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The relation of naniwa-bushi to other genres of Japanese story-singing

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It is a great honour to be awarded the Koizumi Fumio Music Prize. It gives me particular pleasure as I remember the first time I met Professor Koizumi in 1978. I visited his home in Sakuradai, and Mrs Koizumi served tea and cake. There were so many musical instruments from different countries in the room. Later, during my year studying at the Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music I took some of his ethnomusicology classes, though I was a Japanese music major. I was strongly influenced by his book on mode and scales in Japanese music, which brought about a paradigm shift in how Japanese music was understood. Subsequently, the establishment of the Koizumi Archive has played an important role in encouraging ethnomusicology in Japan, and the awarding of the Koizumi Prize to researchers around the world is significant in establishing the Archive as an international centre.

My first formal study of Japanese music was at the University of Paris in 1973-74. After returning to Australia I decided to specialize in Japanese music. I had already been studying Japanese language, and was strongly attracted to Japan, an attraction and connection that has now lasted for 44 years.

I first came to Japan as a tourist in 1973 on my way to Paris, where I studied Japanese language, history, literature, linguistics and also took Professor Akira Tanba's course on Japanese music. Back in Australia I enrolled in Japanese language, and Japanese studies, specializing in Japanese music. As a graduate student, I spent six months studying in Tokyo, under the supervision of Professor Kanazawa at International Christian University, and language at the Asahi Culture Centre. I had private lessons in kiyomoto musical narrative with Kiyomoto Eizaburō, and subsequently had a year at Geidai Musicology Department on a Japanese government scholarship. My supervisor was Yokomichi Mario.

At Monash University I went on to take out a PhD with my research on kiyomoto, eventually published as a book in 1999. I obtained a position in Japanese studies, but unfortunately never had much opportunity to teach Japanese music.

In Japan, traditional music is called *hōgaku* (national music), but outside Japan it comes under the heading of ethnomusicology. For such study, a knowledge of Japanese has been essential, so I count myself lucky to have been in a Japanese studies department. That way, it was possible to consider music as a part of Japan as a whole, and for the past few years now I have been strongly interested in the issue of Japanese music and modernity.

I believe that already in the Edo period Japanese music was developing modern aspects. Indeed, the Edo period is often referred to as Early Modern (*kinsei*) Japan in English. In this

period, for example, we see a movement from vocal and theatre music toward instrumental music, or pure music. The vocal music of puppet and kabuki theatres, that is, jōruri and nagauta, developed in non-theatrical contexts of celebratory pieces and zashiki pieces. This is complemented by the growth of the instrumental music of jiuta and sōkyoku, from the danmono repertoire to extended interludes between songs, leading to the strong emphasis on koto and shakuhachi ensemble music in the Meiji period. These genres started to feature frequent modulation within and between different versions of the three pentatonic scales that form the basis of Edo period music. This made the music more complex and varied and stimulated the development of purely instrumental music.

Another feature that distinguishes Edo period music from that of the medieval period is the frequent use of musical quotation. In jōruri and nagauta we come across phrases labelled utai-gakari, shinnai-gakari, and longer quotations such as nage-bushi and kiyari, even whole sections that take a song from another genre.

A third example of modernity is the commercial base of kabuki and puppet theatres. In addition, musicians developed a system to guarantee their financial viability privately away from the theatre, in the form of the iemoto or family head system, where the head of a school (family) has the authority to grant licenses and professional names in a genre or branch, to publish texts and text-scores, and be paid for all such services. The licensing extended to professional and amateur disciples, and this teaching and licensing system, continued to the present day, has been a significant mechanism in ensuring the continuance of many performance traditions.

As Japanese music entered the Meiji period, and confronted the influx of Western music, Japan in fact “chose” Western music. However, the local music did not fossilize or petrify, but it continued to develop in the modern period as it had in preceding centuries. Of course it was influenced by Western music and in that process generated new styles such as Miyagi Michio’s New Japanese Music Movement, with new combinations of instruments, new musical forms and ensemble formations. Musical notations were developed and music publishing and music journalism flourished. Much new music was created and composed.

Shakuhachi music boomed in the modern period. Using honkyoku as a basis, a powerful image of tradition and antiquity was fabricated, and new shakuhachi traditions were born, in a convincing case of “invention of tradition”.

