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Japanese Singers of Tales: Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative

Alison McQueen Tokita

JAPANESE SINGERS OF TALES

To Miyama and Nowaki

In memory of
John Miles Foley (1947–2012)

Japanese Singers of Tales

Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative

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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is the product of many years of stumbling and fumbling to understand the nature of Japan's musical narratives. It has taken far too long, and in the end I have not got very far. Having written a whole monograph on one genre, kiyomoto-bushi, it has been challenging to cover several genres in a single comparative study. As my understanding of each genre has limitations, I have relied heavily on the work of many other researchers. Hence, I owe an intellectual debt to many whose work is found in the list of references. On the conceptual side, these include Yokomichi Mario, Machida Kashō, Okamoto Bun'ya, Milman Parry and Albert Lord, and one who assumed their mantle, John Miles Foley, to whose memory this volume is dedicated. I have benefited from the support and guidance of many mentors and colleagues, including Gamō Satoaki, Gamō Mitsuko, Satō Michiko, Hyōdō Hiromi and Tokumaru Yosihiko. I have been blessed with wonderfully helpful research colleagues, including Komoda Haruko, Yamada Chieko, Tanaka Yumiko, Fujita Takanori, Hugh de Ferranti and members of innumerable research gatherings. In particular, I benefited from the opportunity to lead a year-long team research project at the International Research Centre for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken) in 1998, when I was most fortunate to have Mitsuta Kazunobu as my manager and my link with the administration, and Komoda Haruko who graciously agreed to be co-editor of the resulting volume in Japanese. I am most grateful to them, and to all members of that project.

For producing the master of the accompanying CD, I am truly indebted to Fujimoto Sō, director of the Japan Traditional Cultures Foundation in Tokyo.

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Our children, to whom this volume is dedicated, have cheerfully put up with years of forbearance towards my slow research progress.

Kyoto

Periods of Japanese History

Nara	710–794
Heian	794–1185
Kamakura	1185–1333
Nanbokuchō	1333–1392
Musomachi	1392–1568
Momoyama	1568–1600
Edo (Tokugawa)	1600–1867
Meiji	1868–1912
Taishō	1912–1926
Shōwa	1926–1988
Heisei	1989–

Chapter 1
Singing the Story: Continuity and Change in Japanese Performed Narratives

Itinerant bards travelling the length and breadth of the Japanese archipelago over a long period of time were instrumental in circulating a body of narratives. The narratives they performed were continually re-told and recycled in different versions and formats, contributing to a sense of a shared Japanese identity that extended spatially – because it defined the geographical extent of 'Japan' – and temporally – because it created a sense of history as 'Japanese' and a connection with the past. Thus the wide circulation of oral narratives in medieval Japan contributed to the creation of what can be called an incipient 'national literature' (Ruch 1977). Shared cultural practices enable people to feel part of an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983), extending beyond their face-to-face daily contacts. Whereas Anderson emphasized the role of the print media in early modern European society in this regard, in Japan performed narratives have provided a similar shared cultural heritage, giving people a sense of belonging to an extended community.

This is the enduring power of many specific narratives such as *The Tale of the Heike* and *The Tale of the Soga Brothers*, which began as orally transmitted tales (episodes), and coalesced into quasi-epic cycles. Such narratives became part of the literary canon, but continued to be re-created in various performance traditions. In addition, the circulation of narratives through all regions by itinerant bards generated a common language with literary features, even in texts with clear indications of oral composition. The language of the performed narratives was not the colloquial regional languages of folktales.

The Japanese have shown a strong preference for stories with music, to judge by the large number of genres of musical storytelling. By adding music to narrative, memorability is enhanced, but also an element of artificiality. At the same time, the possibility of creating emotional and dramatic nuances is increased through musical expression.

The study of Japanese performed narratives opens up the possibility of an alternative cultural history of Japan. It allows us to hear the voice of the people whose socially determined role it was to tell these stories professionally, often by virtue of their blindness. It can also give us an understanding of the world view of those who listened to and patronized these performing arts, since these narratives convey ideas about how people saw themselves, what ideal types they revered, what they aspired to, what behaviours were admired and what despised – in short, the values of the common people.

A great deal of scholarly attention has been paid to Japanese pre-modern literature and drama, but traditions of oral narrative are seldom mentioned, despite their importance to the development of both literature and theatre. A world-wide revolution since the 1960s in the study of oral literature has occurred as a result of Parry and Lord's work (Lord 1960; Foley 1988), and this has begun to introduce a new paradigm in Japan for understanding received 'literary' works such as *The Tale of the Heike* (McCullough 1988; Tyler 2012b) and *The Tale of the Soga Brothers* (Cogan 1987). Instead of trying to determine the original author of *The Tale of the Heike* (which has over a dozen highly divergent textual variants, as well as being a performed musical genre), many scholars now see it as oral literature, or at least 'oral-connected' (Foley 1999: xiv) or 'oral-derived' (ibid.: 31), in addition to having a complex textual tradition of reception (Tokita 2003).

