubondo from now on." From then on my stage name appeared on our posters at street corners, although it was in small letters. We took our play all the way to Hiroshima. About a year later, Mr. Sato met with *Nakano Shinpa-geki* ["Nakano New-school Drama"] and *Gishinoya Kigeki-dan* ["Gishinoya Comedy Troupe"]. *Gishinoya* was a theatrical troupe led by Horikoshi Eicho after the war [First World War 1914-18]. All of its actors had stage names such as Kuranosuke, Rikiya, and Kanbei... *Gishinoya Kanbei*, *Gishinoya So-and-so*. Their plays were very amusing. Mr. Sato decided to merge with them [*Gishinoya*]. That's when I left his group and joined a comedy troupe called ((*Shaganoya*?)) led by Matsudaira Ryutaro.

Around Taisho 9 or 10 [1920 or 21], comedy became very popular, and *shinpa* drama went out of fashion. Almost all plays were comedies. In my new comedy troupe, I played *shakai-geki* [sociodrama that focused social issues such as personal conflict in class society], short comedy, or slapstick drama. Still later, I joined a variety show troupe called *Soganoya Manjuro*. *Kobeikyo* [Katsura Kobeikyo], who was a son of Katsura Beikyo from Osaka, was in this troupe. His stage name was *Soganoya Manjuro*, and he acted as a leading man. He performed a light comedy at the beginning and a *shakai-geki* at the end of the show. He also played both *kyu-kigeki* [traditional comedy] and *shin-kigeki* [new-style comedy]. In between his plays, there was sword dancing, comic dialogue, or comical story, with Mr. Kobeikyo appearing in comic dialogue sometimes. Since I had enough experience in stage performance, I was given fairly good roles. We took our show to various places in Hiroshima Prefecture and Okayama Prefecture. In the meantime, Mr. Sato's troupe was dissolved.

The time for my conscription examination was approaching, so I went back to Onomichi. Takemoto Dansho, who came to Hawaii with me, sang *jōruri* to his own accompaniment. He used to live near my place [in Onomichi], working at a large laundry, washing clothes, mending umbrellas, and working on hats. When I returned to Onomichi, I

learned that my father had moved to Okayama, and my aunt was engaged in various trades such as making miso [bean paste] and pickles, owning a liquor store, and doing business at a public market. My father was doing well in contracting work, and he told me, “I don't expect to die on my *tatami*. You should persevere in your efforts.” With my examination for conscription coming soon, I patiently stayed at my father's in Nodaya-cho, Okayama. There was a movie theater called Sekaikan, affiliated with Nikkatsu [film production and distribution company]. My friend at the movie theater said, “Why not work here? Since you were an actor, you can easily be a cinema interpreter.” At the time, there were two kinds of film speakers [for silent films]. One provided the voice, and the other interpreted foreign films. I got the job easily.

There were about ten speakers in those days. Children played children, women played women, and men played two roles. Everybody had one or two voice roles under a one-day leader. Since the theater was affiliated with Nikkatsu, the Onoe Matsunosuke Troupe appeared in the films, with Yamamoto Kaichi as Mukaijima, Fujino Hideo, who was a director at Daiei [film company] until recently, and Kinugasa Teinosuke as a female-role actor. Since I had been an actor, I assumed it would be easy to be a film speaker. As I stepped on the stand at the start [of a movie], someone would beat wooden clappers against the sham stand when the film was a *jidai-geki* [historical drama]. In a fight scene, he would beat wooden clappers, accompanied by *shamisen* and *taiko* [drum] from the second floor. When the film was a *shinpa* drama, musicians in the box played violin, piano, and other instruments. For *jidai-geki* film, the speakers appeared first to greet the audience. The lead [film speaker] was dressed in *montsuki-hakama* [formal kimono with family crest symbol with a separated skirt], then he described the film. As you may know, it was popular for speakers—especially for interpreters of foreign films—to perform in the *naniwa-bushi* [a kind of narrative song] style. He would greet the audience in a strange voice, “Thank~you~ for~ your~ lively~ presence...” On another occasion, a speaker interpreted a film of the new-school drama in basically the same way as a traditional drama. He said, “All of us speakers are doing our best. Please enjoy our show until the end.” That was followed by a burst of sound from *shamisen* on the second floor or the musical band downstairs.

Each speaker had his or her own role. At the start, we were given the film script. Since it was written in large letters, it was easy to read even in the dark, and we learned our roles by reading the script. We rehearsed to give us an idea about our roles, and to learn how to play them. When an actor was walking in the film, subtitles appeared and we matched our talk with the actor in the film. It required some practice on our part. In drama acting, we responded to the other party who spoke first... we waited for the other party to speak first. As you know, a performance calls for teamwork. Even if you performed well, the audience would not appreciate it if other actors did not perform well. Many actors tried hard to steal the scene, but ended up getting scolded by the stage director. On the other hand, someone who provides an exemplary narration for silent films... he is singled out even when he flubs his line. *Tochiri* [flub] is a backstage expression for bad timing—too late or too early—while entering the stage. *Makuuchi* [backstage] meant inside of the theater, away from public. Whenever quarrels or something untoward happened backstage, it is settled internally without calling police. It was the rule of *makuuchi*.

Oh, I forgot to mention... When I first joined Mr. Sato's troupe I thought that except for

the director and master, ordinary actors would be treated well because they were highly admired by the audience in those days... people said, “Oh, he’s Kawai Takeo, he’s great!” However, that was a terrible mistake. Whenever we were expected to perform, we had to get up early in the morning, and had rehearsals during the daytime. In the evening, it was time to open the theater... the first drumbeat told us to head to dressing room. We apprentices had to be ready by the time the third drumbeat sounded. Most of the time, our master [Mr. Sato] would appear at the tea house attached to the theater, and we would be waiting for him at the entrance. One of us would be carrying his slippers. Our master would arrive riding in a rickshaw, looking like he was boasting of his status. Ha ha. When he arrived, we would say, “Good morning!” When we placed his slippers on the floor, our master would say, “Oh” and take off his *geta* [wooden clogs]. Then we followed him, carrying his *geta*. As soon as the show started we apprentices were required to greet each actor in the dressing room, saying, “Good morning! Good morning!” When I first joined them, I was puzzled about saying “Good morning” in the evening when the lights were on, but that was routine procedure backstage.

RA: Ha ha ha. [laughter]

MC: Once the play started, if my master was to perform, I would follow him, carrying his slippers and a teacup. There were two stage wings, upper and lower... they were called *sode*. I would stand at the *sode*, watching his performance quietly, and holding his slippers. When he got off the stage, I offered him tea, and he took a long gulp. After a short interval, he would go back onstage. When his performance was finally over, I followed him, carrying his slippers and *geta*. When the show was over, I helped him undress... I even put *tabi* [Japanese socks] on his feet. When he took a bath, I would be with him rinsing his back. When we were on the road, we would stay at an inn. While my master ate, I sat there quietly, waiting on him... waiting. If he was with his actress wife, a female apprentice would serve her; otherwise, I had to do everything by myself. When the show was over, I had to visit high-ranking actors in their rooms, saying, “Please have a nice evening!” and bowing my head. It may be different these days, but that was the way in the old days. Our rank on the nameboard determined where we could sit or which rickshaw we could ride. Whenever we made the rounds in town, our greenroom manager directed us to our rickshaw. For example, we were on the road and when our train arrived at the station, *kuruma* [rickshaws] were waiting with small flags showing our names, and we simply took our assigned *kuruma*. The manager had each rickshaw in proper order for the procession. When a rickshaw moved ahead or behind another rickshaw even slightly out of our ranking order, it caused problems.

However, Mr. Sato's troupe, offering a new type of drama, did not bother with that kind of old practice. Sawada Shojiro of *shinkoku-geki* [realistic period-drama] was the first to use the word *shingeki* [new type of drama]. He formed his troupe around Taisho 6 [1917]. He was a member of the drama club when he was a student at Waseda [University]. He was associated with famous people such as Sonoe Toru. When I was a member of the opera troupe, there were two honorary members in Mr. Namura's [Namura Shunso] troupe. One was Kurishima Kyoi, sometimes called Kurishima Sagoromo, who was the father of Kurishima Sumiko, and another was a well-known songwriter. I cannot recall his name now. They came to visit us from time to time. Although they did not perform on stage, they taught us various things. It was common practice for a large

troupe to be supported by various well-known people. Actors could not survive by themselves alone. When kabuki actor Mr. Kinnosuke [Nakamura Kinnosuke] came to visit Hawaii, his assistants kept calling him “*Wakadanna! Wakadanna!*” [“Young master! Young master!”] much to our astonishment. We knew such a calling practice existed, but we thought times had changed. We called him just Kin-chan [*Chan* is a casual term of endearment, not to be used for anyone of higher status or for an older person]. Anyway, those assistants kept calling him *Wakadanna*, implying Tokizo [Nakamura Tokizo, father of Kinnosuke] was *Odanna* [Senior master].

Let me go back to my stage life at the time... As I mentioned earlier, my first role was to deliver mail in the drama called *Michi Futatsu* [“Two Roads”]. Mori ((Yo?)), a well-known actor, played the villain, while Otoji Takeko played the heroine. Mori was *irogataki* [person who pretended a good-natured], and he grabbed Otoji, telling her to obey him. When Otoji pushed him aside, Mori fell to the floor. As he picked himself up, I, playing a postman, entered the scene. I did not say anything and crashed into him, and all the mail went flying. He was startled and shook himself off by waving his hat. I was also startled and started to pick up the dropped mail. When I left the stage, my master was sitting in the wings. He said, “Sakatani! Come here!” “Yes, master.” “Have you seen a mail delivery?” “Yes.” “Do you know anything about mail delivery?” “Yes, I know.” “What do you mean you know? Have you seen an actual mail delivery?” “I have.” “You must perform like that.” “What do you mean by that?” “Don't ask me. Go into town and watch actual mail delivery. Your mail delivery is actor's mail delivery. I want to see real mail delivery, not actor's mail delivery. Don't dramatize!” I thought I did well in my role as the postman, acting defeated and surprised. However, my master did not like it. Mr. Sato taught us every act must be performed in a natural manner. He wrote a famous play called *Ushio*.

