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# Cultural Practices of Traditional Performing Arts by Lifestyle Migrants in Ama-cho, Oki Islands, Japan: Identity Politics and Cultural Practices of I-Turn Migrants as “Middlemen”

Jun NAGATOMO

島根県隠岐郡海士町への I ターン移住者による伝統芸能実践  
——ミドルマンとしてのアイデンティティ・ポリティクスと文化的実践——

長友 淳\*

## Abstract:

This article discusses the cultural practices of traditional performing arts by lifestyle migrants in Ama-cho, Oki islands, Japan. Ama-cho, an isolated island in Shimane Prefecture, has received attention in recent years for its success in finance reform, community revitalisation, and policies to increase population. While the number of *I-turn* migrants increased, many of them are involved in the island’s traditional performing arts. Based on anthropological fieldwork, this paper illustrates the process in which the *I-turn* migrants gradually become interested in the local traditional performing arts through their identity politics as “middlemen” between “islanders” and “outsiders”.

**要旨：**本稿は、島根県隠岐郡海士町への I ターン移住者による伝統芸能の実践について、筆者が行った文化人類学的フィールドワークをもとに論じる。海士町は財政再建や地域創生、人口増加のための各種政策の成功例として注目されているが、I ターン移住者が増加する中で、移住者の間で島の伝統芸能を習う動きが顕著に見られる。本稿では、ミドルマン概念に着目しながら、彼ら自身が経験する「島民」と「よそ者」の間のアイデンティティ・ポリティクスが、いかに伝統芸能の実践につながっているかという点について考察する。

**Key words:** lifestyle migration, identity politics, *I-turn* migrants in Japan

## 1. Introduction

Structural changes in Japanese society since the 1990s have caused a shift in lifestyle values in particular an increased interest in self-fulfillment. This has contributed to increasingly diversified and fluidised life course models in the middle class (Taga 2011; Nagatomo 2015). As is indicated by the higher job turnover rate among youths, the increasing number of young generations who

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\*Associate Professor, School of International Studies, Kwansei Gakuin University

study abroad and/or go on a working holiday, and the choice of provincial life after quitting their jobs, increased flexibility and fluidity in the life of the middle class have resulted from structural changes in Japanese society, combined with shifting priority in people's lifestyles. In these circumstances that surround the middle class in Japanese society, moves to provincial areas have notably increased, including “*U-turns* (returns to hometowns)” and “*I-turns* (moves to provincial areas other than the person's hometown)”. Although the scale of resultant population movement is not very large, these domestic migration are drawing attention for revitalisation measures among local governments that are faced with depopulation, declining birth rates and an ageing society.

One of the successful cases that is attracting attention from across Japan is that of Nakanoshima Island (Ama-cho, Oki-gun, Shimane Prefecture), where the local government has leveraged newcomers for revitalisation. Ama-cho had been faced with a declining birth rate and ageing society, combined with a financial crisis, until Mayor Yamauchi took office in 2002 and carried out a wide variety of administrative and financial reforms. His “defensive” financial reforms included thorough cost reduction in labour costs in the town office, while he proactively carried out, as “offensive” reforms, the introduction of CAS (Cells Alive System), a state-of-the-art freezing technology; branding of processed seafood products using CAS; creation of industries through support of various new venture businesses; a project to enhance benefits of going to the local high school in the island; establishment of a town-operated cram school; and other measures.

As part of these reforms, measures for attracting I-turn migrants were introduced, which had diverse impacts on the society, economy and culture of Ama-cho. Even though Ama-cho is an isolated island with a population of approximately 2,400, 40% of which is accounted for by elderly people aged 65 and over, as many as 361 I-turn migrants have settled in over the nine years from 2004 (Abe 2013).

