

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. Each original is also photographed in one exposure and is included in reduced form at the back of the book.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

UMI[®]

Bell & Howell Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

MANZAI: METAMORPHOSES OF A JAPANESE
COMIC PERFORMANCE GENRE

BY
XAVIER BENJAMIN BENSKY

EAST ASIAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT
MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL

MARCH 1998

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS OF
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS

COPYRIGHT © 1998 BY XAVIER BENJAMIN BENSKY



National Library
of Canada

Acquisitions and
Bibliographic Services

395 Wellington Street
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Bibliothèque nationale
du Canada

Acquisitions et
services bibliographiques

395, rue Wellington
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4
Canada

Your file Votre référence

Our file Notre référence

The author has granted a non-exclusive licence allowing the National Library of Canada to reproduce, loan, distribute or sell copies of this thesis in microform, paper or electronic formats.

The author retains ownership of the copyright in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de reproduire, prêter, distribuer ou vendre des copies de cette thèse sous la forme de microfiche/film, de reproduction sur papier ou sur format électronique.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

0-612-41089-7

泣く間があったら笑わんかい *Naku ma ga attara warawan kai*

[If you have time to cry, why not laugh instead?]

Osakan saying

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	viii
ABSTRACTS	xi
INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter	
1. CLASSICAL MANZAI	7
The Emergence of Classical Manzai	7
A Description of Classical Manzai	19
The Preservation of Classical Manzai	25
2. MANZAI ON STAGE	32
Entertainment in Osaka	32
Niwaka: Osaka's First Popular Stage Comedy	38
Manzai: From "Ten Thousand Years" to "Ten Thousand Talents".	47
Manzai: The Early Years	55
3. MANZAI ON THE AIR	62
Manzai: From "Ten Thousand Talents" to "Chock-Full of Talent".	62
Manzai Meets the Mass Media	71
Manzai Goes to War	79
4. MANZAI ON TELEVISION	84
The Post-War Radio Revival	84
Ten-Year Cycles	86
5. MANZAI EXCERPTS	99
Entatsu and Achako	99
Yasushi and Kiyoshi	106

Downtown	109
6. THE FUTURE OF MANZAI	115
Overcoming Limitations and Erasing Boundaries . .	115
Mediatized Manzai and Commodified Comedians . .	117
On Stage and in Cyberspace: A Look at Manzai's	
Future	120
SOURCES CONSULTED	125

ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. An illustration of Owari <i>manzai</i> from <i>Owari Meisho Zukai</i> 尾張名所図会 [Pictures of Famous Places in Owari]	17
2. An illustration of classical <i>manzai</i> from <i>Jinrin Kinmō Zui</i> 人倫訓蒙図彙, 1690	21
3. Akita <i>manzai</i> performers in 1990	25
4. Chita <i>manzai</i> performers at the Pan-Japan Classical <i>Manzai</i> Performance Convention, held in Aichi prefecture, Chita city on August 25, 1990	27
5. An illustration from <i>Gonyūbu Kyara Onna</i> 御入部伽羅女	35
5. Left, a <i>yakuharai</i> exorciser; right, a <i>saimon</i> performer. From <i>Jinrin Kinmō Zui</i> , 1690	36
7. Actors wearing <i>bote katsura</i> in a <i>niwaka</i> program from the Tenpō years (1830-1844)	41
8. A scene from the <i>niwaka</i> version of <i>Taikōki Jūdanme</i> 仁輪加版「太功記十段目」, performed by disciples of Tsuruya Danjūrō	47
9. Tamagoya Entatsu	49
10. Left, Yokoyama Entatsu; right, Hanabishi Achako . .	65
11. Left, Sunagawa Sutemaru; right, Nakamura Haruyo . .	76
12. A scene from <i>Akireta Eiga</i> あきれた映画, starring Yokoyama Entatsu and Hanabishi Achako, one of the films in the “akireta” series	78

Figure	Page
13. <i>Left</i> , Yokoyama Yasushi; <i>right</i> , Nishikawa Kiyoshi . .	92
14. A classroom scene at Yoshimoto Kōgyō's NSC	97
15. Downtown. <i>Left</i> , Matsumoto Hitoshi; <i>right</i> , Hamada Masatoshi	98

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I was writing this thesis, I often thought of the many individuals who guided my efforts, volunteered their time and offered their support to my research. Without their help, this thesis would not have been possible.