Once when we were on the road in Hiroshima, I failed in my acting. I was playing Kumagoro, a bad man who killed a loan shark. I forgot how much [money]... I said, “You are a total thief who stole this much money.” It was the role I played for the first time. I was around 20 years old, playing an old man of 50 or 60 years of age. It was an important role. Since we were in the country, many of our high-ranking actors had gone back to Tokyo. Only the bottom or middle-ranking players were left. At the time, we had only one or two high-ranking actors, which is why I was given that role. They told me, “You should be able to play the role since your tone of voice sounds like an old person.” My opponent on the stage was Sakamaki Togo, the main character, played by Kibi Taisho. When he got up, I had a heated exchange with him and grabbed him by the arm. I grabbed him all right, but when he glared at me saying, “What!?” I forgot my lines. Ha ha ha. My opponent was amused. I finally managed to say, “You're a *kori... kori-garashi!*” I could not say, “*kori-gashi*” and could not continue. When I said, “You killed *kori-garashi, kori-garashi,*” the audience yelled, “What are you saying!?” I was struck dumb, unable to say my line, whatever it was. I felt very stupid. A leading member of the troupe urged me to leave the stage by turning aside. Well, I had to walk on the *hanamichi* to leave the stage. While I was on *hanamichi*, I threw a parting shot, “I am not one to take revenge on a dog poop like you... I will get you for this!” and I rolled up my skirt [making a fool of his opponent]. The audience shouted at me, “You ham!” Ha ha ha.

RA: Ha ha ha. [laughter]

MC: I felt giddy. Anyway, it was the first time I was on stage, seeing the faces of the audience... their heads looked like a bunch of charcoal balls. I could not recognize them as people. When I spoke, my voice sounded very strange, seeming like it was coming from the top of my head, not from my mouth. Acting is not that easy. In the meantime, I toured provinces here and there and joined a comedy troupe, playing old-style comedy. In 1923, I received letters from Hisamatsu Shunsui [Hosokawa Zenjiro], who was in Hawaii. Aoki Yoshio was also in Hawaii, working for Seiyukai. At the time, Takemoto Dansho, who worked at a laundry shop, was my colleague at Sekaikan, and his elder brother was in Los Angeles. Nichibeï Kogyo was not in business at the time. Instead, the manager of Tokyo Club worked as recruitment agent looking for actors in the Japanese drama or film industry. Old man Kimura—Mr. Kimura Muneo—knew all those people very well. He had helped Mr. Hisamatsu visit America a few times in the old days. In the meantime, Dansho's elder brother told me to come to America. When I was ready to go, he introduced me to Mr. Aoki and Mr. Hisamatsu. At the time, both Mr. Hisamatsu and Mr. Aoki were in Japan, looking for actors [to be brought to Hawaii]. I was in Nagoya, acting in a Soganoya comedy called “*Goseizai*”. Although I was young, I was a leading actor and was giving lessons to other actors during the final rehearsals whenever our troupe leader was not available. Eiraku was the name of the leader. My stage name was Soganoya Shoraku. Since my real name is Masayuki, I was named Shoraku. Anyway, Mr. Hisamatsu came to see me working and decided to invite me to America. I corresponded with Mr. Hisamatsu several times. My departure was originally scheduled in 23 [1923] but was put off until 24 [1924]. At the time, I was told I would not be allowed to land unless I boarded a special ship right away. It was at the end of June. If I was half a day late, I would not have been allowed to land.

RA: Interesting.

MC: This was how I came [to Hawaii]. When we were leaving the pier, a news squad from Kimura Kogyo came to make a film of us at Pearl Harbor. It was led by Buichi, son of the elder Kimura [Kimura Muneo]. There were four of us, Ichikawa Kakuzo from Nikkatsu, me, Kaname from a new-school drama troupe led by Oi Shintaro... I don't remember his last name... and Minoura ... Minoura Ushio. Although it may not be proper to talk about others, it was well known that Minoura Ushio was the son of third-ranked retainer of Sendai Domain [in Edo period]. His elder brother was a teacher in middle school, his younger brother was a soldier in the army, his next younger brother was a painter, and his sister was a teacher in an all-girls' school. Mr. Minoura, the eldest child [actually the second eldest] was an actor. Ha ha ha. He was doing pretty well, playing in *shinpa* drama, sometimes acting as an alternate for Kawada Yoshiko of Shochiku. I was with those people when I landed in Hawaii. I performed my first act in a tent theater in large vacant lot by Pearl Harbor... it is now occupied by buildings. Hongwanji had a branch office there. There was a huge garbage pit in the ground. We pitched a tent in that lot. For our first drama, Mr. Minoura selected *Chijo-no-hito* [“Person in blind love”] out of various choices. While we were rehearsing, Mr. Aoki said, “This is no good. It's *shingeki* [new type of drama]. People in Hawaii do not come to see this.” He asked me, “Can you play another drama?” I said, “I can play *shakai-geki* [sociodrama].” Consequently, we played *Ono-ga-tsumi* [“One's own sin”, written by Kikuchi Yuho, 1899], a story about two brothers. Since we had already announced the title in advance, we called our new play *Chijo-no-hito*. Mr. Aoki compiled a list of co-stars. I was Fujio,

who was a count or viscount. Mr. Aoki was tall and played *onnagata* [female role player]. Since I was the tallest, he asked me to play a male lead. I told him, “No, I do not want to play a lead. I want to play an old man.” He said, “You’re too young to play an old man. Hisamatsu can play an old man.” In the end, Hisamatsu and I shared our roles. Our show started with *Chijo-no-hito*, followed by two comedies I performed. In the middle session, we presented a kabuki number called *Ninokuchi-mura* [Village called Ninokuchi]. It was ((Sankatsu Hanhichi?)). No, it was not ((Sankatsu Hanhichi?))... what was it?

RA: Was it ((*Masagawa*?)) diary?

MC: No, not that one. It was about *fun-iki* [aura]. What was it? These days, I sometimes forget things due to my age. Anyway, we started our show like that. Mr. Aoki told me to play *Jirobei-Goke* [widow of *Jirobei*] in *Ninokuchi-mura*, and I ended up playing both a widow and an old man. It was the first time in my theatrical career that I played *onnagata*. That *Jirobei-Goke* had an ostentatious method of walking when she stepped on the *meiji*, her head covered with a towel. I put the towel on my head while I was on the *meiji*. My performance [as *onnagata*] was very well received by the audience. Our next play was *shakai-geki*, in which I played an old person. It was a play about brothers. The elder brother became a big man after graduating from a famous school. However, his younger brother was just a carpenter. His father treated him cruelly until the younger brother reformed his father in the end. At that time I was acquainted with Mr. Yamamoto. He was from Okayama... he now lives in Kochi. As a matter of fact, I’m also from Okayama because I lived there for awhile. Consequently, he treated me with great kindness, saying I was from his home prefecture. Mr. Yamamoto asked me, “How old are you?” I was 22 or 23 years old at the time. He was surprised and praised me, saying “My! You’re okay, coming from my hometown.” That’s how it was. At the time, I was expecting to move to America [the mainland] one year later. However, the aforementioned immigration act—was it Japanese Exclusion Land Act?—was enacted [Immigration Act of 1924], and only [eligible] groups were allowed to come [from Japan]. I remember that a *manzai* [comic dialogue] or similar troupe came for the first time. We were under the new law, so I couldn’t waste any time.

Then Mihara Sensuke, knowing I was from Hiroshima, asked me to come and see him. He had thought of various paths my future might take, and introduced me to Mr. Sawamura. Mr. Sawamura asked me, “Are you from Hiroshima?” “Yes, I am from Onomichi.” “I see; I am a Yamagata boy.” Then, he asked me, “Mihara told me you could be a [film] narrator.” “Yes.” “Do you have any experience?” “I used to be a speaker at a movie theater under the network of Nikkatsu, about a time when I took my examination for conscription.” “I see. Why don’t you try it?” Consequently, I joined Sawamura Trading Co. It was in 1929... maybe around 25 or 26 years old. I was very surprised by the way we walked around the town advertising our [film] show, because we did not do such things in Japan... we had *tozaiya* [town-crier], a separate profession, to do that. We were told to do it ourselves, beating drums all over town. We got out of our car here and there, and then, beating wooden clappers, called out, “Ladies and Gentlemen!” I was embarrassed or rather ashamed, but Mr. Arimura’s son, who had not yet become a speaker at the time, told me, “Hey, *tozai-bure* [working as town-crier] was a responsibility of the group leader in Hawaii.” and I was somewhat mollified. By the

way, Mr. Arimura had gone back to Japan when I first came here.

RA: Ha ha ha. That must have been a surprise.