There are three key characteristics of I-turn attraction in Ama-cho. First, I-turn migrants to Ama-cho are younger in general, compared to their counterparts in other local governments. I-turn migrants to Ama-cho are broadly categorised into three groups: 1) migrants in their early to late 20s, who are mainly interested in “self-discovery”; 2) ex-elite class members who move in their late 20s to 40s, aiming at self-fulfillment concerning the meaning of work and life (e.g. self-fulfillment through roles in local revitalisation, work where they can leverage their skills and experience); and 3) migrants in their 30s to 50s, who are attracted by nature and the environment. It is characteristic that the proportion of migrants who seek “provincial life” in a general sense is low, compared to other destinations for I-turn migration. The relatively low ages of I-turn migrants have contributed to improved birth rates on the island, with roughly one-third of nursery school children coming from I-turn households. Second, the I-turn migrants have contributed to the creation of industries and to local revitalisation. The majority of I-turn migrants has come to the island through recruitment of project members by the town office or by local businesses, and usually have specialised skills and academic backgrounds. Most of them also have an entrepreneurial spirit and mindset, and their human networks often lead to sequential I-turns, thus causing a virtuous circle. I-turn migrants have played significant roles in the local revitalisation measures and creation of industries in Ama-cho, such as the project to enhance benefits of going to the local high school and the operation of the Okinokuni Learning Centre<sup>1)</sup>, manufacturing and marketing of processed sea cucumber products, the compre-

1) The survival of the prefectural high school, which was at the verge of discontinuation, was a critical requirement ↗

hensive revitalisation plan that won the Good Design Award, the concept of turning the entire island into a library, and merchandising of “turbo curry” as a common local food. Third, the retention rate of I-turn migrants is high, assisted by both physical and systematic support measures. The permanent residence rate in Ama-cho is relatively high compared to other local governments, being as high as roughly two-thirds of all I-turn migrants. This is considered to have been achieved by the synergy of both physical (e.g. housing for permanent residents) and systematic support measures (e.g. job placement service, generous support for childbirth and medical care, human networks of islanders and I-turn migrants) (Nagatomo 2013).

I-turn migrants to Ama-cho have played significant roles in the local society and economy, as described above, while they have also had a cultural impact on the island. At present, I-turn migrants make up the majority of the tourism association staff, who play a central role in the tourism industry of the island. There is also a case where a company established by I-turn migrants leveraged the traditional rice farming in alternative tourism, thereby restoring the culture of dedicating sacred straw ropes. At the same time, fieldwork conducted by the author indicates that I-turn migrants are highly interested in the traditional performing arts of the island, and that approximately 30% of adult I-turn migrants are learning some traditional performing arts, such as *kagura* (sacred Shinto music and dance), *shamisen* (three-stringed Japanese guitar), *minyo* (folk song) and *buyo* (traditional dance). Apart from these specialised traditional arts, I-turn migrants proactively participate in the practice of the island’s traditional performances. They willingly learn “*Kinnyamonya*” and other major dances that are danced at festivals and on other festive occasions. During fieldwork in 2010, the author had a chance to observe a wedding reception of an I-turn couple, where an entertainment event called “*Magodaki (Ko sazuke)*” was held.

The practice of traditional performing art by I-turn migrants presents the following themes for discussion. First, why do these I-turn migrants learn traditional performing arts? What cultural and social processes exist in their motivation and background? Second, what theoretic interpretations are possible in cultural anthropology and sociology to explain their cultural practice? This paper discusses these points from the perspectives of anthropology of tourism, based on the fieldwork conducted by the author. The paper is composed as follows: after discussing theoretic perspectives and methodology, the paper discusses the cultural practice of traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants, indicating fieldwork data, with a focus on the relationship with identity politics.

## 2. Theoretical Perspectives and Methodology

In the theoretical framework of migration studies, I-turn is included in the category of “lifestyle migration”. The new forms of migration that emerged in the middle class of developed countries, in conjunction with the development of globalisation, is gradually being theorised in a broad concept called “lifestyle migration”, in contemporary Western sociology, cultural anthropology, and human geography. Michael Benson defines that lifestyle migrants move not for reasons that have been tra-

↘ for Ama-cho to prevent the outflow of youths. The project to enhance benefits of going to high school went on track through the practice of regional science, where human resources from inside and outside the island participated in training for developing entrepreneurship; the invitation of students to study on the island from outside; and collaboration with the town-operated cram school where professional I-turn teachers taught classes. The size of one grade in the prefectural high school was increased to two classes, and this successful case of school regeneration in provincial areas has attracted attention from across Japan.