This book is a study of Japanese narratives which are sung in performance, commonly known as katarimono. It is a journey through ten centuries of Japanese history using extant performed narratives as signposts. Of the many genres of performed narrative, this study focuses on one particular group of narratives with a strong musical element, which can be traced as a single tradition defined by both thematic and formal continuities.

I will argue that, despite the apparently discrete nature of the individual genres, it is possible to identify a continuous tradition of musically performed narrative in Japan from the tenth to the twentieth centuries. The elements of change relate to the move away from oral narrative to text-based performance, and from a simple narrative situation by one performer to complex theatrical narratives with dancers, puppeteers, singers and other musicians. The resulting complexity led to the foregrounding of the musical aspects in some cases, and of dramatic or dance aspects in others. Musical and textual analysis of these extant performance traditions reveals points of divergence in both form and content, while also stressing continuities.

These genres have a highly developed musical aspect, which differentiates them from most oral narrative. Their orality is not 'composition in performance', because they have been textualized and their texts are largely fixed. Their music, however, has retained oral features and it is to this aspect that orality theory can be applied.

In Europe, oral narrative arts belonged to a pre-literate stage of society, or pre-literate segments of society, and ceased to be relevant as literacy became widespread. Indeed, sung narratives had probably given way to literature, drama and opera by the end of the medieval era. In contrast, in Japan, even as literacy rates grew remarkably from the seventeenth century, performed narratives continued to thrive in the increasingly literate culture of the Edo period (1603–1867) and into the modern period.

The vitality of performed narratives in pre-modern Japan can be seen in the urban arts of kabuki and bunraku, in didactic and witty storytelling in small theatres, and in the street performance of satiric ballads and broadsides, as well as folk and regional narrative arts. The urbanites of the Edo period spent a lot

of leisure time and money on learning to perform these arts from professional performers. In the period of modernization performed narratives lost their place at the pinnacle of both popular and officially patronized culture. The old working classes of cities such as Tokyo and Osaka continued to enjoy genres such as gidayū-bushi, kiyomoto and shinnai until the 1950s, but television was the death knell to the practice on any wide scale.

Even in the modern period, despite the prioritization of Western music over Japanese music from 1868, indigenous music including performed narratives remained vigorous until the Second World War, since which there has been a steady erosion of Japanese pre-modern forms. Instead, in the period of rapid economic growth in the 1960s and 1970s, enka (a ballad with a definite narrative element) emerged (Yano 2002), there was a min'yō boom (Hughes 2008), and from the 1970s karaoke developed (Mitsui and Hosokawa 1998). The non-musical narrative arts of rakugo and kōdan continue to occupy a significant though limited space in contemporary popular culture, maintaining a strong following in small theatres and on television. It is remarkable that performed narratives have retained their popularity for so long.

The narrative arts with a strong musical component are now regarded as 'traditional' or 'classical', which is code for fossilized, or worse, almost defunct. One fateful event leading to their downfall was the disestablishment of the traditional class system in 1871, which took away the officially supported professions of blind artists (Groemer 2001: 374). Whereas heike narratives performed by blind musicians had been supported by the military government, the modern nation state had no use for them.

As the title *Japanese Singers of Tales* suggests, this study is situated in a body of research about oral narrative, inspired by the work of Parry and Lord, which was published under the title *Singers of Tales* (Lord 1960). Marshall Pihl used this phrase in his study of pan'sori in *Korean Singers of Tales* (Pihl 1994). It considers centrally the issues of orality and literacy. The sub-title of the book, *Ten Centuries of Performed Narrative*, indicates the diachronic aspect of the study. It focuses on genres in one particular stream of Japanese narrative, and points out the continuity of grand narratives which endured over several centuries.

The concept of a continuous tradition overarching discrete genres is congruous with Foley's concept of 'traditional referentiality' (Foley 1999). The thematic continuity occurs in the use and development of specific stories and characters, as well as the use of certain consistent story patterns and stock expressions. The formal continuity occurs in both verbal and musical narrative structuring and expressive devices. I will point to a heritage of formulaic expression in both verbal and musical aspects of the narratives: the accumulation of a stock of verbal and musical formulaic material.

This book will examine four extant genres dating from the medieval period: kōshiki, heike, nō and kōwaka; followed by a selection from the large number of jōruri musical narratives dating from the Edo period. These form a stream that can be traced back to the tenth century. This study will demonstrate the fundamental

aspects of continuity between the separately named highly musicalized narratives, that is, the role of tradition, and through the case studies will point to political, social and cultural changes at various points that stimulated innovation, development and transformation, and the emergence of new genres from old ones. The later genres show an awareness of preceding genres and traditions, resulting in quotation and intertextuality.