MC: I was surprised. Everything was different. For example, when we went around town on our rickshaw, ((?)), in Japan, middle or higher ranking actors carried *pochi-bukuro* [special envelope for monetary gifts]. It contained tips of 50 *sen* or one *yen*, which we gave to our drivers. It helped us gain popularity... the drivers would speak well of us, saying “My actor is Sakatani so-and-so. He is very thoughtful.” I thought it was the same way in Hawaii, but the drivers here did not take our tip. Instead they gave us money... totally surprised me. Furthermore, on another occasion, I walked around town to see important patrons at their houses. I would say, “Pleased to meet you” and offered a towel [as a gift]. It was my courtesy call to thank them or get acquainted with them. I would say, “I am so-and-so from Japan... I am Sakatani, I’m with this troupe. I am pleased to meet you.” I walked all over town. Whenever I visited a new person, he would give me something. It was a custom which I was not aware of at the time. Then Mr. Shiraishi or somebody else who took me there would nudge me, saying, “Hey, Mr. Chikuma, say ‘thank you’!” and I would. In another case, when our show was over, we visited an important patron to give him a towel. He gave our group, just the two of us, six or seven bales of rice, which was worth five *yen* [dollars] in those days. Similarly, sponsors oftentimes gave us five or ten *yen* in cash. It was a good amount of money. Then we were told [by our sponsor], “You should keep this money, but you have to wait until you receive your salary.” We performed several times, including our trip to Hilo, but we received no salary. He [our sponsor] told me, “Your salary goes to Mr. Aoki as compensation for his efforts to bring you to Hawaii.” I complained saying, “I came to Hawaii by borrowing money from my parents. I do not owe him a cent.” All the same I was told, “It is our custom here. Therefore, you have to follow it.” I ended up saying, “Thank you,” but I think it was wrong. I would probably have been better off if I had enrolled in a brand-name school to study instead of performing. Ha ha ha.

RA: You might be right.

MC: When I first performed on stage [in Japan], it was in a makeshift theater. I was surprised with the way it was set up. When we were on the road in Okayama, we had played in a large shack. Here, we put on our make-up under the stage. The stage had a roof, but there was no roof, nothing for spectators. They [organizers] created *masu...* box seats by stretching a string or line, which were sold to spectators. It was February or March and very cold. Spectators brought their own *bento* [box lunch]. We stayed at [nearby] farmers' houses, scattered around like soldiers used to do. We were asked to start our show at nine o'clock. “Nine o'clock? You mean nine o'clock in the evening?” “Yes, that's right.” They wanted our show to last a long time after nine o'clock. Accordingly, we performed three or so dramas. It took more than three hours. It was around two or three o'clock when our show was over, lasting three hours from nine o'clock... time a cock crowed.

RA: Ha ha ha.

MC: The reason for that was... we were in a silkworm-raising region. Many young girls from various rural areas were employed, raising silkworms while keeping them warm. Their employers hired our troupe to acknowledge their services. That was the reason we were there. While we were putting on our make-up under the eaves, people brought us newly

brewed *sake* [rice wine] in a two-*sho* [a little less than a gallon] bottle, still smelling of sake lees. They also brought us tasty dishes in tiered trays, courteously bowing to us repeatedly, saying, “Hello, actor-*san*...” Under such hospitable treatment, we could not help wonder who was paying whom and who was the *real* customer. We took our baths in *teppo-buro* [bath with a metal pipe inside the tub] and drank *sake* during our stay there. In some locations, spectators watched our show while sitting on straw mats laid on the stubble of rice plants left after harvesting. That was how it was sometimes. Since I had played at those places, I was not too surprised when I came here. Heh, heh. [laughter] When we went to Hilo, we played *Ninjo-Mizuguruma*, which was very much like *Chijo no hito*. No, it was *Ono ga tsumi*. I am sure.

RA: ((?))

MC: Yes, it was the one. When we played, I was in a *doroba* [killing scene], killing my elder brother, son of a master carpenter. In the climax of the scene I fired a pistol, saying “Father, please forgive me!” It was a toy pistol, and a person in hiding was supposed to fire a live bullet simultaneously. However, there was no explosive sound when I fired my pistol... just click, click, click.

RA: Ha ha ha.

MC: I was perplexed. Mr. Hisamatsu was the father. He said, “What did you do?” catching ((?)). I said, “Please forgive me.” and I deliberately grabbed his hand. ((?)). It was not in the script, but what could I do? Making a spur-of-the-moment move, I gestured a desperate expression, biting my tongue, to end the drama. After that, somebody sang *oiwake* [folk songs of Niigata prefecture]. At the end of the show, the curtain started to come down. When it was halfway down, there was a sudden loud boom, frightening the audience. This happened at Yurakuza in Hilo, in our second appearance, to celebrate its grand opening.

RA: It was called Yurakukan.

MC: Yes. It was a fiasco. Mr. Aoki had arranged our appearance there. Ha ha ha. Anyway, it happened there. I have been with Sawamura Trading Co. to this day. In 1924, its united entertainment company joined Nihon-no-kai and we moved with the company. At that time, I was no longer a [film] speaker but a sales and advertising manager. Once, when I wrote about myself in a newspaper, I was ridiculed because I was a manager with no subordinates. I had already mentioned my film business. In the first place, as times have changed, things changed even during the period of silent films—although we now have talking pictures. At the time, Nikkatsu had created three departments. In the field of kabuki, famous Ichikawa Omezo came here. In the film business [in Japan], *bibun* [flowery tone of voice] became popular. Let me show you: “Much happiness is about to disappear. [In the meantime...] covered by young green shoots, listening to the pleasant murmur of a mountain stream, those two young lovers made a solemn oath in the forest of green leaves. They walk on a bright path, holding hands. Oh, I wish you all the best, young couples!” followed by Japanese or Western music “La~la~la~la~.” Let me give you another *bibun* line. “Is it the sound of rustling leaves in the forest or the murmur of swaying grasses? There goes the sound of a flute, plain and natural, in harmony with secret love, rolling over the still, green curtain.” This is immediately followed by the sound of a Japanese flute coming from below the stage. Ha ha ha. As we kept talking in

bibun, the audience applauded. Consequently, I did the same thing [talking in *bibun*] when I came to Hawaii. However, the audience complained, “What are you saying? We don’t understand a word of it.” I was disappointed. It was much the same way with our drama. Our audience told us, “Your play has only one or two acts, not *danmono*.” “What is *danmono*?” They meant a play with more than ten acts, like *kyogen* [traditional comic drama]. Perhaps I should not say this, but local actors exaggerated their expressions, overly cried or made a wry face. Since we played *shingeki* [new-style drama], we did no such exaggeration. However, audiences loved that overacting. They told us, “You’re lousy actors.”

RA: Ha ha ha.

MC: We were at a loss. However, natural performance is appreciated nowadays.

RA: It's funny.

MC: The same thing happened in the movies. The first time Sawa-Sho [Sawada Shojiro] appeared on the screen, he wore a wig. “Hey, there’s something strange about those *shinkoku-geki* [new style drama] actors. They wear *chonmage* [topknot] wigs, but they speak the modern language.” Also, his speaking lines were peculiar, spoken like “Let~me~get~wet~in~the~spring~rain.” As Kunisada Chuji he also said, “My~long~long~life, no~place~to~settle, revelling~in~prosperity.” His intoned monologue continued, “Reared on the road ~Kunisada Chuji is a wanderer!” His monologue sounded out of tune for those who were used to the contemporary way of speaking, and it was not appreciated at the time. It was enthusiastically received only at a later time. When he first appeared in *bunshi-geki* [a theatrical performance by scholars], it was not well received... he played only true *shingeki*. Consequently, he started to do *jidai-geki* [historical play], which eventually became his specialty. We also introduced some *jidai-geki* scenes in our *kigeki* [comic] drama. This was why we were able to play like we did when we retired to Hawaii. We pulled ourselves in a fighting posture, performing to our band music. [Here he imitates sounds of *taiko* drums in the kabuki music called *dontappo*.] Our exaggerated movements eventually made our audience laugh at the absurdity of our fighting scenes. Sometimes when we played in the countryside, actors deliberately fell from the second floor. They practiced *judo* and they did it well, even though they could have been injured. It was the same in movies. We owed that kind of acting to Sawada Shojiro. I think he was a reformer. Tatsumi Ryutaro or Shimada Shogo are the troupe leaders now, but [when he was the leader], Sawada Shojiro used to walk with a cane, dressed in *hakama* [Japanese skirt for formal wear]. I was much younger at the time.

As for myself, just before I came to Hawaii, I almost joined the Teikoku movie production company, based on a recommendation from my friend Dan Tokuma. He was an actor at Teikoku. At the time, both of us were in a screen-and-stage play. He told me, “Hey, why don't you join Teigeki? I can arrange it.” He joined the Kinugasa group and was popular for a time. In the end I did not take his offer, and came here [to Hawaii]. It was better this way... there is no point in keep playing. Ha ha ha. Just before I came to America, I married my present wife. Mr. Hisamatsu and others urged me to take her with me, and her parents also insisted. After all, her father asked me to have my name entered into his family register, and I changed my surname to Chikuma. As a result, my current

home town is Ushita in Hiroshima... Kanda-ku [ward] of Ushita-machi [town]. Maybe I should boast that I was born in Kanda [pretending he was a Tokyoite, because Kanda is a well-known ward in Tokyo.] Kabuki became a popular drama in the Genroku period [1688-1704]. Danjuro [Ichikawa Danjuro] established *Kabuki Juhachiban* [repertoire of 18 kabuki plays]—people call it just *Juhachiban*—in a later period [around 1840]. Danjuro was a famous *aragotoshi* [actor who plays the ruffian]. ((?)) played Manjiro. Actors in *Kanto* [Tokyo and surrounding area] were good playing *sanjaku-mono* [story about chivalrous gamblers]. That Tachibanaya (the 15th)—Ichimura Uzaemon—was a fantastic actor. I saw him perform in *Shiranami Gonin Otoko* [“A Group of Five Dandy Thieves”]. I think it was at the Chamber of Commerce [in Tokyo].

RA: Hmn, Shiranami...

MC: In another play, *Sannin Kichisa* [“Three thieves named Kichisa”]. His *Ojo Kichisa* was amazing, very popular. Let me imitate... Oh, the words escape me, ha ha ha. [laughter]

RA: Is it time to change tape?

MC: Well! Let me start with a *sanjaku-mono* monologue while holding his swaggering pose... “Ruined by a wretched love, I lost my will to live. I barely survived in Kisarazu, having no place to stay in all seven villages around Kisarazu. I was penniless for three years. I have scars on my face that earned me a nickname—*Kirare-no-Yosa* [“Scar face Yosa”]... fortunately it is helping me commit robbery, money extortion by intimidation...” [in kabuki intonation]

[Gap in recording here.]