First, I would like to thank the professors, comedians, instructors, students and others who assisted me while I carried out my field research in Osaka during the summer of 1996. I begin by acknowledging Prof. Inoue Hiroshi of Kansai University in Osaka, for his role in arranging my first contacts with cultural informants, and for giving me several books on *manzai* from his personal library. I am equally indebted to Prof. Kizugawa Kei of Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto for answering my questions on classical *manzai* in an interview. I would also like to thank Tanahashi Akio and Tanaka Kyūhei – then consultants at the temporary office of the Museum of Kamigata Performing Arts – for lending me a collection of *manzai* scripts personally signed by Akita Minoru, and for sending me an invaluable collection of articles and documents related to *manzai* and the Kamigata performing arts in general.

I feel a strong debt of gratitude towards Mizutani Nobuhiro of Yoshimoto Kōgyō Corporation, for arranging my visit to the company's training school for comedians and for spending several hours of his time to explain the inner workings of Japan's largest entertainment company. I would also like to thank Mr. Yasuda, director of the NSC training school, for graciously allowing me to videotape the classroom and interview the students on three separate

occasions.

I am grateful to all of those who allowed me to record them for my research. From Yoshimoto Kōgyō, I would also like to thank Honda Masanori for his frank discussion on current trends in modern *manzai*, the duo Jarakikku (Tanimura Nobutomo and Kira Ryūichi) for describing their first-hand experience of *manzai* performance and *rakugo* raconteur Shōfukutei Kakushō for his invaluable insights into performer-audience interaction. I am grateful to Mizuta Tatsuo of the Shōchiku Entertainment Company for an informative discussion on the importance of *manzai* compared to other forms of stage entertainment. Furthermore, I am particularly grateful to Ōtaki Tetsuo, president of the Ōtaki Agency, for allowing me to view *manzai* performances free of charge, for inviting me to a ‘cast party’ where I was able to informally interview comedians, and for arranging my selection as member of a studio audience of a comedy show for emerging *manzai* comedians. I would like to thank Naka Keihitsu, principal at the Osaka Higashi Sumiyoshi High School, as well as instructors Shinno Shin and Hayashiya Somemaru for allowing me to record their classes and agree to personal interviews.

I am truly grateful to the organisations that provided me with critical financial assistance to support my thesis research. I benefited from a Humanities Research Grant from McGill University. I also received a supplementary grant from the Department of East Asian Studies to finance my expenses in Japan. Finally, I would like to extend special thanks to Profs. Thomas Looser and Thomas Lamarre who alternately served as my thesis advisors. Their continued

guidance and insight during my research as well as the thesis-writing process helped me to organise my ideas and present them more effectively. Moreover, their enthusiasm for my project sustained me throughout the difficult task of piecing together my research materials. Last but not least, I would like to thank my family and friends who offered their moral support when I was faced with writer's block. To all of you, a heart-felt "*Arini*" (thank you in Osaka dialect).

ABSTRACTS

English

This thesis discusses the historical development of the Japanese comic performance genre of *manzai*, and its contemporary manifestations. The first chapter examines *manzai*'s ritual origins in the Heian court and its subsequent expansion throughout Japan as an established performance style. The chapter also describes the genre of 'classical *manzai*' and discusses its present status. The second chapter examines how 'stage *manzai*' emerged in Osaka from a panoply of popular entertainment forms, and particularly from *niwaka* stage comedy. The third chapter describes the emergence of the genre of 'modern *manzai*,' details its adaptation to radio and discusses the impact of the Second World War. The fourth chapter examines modern *manzai*'s post-war development and focuses on its representation through television. The fifth chapter provides excerpts of modern *manzai* performance in its various stages of evolution. Finally, the sixth chapter discusses the challenges facing modern *manzai* today and contemplates possibilities for its future.