Later genres did not always supplant earlier ones, but developed alongside them, hence the survival of the medieval genres into the Edo period, and further into the twentieth century. Many older genres have continued to be performed and appreciated well after newer ones emerged, leading to a complex interplay of mutual influence, and strong linkages between old and new. All the genres dealt with in this study are in the twenty-first century still being performed by both professionals and amateurs, and still being appreciated by audiences.

Continuity and Change: Historical Overview

The remarkable continuity in Japan's culture gives an excellent opportunity for a diachronic study of the dynamics of cultural change, with the creation and transmission of a number of performance genres over ten centuries. At historical junctures of social and political upheaval, we note major epistemic shifts, where there occurs attrition of performing art forms and the emergence of new forms, in a burst of cultural creativity. Often these points of disjuncture involve major stimulus from outside. In the more stable periods, such as the Heian and Edo periods, consolidation and elaboration of introduced elements and innovations occurs. The transitional periods see big changes in social and cultural praxis; they produce change in dominant philosophy and ideology, and generate new stories purveyed by new media.

From Myth to History

With the introduction of writing from China between the Kofun period (fifth to seventh centuries) and the Nara period (eighth century), the Japanese archipelago changed from a primarily oral society to a literate society. More than just a change of medium from oral to written communication, it was a major change in episteme. This involved the shift from the court's oral custodians of genealogy, ritual and procedure using oral narrative, to scribes making written records of all matters in Chinese. Many aspects of Chinese culture were introduced, including the administrative system, court music and Buddhism.

The mythic age is partially known through Japan's oldest extant book, the *Kojiki* (712), which records Japan's pre-Buddhist, pre-Chinese indigenous oral culture compiled from earlier accounts which were written from the oral lore transmitted by the narratorial caste, the kataribe. The book was written in a hybrid Japanese-Chinese style, in an attempt to retain the orally transmitted culture.

Chinese characters were used both for meaning and for sound, the latter especially for noting place names and personal names, and in transcribing songs. The *Kojiki* was a compilation of myths and legends, purporting to be the history of the Yamato clan, and of genealogies of the major clans (see Philippi 1968; Lurie 2011). One of its most famous myths is the account of the sun goddess, Amaterasu, who, offended by her brother's obnoxious behaviour, shut herself in a cave and thus plunged the world into darkness (perhaps symbolizing a solar eclipse, or the winter solstice). The other gods put on a bawdy amusing show to entice her out, and their laughter piqued her curiosity enough to make her emerge from the cave (Lu 1997: 6). The description of that performance suggests it is regarded as ritual and a prototype of theatrical performance. Written in a complex variety of adaptations of Chinese characters to Japanese phonology (manyōgana), the *Kojiki* became difficult to read after the Japanese writing system evolved with the development of the two kana syllabaries. When the ancient narratives were invoked by later writers, such as Zeami in his writings about nō (Zeami and Hare 2008, 14 and 47), it was the companion volume the *Nihongi*, compiled in pure Chinese in 720, that was more accessible (Miner et al. 1985: 186). On the whole, the *Kojiki* and *Nihongi* narratives have not been major sources of material for later performance genres, one exception being the kōwaka piece, *Nihongi* (Araki 1964: 112, 144). However, they are significant as evidence of a formalized system of indigenous oral narrative by a professional caste.

Salvation Narratives

The introduction of Buddhism led to the practice of preaching (sekkyō) by highly literate ordained priests in temples, and also to proselytizing (shōdō) by a variety of priest-like figures on the streets, in which context storytelling flourished. Towards the end of the Heian period, the musical liturgy of kōshiki as a devotional and teaching practice for the elite class appears, and its musical development continued over the Kamakura period (see Chapter 2). The rhetorical art of preaching called on local and imported legends and moral tales to illustrate paths to achieve salvation, or tales about saintly people. The impact of preaching on storytelling culture was profound. The practice of teaching Buddhism with pictures (etoki) in temples and in market places grew, and popular preaching developed into a musical storytelling called sekkyō-bushi, although this genre (sermon music, musical sermons, sermon ballads) as it flourished in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries had little to do with the world of Buddhism. A syncretic fusion of many folk beliefs, sekkyō-bushi became an entertainment performed with shamisen and puppets in the seventeenth century, and was subsumed into jōruri (Kimbrough 2013).

Tales (Setsuwa)

Kamakura-period Buddhism developed fund-raising (kanjin) practices by itinerant holy men (hijiri) and women (miko, later nuns, especially the Kumano

bikuni) to raise money for religious and public works, by telling stories on themes of salvation. There emerged a body of many types of legends of the origins of shrines and temples (engitan), the original gods associated with Buddhist entities (honjitan), confession narratives (zange monogatari), and journeys through hell (jigoku meguri). Many groups of people, women and men, blind and sighted, purveyed stories that circulated widely, and these orally circulating stories were collected and compiled by literati as setsuwa tales. The earliest collections seem to have been for the use of Buddhist priests for sermon material.[1] These collections were then further drawn on as sources for nō, kōwaka, jōruri and kabuki plays in later generations. The abiding circulation of oral performance in the medieval period by illiterate outcast groups casts doubt on their access to written sources, but instead suggests a fund of oral lore freely exchanged. It seems most likely that setsuwa stories continued to be generated and elaborated orally. This is an area outside the scope of this study that requires careful future research.