Furthermore, totally new genres were born. In the case of biwa music, so-called modern biwa (kindai biwa) was formed from the blind biwa traditions of Kyushu. Another new genre was the new style of musical narrative, naniwa-bushi, about which I will talk in more detail today.

My research of Japanese music began with kiyomoto-bushi. I became aware of it through Malm’s book which treated in detail nagauta, his specialty, but only referred briefly to kiyomoto-bushi as a branch of jōruri used to accompany kabuki dance, with beautiful singing in a high register. My interest was piqued. While studying it I attempted to analyze using Malm’s methodology for nagauta, but found that that approach did not work. After ten years or so, I decided that kiyomoto was not music or song in the normal sense, but narrative with musical delivery, in fact, katarimono. It was commonly thought at that time that although stemming from jōruri, kiyomoto was really song (utaimono). However, as I came to understand it more deeply, I was convinced that its narrative features were central. To put it concisely, it used formulaic diction, and formulaic musical material, in its sections, phrases and substyles. The concept of sectional structure (shōdan kōsei) propounded by Yokomichi Mario initially for noh

has been crucial for the understanding of katarimono. I am indebted to him for this.

From demonstrating the narrative nature of kiyomoto, I proceeded to apply my method to the earlier genres which form the heritage of kiyomoto, to clarify what actually was Japanese oral and musical narrative. Going gradually backwards in time, I looked first at other bungo-kei jōruri genres such as tokiwazu and itchū-bushi, then gidayū-bushi, then further back into the medieval genres of noh, kōwaka, heike, and finally kōshiki shōmyō. I believe I have been able to show their common features as katarimono, specifically their structural principles and their use of formulaic musical material. In this endeavor, I have benefited greatly from the guidance and inspiration of Professor Koizumi, and Professor Yokomichi and numerous other Japanese researchers in the field. I am particularly indebted to those who joined the team research project I was privileged to lead at the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies in 1998-1999. Their contributions to discussion and to the volume of papers in Japanese (2002) were crucial to the development of my research that culminated in my 2015 monograph.

From this, I developed an interest in the modern narrative genre, naniwa-bushi, the topic of my talk today.

Naniwa-bushi has a number of modern features, starting with its use of modern media and technology. It emerged as a genre contemporary with the development of stenographic books (sokki-bon), then entered the era of sound recording that developed in Japan to a large degree through the popularity of naniwa-bushi. Then followed cinema, radio and talkie films. All of these media fed on naniwa-bushi's popularity. The electronic microphone became a fixture of naniwa-bushi performance, just as in mediated popular music, and continues to be an "accessory" today. This would be unthinkable with the earlier katarimono genres of gidayū and kiyomoto. More recently, pre-recorded studio orchestral accompaniment has been used instead of shamisen in a karaoke style by some performers. Naniwa-bushi has kept up with recording technology from record to cassette to CD, and now actively uses the Internet, iTunes and YouTube as a crucial means of reaching fans, and of learning and transmitting the art.

On the other hand, naniwa-bushi also has many traditional or pre-modern features. Performers always wear kimono in keeping with the custom of the Meiji period when it was born. The content of the narratives focus overwhelmingly on old-fashioned values such as loyalty and giri-ninjō, even if the actual stories are not pre-modern. In the postwar period it was castigated as feudal and fell from the heights of popularity it had enjoyed, especially because of its cooperation with the military agenda that afflicted all arts in the 1940s when it espoused patriotic narratives. It became an epithet for a type of old-fashioned masculine subculture. Further traditional elements are its texts and musical features. The text of the sung parts of the narrative are always in traditional poetic metre, consisting of lines of seven plus five syllables. The accompanying instrument is in principle the three-stringed plucked lute shamisen. The texts are written down but there are no musical scores or notation for either the sung narrative or the shamisen accompaniment. In this, it seems to be closer to oral narrative than the jōruri and nagauta genres that developed in the Edo period.