ditionally common, such as economic, occupational, or political reasons, but in pursuit of quality of life in a broader sense (Benson 2009:123). Conventionally, migrants moved mainly for political, economic and religious reasons (e.g. Gonzalez 1961). Traditional migration studies have interpreted population movement in the frameworks focused on push-pull factors in the social structure, particularly for economic migrants. However, it is often difficult to explain in these frameworks the new migration forms that are emerging in the middle class of developed countries. Typical examples include “retirement migration” (e.g. King et al. 1998), “migrants searching for self-discovery” (Kato 2009), “cultural migrants” (Fujita 2009), and migration as a means for pursuing an ideal lifestyle (Nagatomo 2007; Williams and Hall 2000). These new migration forms are common in that the majority of migrants belong to the middle class, and that economic motivation does not form the central element of migration<sup>2)</sup>, though the generations and social classes of migrants and the characteristics of migration are diverse. In other words, migration of such new migrants is not defined by push factors (e.g. migration becomes inescapable due to poverty, etc.), but they move on their own initiative, according to their choices in life. In the meantime, the concept of “migration” is becoming increasingly ambiguous, while the relationship between tourism experience and migration is deepening. This is particularly typical in “seasonal migration” (McHugh and Mings 1996), “long-stay tourism” (e.g. Ono 2007) and so on<sup>3)</sup>.

Lifestyle migration, including these various new migration forms, is characteristic in its relationship with the perception of leisure, and with the view of labour as the opposite concept. Nagatomo (2015) discussed that the new views of labour and leisure, based on “individualisation” that has proceeded in the middle class due to structural changes in the Japanese society since the 1990s, have caused increasing interests in work-life balance and life in foreign countries, leading to increasing “transnational movement for leisure”, taking an example of Japanese migrants to Australia. In their book “*Sea Change*”, Burnley and Murphy (2003) studied the recent population movement from the urban to suburban area in Australia, and pointed out that this movement was motivated by the idealised provincial environment in the suburban area, as opposed to the living environment and work-centered lifestyle in the urban area. This viewpoint of “counter-urbanisation” suggested by Burnley and Murphy is also observed in the study of migrants to the provincial area in New Zealand, by Swaffield and Fairweather (1998) and in McHugh and Mings’ study (1996:546) of seasonal migration by retirement-age migrants who move between Northern America and the state of Arizona from season to season.

It can be pointed out that recent studies on lifestyle migration tend to emphasise that aspirations for ideal lifestyle in the new area are functioning as pull factors in a broad sense, and have significance in decision-making related to migration. Walmsley et al. (1998) conducted research concern-

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- 2) There is a counterargument that there are few cases where no economic element/motivation is related to new migration patterns of the middle class in developed countries. However, preceding studies and studies by the author focused on migration of the Japanese middle class in the 1990s and later clearly indicate that these migrants have expectations mainly concerning ideals and positive images about life in foreign countries (e.g. experience of a working holiday in a foreign country would enhance their language proficiency and facilitate their future job finding overseas), unlike the push factors, such as poverty and low income, that motivated historical migrants.
- 3) The concept of “migration” varies by the researchers. While “permanent migration” is the typical connotation in the Japanese equivalent “*iju*”, Western studies usually regard migrants as people who migrate. From this point of view, this paper uses the terms “migrants” and “migrants” in a broad sense as people who migrate and reside, including for a working holiday, retirement migration, and I-turn migrants.

ing factors for internal migration to the coastal area in New South Wales, Australia, and pointed out that the pull factors, such as residential environment, climate and slow living rhythm, had a larger significance than economic elements/motivation and other push factors. The study by Ip and others (Ip et al. 1998) discussed that residential environment, education and other lifestyle-related elements affected migration from Taiwan to Australia, while recognising the presence of economic elements and motivations. Similar viewpoints were also present in the research of retirement migrants in western North Carolina, conducted by Hass and Serow (1993); in the study of internal migrants to the Gold Coast, conducted by Stimson and Minnery (1998); and in the survey of reasons for migration by the British and Germans to the Balearic Islands in Spain, conducted by Salva-Thomas (2002).