The English terms of oral narrative, performed narrative and epic are not necessarily easily matched with the Japanese terms of katari (performed narrative), monogatari (literary tales) and katarimono (musicalized performed narratives). Scholars in Japan commonly distinguish the act of telling (kataru) from that of singing (utau). In the twentieth century long-lasting debates took place about whether Japan had an epic tradition: quasi-historical tales of glory, of legendary heroes, known by all the community – the 'grand narratives' of the nation. The most likely candidate was *The Tale of the Heike*, but it differs from many other epic traditions in its elegiac tone and the marked differences between variant texts.

Scholars such as Yanagita Kunio and Orikuchi Shinobu were concerned to understand the fundamental nature of Japanese culture in the era when it seemed that Japan was in danger of becoming fully westernized. Thus they spearheaded a profound reaction against westernization and modernization in the first half of the twentieth century, and attempted various re-definitions of Japanese tradition. Yanagita was influential on later generations of literary scholars, including Hyōdō Hiromi (1997, 2000) and Fukuda Akira. Hyōdō (2000), for example, discusses the dilemmas created with the equation of kōshō bungei with oral literature, noting in particular that it failed to notice the currently popular urban oral art of naniwa-bushi.

War Tales (Gunkimono) and Revenge Narratives

The earliest war tale was *Shōmonki* (trans. Rabinovitch 1986), a chronicle of a rebellion that took place in 935. War tales have been studied by Varley (1994) as a source of information about warrior history and culture. Originating as separate tales, they came to form sequences and cycles, leading to the extended narratives

[1] Examples of setsuwa collections include *Nihon ryōiki* (Nara period), *Konjaku monogatari-shū* (late Heian period), *Shintō-shū* (fourteenth century), *Otogi zōshi* (sixteenth to seventeenth century) and many others.

of the Heike clan, the Soga Brothers and the Minamoto warrior hero, Yoshitsune (*Gikeiki*; see McCullough 1966). At the end of the twelfth century the wars between two warrior clans, the Heike and the Genji, gave rise to the narratives which came to be called *The Tale of the Heike* and the related performance tradition of heike narrative by blind monks playing the biwa lute (see Chapter 3). The heike narratives were subsequently drawn on by nō, kōwaka mai and then jōruri (in both bunraku and kabuki). Another smaller scale incident, a revenge feud of the same era, gave rise to *The Tale of the Soga Brothers*, which similarly provided abundant material for later genres. These tales also had a religious element, but not fundamentally of a Buddhist kind. Their earliest function seems to have been as a propitiatory ritual narrative to appease angry spirits of those who suffered unnatural deaths.

Nō and mai

Nō drew on many precedents, including ritual placatory rites, and the dance and oracle narratives of shamanistic women (miko). The latter developed into women entertainers who danced solo in mai style, and sang while playing a drum. In the fourteenth century, a turbulent transition period between the Kamakura and Muromachi periods (the Nanbokuchō divided court from 1333 to 1392), the nō drama was formalized and reached its present form under Kannami and Zeami. It has a rich combination of dramatic, musical and dance elements. Its singing is closely related to the musical narrative of heike and kōwaka.

The era of the divided courts was chronicled in the *Taiheiki* which was 'read' (see Hyōdō 1995 [2005]; Varley 1994: 171). Although some extant texts have musical indications, it did not become an ongoing musical performance tradition, but may be linked to the non-musical kōdan and rakugo storytelling. Although not ascribed to a single author, it seems to have been formed as a written chronicle and, unlike *The Tale of the Heike* and *The Tale of the Soga Brothers*, does not have myriad variants. A diary of the time mentions a Kojima Hōshi, a biwa hōshi who may have been the compiler. (See McCullough's partial translation, 1959.)

Closely related to nō are the performing arts of mai, of which the latest is the still extant kōwaka. Kōwaka narrative is a simple version of nō. Where earlier mai was performed by women (shirabyōshi, kusemai, maimai), later boys' mai (chigo mai), and then mai by mature males developed. Kōwaka is men's mai. It was popular with the military class in the sixteenth century.