RA: Mr. Chikuma, please go ahead.

Unk1: Please continue.

MC: What was I talking about?

RA: *Kōdan* storytelling. How did you start telling stories? Why?

MC: It happened after the war. Before the war, I performed *rakugo* [traditional comic storytelling]. I also worked on interpreting and advertising movies. After the war, I thought radio talk shows had become obsolete, but they suddenly flourished again. Many of us worked as storytellers on the radio, rushing around like hermit crabs from one station to another for one hour session. At the time, they kept asking me to perform at their stations, and I could not be partial. As a result, I performed at several stations, presenting various stories either of dramas or of films. In the meantime, Mr. Murata joined KGMB [in Honolulu].

Unk1: Mr. Murata is still with the station.

MC: Then he asked me to air something different. He asked me to perform *rakugo* every Sunday. When I visited him, telling him about a film and showing the advertisement for it, he said, “Could you do a comic story while you are here?” It was how I started to perform *rakugo*. I think it lasted about six or seven years. Then Mr. Isoshima at KPOA [in Maui]... also, Mr. Tanaka was there...

Unk1: Yes, Mr. Tanaka was there.

MC: He asked me to perform *rakugo* at his station. I said I could but cautioned him that my boss would complain if my performance was used to advertise his station. I could not be involved in his commercial business. I asked him to air advertisements for our movies in exchange of my performance there. He agreed to my proposal. At the time, we were willing to help each other. I refused to accept his monetary compensation. In the meantime, KAHU [on the Big Island] contacted me... who was it, now?

RA: Mr. Tatsumi was at KAHU.

MC: When I met Mr. Tatsumi at a welcoming party for a visitor from Japan, he asked me to perform at his station. I said I would and he agreed to advertise for us. About a year later, Mr. Ikeuchi offered me some money, saying my performance was very amusing. Although I refused to accept any performance fee, I heard later that it was against the labor law to employ a person without compensation. In the end, I agreed to accept a small token of his gratitude, but I still refused to accept the initial fee he offered. Ha ha ha. He was perplexed, "You must accept proper compensation the next time you visit us."

Unk1: I can understand why he was perplexed.

MC: Well, I was mollified to accept a proper compensation. It was the same way when I performed at KGMB. I thought about introducing a new program there and came up with *Kōdan* storytelling. The director liked my idea and I started to perform *Kōdan* there. At that time...

RA: When was it?

MC: It was when I came back here [to Honolulu]. It was in [19] 50, or around [19] 47-8, when I started performing *Kōdan*. At that time, Mr. Murata asked me if he could put a sponsor to my program. I told him it was up to him. My boss did not complain as long as our movie theater was advertised in my program, which was worth some money. Besides, somebody in our company used to own KGMB stock when it was consolidated.

RA: I see.

MC: Our executive owned some shares of the stock until he sold them. It was the first time I performed *Kōdan*. Then Mr. Fujita joined our company.

Unk1: I remember him. He was a tough bird.

MC: He asked me to do some management. I said, "I do not want to be a manager. I am not good at speaking English. I cannot rattle on in English. I am willing to work as an entertainer." He said, "O.K., why don't you see Mr. Fujita?" I was not aware of Mr. Fujita... was that Worrall? [J. Howard Worrall, owner of KGMB-TV]...

Unk1: Yes, he was.

MC: The boss [Worrall] brought him [Mr. Fujita]. Worrall was a vice president of the Consolidated Amusement Company. He said, "Chikuma, please perform [*kōdan*]." I said, "Fine, but should the boss..." He said, "Don't worry, as long as any station carries our advertisement." This was how I started performing *kōdan*. In the meantime, Mr. Yamamoto joined KULA [in Honolulu, present-day KITV].

Unk1: That's right, KULA.

MC: At that time, Mr. Yamamoto asked me, “We are old friends from the days of drama shows. Could you perform at our station?”

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: When I started at KULA, I did *rakugo*. Sometime later, another player started to perform something resembling *kōdan*, but he soon gave up.

Unk1: Well, he was not a true artist.

MC: After he gave up, Mr. Yamamoto asked me to perform *kōdan*, and I agreed. However, I told him “It would not be called *kōdan*. It would be a narrative since I performed my *kōdan* at KGMB. The station [KULA] was the ((?)), predecessor of present-day KOHO [in Honolulu].

Unk1: Yes, it was.

MC: That's right. Everybody there moved to that station.

Unk1: I remember. I moved to KULA and worked there for a short time.

MC: They asked me to keep doing it and I kept performing there for a long time. Before the war, Mr. Furukawa performed at KGU [in Honolulu].

Unk1: That's right. It was at KGU.

MC: Also, Mr. Goto performed there.

Unk1: Yes, Mr. Goto followed Mr. Furukawa there.

MC: They asked me to perform there from time to time. When they mentioned my performance fee, I said, “Don't be silly! I would not perform if you give me any money.” Then... a person there who worked at the post office... somebody named Ami... not Ami... he was sort of a manager at KGU.

Unk1: I wonder what was his name... Ami something. He was not that tall.

MC: That's right.

Unk1: He had odd eyes...

MC: Yes, he had.

Unk1: His name was... not Amioka... Ami something.

MC: Well, he asked me to perform at KGU a few years after its inauguration.

Unk1: It was a commemorative program.

MC: He asked me to perform at the commemorative program. When he asked me how much I wanted for my performance, I said, “No, no, no. I won't do it if you pay me. If I get paid, I would lose my job at my company. Therefore, no, no.” Then, he said, “In that case, it shall be only for this occasion, not for your following performances.” I said, “Well, if you insist... KGU is paying... Let me tell you how much. How about one dollar per minute?” He said, “Whatever you say.” Then I performed *rakugo*. I made it short since they were paying me a dollar a minute. Afterwards, he gave me a check of seven dollars for my seven-minute performance.

Unk1: Ha ha ha.

MC: I laugh about it now and then. My storytelling was worth one dollar per minute! Those days, it was customary for performers to beg the station to let them perform.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: Especially for amateur performers.

Unk1: Yes, that was the way for a performer to start his career.

MC: However, these days...

Unk1: It is different these days.

MC: Yes, that's right. When a station did not pay a performer during rehearsal...

Unk1: Yes, I remember.

MC: It was against some labor law...

Unk1: The Labor Standard Act.

MC: He complained even to some higher-up personnel.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: After that, radio stations strictly adhered to the law. They paid us saying, "This is gasoline money." If I performed as much as I could, my pay would have been a maximum of 25 dollars or so per month.

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: That was what they offered, but I refused it because my company gave me 30 dollars as gasoline money while I went around.

Unk1: I see.

MC: My company gave me extra money to perform there [at KGU]. Since I was already being paid by my company, I refused to accept the performance fee there. However, they explained that it was mandatory to pay me as part of their business. After that, they kept paying my performance fee. In the meantime, all the independent stations went out of business. When my company acquired KGMB, I was somewhat troubled.

Unk1: That was not a surprise.

MC: The reason was... They asked me to do advertising on the air. I had never been an announcer. I told them I could do some storytelling but I could not be an announcer. Nonetheless, I ended up reading news in the morning, inserting some advertising until Mr. Fujita took over. Both of us, Mr. Fujita and I, did the morning news.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Mr. Onishi came to work on the afternoon program after school.

Unk1: Yes, I remember.

MC: Mr. Onishi was good. I went out to *Hawaii Times*, asking for news we could use. Mr. Nakamura was there. There was also another person who was in charge of entertainment

news. He passed away.

Unk1: Let me see. I know who he was...

MC: Who was he? Mr. Kawazoe?

Unk1: That's right, Mr. Kawazoe!

MC: I went to see him to get our news, but it was difficult to get it in time. I brought back the news wet from the press for our proofreading.

Unk1: I see, proofreading.

MC: They prepared news for us to study. The next morning, we went to the station, and read the news. It was difficult to read proof-sheets that had been handled by our proofreaders over and over.

Unk1: Some of them were hard to read.

MC: Yes, it happened from time to time. I did my best. We received letters from our listeners. One of them addressed to me said, "Thank you," which was nice. The letter continued, "I have found your storytelling was amusing. However, I would advise you not to be an announcer. You should stop speaking like a cinema interpreter."

Unk1: Ha ha ha. "Like a cinema interpreter?"

MC: He did not appreciate the way news announcers speak these days. In the early days, they spoke with a colloquial accent from their hometowns, such as a Hiroshima dialect.

Unk1: Sure, they did.

MC: Or that of some other places. When I spoke in *Edo-ben* [Tokyo dialect, often considered to be standard Japanese], the audience thought I spoke like a cinema interpreter.

Unk1: That explains it.

MC: Mr. Fujita noticed it too. "Hey, Uncle. Please don't worry. It's like they wear tinted glasses on their ears instead of on their eyes." Ha ha ha.

Unk1: Fujita himself had a strange tone of voice. He did not speak ordinary Japanese.

MC: Ha ha ha. He sometimes spoke carelessly.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: I was most embarrassed when I was asked to advertise that female thing... you know, at the time of her period. I refused to read that advertisement.

Unk1: Ha ha ha.

MC: I was perplexed sometimes, especially in the beginning. When I was at KOHO after the war, I heard an announcer say something weird. Are you familiar with *Nanbuzaka Yukino Wakare* ["The parting in the snow at *Nanbuzaka*"] in the famous *Chūshingura* [The loyal 47 samurai who avenged their master's death]?

Unk1: Let me see. Yes, it is called *Nanbuzaka*.

MC: He said *Nanbu Bansetsu-no Wakare*... very strange. He was wrong... it was not *Bansetsu*... it was *Nanbuzaka Yukino Wakare* in the famous *Chūshingura*. I questioned

him, “Why did you call it *Nanbu Bansetsu-no Wakare*?” He was puzzled, “What are you talking about?” I think he was a student from Japan... from ((?)), some hotel or famous place.