The singer-narrator of naniwa-bushi is called the rōkyoku-shi, and the shamisen player is the kyoku-shi. The narrative alternates between sections of sung (musically delivered) fushi, and spoken narrative, called tanka. This fits the prosimetric model of performed narrative, typical of China and Central Asian narratives. Most other Japanese narratives do not conform so closely to this model of sung sections in poetic metre and sections of spoken narrative. Naniwa-bushi's inclusion of both narrative and dramatic dialogue in the spoken sections is one feature that

distinguishes it from jōruri and heike. A piece lasts typically for thirty minutes. The shamisen not only accompanies the sung sections, but continues to play throughout the spoken sections in an improvisational way to provide musical continuity and to give atmospheric support to the narrative. The sung fushi sections are the heart of the narrative: a piece begins and ends with sung delivery, and spoken sections are interpolated into the musical flow; and the whole is supported by the shamisen. Related story-telling arts of kōdan and rakugo are often dubbed solo theatre; naniwa-bushi could be called solo musical theatre.

The musical aspect of naniwa-bushi is not at all modern. It is katarimono through and through. Firstly, it is structured in formulaic sections, just like jōruri and earlier katarimono. Each section is characterized by a musical substyle: it may be the basic, most frequently used one, or it may be a more specialized one that lends formal variety, or one that underlines the content of the narrative. In its use of these formulaic substyles it retains premodern orality in its musical aspect.

Another feature is the mark of individual performers in musical style. Naniwa-bushi emerged from street performances of saimon and chobokure, and it is still very fluid. It is similar in this to jōruri in the seventeenth century when individual performers gave rise to their own brand of jōruri, leading to the plethora of genres we have now: gidayū-bushi, itchū-bushi, tokiwazu-bushi and so on, and within gidayū-bushi the individual styles attributed to prominent performers. In naniwa-bushi too people identify styles with certain famous performers: Baiō-bushi, Kumomemon-bushi, Torazō-bushi, after singers who generated unique melodic trademarks. Such individual traits are highly evaluated. It shows a generative capacity characteristic of oral narrative, but that has now disappeared from jōruri.

There is also regional difference in the form of kantō-bushi and kansai-bushi, that grew respectively in the Tokyo region and the Osaka region. The two styles are no longer strictly limited to those regions, but they show definite differences in sung fushi and shamisen patterns.

Although texts are written down, they are not placed in front of the performer as in jōruri and nagauta. The performer memorizes the whole piece, and often inserts personal variants extempore, especially at the beginning of the performance. For many pieces there is no author as such, and individual versions are created of well-known stories, notably the stories of kōdan that were widely adapted in the formative period of the genre, and are the stuff of long episodic narratives. The text is normally hand-written by the performer, perhaps based on one borrowed from a teacher or colleague. As there are no musical notations, a performer learns orally by imitating a teacher, or a mentor. However, the named fushi types (substyles) form a kind of oral notation that indicate the style of a particular section, and may be written down for reference against the text or by the shamisen player when she discusses with the singer about the piece to be performed.

As previously mentioned, a piece is made up of an accumulation of formulaic sections, but, in contrast to jōruri, there are very few phrase-length formulaic phrases (senritsukei). A piece follows a relatively fixed order of progression, opening with fushi and closing with fushi. The first fushi is jibushi (also called kikkake), which commences in free rhythm unaccompanied except a few notes from the shamisen between phrases, and changes to fitted rhythm with full shamisen accompaniment. This substyle can be repeated any number of times, and can be considered the basic style of the genre. The final section is called barashi (literally, “unpacking”). Other more special substyles include urei (pathos), seme (urgent), hayabushi

(rushed). Kantō-bushi has a distinct basic style which Kitagawa Junko calls “kantō-bushi in the narrow sense”.

The few formulaic phrases include a nasal, broken melisma unique to naniwa-bushi, for which I have not found a name. In addition, the final phrase of a section is remarkably consistent across all performers, as is the final phrase of a piece. The concluding phrase is musically and verbally totally formulaic.

The naniwa-bushi shamisen plays without ceasing throughout a piece. It accompanies and supports the singer, but in contrast to jōruri and nagauta, has not developed extensive solo passages beyond short introductory motives, and sometimes a short final phrase at the end of a piece. The shamisen player does not have any musical notation or score. She follows the shifting choices of the singer, flexibly adapting to the singer’s style whether kantō-bushi or kansai-bushi with the appropriate corresponding shamisen melodies and motives (*te*), and her own free adaptations. During sections of spoken delivery, she plays throughout in an improvisatory way, mostly in fragmentary phrases in a style that suits the mood of the narrative. At moments of dramatic or violent movement she uses strong matching effects: for example, to suggest rain or the galloping of horses she uses an instrumental onomatopoeia. The shamisen player has scope for developing her own “voice”, as well as inheriting conventional and traditional motives. She also calls on kabuki off-stage melodies used for some dramatic dialogue. Often heard in a snowy scene is a phrase from the *jiuta* song *Yuki*, taken from the repertoire of kabuki off-stage music. The shamisen lacks the independence of the singer, but in the spoken sections, has much scope for oral composition and originality. The short phrases at the opening and ending of a piece, and in between sections, are a “traditional” part of the genre conventions, but a competent performer puts her own stamp of them, individualizing them.