Jōruri

The earliest references to jōruri narrative come from the early fifteenth century. The period of civil war from 1466 to the end of the sixteenth century eventually subsided and the peaceful Edo period dawned from 1600. Shamisen was the central instrument of Edo-period music. Generally thought to have been introduced to Japan via Ryukyu by the 1570s, the shamisen was a major stimulus to musical development at the plebeian level and in bourgeois settings. Very soon, shamisen

music became differentiated into a myriad of genres, including popular song, theatre and narrative. Jōruri narrative was elaborated into a large number of related but competing styles, each with a separate identity and musico-social system. The jōruri genres developed first in the puppet theatre and later in kabuki.

The Modern Period

The modern period saw the adoption of Western music, but also the generation of the neo-traditional genres, kindai biwa and naniwa-bushi. From the margins of pre-modern Japan (Kyūshū) sprang the Meiji revolutionaries and kindai biwa, redolent of modern nationalism, singing conservative anti-modern tales to the accompaniment of the biwa. Meanwhile in the poorest quarters, street performers who through the Edo period had sung satirical narratives (saimon, chobokure, chongara) developed naniwa-bushi accompanied by shamisen, and this too became a vehicle for nationalist sentiment through the musical recitation of tales of valour and romance.

The 'heike-jōruri' Stream of Narratives

In Japan, we should distinguish initially between two broad categories of storytelling genres of performed narrative: first those with no musical aspect whatsoever, such as rakugo, kōdan and manzai, and secondly those with a musical delivery. In the latter we can further distinguish between narratives with simple musical delivery, with one basic melody only (stichic narrative; see below), and narratives with a more complex musical structure, that use multiple melodies. The latter type, the focus of this book, includes the alternation of sung and spoken delivery, the sung passages employing a number of different melodies and styles. The spoken passages are in most cases dramatic dialogue. The narrative is therefore incipiently dramatic.

This study focuses on the most musically-developed stream of performed narratives: kōshiki, heike, nō, kōwaka and the several genres of jōruri. As a convenient shorthand, I will refer to this as the heike-jōruri stream (some scholars call this the biwa hōshi stream). While moving through the various selected genres within this stream, we will make many comparisons, diachronic and synchronic. This study excludes folk or regional narrative genres, such as oku jōruri, saimon types, goze, kudoki, ondo, deroren saimon and a later style of musical preaching called fushidan sekkyō. It also excludes the remarkable new sung narratives of the twentieth century: naniwa-bushi or rōkyoku, and two modern biwa styles originating from the provinces of Satsuma and Chikuzen. They are of a different lineage and work on different musical principles, and require a separate study.

Thematic Continuities: Fictional / Narrative Worlds

The heike-jōruri narratives show a remarkable degree of both thematic and formal continuity.

Oral origins are undisputed for the heike narratives by biwa hōshi, for the narrative of the Soga Brothers, for the moral or didactic tales compiled as setsuwa bungaku and otogi zōshi, for the tale of Lady Jōruri, and for the sekkyō narratives. However, literate and oral cultures coexisted, constantly interacting and cross-fertilizing each other. Hence, narrative and dramatic creations often derived from literary works, just as oral narratives provided materials for written vernacular works. The latter describes the dominant direction; indeed, many of the early Heian literary monogatari drew on oral sources.

The stock of thematic material in theatrical forms such as nō, bunraku and kabuki originates in early sources that are continually re-invented in new media and new forms. In kabuki and bunraku this is articulated as sekai versus shukō – world and contrivance – or, to put it more abstractly, tradition and innovation (Parker 2006).

Hard and Soft Narrative Worlds

In heike-jōruri narratives a number of broad narrative strands ('grand narratives') that have continued over the centuries, in oral, performed and written forms, are identifiable. These can be found in the world of storytelling and its interpenetrating worlds of history, literature, proselytizing and begging. Such narrative worlds exist as verbal constructs and have created meaning for many communities of people in many eras. The diffusion of narratives over the geographical extent of the Japanese archipelago contributed from early on towards the formation of a community or a society at the national level, through the shared reception of narratives.

There are two broad narrative strands: the 'soft' one of salvation, suffering and self-sacrifice, with a strong Buddhist flavour, later evolving to include tales of romantic suffering; and the 'hard' one focusing on valorous warrior exploits, with a strong Shintō flavour, and also auspicious, life-affirming elements.

Salvation and romantic narratives share many formal aspects of expression. The soft narrative mode led to the love suicide plays of Chikamatsu and other jōruri authors, the major new type of narrative in the Edo period. The narrative world of battle tales developed different expressive means and can be called hard narrative. This led to the historical jōruri plays. Both modes are deeply connected: for example, the battle tale often ends with a warrior undergoing a spiritual awakening (hosshin) and turning to monastic life.

Another stream of narratives can be identified in most genres, whose purpose is primarily of a ritual nature (Shintō, not Buddhist). They are auspicious in nature – for example, nō's *Okina*, kabuki's *Sanbasō* and jōruri's shūgi auspicious pieces, and follow the tradition of seeking ritual appeasement or good fortune. Auspicious expression tends to draw on hard narrative music resources.