Based on the new migration trends of the middle class in the age of globalisation, as described above, this paper regards I-turn as a migration form included in lifestyle migration, and adopts a qualitative methodology. I-turn migration is a phenomenon where people move to provincial areas other than their hometowns. Because it is difficult to explain this population movement from the push-pull factors in social structure, qualitative research is considered to be highly applicable. Qualitative research is a methodology where interview data and other research data are generalised from flexible and incisive viewpoints against social contexts, based on interpretivism with a focus on the interpretation, understanding, experience and production of society (Mason 1996: 4). These characteristics of qualitative research are considered effective for studies on the practice of traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants, a study field that is socially and culturally special and limited. From this standpoint, the author conducted fieldwork five times from 2010 to 2014, mainly consisting of repeated informal interviews with I-turn migrants and islanders, followed by semi-structured interviews with 20 I-turn migrants. Fieldwork indicated that the practice of traditional culture by I-turn migrants in Ama-cho had a relationship with the complex identity politics of “middlemen”. The following sections discuss how their identity politics and social interaction affect the practice of traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants.

### **3. Practice of Traditional Dances: I-turn Migrants as “Middlemen” and their Identity Politics**

#### **3.1 I-turn Migrants as “Middlemen”: Construction of Socioeconomic Networks, Ripple Effects of Urban Occupational Discipline, and Sequential Influx of Skilled Migrants**

From the viewpoint of identity with a focus on strangers, I-turn migrants are positioned in the middle of islanders and strangers. Their social position and roles are defined as those of “middlemen” from the anthropologic point of view. Bailey deems that middlemen fill the gap in exchange between a small-sized community and a large-sized community, and states that the functionality of middlemen as an effective agent between the two parties depends on their ability to convey the power and intention of either party in a subtly altered manner (Bailey 1970:168). In anthropology, the concept of middlemen is positioned between borders of social systems, and signifies persons who function as an agent when the two parties interact. Their social function and role as an agent has a theoretic importance in contemporary anthropology, which highlights dynamism of societies and groups.

Through repeated fieldwork on I-turn migrants in Ama-cho, it was notably observed that they frequently went to and returned from the mainland, and that they had extensive social networks. Mr.

A, a male in his 40s, functioned as a gatekeeper in the fieldwork by the author. Mr. A worked for a corporate training consulting agency after retiring from a well-known company that operated both a human resource placement business and advertisement business, and now serves as the Director for the town-operated cram school. The successes in the project to enhance benefits of going to high school and in the operation of the town-operated cram school attracted attention from across Japan, and Mr. A leaves the island twice a month on average to give lectures. When he mentioned his frequent business trips, Mr. A stated as follows:

After visiting the Kansai region, I will go to Yamagata Prefecture, and then to Tokyo. In Tokyo, I'll see Mr. X (name) at the Ministry of YY. He is a super big name in restoration operations. Once I made a presentation before him when he visited the island. On that occasion, he urged me to call him when I visit Tokyo . . .

Mr. A acquires subsidies from ministerial agencies, and establishes relationships with governmental agencies and private enterprises through his lectures, leveraging his documentation and presentation skills that he accumulated through his working experience at a large company. His social position is exactly what middlemen means in anthropology, linking Ama-cho with the central government.

Similarly, Mr. B, a male in his 30s, also proves the social position of I-turn migrants who link an isolated island with the mainland both socially and economically. Mr. B once stayed in Ama-cho as part of his research seminar activities at a prestigious national university in Tokyo. After graduation, he moved to the island after experiencing local industries through the Furusato Shimane Teiju Foundation. He now runs a business of dried sea cucumbers and operates an inn, and is often reported about by the media as a pioneer of I-turn. He appealed to the town office that an industry could be created by processing sea cucumbers that were harvested around the island, and the Ama-cho government funded approximately 70 million yen for the establishment of a processing factory. Although some local residents had criticised against such large funding to a young man coming from outside the island, this investment led to increased income of fishermen and new employment in the processing business. At present, processed sea cucumbers are also exported to China.