French

Cette thèse traite le développement historique de l'art ludique japonais appelé *manzaï*, genre de représentation comique, ainsi que ses manifestations contemporaines. Le premier chapitre examine les origines rituelles du *manzaï* et son expansion par la suite à travers le Japon en tant que style de représentation reconnu. Le chapitre décrit

également le '*manzaï* classique' en tant que genre et traite l'état actuel de ce dernier. Le deuxième chapitre examine comment le '*manzaï* destiné à la scène' a émergé à Osaka d'un éventail de représentations populaires, et de la comédie de scène *niwaka* en particulier. Le troisième chapitre décrit l'émergence du '*manzaï* moderne' en tant que genre, détaille son adaptation à la radio et traite l'impact de la deuxième guerre mondiale. Le quatrième chapitre examine le développement après-guerre du *manzaï* moderne, ainsi que sa représentation par la télévision. Le cinquième chapitre fournit des extraits de représentations du *manzaï* moderne dans ses différentes phases d'évolution. Finalement, le sixième chapitre traite les tensions survenues au sein du *manzaï* contemporain et contemple les possibilités de son avenir.

INTRODUCTION

In April 1994, I was almost half a year into my job in the international marketing division of a Japanese company in Tokyo. After a difficult training period in which I learned the code of the *salarīman* (salaried worker), I knew the level of respect I owed my *sempai* 先輩 (seniors) and expected the same from my three new *kōhai* 後輩 (juniors) who had just arrived. In the months that followed, however, I was puzzled by the behaviour of one of these new recruits. Although hard-working and efficient in his duties, this Osaka native seemed brash and almost over-familiar with his superiors, sometimes feigning to complain when given a task or making witty remarks. He was unlike his fellow freshmen, who were mostly subservient and reserved. In short, he did not behave the way I had learned a *kōhai* should.

One muggy evening that summer, during a *nōryōkai* 納涼会 (literally 'a party to cool off') at a local eatery, I was surprised by the liberties he seemed to take with senior employees. At one point, he interrupted the manager who was bragging about his fishing exploits, exclaiming: "Get out of here! There aren't any fish that size!" Visibly startled by the remark, the manager paused for a while until someone broke the tension with a nervous laugh. When I asked my advisor about the incident the following day, he informed me that this was normal behaviour for an Osakan, and that it was not meant to be disrespectful.

I didn't know it at the time, but our new recruit from Osaka was engaging in a form of interactional joking typical of *manzai*, a performing art featuring dialogue with comical wording and gestures

usually performed by two people cast in the roles of a wit and a straight man. He was not purposefully imitating *manzai*, however. Tsutsui Sayo explains:

In everyday settings, this form of interaction is commonly practiced in a loosely conventional way in the Kansai region among friends, family, acquaintances, or even strangers. The interaction is framed as play, and the laughter on the part of the performers and / or audience serves to create a warm atmosphere.¹

Therefore, his intention was not to disparage the manager, but rather to liven the party for everyone's enjoyment.

The moment of tension was caused by a cultural gap between the Tokyo-born manager and the Osaka-born employee. According to Inoue Hiroshi,² Tokyo has retained the feudalistic culture of the samurai who valued vertical relations, protocol and authority. Osaka, on the other hand, has always been a thriving merchant city where horizontal relations matter most. For samurai, laughter is tantamount to insult. For merchants, it is an essential tool for negotiation.³ Therefore, from the manager's point of view, the freshman's rank did not give him the authority to dispute his story. The freshman, on the other hand, interpreted the foolishness of the manager's exaggeration as implicit permission to engage in *manzai*-like interactional joking. Thus, he took the role of the straight man and expected everyone to laugh.

¹ Tsutsui Sayo, "Conversational Joking on Japanese Television, in Everyday Life: Fools and Their Foils Pair Off in the Kansai Region," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., 19-23 Nov., 1997), 2. Kansai is the name given for the Osaka region.