The distinction between hard and soft narrative relates to the issue of formal continuities of structure and formulaic expression. Thus, although this is a loose and broad way of talking about different styles of musical narrative, it is nonetheless productive in the conceptualization of heike-jōruri narrative music and its development over ten centuries. In the broadest sense it asserts that differentiated and specific narrative musical styles or substyles are available to suit the content of a narrated story. It also provides a clue as to the provenance and lineage of many aspects of musical formulaism.

The predominantly hard genres that focus on military themes, historical tales of warrior families and feuds are heike, kōwaka, gidayū-bushi and ōzatsuma-bushi. They typically portray a masculine, warrior culture. Other genres, such as itchū-bushi and bungo-bushi, are predominantly soft, focusing on salvation narratives, repentance, romance, love suicides and so on. However, constant influence between genres has led to increasing complexity and hybridity, so that most genres have both hard and soft elements. In heike narrative some pieces (hiroimono) feature battle scenes and use particular melodies, whereas scenes about romance and religious awakening are melodic (fushimono) and feature other particular melodies. Kōwaka is usually classified as military (gunkimono) but a substantial part of its traditional repertoire is mythic and salvation oriented and can be considered to comprise setsuwa pieces (Squires 2001). Nō (utai) comprises a wide variety of plays, one whole category being shura or warrior plays, which feature a lot of 'strong singing' (tsuyogin), another being women plays or third-act plays (sanbanme mono), which feature only 'soft singing' (yowagin).

Orality, Literacy and Textualization

Oral narrative is characteristic of people who for various reasons do not rely on written texts. It could be that writing is not yet known to them, or that only the elite groups of their society have access to the technology of writing. Orality is one of the central issues to have been addressed by researchers of performed narrative. In particular, the narratives of living traditions of the South Slavs (in the Balkans, former Yugoslavia), of Africa and of India have been the object of extensive fieldwork, documentation and analysis. The field of oral literature studies was firmly established by Parry and Lord (Lord 1960 [2000]), who collected data in the Balkans to demonstrate the characteristics of performed narrative. However, the musical element, although an integral part of the narrative, receives little attention in the influential structural model that they created. Their model is based on the formulaic nature of the line and phrase (the *formula*), and the formulaic nature of the section or scene, or group of lines (the *theme*).

A lot of textual criticism has been done from the perspective of oral narrative theory on narratives which are known now only as written texts, such as the Homeric epics, the Bible and medieval European texts such as Beowulf,

Robin Hood and King Arthur.[2] There are also plenty of studies on still-performed oral literature: Clunies-Ross (2000) for Iceland; Reichl (2000) for Turkmen, India, China and others; Pihl (1994) for Korea; Børdahl (1999) and McLaren (1998) for China. Many apply the Parry-Lord model. Few, however, deal with musical issues. Similar studies have been published for Japan: kiyomoto (Tokita 1999), zatō biwa (de Ferranti 2009) and the area of comic storytelling (rakugo) (Morioka and Sasaki 1990).

The concept of oral narrative is generally applied to the verbal aspect of narratives which use 'oral composition', and have a high degree of verbal formulaism. In such narratives, the musical aspect is simple, and there is only one performer who both sings and plays an instrument. This kind of oral narrative applies to the Japanese Ainu yukar, goze uta and zatō biwa, in the sense that the Ainu practised oral composition as theorized by Parry-Lord. Furthermore, these traditions do not have performance texts (although ethnologists may have collected the narratives and made texts for research purposes). They therefore relied totally on oral transmission. Goze uta and zatō biwa were the preserve of the blind.

The narratives introduced in this book are not oral narratives in the sense of being newly composed each performance (oral composition). However, they have orality, because they are performed rather than read; the role of texts is limited and that of notation even more limited. We can say that these genres have deliberately avoided written texts in the process of transmission of certain or all aspects of the art, and even if the narrated verbal text is written down, its musical and kinetic realizations are not.

To look at issues of orality and literacy in regard to these performed narratives helps to establish the most appropriate model for understanding their structure. This includes the 'residual orality' of formulaic expression (Ong 1982). As all the genres have a strong element of textuality, we will also place them in the framework of the textualization of oral epics proposed by Honko (2000).

Orality theory has been applied to the study of *The Tale of the Heike*, which, until the impact of oral studies, had primarily been studied as literature. The first to apply the Parry-Lord oral-formulaic theory to Japan was Kenneth Butler (1966), with his work on the oral origins of the heike narrative and the interaction between oral performance and literate texts. This led nearly 20 years later to its take-up by Yamamoto Kichizō who applied the theory to goze, kōwaka and sekkyō narratives, thereby introducing it to pre-modern literary scholars (Yamamoto 1988). Hyōdō and many others saw its relevance especially to debates about the origins of heike narrative, but there has not been a full acceptance of the orality position in literary studies, rather a division into two camps seems to have become entrenched.

