Special Feature on “Maai”: A Note from the Editor

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“Maai” is a concept that represents a relation holding spatially and temporarily among more than two people or things, at least one of which is a human being. The word consists of “ma” and “ai”. “Ma” means a space or time, sometimes physically and sometimes temporally. “Ai” is a noun form of a verb “au” which means that more than two people or things meet or match. Therefore, “maai” has a connotation of creating a space or time to interact with the opponents in a way that enables both oneself and the others to live well.

The list of papers constituting the special feature is the following;

1. Kono, T., Phenomenology of Ma and Maai: An Interpretation of Zeami’s Body Cosmology from a Phenomenological Point of View
2. Takanashi, K. and Den, Y., Field Interaction Analysis: A Second-Person Viewpoint Approach to Maai
3. Fujii, H., MAAI—Dynamic Equilibrium in Architecture
4. Suwa, M., How Could and Should “Maai”, Empathetic Relation from Second-Person’s Viewpoint, Be Studied?

As a preface, I will raise two significant features of “maai”. First, when a “maai” is being formed between people or things, there exists a dynamic equilibrium or balance between the two moves or powers. The readers will see many examples of this feature,

- in Noh play, a Japanese dramatic form established in fourteenth century, and also in ancient sword bouts or martial arts such as Kendo, both in Kono’s paper,
- in the creation, utilization, and research of architectural spaces, in Fujii’s paper,
- in people’s walking in a crowded diagonal crossing in a big city, and in also bouts of a pitcher and the opposing batter in baseball games, both in Suwa’s paper,

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- in interactions among the principal members who are in command of construction of the shrine for Nozawa-Spring Festival, in Takanashi and Den's paper.

Second, what balances dynamically are the psychological energies of the two opposing or facing each other. "Ma" is filled with psychological energies of both. The balance or equilibrium never stands still, but rather turns to the next state dynamically. Both feel this balance or equilibrium, perceive the internal intent of each other, and thereby know what may occur next and how oneself should move next.

When other people in the third-person's viewpoint are there, they also may be able to sympathize and resonate with the balance of the energies filled in the "ma", and thereby feel the internal intents of both opponents. That enables them to know what is likely to come or occur next and how. The readers will see detailed discussions on this feature in Kono's and Suwa's papers.

The four papers recognize the significance of examinations of the tacit phenomenon of "maai", and argue how it could or should be examined.

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