Unk1: Yes, young people don’t know history.

MC: I told him those words came from *Chūshingura*, which was made famous by *naniwabushi* [a kind of narrative ballad popular during the Edo period]. He said, “I have never heard of it.”

Unk1: Indeed! I am not surprised he had never been exposed to it.

MC: Since he was not familiar with *naniwabushi*, he said he did not know *Chūshingura*.

Unk1: By the way, performing *Chūshingura* was prohibited by the Occupation Forces [in Japan]. That is why he did not know about it.

MC: Maybe so.

Unk1: Yes, it happened in Japan.

MC: Revenge was strictly forbidden.

Unk1: It was forbidden. Therefore, he did not know.

MC: I was annoyed by that *Nanbu Bansetsu*. Another example was the word *kakashi* [scarecrow]. There was a nursery song *Kakashi no Uta*. He pronounced it *sanzanshi*.

Unk1: Ha ha ha. *Sanzanshi* for *kakashi*!

MC: That's right. That was what he said.

Unk1: *Sanzanshi* for *kakashi*!

MC: On another occasion, I went there to ask for permission to put an advertisement on air. It stated at the end, “It is impossible to watch without tears when she went to get a certificate, walking on *matsubazue* [crutches].” However, an announcer there pronounced it *shoshoe* [for *matsubazue*].

Unk1: A-ha!

MC: I told him, “It is not *shoshoe*. It should be pronounced *matsubazue*.” He said, “Is that so?” Let me tell you an old story. When I was interned, Mr. ((?)) made the same mistake. He was from the mainland.

Unk1: Yes, I can imagine.

MC: Many people there mispronounced words. It was funny, and those of us from Hawaii took the trouble to listen to them each day, wondering how many mistakes they would make.

Unk1: I see.

MC: For example, they said, “We *kutsugurigae-shita* [for *kutsugae-shita*, means 'subverted'] an army unit. Another mistake, “They *karonjite* [for *karojite*, means 'narrowly'] escaped.”

Unk1: Ha ha ha. *Karonjite*!

MC: It happened. We need to be very careful when we are on the air.

Unk1: Use of words... we should really be careful about wording.

RA: We should study well so that such mistakes can be avoided, especially when we are on the air.

MC: In the old days, Japanese [film] speakers in rural areas often used strange language.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: For example, a man said, "A band of *dojin* on an uninhabited island..." Those aborigines with black skin were called *dojin*. How can a band of *dojin* be there if it was uninhabited? Some speakers spoke such gibberish without batting an eye until the show was over. Some of them were really awful. They kept talking in a loud voice without even mentioning the title [of the film].

Unk1: The audience didn't know what was what.

MC: After talking gibberish, he said, "Now, it is not so~!"

RA: It is not so... Ha ha ha.

MC: When I complained, saying it was not funny, he said, "Don't worry, the audience can see the film. If I said nothing, I would be in trouble." There were many such speakers in those days.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: I was stumped, although I had no intention of speaking ill about the countryside.

RA: It tells us that the Japanese language is difficult to learn.

MC: Yes, it is. Such mistakes happen often.

RA: I see.

MC: I am...

Unk2: Even university students sometimes give strange answers to their examination questions.

Unk1: Yes, that happens quite often.

MC: Maybe some were intentionally made. Let me talk about *Chūshingura*, which I mentioned earlier.

RA: Yes, we were talking about *Chūshingura*.

MC: One of them was Horibe Yasubei.

Unk1: Horibe Yasubei.

MC: His hometown was...

Unk1: Was it Shibata?

MC: Yes, it was Shibata in Echigo [now Niigata Prefecture]. The announcer was aware that the former name of Horibe Yasubei was Nakayama.

Unk1: It was Nakayama.

MC: The announcer was trying to say that Yasubei was born in Shibata in Echigo.

Unk1: Shibata yielded 150 thousand *koku* of rice [Edo-period measurement].

MC: However, it was not easy for an announcer to read a script accurately.

Unk1: Yes, I know.

MC: Shibata was sometimes incorrectly pronounced 'Shinhatta'. Mr. Furuya was annoyed, crying, "Gimme a break!" Then, he... who was at *Nippu Jiji* [Japanese-language newspaper in Hawaii]... from Wahiawa and... he drove fast on his dolly... not dolly, motorcycle?

Unk1: Yes?

MC: Mr. Tamaru!

Unk1: Yeah, Mr. Tamaru.

MC: Mr. Tamaru. He had a deep knowledge of *oiwake* [folk songs of Niigata district]. He told me, "Speaking of Echigo... it should be pronounced Shibata!" I said, "I know how to pronounce it, but my coworker doesn't." Announcers should know the correct way to pronounce place names.

Unk1: I see. That was...

MC: I was embarrassed when those mistakes were made.

Unk2: When there's no kana [hiragana alongside kanji characters]...

Unk1: It is difficult to pronounce them correctly.

MC: What was it? I once made a mistake when I read a word which contained the character *tani*. Mr. Furuya said it was the name of his hometown. I pronounced it something *-tani*. Afterwards, I noticed, *kana* was written alongside the Chinese character showing the correct pronunciation. Ha ha ha. It is easy to make a mistake when it comes to people's names, if we are not careful. Now let me go back to the drama I mentioned earlier. I did my first performance while I was interned in... what was the place? It was hot there...

Unk1: Hot? Where was it?

MC: Yes... Louisiana !

Unk1: Yeah, Louisiana.

MC: In Louisiana...

Unk1: Louisiana... it is hot there.

MC: We called internees from Peru together. Mr. Hamada from Maui used to be the secretary at *Hawaii Times*, and...

Unk1: I remember... he was from Maui.

MC: Mr. Hamada taught those internees how to perform kabuki.

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: It was a scene of something *-ura*. Kumagai [Kumagai Naozane, famous warrior] was pursuing Atsumori [Taira no Atsumori, head of the Heike family, who died in 1184 at age 15].

RA: It is called *Dan-no-Ura*.

MC: Yes, *Dan-no-Ura*.

Unk1: Battle of *Dan-no-Ura*.

MC: We wondered how we could do the drama [in the internment camp]. At the time, we weren't together with Mr. Yonemura and others. We arrived on the second and third transport ships [from Hawaii]. At one point, those on the first and second transport ships saw each other, but we were separated later. It was in Louisiana when all of us came together.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Mr. Hamada had an idea how to dress those internees from Peru [for the show]. We obtained a tent [from the office] and washed it to make our stage costume... we even attached stage names to it. Then, we made *yoroi* [suits of armor].

Unk1: *Yoroi*!

MC: Our *yoroi* was made from... what was the name? It was like a tar paper for roofing [tinplate]. It glittered like silver. We cut the plate to make beautiful *yoroi* to be worn by the young men from Peru.

Unk1: I can see they were good looking *yoroi*.

MC: We made *yoroi*. Then volunteers from the Peru group made *chonmage* wigs from loosened hemp rope.

Unk1: Oh, from rope.

MC: With the costumes Kumagai and others completed, we staged our show in Louisiana. At the time, internees from Hawaii taught others how to act, but we did not perform ourselves. Anyway, it was my first exposure to drama.

Unk1: I see.

MC: We had explained to the authorities what we were doing, and they did not say anything about our activities.

Unk1: Understandable.

MC: They just overlooked it. Afterwards, as I moved around from camp to camp, I did storytelling... I did not perform drama.

Unk1: Yeah, storytelling!

MC: For my variety show, I performed *mandan* [comic monologue] and *rakugo*. By the way, after I came back here [Hawaii], I wrote about him [no name is mentioned]. Since I did not want to offend him, I checked with him in advance and he said, "Go ahead." They say the dialect is the handprint of the province. When I told him about his accent, I was afraid he might get angry, but he roared with laughter instead.

Unk1: I see.

MC: In fact, I gave speech in his place as he explained to me what he wanted to say. It would be, for example, "We are grateful to our cooks: getting up while it is still dark, working

very hard...”

Unk1: I see.

MC: I think he was from Echigo [Niigata district] or thereabouts.

Unk1: Tohoku area.

MC: Yes, his dialect was horrible.

Unk1: Yes... strong accent.

MC: He continued, “I am thankful. Finally, I have one request. I prepared a box...” He was in charge of taking aprons and dirty clothes to the laundry. He said, “Please make sure you leave your dirty clothes in the box.” Afterwards, when I looked at the box, I noticed he had written, “Bin for *shachi* and *panchi*,” instead of “Bin for shirts and pants.” His dialect was just awful.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Speaking of the dialect being the handprint of the province, I wrote an article about my experience in the internment camp for *Times* [The *Hawaii Times*, formerly *Nippu Jiji*] around New Year's Day. I mentioned that episode as the punchline at the end of the article. When I told him about it, he laughed, patting me on the shoulder.

Unk1: I see.

MC: It can't be helped. He grew up with that dialect.

Unk1: Some dialects are hard to understand.

MC: Mr. Obata said, “Cho-tata-kure!” [for “Chotto Tataite-kure.”.. It means, “Hey, pat me...”]

Unk1: I see, Mr. Obata.

MC: “Cho-tata-kure.” We were puzzled... “Hit butterfly?” [*Cho* means 'butterfly'] He was laughing.

RA: Hit butterfly...

Unk1: I can imagine.

MC: When we moved to Santa Fe, the authorities there allowed us to build a theater.

Unk1: I see. You went to Santa Fe.

MC: Actors went up and down the stairs, to and from the *hanamichi*. All those were built by carpenters.

Unk1: Were they professional carpenters from outside?

MC: They were all internees. There were many of them [former carpenters].

Unk1: I see. Internees were from all walks of life.

MC: Mr. Yonemura was in charge of making costumes. He was skilled in using the sewing machine. He even sewed *tabi* [Japanese socks]!