Oral culture is prone to being romanticized when it is seen as dichotomous with literate culture. Ong's powerful exposition of the intrinsic value of orality

[2] Ivan Illich's study of the foundations of bookish culture in Europe draws on Parry-Lord and related work to examine the moment of shift from oral to written culture in Europe around the thirteenth century (Illich 1993).

was instrumental in achieving a swing from the exclusive valorization of the written text to the valuing of oral texts (Ong 1982). Subsequent research has shown that rarely are orality and literacy mutually exclusive, but that there is vigorous interaction between the two. Indeed, it is virtually impossible to investigate a 'pure' oral culture. Japan began to use the Chinese writing system from at least the fifth century. By the ninth century two syllabaries had been developed, and the hiragana syllabary in particular fostered the growth of a vernacular literature, which flowered spectacularly in the tenth and eleventh centuries with imperial poetry anthologies (chokusen waka-shū), and with women's prose fiction, epitomized by Lady Murasaki's *The Tale of Genji*.

Thus Japanese literacy has been defined by the use of Chinese characters, so that writing in the vernacular using the phonetic kana scripts is closer to orality, and captures the sounds of the spoken Japanese language.

> People in lower levels of society had access to literate knowledge through professional scribes without knowing how to read and write themselves … orality and literacy mutually interact, support and influence each other in many ways. (Judith Fröhlich on literacy in premodern Japan, *Premodern Japanese Studies*, 18 January 2007. See also Fröhlich 2007)

The use of a written script by ruling elites affects all levels of society. However, even performance genres which generate written texts are linked through their lineage of development with earlier 'pure' oral narratives, and show traces of 'residual orality' in their verbal and musical formulaic expression. The written texts of heike and jōruri, for example, are realized musically in performance on the basis of unsystematic and limited musical notation. Their orality is maintained in both their performance and in their transmission process.

Factors that Distance heike-jōruri from Oral Narrative

As narrative performance arts developed over the centuries, many factors affected the degree to which they could be termed oral. One factor was the influence of literacy, first in the form of Chinese characters. Early on, the advent of Chinese literate culture, especially as carried to Japan by Buddhism, led to the creation of a literate court elite, and literate monks in the temples. As literacy was an importation from China and carried by men, it was superimposed on an oral culture which became the domain of women and the blind (Pollack 1986). A second factor which brought musical narratives out of the purely oral domain was the increasing elaboration of the musical aspect. A third factor was the kinetic realization of narrative in theatrical contexts: nō, kōwaka, jōruri. As narrative was incorporated into theatrical performance, the complexity of having multiple performers – musicians, actors, puppeteers, dancers, singers – meant that more had to be determined in advance and less could be left to the discretion of a single performer. This type of contextual change also led to further development of the

musical aspect of the narrative performance, and the extensive incorporation of lyric songs into the narrative text, which affected narrative structure.

With these changes, the blind ceased to be the only practitioners. In early narrative practice, the blind were given sole right to control the performance of some narratives, but after the marriage of jōruri narrative with shamisen and puppet performance around the turn of the seventeenth century, it became the realm of sighted males. This coincided with the general shift from a single performer who sang and accompanied himself (as in heike) to a separation of the roles of narrator and shamisen (as in jōruri), together accompanying the kinetic representation of the narrative by puppets or live actors.

Each genre represents a stage in the development of Japanese musical narratives from simple to complex: from closer to oral expression to the greater incorporation of literary narrative elements; the amplification of narrative's dramatic capability by going on stage, with kinetic illustration; and by increasingly complex musical expression. Other aspects of change included the moving away from religious and ritual intent to secular entertainment. Furthermore, whereas women had a more active input into ancient Japanese performing arts, increasingly men came to control artistic performance, culminating in the banning of women from the public stage in 1629, a ban which remained in force until 1879 (Kano 2001).

Situating Japanese Musical Narratives in a Global Context

Models of Performed Narrative: Cross-cultural Comparisons

A cursory survey of performed narratives in several cultures suggests at least three forms of narrative, yielding the following structural models: *strophic*, like the Scottish ballad, many folksongs and enka; *stichic*, like Southern Slav epics (Erdely 1995; 2000); and *prosimetric*, like many Chinese musical narratives, including Chinese opera.

Strophic model

The strophic form features stanzaic rhyme and a regular metre and is found not only in folk song, art song, most Japanese school songs, and contemporary popular songs and hymns, but also in ballads (such as Scottish border ballads and country and western music) which tell a story but musically function like songs. The number of verses and hence the length of the narrative is flexible, but usually is limited to a performance time of no longer than 10 minutes. It consists of a number of stanzas or strophes, all of which follow the same metric pattern and melody, with the possibility of a refrain. There is no spoken delivery. The ballad may or may not be accompanied by an instrument. Narrative has taken on the musical dimensions of song.