² In this thesis, all Japanese names are written in the conventional Japanese style of family name first, given name second, unless the individual in question usually writes in English.

³ Inoue Hiroshi, "*Rakugo, Manzai and Kigeki: The Arts of Laughter*," *Japan Foundation Newsletter* 13, no. 4 (January 1996), 1-2.

At the time, I had none of these insights into Osakan culture. Nevertheless, the freshman's behaviour and my advisor's comments had sparked my interest and I was curious to learn more about Osakans. One evening in my apartment, I recognised Kansai-ben 関西弁 (Kansai dialect) as I was changing television channels. What I saw looked like stand-up comedy, except that there were two comedians standing behind the microphone instead of one. Since I had not yet seen a Japanese comedy show on television, I paid close attention.

The smaller man often yelled at his taller sidekick and would hit him on the head when he spoke. Although the slapstick dimension of their routine was amusing, it was their comic dialogue that had me rolling on the floor. Their topics were sometimes sexually explicit or scatological, at other times utterly nonsensical. They would drift from free talk to situational dialogues with set roles. In these, the taller comedian would invariably portray someone in a position of authority such as a doctor or a high school teacher, and the smaller one would talk back to him.⁴ Then, I remembered the incident at the eatery and recognised the similarity between the smaller comedian and my *kōhai* at work. The following day, I offered to buy him lunch. When he jokingly asked what I would get from the deal, I told him I wanted to know about Osakan comedy. That was the first time I learned the word *manzai*.

From that moment onward, watching *manzai* became one of my favourite pastimes. In retrospect, I now see how my growing interest in *manzai* was both an expression of my desire to escape the 'vertical'

⁴ I later discovered that those two comedians who had me in fits of laughter were Downtown, one of the most popular comic duos in Japan. For a detailed discussion of Downtown, see p. 109 below.

pressure of a Japanese company and an indication that I had discovered a fascinating area of research which beckoned me to return to academia. At my going-away party in the summer of 1995, I had one last talk with my Osakan friend over a glass of sake. I told him I was going to McGill University in Montreal and that I intended to write a thesis on *manzai*. A broad smile stretched across his face as he said : "You don't have to cross the Pacific Ocean to get to Osaka. just take the bullet train!". One year later, I was on a bullet train to Osaka.

* * * * *

I carried out my field research on *manzai* in Osaka and Kyoto between June 5 and July 5, 1996. Due to the scarcity of information on *manzai* in North American libraries, I only had general notions of its origins and subsequent evolution. Among the English-language texts I discovered, Muneko Jay Yoshikawa's comprehensive article "Popular Performing Arts: Manzai and Rakugo" was an invaluable resource. Although it was not published at the time of my field research, I would also like to mention Nishiyama Matsunosuke's *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1860*, translated and edited by Gerald Groemer, for its examination of *manzai* in the context of itinerant performers, as well as for its detailed presentation of popular performing arts from the Edo-Meiji period. As for contemporary developments, the documents I possessed did not go further than the early 1970's. Therefore, my goal in Osaka was to collect as much data as possible, with the understanding that I would subsequently narrow

the focus of my thesis based on this data.

My research was divided into two phases: The first phase, which spanned my first ten days in Osaka, was devoted to bibliographical research on both classical and modern *manzai*. Thanks to the numerous volumes I discovered at the Osaka Nakanoshima Library, I was able to construct a detailed history of *manzai*, re-tracing its origins, carefully following its numerous changes, the influences it received from other forms of performing arts, as well as its diversification throughout the centuries. Furthermore, I obtained extensive documentation on *manzai* as well as other comic performing arts of Osaka at what was then the temporary office of the Kamigata [the region of Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe] Performing Arts Museum.⁵ Nevertheless, even the most recent books I examined did not deal with *manzai* in the 90's.

Therefore, I began the second phase of my research, which I devoted to understanding the state of *manzai* today. Armed with audio-video equipment, I recorded performances at several theatres owned by different entertainment companies, interviewed university professors, performers of *manzai* and other forms of comic performing arts, as well as entertainment producers and television producers. I also focused on *manzai*'s future by spending three days in a *manzai* training school, observing teachers and students in action. I visited the Osaka Higashi Sumiyoshi High School 大阪東住吉高等学校, home of Japan's first high-school level "performing arts and culture course," conducted interviews of teachers and students, and videotaped classroom material.