In this way, the shamisen player must fit in with the style of the singer: kantō-bushi and kansai-bushi have many musical differences, but a shamisen player does not specialize in one or the other. Individual singers also belong to lineages or have developed personal idiosyncrasies that the shamisen player must recognize, match and support. It used to be common for a husband and wife team to always perform together, but these days, fixed partnerships are few, though clearly preferences exist. The number of shamisen players is far smaller than the number of singers, so they need to be flexible and perform for a range of singers. They must possess the ability to improvise and adapt, often without much or any rehearsal. This musical and performance ability of the naniwa-bushi shamisen players is amazing.

The shamisen is always tuned to *sansagari* (b e a, a fourth on a fourth), unlike jōruri’s *honchōshi*. There is no modulation (nuclear tones remain constant), but there is a shift to semi-tonal intervals for the *urei* substyle, and there is instability in some sections between whole tone and semi-tone versions of the melody, like a shifting between major and minor modes. The quotation of melodies from other genres is not conspicuous. In all these respects, it shows affinity with *goze uta*, rather than jōruri, indicating that its lineage is separate from jōruri and nagauta.

Currently, naniwa-bushi be heard regularly at the Mokubatei theatre in Asakusa, Tokyo, where there are performances on the first seven days of every month from 12:15 to 4:00, and in Osaka, at the South Meeting Room of the Isshinji Temple in Tennōji ward, on the second Saturday, Sunday and Monday of the month throughout the year from 1:00 to 3:00. The national broadcaster NHK has a weekly 30-minute program *Best of Rōkyoku* (*Rōkyoku*

jūhachiban), and occasional television broadcasts. In addition there are a considerable number of live performances, but it is difficult for a performer to make a living from naniwa-bushi alone. Many are also performing folksong, enka, kawachi ondo, or other jobs including driving a taxi. According to the respective websites, in Tokyo there are 40 singers and 16 shamisen players; in Osaka, 22 singers and five shamisen players. Not all those listed on the website perform regularly. However, recently a number of young professional performers are joining the ranks.

The current repertoire of naniwa-bushi is extensive. A survey carried out by the author between 2011 and 2016 showed that in the regular seasons of Tokyo and Osaka combined over 1000 separate pieces have been performed at least once. This includes newly created pieces, showing that naniwa-bushi draws not only on traditional themes, but actively creates new narratives, from the 1920s use of stories from contemporary literature (such as pieces based on Higuchi Ichiyō's *Jūsanya* and Kikuchi Kan's *Chichi kaeru*) to the present day. Some recent works are based purely on contemporary life and are full of humour.

We can conclude from this that naniwa-bushi continues to be fertile in generating new works while maintaining and developing its traditional musical style. Naniwa-bushi may not have the same large audiences as the 1930s to 1960s, but it is far from dying out, as is often stated. We are seeing generational change, and the creation of new audiences. The future of naniwa-bushi is far from bleak.

On this note I will finish with the typical phrase at the end of a piece: "Time is up, come back for more next time!" In fact, my next talk to commemorate the award of the Koizumi prize will be at a meeting of the Society for Research in Asiatic Music in Kyoto in a couple of days, when I will take up another aspect of musical modernity: the art song and modern musical identity in Japan, Korea, China and Australia, 1900 to 1950.

Thank you for your attention.

Relevant publications by Alison Tokita

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- 2012 「講式にみとめられる即興性の名残」 [Residual orality in *kōshiki*], in 藤田隆則、上野正昭 (編), 『歌と語りの言葉とふしの研究』京都市立芸術大学日本伝統音楽研究センター, 157-179.
- 2015 *Japanese Singers of Tales: Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative*. Ashgate, Surrey.
- 2016 浪花節における口頭性—「太閤記」ものの場合 (Orality in naniwa-bushi: the case of Taikōki pieces) 『日本伝統音楽研究』第13号, 25-45.
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