Just like Mr. A and Mr. B above, persons who graduated from prestigious universities and/or worked for prestigious companies are playing important roles in the economic and local regeneration in Ama-cho. As observed in the local contribution by Mr. A to the service industry, and by Mr. B to the primary sector of industry, I-turn migrants from the elite class, among other groups of I-turn migrants to Ama-cho, bring with them social and economic benefits and networks with the central government/industry, and function as middlemen in the isolated island faced with financial crisis, combined with a declining birth rate and an ageing society, linking it with the mainland.

Apart from links with the mainland through social networks, these I-turn migrants have also caused small but important changes on the island, regarding urban occupational discipline and ethics. In the fieldwork conducted by the author, many mentioned that the atmosphere in the workplace has changed. In the informal interviews with the mayor and the town office staff, many interviewees referred to the ways of work and communication that were introduced by I-turn migrants. The interview data below shows a typical comment that mentioned that point:

Before, the town office staff only said “Hi, the XX section” or something like that when they answered telephone calls. After I-turn migrants came, they naturally started to say “Hello, this is YY speaking, the XX section, Ama-cho Town Office”. It seems that the I-turn migrants brought in with them a favourable attitude of work from the central government or industry.

This is a comment by the mayor concerning the staff’s attitude and practice of answering telephone calls. Just as indicated in this example, I-turn migrants have not only functioned as social and economic agents, but also brought with them the discipline of central corporate organisations into the island. On this point, Mr. C, a male in his 30s and a pioneer among I-turn migrants who serves as the leader of the project to enhance benefits of visiting Ama-cho, stated that the fusion of urban senses (focused on rational operation and efficiency) with provincial senses (prioritising human relationships and effects before efficiency) was a model for operating new businesses and organisations, and that he leveraged this fusion in the regenerative projects in Ama-cho.

Furthermore, I-turn migrants to Ama-cho have played a significant role as agents for calling in more skilled migrants. While he was working for a consulting agency, Mr. A stayed in Ama-cho as an instructor for the AMA Wagon Project<sup>4)</sup>, which was operated by Ama-cho. Mr. A stated that he was deeply impressed by the enthusiasm of I-turn migrants whom he met during the stay, even more than the beautiful nature of the island. Mr. A recalled that he observed an epitome of Japanese society on the island, faced with a declining birth rate and an ageing society, combined with financial crisis, and that he empathised with the enthusiasm of I-turn migrants who were seeking to create a model for a new society in Ama-cho that was opposed to the urban-centered lifestyle focused on mass consumption. Ms. D, a female in her 30s who moved to Ama-cho after empathising with the passion of I-turn migrants and town office staff during her stay on the island as a newspaper reporter, stated as follows concerning the process of decision-making for migration:

During my first visit to the island for reporting, people whom I met for the first time told me that there would be chances here for me to exercise my abilities, if I ever got tired of my work in Tokyo. When Mr. C, an I-turn migrant, said this, I was surprised at first, wondering why he could say such a thing. It strongly impressed me that there were people who lived so freely and in such a flexible manner.

After graduating from a prestigious national university, Ms. D worked for a large printing company and then for a venture business, before becoming a newspaper reporter. After visiting Ama-cho as a reporter, Ms. D was living a highly busy and physically demanding life for some time, when Mr. C contacted her about a job offer in the project to enhance the benefits of visiting the island, and she started considering moving to the island. Ms. D decided on moving when she remembered what she was told by I-turn migrants during her previous visit as a reporter, and when she subsequently met

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4) The AMA Wagon Project is part of the catering seminars and PR activities held by Ama-cho, in which tourists travel from Tokyo to Ama-cho in a microbus and then stay on the island. This project has not only promoted advertisement of and tourists to the island, but has also established networks for indirectly calling in migrants and supporting Ama-cho. There are also remarkable cases such as that of Mr. A, where the experience and human networks of people who stayed on the island as guest instructors in this project led to new I-turn migrants.

the mayor in Tokyo, who directly asked for her help toward the regeneration of Ama-cho. In this way, I-turn migrants filled with an entrepreneurial spirit have functioned as catalysts to call in new migrants who have a similar mindset, skills and occupational ethics. This is an important element in understanding the success of Ama-cho in receiving I-turn migrants.