Unk1: Oh!

MC: We formed a big troupe with many actors. We staged our show once a month without

fail.

RA: Amazing!

MC: It was a big show. We staged one kabuki drama, and I performed a comical sociodrama. We also had a period drama of *chonmage* men. Mr. Yamamoto became annoyed when he wrote a topknot story.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Although he wrote it, there was no actor who could play it.

Unk1: I see. There was no actor for the play.

MC: At that time, our group, including Old Kimura [Kimura Muneo], had arrived at the camp and we were enthusiastically welcomed, "Let's perform a drama!"

Unk1: I see.

MC: Mr. Nakaichi was also there.

Unk1: Oh, he was with you?

MC: With him on the stage, we had a splendid stage drama.

Unk1: Of course.

MC: When we came back [to Hawaii], we performed during the daytime at McKinley [High School] for four... three days. We had a full audience each time. Sure enough, people in Hawaii demanded that we do some more. Since we had no choice, we staged our show again sometime later. That's when the Captain of G-2 [Army military intelligence unit] or some such organization came and summoned us to his office.

Unk1: Oh.

MC: I, Mr. Yamada, Mr. Yamamoto, Mr. Yonegoro, and all the other principal members went there. He told us not to show those kinds of dramas.

Unk1: Ah, I see.

MC: Because it was still wartime.

Unk1: I see. War had not ended when you performed.

MC: He told us to avoid staging those types of drama as much as possible.

Unk1: Ah, I see.

MC: We were doing something they [G-2] didn't like. Mr. Yamamoto was frightened. He had been left behind when we came back [to Hawaii], not intentionally but because there had been no room on our ship.

Unk1: I see.

MC: He was told to wait for the next ship.

RA: Mr. Chikuma. Why were you interned?

MC: In the first place, there was no particular reason for it at the time.

Unk1: Oh.

MC: That's right. Once, Dr. Kimura told me, "Maybe you guys were interned to be exchanged for American prisoners of war."

Unk1: I see.

MC: After we were captured, a soldier on Sand Island [Sand Island Detention Camp] told us, "We are trying to prevent you guys, as leading figures, cause anything untoward disturbance in the outside world. This is why we interned you here. We are not looking down on you. Please cooperate with us."

RA: I see.

Unk1: That was their true intention.

MC: Accordingly, when we were sent to the camp [on the mainland], other internees there teased us, saying, "What are you doing here?"

Unk1: I can understand.

MC: They told us, "This is no place for you." We said, "That's right!" Ha ha ha. Countering their teasing, I told them, "Do you know what the people outside are saying about you guys?" They said, "What are you talking about?" They laughed at us, saying, "You guys are a *konseki* [very tiny, just a trace] group." "What do you mean by *konseki* group?" "Oh, it is nothing. ((?!))! *konseki*..." Ha ha ha. They were talking rubbish!

RA: Those internees from the mainland...

MC: Consequently, both [The mainland and Hawaii] groups tried to avoid each other. It happened, "What did you say?," "Don't say such thing!" I told them that the boss of the Sand Island facility mentioned us, "You all are leading figures. While other ethnic internees were sent to other places, all principal Japanese are to be sent to the mainland. It is wartime now. People in the outside [in Hawaii] are thankful for your sacrifice... that should be of some comfort. I may be *konseki*, but I'm not the only one. There are plenty of Japanese on the outside [in Hawaii]." Ha ha ha. That was how it was. When we went to Santa Fe [Internment Camp], we had about 40 members in our troupe.

Unk1: Wow, that many!

MC: Mr. Hanafusa from Waianae became the leader of our troupe later.

Unk1: Oh, he was from Waianae!

MC: We created our nameplates by hand. I had been in publishing. We needed to show our titles, like "So-and-so, troupe leader."

Unk1: I see.

MC: We created nameplates for our group officials. I was asked to be a secretary.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Our audience presented flowers to us.

Unk1: So you had a troupe leader.

MC: It was interesting. Our audience easily laughed and wept at small things.

Unk1: I see.

MC: I performed a drama called *Bunshin Irezumi* ["My Son and Tattoo"]. I was a rogue and a heavy drinker. I cut somebody and had been imprisoned in Hokkaido. I came back after serving time.

Unk1: I see.

MC: I learned that a newspaper-seller I saved in the past was now the manager of a company. I wanted to get hold of him to remind him that he was obligated to help me for saving him in the past. I was hoping I for an easy life in my old age. I saw him and said, "Let me see if you have a tattoo on your arm. Your tattoo is the same as mine. It is the evidence you and I pledged ourselves to be like father and son." He said, "Yes." Mr. Tsushima wrote our dialogue.

Unk1: I see.

MC: He was the boss and I was his agent. Anyway, he [the boy] said, "I'll see you at home. The address is such-and-such." I said, "Very well. Be sure to be there." and I left. Afterwards, an *irogataki* [sinister guy] tormented him saying, "It is totally absurd that the manager of our company has a tattoo." In the meantime, president of the company was listening. Mr. Kimura played the president.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Then the president told the manager, "Wait a minute. You don't need to worry. In the old days in Russia, they tattooed a crest as identification in case [a soldier] died in the battlefield. A tattoo was an asset to a man." He continued, "Nobody can blame a man with a tattoo if he reformed himself, doing an excellent job for the company. You are making a big issue out of a tattoo, but, as I said, there is nothing wrong with having a tattoo. Look at me!" And the president displayed his own tattoo.

Unk1: I see. The president himself had a tattoo.

MC: It was a decisive moment in the play. The next scene was at the manager's house. I visited him there and saw his wife. I said, "I see you are his wife. You are a nice bit of skirt."

Unk1: A-ha.

MC: "For a variety of reasons, he and I have a parent-child relationship."

Unk1: Yes.

MC: I said, "I intend to stay for a while. I expect you to look after me from now on."

Unk1: I see.

MC: I laid out my complaints. Then I asked her, "Where were you born?" "I was born in Banshu Himeji. My mother died of such-and-such causes." "How about your father?" I asked.

Unk1: Yes?

MC: "For such-and-such reason, my father cut somebody down and served his time in a prison in Hokkaido." I was thunderstruck... my reaction was the focal point of the drama.

Unk1: I can see it.

MC: My reaction surprised her, and she asked, "What is it?" I asked, "Was the name of your

mother? Did she live such-and-such district in Himeji?” “How do you know such things?” I put my foot on the *hanamichi*, tucking up my skirt... a big scene.

Unk1: I see.

RA: Were you going to tell her that you were her father?

MC: “Do you know I was also born in Banshu~Himeji?” [in a dramatic tone].

Unk1: Striking moment.

MC: Spectators shouted. One of them was president Makino.

Unk1: Ah.

MC: And Mr. Tokio. What was his name? Nagaoka.

Unk1: Nagaoka.

MC: Mr. Shigure.

Unk1: Nagaoka Shigure.

MC: Shigure called out, “Daitoryo! Senryo! Oh!” [It means, “Well done! Fantastic!”]

Unk1: Uh-huh.

MC: Ha ha ha. All the spectators clapped their hands. I had thought our audience would be angry because the drama was not played by older actors.

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: Then, my lines continued in a *kabuki* tone.

Unk1: I see.

MC: I said, “I now know you are my blood daughter. Please forgive me, I was totally ignorant.”

Unk1: I see.

MC: I continued, “I shall be a gravekeeper tending a pagoda of unknown persons from now on.” Still more... “Anyway, I had better leave before your husband comes home. Treasure your husband so that he will not throw you away. Live in peace for many years to come!” In the meantime, her husband [the manager] had come home with his dog, listening to their conversation. When I glanced at him on my way out, he threw me a bundle of money. I picked it up and made a bow to him... then the sound of wooden clappers signaled the end of the show.

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: We did it. Just before we came back [to Hawaii], I performed this role.

Unk1: I see.

MC: I had not performed at all before that.

Unk1: I see.

MC: I also performed that role when we came back. The audience kept crying at our show.

Unk1: I can understand.

MC: They told me, “When you spoke in the show, everybody cried!” It was strange, but small things triggered their sad feelings when they were confined in the camp.

Unk1: They were moved.

MC: They also laughed at small things.

Unk1: I understand. It’s an emotional thing.

MC: It was a sociodrama, making our audience cry and laugh in turn.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: And we chose to play the drama which would touch their hearts.

Unk1: I see.

MC: When I came back here, I was kept busy as I mentioned earlier. When I joined a company dealing with movies, Mr. Miyamoto was in charge of purchasing Japanese movies. He... in 1949...

Unk1: I remember Mr. Miyamoto.

MC: He went to Japan to buy Japanese films. However...

Unk1: I see he went to buy movies after the war.

MC: Yes, after the war. He went through his old business connection. However, he found no *samurai* movies containing swordplay scenes anywhere, even at Daiei [movie production company].

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: Such movies were not allowed to be produced.

Unk1: I can understand.

MC: It was strange... no familiar names in photos, even in tragic-comedy films.

Unk1: Nothing.

MC: We felt we should avoid gloomy pictures, given the circumstances.

Unk1: I remember.

MC: We could not import any suitable movies from Japan. We were perplexed. In the meantime, Scope was introduced in 1948.

Unk1: Ah.

MC: CinemaScope.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: Pictures were projected all over the stage.

Unk1: Yes, all over the stage.

MC: Accordingly, the projection stage was modified. We ran films adults and children alike could enjoy. A typical one was *Fuefuki Doji* [“Flute-playing boy”]... Azuma

Chiyonosake and Fushimi Sentaro played the main characters. Mr. Makino wanted to invite Kinnosuke [Nakamura Kinnosuke], and he came to visit here. Later on, many actors from Japan came to visit. Then we had CinemaScope in 1948.