Stichic model

In stichic ('one line') narrative, the text is made up of metrically uniform lines, with a fixed number of syllables / morae. Basically only one melody is applied to each line. Sections are marked by a descending melody with a different rhythm (usually slower), and an instrumental interlude. In contrast to strophic form, sections are variable in length: there is no fixed number of lines. Not only is the number of lines in a section varied (and hence the length of a section), neither is the number of sections fixed by any particular formal requirement. There is no spoken delivery. It is typical of long epic narratives in poetic metre. This type can be seen in South Slavic narratives (Lord 2000), in Russian bylina and in Japanese goze narratives (CD Track 2).

South Slav stichic case

The purpose of most English language research on this has been to provide a case study to illumine the nature of Homeric epic narrative (known as text only), and has not been concerned particularly with the musical aspect of the narrative. Because the music seems very simple and repetitive, it is paid lip service to, but not analysed or theorized (and not included in the Parry-Lord theory as such). Lord, for example, provides one musical example. Significant exceptions are Herzog (1951) and Erdely (1995). Herzog's brief paper manages to show that there is a subtle but significant variation in the basic melody of the Slavic narratives depending on the position in the section, which contributes towards the narrative impetus; he argues that the music has its own logic as a system (Herzog 1951). It is not a simple or mechanical repetition. A narrative climax may also be musically reinforced. Erdely's transcriptions of five complete narratives is prefaced with an insightful introduction. His study takes care to show the minute variations of the basic melody within one performance, and the variations between performers, in contrast to the Lord book, which has only one musical example to represent the entire musical corpus.

The South Slavic narrative performer accompanies himself with the one-stringed bowed lute, the gusle. He is called a guslar (lute player). In some regions the accompanying instrument is a two-stringed fiddle, or a tamboura with anything from two to six strings. The performer is a sighted male, who both sings and plays. Typically illiterate, the guslar learnt his repertory orally from a teacher, and later by listening to other guslars' songs (Lord 2000: 20). Written texts started to be collected from the eighteenth century, but until recently did not form part of the learning process. The guslar practises oral composition; each performance is different, in length, in number and detail of episodes, and in actual verbal phrasing. The number of lines forming a section is not at all set, so section length is highly variable. Sections are marked by the playing of an instrumental interlude, while the narrative is only accompanied briefly between phrases. The opening and closing lines are musically different in character, as shown by both Herzog and Erdely (examples can be heard at: http://chs119.chs.harvard.edu/mpc/songs/mp_songs.html).

The musical element of the South Slavic narratives has been given little attention by researchers. Clearly, there is only one basic line-length melody, quite different from the multiple-melody nature of heike-jōruri narratives. However, the key element of the Parry-Lord theory is its structural analysis in terms of the formulaic nature of the phrase (*formula*) and the formulaic nature of the story element (*theme*). This is suggestive for the understanding of formulaic expression in this study.

Prosimetric model

Prosimetric (or chantefable) literature is a dominant form in world oral narrative, found in China, Mongolia, Turkey, Arabia, India and many other cultures, as demonstrated in the case studies in Harris and Reichl (1997) and Reichl (2000). Prosimetric narrative is generally understood to mean the alternation of sections of explanatory, expository prose in spoken delivery, and metric sections in verse with melodic delivery. Harris and Reichl (1997), in presenting many cross-cultural case studies, argue for a broader, more flexible definition, calling it simply 'the mixture of verse and prose, in particular in narrative' (1997: 3), while noting that the 'change between narrating in prose and singing in verse is characteristic of a great number of oral prosimetric genres in world literature' (ibid.: 6). However, they continue, the definition of both verse and prose is not so simple when seen cross-culturally: 'When it comes to defining prose, a more radical view has been proposed, namely that all prose in oral narrative is rhythmic, patterned, and poetically structured' (ibid.: 7). Prose is only relevant to written language on the printed page.

Prosimetric Narrative in China

There are said to be over 300 extant long performed narrative genres in China, and many more must have existed, but are no longer extant, in a known tradition going back at least 1,000 years. Naturally, much variation must be expected between these genres, but the broad and generally accepted definition of the very widespread form of Chinese oral narrative called shuochang (Jp. sesshō) is the alternation of prose (spoken) sections called shuo and verse (sung) sections called chang (Bender 2003; Børdahl 1999, Børdahl 2013) (CD track 1).

Prose sections are presented in spoken delivery, close to vernacular speech, but still stylized. These sections are not accompanied by musical instruments. They are flexible, free and open to improvisation, expansion and contraction in performance. For verse sections in sung delivery, the text is more fixed, not subject to change in performance. There are various possible metric forms, but regular line lengths are maintained in one narrative. These sections are accompanied by an instrumental ensemble, whose composition varies with different genres and different regions. Typically, the ensemble includes a drum or drums, and melody instruments such as flute or lute – pi'pa or sanxian.