In this section above, the author has discussed the three elements of middlemen, 1) as a social and economic agent between the island and the mainland, 2) as an introducer of urban occupational discipline, and 3) as a catalyst to call in new I-turn migrants. In the following section, the process where these I-turn migrants practice traditional performing arts is discussed, from the viewpoint of the relationship with the identity politics that they experience as middlemen.

### 3.2 Identity Politics of I-turn Migrants as Middlemen

While I-turn migrants to Ama-cho function as middlemen who link the island with urban areas both socially and economically, they themselves have experienced identity politics between strangers and islanders. This experience is closely related to the proactive practice of traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants. Figure 1 indicates identity politics that I-turn migrants have experienced following their move to the island, social interactions and changes in their mindset, and the process of practicing traditional performing arts, as illustrated through the fieldwork. The following section describes how I-turn migrants begin to sense of attachment to the island, through social interactions among I-turn migrants, native residents, and visitors from outside the island, as well as the identity politics that I-turn migrants go through between strangers and islanders, and the two processes that comprise the “sense of entering the island”.

After moving to the island, I-turn migrants experience an identity sway between strangers and islanders. They function as middlemen who link the island and the mainland both socially and economically. Through their work and social life, they regularly experience social interactions with people from the mainland. Throughout the year, media reporters and administrative study tours visit Ama-cho from across Japan, and specially regard I-turn migrants as “persons who have moved to the island”. I-turn migrants are depicted as cultural others by the mainland population, to which they once belonged. Typical depictions of I-turn migrants in media coverage include “playing a key role

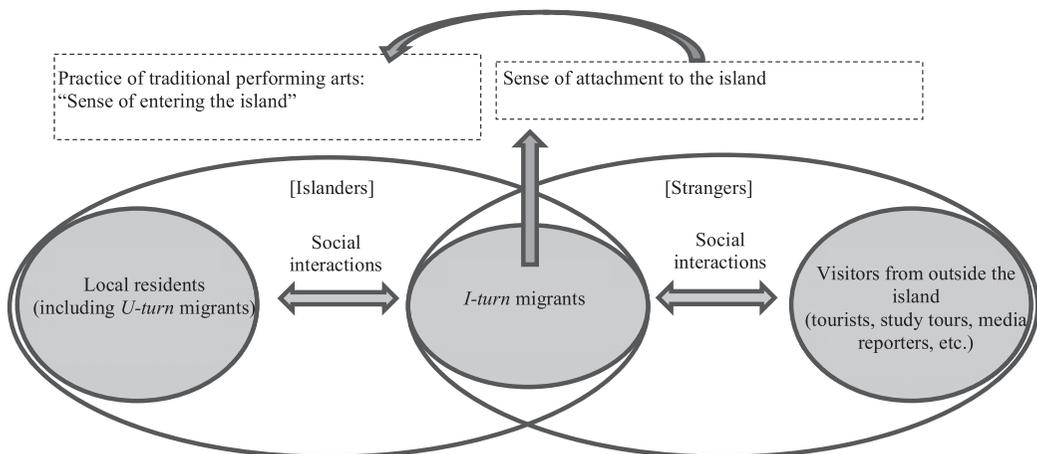


Figure 1: Identity politics of I-turn migrants and their process of practicing traditional performing arts

in the revitalisation of the island”, “a model for local regeneration in Japan”, and “I-turn migrants changing the island”. Such depictions of I-turn migrants by the mainland media and social interactions with reporters and study tours from the mainland, urge the migrants to recognise their position as islanders, and their sense of belonging to the island. Thus they begin to have the sense of attachment to the island. Through the fieldwork, I-turn migrants tended to narrate life on the island as incidents in their own world. When they talked about episodes on the island, they emphasised that they were already a part of local life, even though they *did* feel out of place immediately after migration. Episodes that were narrated in this stance included that they had no problem with food, because the area was rich in sea foods; that winter on the island was harsh, and only people who lived there could tell the darkness and bitterness of winter; that islanders were so kind that, when it rained, neighbours took laundry that was hanged outside for drying into the house and so on. I-turn migrants gradually recognise differences between cultural others and themselves, through social interactions with media reporters, administrative study tours, and other strangers from outside the island, and emphasise that, although they used to work for companies on the mainland, and used to live in an urban-centered society focused on mass consumption, having a “mainland-ish mindset”, they have moved to an island with an opposite culture, where they are achieving self-fulfillment through contribution to local industry and regeneration. In other words, I-turn migrants formulate a recognition that emphasises their differences with strangers from outside the island, through social interactions with them. This can be understood as a process for I-turn migrants to islanders.