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: The actual name was Toei Scope, different from CinemaScope. I heard it was originally invented in Germany and Toei modified it. When we put *Tange Sazen* on the screen for the first time, not many people came to see the movie. Consequently, we went out walking all over asking people if they wanted to do fundraisers. Ha ha ha.

Unk1: I see. You asked people...

MC: Yes, we asked people, explaining that we were willing to raise funds for their community if they would come to see our movie. People such as Mr. Shishido, Mr. Sasaki, and Mr. Migita, members of the Judo Club, were willing to help us.

Unk2: I remember. You walked around for one week.

MC: We went out many weeks raising funds. As a result, many people started to come to see our movies.

Unk1: I see.

MC: At that time, I went to Izumo Taisha Shrine to raise funds. Since they were ((?)), we were not hopeful. To our surprise, tons of people came to see the movie.

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: A ticket cost one dollar or 80 cents. Less than a dollar. When we gave back their 25 or 30 cents in change, our customers told us to keep it.

Unk1: I see.

MC: They told us to use the change for the school [fundraiser] saying, "If you pocket the change for yourself, we would not pay [the admission fee] next time." I had to admit it made sense to me.

Unk1: It made sense.

MC: Our boss would know right away if anything wasn't right. Anyway, things went smoothly and many people helped us. Huge success.

Unk1: Great success.

MC: In the meantime, Kinnosuke became popular. Okawa Hashizo started to appear on the screen.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Early in his career, Okawa Hashizo played a *samurai* in *Wakasama-samurai Torimotocho* ["Young Samurai's Detective Story"]. He wore *kimono* with the *Aoi mon* [famous crest of Tokugawa family] and a *fukaamigasa* [straw hat] on his head. At the time, movies were not in color. When he turned around and raised his hat, the audience uttered a cry of admiration, "Wow! Such a handsome guy!" Yes, he was really handsome.

Unk1: It was black-and-white.

MC: Black-and-white for a short time. Soon we had color movies, all of them. The late president Okawa of Toei told us... and I... My boss asked me to help the president since he did not understand English. He told me...

Unk1: I see.

MC: He said all the talkies [talking pictures] from Toei would be in color starting in March or April and they would be Scope [Toei Scope, widescreen pictures].

Unk1: I see.

MC: I was the interpreter.

Unk1: I see.

MC: My boss was confused.

Unk1: I see.

MC: He was puzzled, "Why are Japanese *samurai* movies called Scope?" Our president [my boss] spoke Japanese fairly well.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: The president [of Toei] laughed, "All Toei pictures will be Scope." Our president said, "Really?" [in a funny tone].

Unk1: I see.

MC: Then the other president [Mr. Okawa] said, "Really!" It was kind of funny.

Unk1: Ha ha ha.

RA: Who was your president? Byrd?

MC: No.

RA: Oh...

MC: Mr. Williams.

Unk1: I see, Mr. Williams.

RA: Oh, Oh...

MC: William...

RA: Byrd became ((?)) later.

MC: Yes. After Williams quit, ((Byrd?)) took over. He used to be the head treasurer. He was a man of good sense who strongly supported our Japanese department.

RA: I see. Was he a Caucasian who graduated from McKinley?

MC: Yes.

RA: He was my classmate.

MC: He was a local boy.

RA: Yeah.

MC: He understood us.

RA: Yes.

MC: He insisted we should do fundraising. We were perplexed.

Unk1: I remember that.

MC: He said that was the way to draw customers... "If we do not do fundraising, we have to hire agents with percentage pay. Nobody will sell our tickets without percentage pay."

Unk1: Yeah, they would not sell tickets for nothing.

RA: Hmm.

MC: He further told us to do things this way and that way and ordered, "Just do it!"

Unk1: I see.

MC: Since he was the president, we did as he told us. The result was a big surprise!

Unk1 : It was a full house.

MC: Yes, it turned out fundraising was the best way because it was person-to-person advertising, better than a conventional advertisement.

Unk1: Uh-huh.

RA: Yeah.

MC: When we told fundraisers it was a good movie, they in turn advertised it to others.

Unk1: They sold the tickets, saying it was a very good movie.

RA: Those who normally stayed away from the movie theater would buy tickets since it was fundraising.

Unk1: Right.

RA: They bought... those who normally didn't go.

MC: It was fantastic at the time.

RA: They stopped doing it, didn't they?

MC: That's right. Fundraising is rarely required for promoting a movie these days. Fundraising must be a continuous effort.

RA: I see.

MC: If it is done sporadically only when a good movie is playing, theaters will lose money.

RA: I see. Fundraising isn't needed when the movie is good.

MC: In the meantime, *Yakuza* [gangster] films became very popular in Japan. However, they were not well received in Hawaii.

RA: What were they?

MC: Gang...gang... gangster...

RA: Oh, oh.

Unk1: Gang films...

MC: Though they might be entertaining, they were unpopular [in Hawaii].

Unk1: I don't think they would have been well received.

MC: They said those films couldn't be shown to children.

Unk1: I see. They were unsuitable from the educational point of view.

MC: Furthermore, those gangster films always contained some sex scenes.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: That was no good. If we showed those films, everybody would holler, "We can't watch those movies with our children!"

Unk1: That would be true.

MC: At that time, I quit taking an active role in the film business... I practically retired. I just lent a helping hand whenever I was asked.

Unk1: They are showing old films at Kapahulu [Kapahulu Theater, closed in March 1980] from time to time.

MC: What they are showing now is pretty interesting, though it would be a little hard to follow. The story was originally written by Yokomizo Seishi.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: The film was produced by Kadokawa and it was one of their best works. The story is rather complicated, going through intricacies of a plot. However, you'll enjoy watching and the time goes by in a flash.

Unk1: I agree.

MC: Soon, Tokyo Don will be on the screen. The audience will wonder who will play Don.

Unk1: I see.

MC: A fight between a Tokyo gang and an Osaka gang.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: ((?))

Unk1: Yes, it is...

MC: A matter of oil brings the president of that country into the plot.

Unk1: Yes, it does.

MC: It is interesting, though it's a bit puzzling.

Unk1: You don't know until the very end.

MC: However, it still contains erotic scenes.

Unk1: All such movies have them.

MC: I heard people in Japan do not go to see a movie unless it contains some sex scenes.

Unk1: Right, all such movies have those.

MC: Yes.

RA: Well, what kind of impact has television had on films?

MC: TV made a strong impact on Western movies in the beginning.

RA: I see.

MC: However, there was not much impact on Japanese films [in Hawaii] since they came at a later date and were few in number.

RA: I see. KIKU [television station] is now...

MC: I know. It is not a matter of impact. Those who are in the habit of seeing films in a theater say, "It is much better to watch movies on a large screen."

Unk1: I agree. Watching movies on TV is not the same as watching them in a theater.

MC: That's right. The other day, the theater [Kaphulu Theater?] showed *Yagyu Ichizoku no Inbo* ["*Yagyu Clan Conspiracy*"]. It was very well made.

Unk1: Yeah.

MC: However, what they [KIKU-TV] have now is more interesting than that *Yagyu* because it is lasting a long time. *Yagyu* in the theater lasted about two hours.

Unk1: Yeah.

MC: *Current Conspiracy* ["*Yagyu Clan Conspiracy*"] on KIKU lasts more than two or three hours.

Unk1: It keeps going.

MC: Maybe 30 minutes at a time but it is a series with 10 or 20 episodes... a long series.

RA: What is it now? There are long series such as *Kashin* ["Center of a Flower"] on KIKU, which could last one year.

Unk1: That's right. Are you these days...?

RA: KIKU also has the Saturday Theater, where a story concludes each Saturday.

MC: Yes.

RA: Yeah.

MC: They employ famous actors in the program. Good ones.

RA: I agree.

MC: They use character actors and actresses.

Unk1: However, they all have some sex scenes.

RA: Well, they have erotic scenes.

Unk1: Therefore ...

RA: There are many bed scenes.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: People here do not care for such scenes. It is embarrassing.

Unk1: That's right.

RA: What can I say... it seems [Japanese] people here have kept their Meiji-era ethics.

MC: That's right.

Unk3: I think erotic scenes would be acceptable here if they are brief.

MC: Even so, it would be a problem.

Unk3: It can't be helped if the family is in the theater, but you wouldn't want your family to watch them at home.

MC: That's true, sometimes.

Unk1: Afterwards, parents could...

MC: Parents may allow children to watch it sometimes.

Unk1: They need to be careful. They could prepare their children.

Unk3: If they have a daughter, it may become ((?)) unpleasant.

Unk1: That can happen.

RA: Since I and my wife are the only ones in our house, it is... but a family...

Unk1: In that case, it would be awkward.

MC: It is not appropriate for children to watch those scenes.

Unk1: That's right.

MC: [For our movies] Some parents became angry and phoned us afterwards. Therefore, we had to be sure to say "Adults only" in our advertisement.

Unk1: Yeah, that's right.

MC: Also, we had to specify "Adult Movie."

Unk1: You need a warning.

MC: We must say so in writing.

Unk3: These days, theater-going people....

MC: Yes.

Unk3: Not many are families, are they?

MC: Still, some come with family.

Unk3: I think many customers are young ones who go to Las Vegas, for example. Don't such movies appeal to them?

MC: Ha ha ha. You might be right.

Unk3: They call it a "hormone" movie.

MC: When we kept advertising that kind of movies, we had different customers.

Unk1: It would be different.

MC: We even had customers of different ethnic groups... other than Japanese. They came in groups... 10 people or even 20 in a large group.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Some of them were Hawaiians... still others like Filipinos came in group.

Unk1: I see. They came in a group.

MC: They would become angry if they did not like the movie.

Unk1: I can imagine.

MC: They said, "When do those [sex] scenes appear?" "There are no such scenes!"

All: [laughter].

Unk1: They said, "No nice ((?))."

MC: We did not know what to say.

RA: They were disappointed. I cannot blame them.

Unk3: I think many elderly persons like us—or even older—would reject such scenes.