This process for I-turn migrants to coming closer to be islanders also has a close relationship with the practice of traditional performing arts. Throughout the fieldwork, the phrase “now that I have come to the island” was used with remarkable frequency by I-turn migrants during comments concerning motivations for learning traditional performing arts. Ms. E, a female in her 30s, applied for a job opening at an inn and moved to Ama-cho. As she lived on the island, she was gradually attracted by local culture, and started to participate in a project for disseminating the benefits of visiting the island through the media. She recollected how she and other I-turn women established a circle for learning local dances as follows:

Now that I came to the island, I started to feel like learning local culture ... Because I-turn migrants are originally from outside the island, we wanted to learn and join local culture. The circle has about ten members, all I-turn migrants. It started with about five members, with people sometimes joining and leaving the group. We invited a local resident as an instructor. Many I-turn women learn *buyo*, and many I-turn men learn *kagura*, *minyō*, and *shamisen*. One of the ten incumbent members is a U-turn migrants, and the other nine are I-turn migrants. No native young residents come for learning. There are groups of middle-aged native women, but we do not learn together with them.

When Ms. E said “now that I came to the island”, it more signified that she had a chance to become a resident of the island, rather than coming to the island as a visitor. This significance is also linked to her sense of belonging to the island as a kind of utopia. Through a fresh contact with traditional culture after moving to the island, a certain identity sway occurs to I-turn migrants, both in the self-discovery migrant group (mainly in their 20s) and in the self-fulfillment migrant group,

including their spouses (mainly in their late 20s to 30s). While functioning as middlemen who link the island with an outside world, I-turn migrants also begin to sense of belonging to the island. Ms. F, a female in her 30s, narrated as follows when she looked back at how she established the circle and asked a native resident to be their instructor:

When I started to live on the island, the local life was totally different from that in Tokyo, and I felt that local culture has been steadily maintained and passed on. I believe it was our motivation that we wanted to feel, more strongly, that we were part of that process on the island, and to learn local culture as much as we could.

Ms. F is the spouse of Mr. A, who had previously decided to move to the island. Ms. F also moved to Ama-cho immediately before marriage. She asked a local resident who was running a small bar frequented by Mr. A to be their instructor for the circle, Mr. A called this resident his “mother on the island”. This instructor said that, although she intended to turn down the request at first, she started to give lessons after being impressed by the enthusiasm of the members and their willingness to learn local culture.

Most of traditional dances that the circle members learn for the purpose of learning local culture and “entering the island” have a symbolic significance for the island, and islanders are very familiar with them (e.g. “*Okii Iwai Ondo*”). These dances are taught to native residents at elementary school, and are frequently danced on festive occasions, such as local events and wedding ceremonies. When the circle members learn such symbolic dances, it causes two processes to occur: one for themselves to “enter the island” as participants in the practice of culture, and the other for native residents to “accept them”. These processes were remarkably observed in a local autumn festival of industry and culture. Their circle showed a dance performance in the Ama-cho Festival of Industry and Culture, which was held in late October. While visitors also come from outside the island, the local performance art program as part of this festival mainly comprises local arts. The program was held in the Development Centre Tomin Hall, the only hall equipped with a stage and audience seats. Native residents gathered to watch their relatives and acquaintances do *minyō*, *buyō*, and/or instrumental performances. Among such local art performances by native residents, the dance performance by I-turn migrants (“*Okii Iwai Ondo*” and “*Shin Ama-cho Ondo*”) received applause by native residents as warm as that for the later *minyō* performance by children from Ama Elementary School. The large applause was caused by a kind of catharsis among native residents, to know that young people who originally came from outside the island respectfully learned and performed the island’s dance and *minyō*.

In this way, the practice of traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants facilitates the psychological acceptance of I-turn migrants by local residents. In the meantime, I-turn migrants also have a dilemma that it is still difficult for them to become “true” islanders, despite their efforts to coming closer to becoming one. This is another motivation for them to participate in the practice of traditional performing arts. After graduating from a prestigious university in the Kansai region, Mr. H, a male in his 30s, established a small trading company that handles many tasks from the marketing of local specialties to webpage building and tourism businesses. Mr. H stated as follows, while showing photos of the annual summer festival in his district, to the author:

For example, this *shishimai* (lion dance) can only be performed by native residents. Of course, we I-turn migrants participate in the festival, and play the drums and various other roles, but there is an implicit rule or tradition that only allows native residents to perform this lion dance

...

Describing his motivation for migration, Mr. H said that he was not interested in a “provincial life” at first, but gradually came to respect local culture through his life on the island. Mr. H then started to learn *kagura*, and launched a business to leverage traditional local farming techniques in alternative tourism. He contributes to the employment of local residents through farming experience tours from the mainland, and to the restoration of traditional cultures, such as the dedication of sacred straw ropes. Despite all his efforts for the revitalisation of local culture and society, there still exist subtle social interactions concerning the true identity of islanders between native residents and I-turn migrants.

From the viewpoints of tourism sociology and tourism anthropology, the relationship between the generation of sense of belonging to the island and the practice of traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants, as described above, is also linked to the objectification and commercialisation of culture in the context of tourism (e.g. Ota 1993) and to the discussion of authenticity (e.g. Clifford 1988: 223). At the same time, it is also possible to discuss the practice of culture by migrants from the viewpoint of post-colonialism, deeming that I-turn migrants, as cultural others from the city, “discover” vanishing traditional culture on the island after moving to the island, as defined by salvage anthropology, and “consume” such culture in a unilateral manner to confirm that they belong to the island as a utopia for them. From this perspective, cultural practice by I-turn migrants is aimed at confirming that they belong to that utopia, and is therefore filled with performativity.

However, this paper has described, based on the fieldwork, that the practice of traditional culture by I-turn migrants is difficult to explain from such radical viewpoints, but that it is related to complex identity politics. I-turn migrants originally come from outside the island, and function as middlemen who link the island with the mainland after moving to the island. They constantly experience identity sway between islanders and strangers. As represented by the phrase “I want to enter the island”, their identity politics triggers a process for them to further coming closer to be islanders, and the practice of traditional culture is part of such a process. In other words, there are more complex politics than radical perspectives as exemplified above, and I-turn migrants as middlemen experience identity politics among local residents, I-turn migrants, and strangers from outside the island, which is more complex than the dichotomy between “hosts” and “guests”.

#### 4. Conclusion

This paper discussed the relationship of identity politics that is experienced by I-turn migrants to Ama-cho, Oki-gun, Shimane Prefecture, as middlemen, with their interest in local traditional culture and practice of traditional performing arts. At the beginning, this paper positioned “I-turn migration”, a term only used with relation to Japanese society, as part of lifestyle migration, which has been theorised as a new migration form in the middle class in migration research. This paper then discussed how I-turn migrants function as middlemen who link the island with the mainland. Subsequently, the paper clarified how I-turn migrants as middlemen experience identity sway between is-

landers (us) and strangers (them) in their life on the island, and described the process where they have the “sense of entering the island”. The paper thus discussed how I-turn migrants begin to have the sense of belonging to the island through social interactions with strangers from outside the island, such as media reporters and administrative study tours, and how that process of “entering the island” is related to the practice of traditional performing arts. This paper also pointed out that, despite the strong sense of entering the island and participation in traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants, micro interactions with local residents still exist in the psychological acceptance of I-turn migrants as islanders, as evidenced by the implicit division of roles in festivals.

For the discussion of cultural practice of traditional performing arts by I-turn migrants, it is necessary to examine more complex identity politics as middlemen among local residents, I-turn migrants, and strangers from outside the island, rather than the dichotomist framework between hosts and guests, as adopted in tourism anthropology and sociology. It has only been about ten years since Ama-cho has accepted I-turn migrants. For further studies in this field, discussions need to be held from various perspectives, including interactions with U-turn migrants, practice of traditional culture by children of I-turn migrants and so on.

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