MC: That's right.

Unk3: Young people like Nisei are not bothered about those scenes.

Unk1: They do not care.

MC: Some actors in kabuki specialized in performing that kind [erotic] scene.

Unk1: I know.

MC: Although they are ((harshly criticized?)), they gain good publicity and people go to see their performance.

Unk1: Interesting.

MC: Some have been disappointed, "It wasn't what I expected."

Unk1: I see. It was a disappointment.

MC: It is a delicate matter.

RA: Yeah, it cannot be too explicit.

Unk1: It cannot.

MC: Let me talk about talkies [talking films]. They were first introduced [to Hawaii] around 1930.

Unk1: It was in 1930.

RA: That's right.

MC: Inoue Masao and Mizutani... what was her name?

Unk1: Yaeko.

MC: That's right. The title was *Taii no Musume* ["Captain's Daughter"].

Unk1: Yes, *Taii no Musume*.

MC: It was shown at Roosevelt Theater. Mr. Sawamura set it up there. However, it [the audio] sounded garbled, like they were talking from the bottom of a well. It was the first talkie. The [phonograph] record and film needed to be synchronized. As the record rotated, a phonograph needle picked up the sound and delivered to the front of the screen. The machine contained a carbon coil that turned bright red as electricity was induced, burning the record above, making it weak. When the show was over, the record was carefully removed to be cooled in an icebox.

Unk1: Oh.

MC: Those early talkies were interesting. Later on, we had talkies with embedded sound in the film. Our company did not have many talkies at the beginning since we had enough good silent films.

Unk3: The theater was a pioneer, presenting many types of new entertainment, including *naniwabushi*.

MC: Yeah.

Unk3: However, the facilities... voices were amplified strangely. It was hard to listen and understand.

MC: Heh-heh. Although Shochiku presented various shows there, their movies were not well received because of the big echo in the theater. As for *naniwabushi*, the audience here [in Hawaii] sometimes did not appreciate singers who were famous in Japan. For example, the famous Tamagawa Katsutarō sounded very good on his record, but the audience here appreciated his son more. Uratarō [Azumaya Uratarō] is the son, who often sings *rōkyoku* [*naniwabushi*], such as *Nogitsune Sanji* ["Wild Fox Sanji"] even now. A lot depended on the customers' taste, too. Here [in Hawaii], *rōkyoku* lyrics would not be appreciated unless they are in singsong style. Therefore, Mr. Yonewaka [Suzuki Yonewaka] was well received, for example. It was the melody.

RA: [When I was] at Kuakini, my secretary's husband, who understands very little Japanese, enjoyed *rōkyoku*. He liked the sing-song intonation. He does not understand the story and only enjoys the tone. He does not understand the words, especially when there are too many words.

MC: Our audience is the same way. They don't appreciate wordiness. After all, it is the tone that counts.

Unk1: Tone is the key.

MC: Yes. As time goes by, people's preferences change gradually. At one time, *naniwabushi* was unpopular, but it was revived when TV became widespread.

RA: Interesting.

MC: Due to TV, film speakers lost their reason for existing... almost useless.

RA: When I visited Japan in 1965, I went around in Tokyo, looking for *rōkyoku* performance.

MC: Ha ha ha.

RA: They told me, “*Rōkyoku* cannot draw an audience in Tokyo. You need to go countryside.” I had the impression that there were many *rōkyoku* fans in the country.

MC: Talking about *rōkyoku*, when that famous Chaplin visited Japan, he was led to a *rōkyoku* place, but he immediately rushed out.

Unk1 & Unk2: A-Ha.

MC: He said, “What is that? Such strenuous performance.”

Unk1: Ha ha ha. Interesting.

MC: What was it... those famous words Shakespeare wrote? Then he was ((?)) and taken to a dancing show in which dancers wore red waist cloths. He was delighted saying, “Wonderful!”

Unk1: I see.

MC: What Japanese see or hear is not the same as what is perceived by Caucasians or other foreigners.

Unk1: That's right. It is a different sense.

MC: It is so.

Unk1: Did you take a Caucasian with you?

MC: No. It happened when Chaplin visited Japan.

RA: Oh, that Charlie Chaplin! Oh, yeah yeah. Sure, it was understandable.

MC: It was just a story [to Chaplin].

RA: That was why he did not appreciate the tone of *rōkyoku* singing.

MC: That's right. Anyways, when we like something, we appreciate anything similar to it. In the meantime, everything changes as time goes by.

Unk1: Things change.

RA: We appreciate music or anything else we are familiar with. Familiarity is important.

Unk3: I understand a rakugo teller is coming this August.

Unk1: Again?

Unk3: Sometime ago, I read in a newspaper that *yose* [vaudeville theater] could hardly attract customers [in Japan]. Maybe those variety shows are making a comeback these days.

RA: That may be so. I heard there are *rakugo* clubs at Japanese universities and students are practicing for *rakugo* contests among themselves.

MC: *Rakugo* is amusing, especially when we understand its punchline.

RA: Yeah.

MC: Speaking of *rakugo*... While we were showing a movie in an outer island theater this April, the machine [projector] stopped working. During the break, I wanted to introduce *rakugo* to the audience and performed it on the stage. Then there was some dancing on

the stage. It was accompanied by shamisen music played by Takase.

Unk1: Oh.

MC: After the show was over, a theater worker told me, “Hey, a *gundan* of spectators want to see you.”

Unk1: *Gundan* [war stories]...

MC: *Gundan-shi!* [Professional war storyteller] Heh-heh.

Unk1: I remember hearing *Gundan* a long time ago.

MC: They told me, “We don’t know what it was called, but your silly story was amusing.”

RA: Silly stories are amusing.

MC: They didn’t know *rakugo*.

Unk1: They knew nothing about *rakugo*.

RA: That’s right.

Unk3: Even in ((Hawaii?)), there are a substantial number of brides of American soldiers and kibeï Nisei from Japan. I think they would enjoy *rakugo* once in a while.

MC: I think so.

RA: You need to know the Japanese language in order to appreciate *rakugo* or anything.

Unk3: I agree.

Unk1: Otherwise, you cannot understand the figures of speech.

RA: Yeah.

MC: That’s right. It is about understanding the punchline.

Unk1: Punchline!

RA: Yeah. At a party of Fukuoka Kenjin-kai officials, we kept singing songs. I noticed, however, people easily laughed when somebody told a joke in English.

Unk1: I see.

RA: Thereby, although I do not know many Japanese jokes, I told them one joke. However, those who understood my joke...

MC: Not many.

RA: Only three or so out of 20 or so attendees.

Unk1: I see.

MC: Not many.

RA: My joke was... Somebody had too many children. He asked God, “I am in trouble with having too many kids. I cannot keep feeding them, what can I do?” God answered, “You should wear a loincloth made from *mōsen* [thick fabric].”

All: [Laughter].

RA: *Mōsen* also means, “I shall stop doing it.”

All: [Laughter]

Unk1: He may as well have said, “I won't do it anymore.”

MC: Here is a short *rakugo*... “Look! That’s a sexy-looking woman there!” “She is a widow from the back street over there.” “Wow, widows are pretty! I hope my wife will be a widow soon!”

All: Ha ha ha.

MC: However, if they don't understand Japanese, they don't laugh... nothing.

Unk1: They just wonder what's so funny.

RA: First of all, they do not know what *mibōjin* [widow] is.

MC: Let me tell you another short one... a *yūrei* [ghost] suddenly appears in the center of Ginza in Tokyo. A noontime siren blares out, and it says, “I am lost!” in its eerie voice.

Unk1: Aha.

MC: “Who are you?” “I am a *yūrei*. *Urameshi-ya!* [You shall feel my wrath!]” “What are you saying... it is not *urameshi*, it is *hirumeshi* [lunch] time now!”

Unk1: He he he.

MC: “Hey, a *yūrei* is supposed to appear in the dead of night. You should come out on a spooky drizzly night, not during the daytime. What an idiot!” the *yūrei* says, “It's scary in the nighttime... a punchline.

Unk1: Ha ha ha.

MC: A *yūrei* is afraid of... [nighttime]. Sometimes a long story can develop from such a short one.

RA: Yeah.

MC: From comical anecdotes.

RA: As fewer and fewer people understand the Japanese language...

MC: That's right.

RA: Those [traditional Japanese performances] are less and less appreciated.

MC: Now, shall we bring this to a close?

RA: Yes, please.

MC: I could not recall the line earlier, but let me do an Uzaemon monologue.

RA: All right.

MC: “Under a beam of light on a hazy spring evening, with a cold breeze soothing my tipsy body, I was weaving my way to my playboy crow’s nest. At the riverside I ran into easy money, a windfall, a jerk on the fishing pole. It came from the far west to this river. ‘Tis the day before spring. The streetwalkers [unlucky] mishap is my windfall. Unlike a mere penny in a bag of beans, this is a bag of coins. What a good omen before the first day of

spring!” This is a platitude by Ojo Kichisa, one of three thieves called Kichisa.

RA: Interesting.

MC: This is a well-known monologue. Uzaemon [Ichimura Uzaemon] played the role and it was a big hit. In *kabuki*, Tokyo featured the “*aragoto*” method [bravado, rough] from the Edo period. Osaka specialized in the “*wagoto*” method [gentle, romantic]. [Nakamura] Ganjiro is an example. He played Kamiya Jihei.

Unk1: Aha, Kamiya Jihei.

MC: However, though he was handsome and a good actor, he was somewhat off-key in his acting.

RA: Oh.

MC: But he was popular. However, other actors imitated him, thinking it was a good style. Actors in the country would enter the stage, assume a stereotyped posture, and start to say, ((?)).

[Interview tape abruptly ended here in the middle of the conversation.]

Translated by Ari Uchida (Japanese Cultural Center of Hawai‘i volunteer).

Note: Masayuki Chikuma passed away on October 2, 1991.