⁵ The museum opened its doors in November 1996, and has become a centerpiece in the revival of Kamigata performing arts.

Finally, although time constraints prevented me from gaining first-hand experiential knowledge of *manzai*, I appeared on a televised comedy show called Chō Bakushō Būingu 超爆笑ブーイング, in which audience members judge performances and determine whether or not they qualify to appear the following week. As the only foreigner in the audience, I was singled out by the comedians on stage and had the privilege of engaging in *manzai*-like joking interaction with them. Of course, I was the butt of their jokes. After my research in Osaka, however, I finally had an opportunity to experience *manzai* first-hand: In April 1997, at the Japanese Popular Culture Conference in Victoria, Canada, I teamed up with fellow *manzai* researcher Joel Stocker to perform a short routine of our own conception. In addition to daily conversations with Osakans during my *salarīman* years in Tokyo, these experiences allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of *manzai*'s performance dynamics, the psychic link between performers and audience members, as well as the nature of Japanese comedy in general.

* * * * *

The primary objective of this thesis is to trace the historical development of *manzai*, from its ritual origins in the eighth century to its most recent avatars *in statu nascendi*, with a special focus on media technology's impact on *manzai*'s form and content in the twentieth century and beyond. This thesis also intends to serve as a general introduction to the genre of *manzai*, and includes several extracts of *manzai* performances translated in English.

CHAPTER I

CLASSICAL MANZAI

The Emergence of Classical Manzai

The origins and early development of *manzai* remain somewhat obscure. Scholars struggle to piece together a coherent account from scattered references and diverse sources, and the resultant histories are often quite general and even apocryphal. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to pursue these accounts, because they give a sense of the historical transformations that lie behind the emergence of classical *manzai*. In particular, one sees how the early ritual use of *manzai* among the nobles of the Heian court changed dramatically as *manzai* spread beyond the court into other ranks and professions, gradually developing into a style of performance with a widespread, popular appeal by the late Middle Ages. By the early modern or Edo period (1615-1868), samurai patronage had spurred the expansion of *manzai* into eastern Japan, where two dominant branches emerged: Mikawa *manzai* and Owari *manzai*. In the twentieth century, these two branches gave rise to the two major currents of *manzai* performance, which are the main focus of subsequent chapters.

* * * * *

The ritualised performance art of classical *manzai* has been traced back as early as the eighth century to a ceremony which was

transmitted from China called *tōka* 踏歌.¹ The ceremony, which was performed on the fifteenth and the sixteenth of the first month of the year, involved men and women stomping their feet while dancing and singing congratulatory verses. The *tōka* was a predecessor of classical *manzai*, which was first known under the name *senzu manzai* or *senshū manzai* 千秋萬歳. The expression *senzu manzai*, which literally means "one thousand autumns and ten thousand years," was found in historical writings of ancient China to show deference for the passing away of an important official. Instead of using the word "death", it was said of such individuals that they had "prospered for a thousand, yet even ten thousand years". The expression was later separated from this context, and in Japan, came to be used to wish someone a prosperous life.² Eventually, *senzu manzai* — later known simply as *manzai* — would be the name given to a genre of celebratory ritual, usually performed at new year's time by two representatives of a Shinto shrine to bring about "ten thousand years" of health and prosperity.

Senzu manzai arises in the context of specific beliefs. The most representative form of festival entertainment in the Heian period (794-1185) was *okagura* 御神樂, a ritualised performance featuring song and dance. The *okagura* was performed by two people, one representing an anthropomorphic god and the other representing a local deity. In the dialogue between the two performers, the anthropomorphic god commands the local deity and tries to make him obey. However, the

¹ Orita Kōji, "manzai," *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan* (1983 ed.)

² Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Tayū saizō den: manzai wo tsuranuku mono* [the *tayū* and *saizō* legacy: those who perform *manzai*] (N.p.:Heibonsha, 1979), 24-26.

local deity mocks, disobeys, and makes fun of the anthropomorphic god. In the end, the local community and land are said to be blessed by the local deity succumbing to the anthropomorphic god.³ The character representing the local deity is called the *modoki* 擬, alternatively written 抵牾 or 抵牾. This exchange in the *okagura* reflects the popular belief that the gods descend to people's homes and bring blessings to ensure the prosperity of the descendants and the fertility of the land. Such beliefs brought about the creation of a distinct category of individuals, known as *shūgenshoku* 祝言職 or 'celebration professionals,' who would visit in lieu of the gods. These visits were believed to occur at auspicious times such as festivals, banquets, and other happy occasions, the most important of which was the new year – which also corresponded to the beginning of spring in the Japanese calendar. The symbolic relationship between the two performers of the *okagura* was the prototype for *senzu manzai*, the traditional narrative performance art performed by two representatives of a shrine or temple, one of them in the role of a wit and the other in the role of a straight man. By the seventeenth century, these two roles would be known as the *tayū* 太夫 and the *saijō* 才藏.

Yamaji Kōzō, in his article "Manzai no henshen" [the changes of *manzai*], discusses the origins of the two forms of *manzai*. Since medieval times, the *shūgenshoku* who performed *senzu manzai* have been given many different names. A passage in the Chion edition of the *Wakan Rōei Shō Chūjō* 知恩院本「和漢朗詠注上」 from the late Heian

³ Muneo Jay Yoshikawa, "Popular Performing Arts: *Manzai* and *Rakugo*," *Handbook of Japanese Popular Culture* (eds. Richard Gid Powers and Hidetoshi Kato. New York: Greenwood, 1989), 76.

period (twelfth century) describes *senzu manzai* conducted by *kotsujiki bōshi* 乞食法師, or “beggar priests”.⁴ The name ‘beggar priests’ does not imply that they were low-class specialised performing artists. Rather, these were people subordinate to wealthy patrons who usually occupied functions requiring knowledge of purification rites or magic. On the day of the Rat and the day of the Rabbit in the first month of the lunar calendar,⁵ they would appear in special clothing with a staff and a small pine with roots attached in hand, to speak words of congratulation.⁶ Yamaji points out that these elements of their performance, including their dialogue structured through *kototori* 事とり responses, already displays the rudimentary characteristics of classical *manzai* in its subsequent form.

References to *shūgenshoku* as beggars have been found as early as the *Manyōshū* 万葉集, written in the Nara period (646-794). The Chinese characters for “beggars” are used to describe the *hokaibito*, people whose profession it was to offer words of celebration.⁷ In his widely read book *Sasurainin no Geinōshi* [performing arts history of wanderers], Misumi Haruo explains that the popular performing arts of Japan, including *manzai*, owe much to the existence of wandering

⁴ Yamaji Kōzō, “Eizō kaisetsu” [video commentary]. *Shukufuku suru hitobito* [those who celebrate], vol. 12 of *Oto to eizō to moji ni yoru (taikei) nihon rekishi to geinō* [Japanese history and performing arts (outline) through sound, image and word], eds. Ozawa Shōichi et al. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1990), 175.

⁵ It was the custom at the time to count days according to the twelve signs of the Chinese zodiac. The Rat and the Rabbit were the first and the fourth signs of the zodiac, respectively.

⁶ Ibid., 175.

⁷ Ozawa Shōichi, “Manzai 1990,” *Shukufuku suru hitobito*, 30.

performers who would travel from village to village and perform their arts in the street or square or an area in front of homes. These extremely poor individuals, or members of the agrarian society who could not settle down since they owned no land, would beg for the farming village's produce.⁸

Although after the thirteenth century, *manzai* would become a ritual performed at the new year's time alone, it was originally not limited to this context. One of the oldest references to *senzu manzai* dates from the mid-eleventh century, in Fujiwara Akihira's *Shinsarugakuki* 新猿楽記, where it is described along with the narratives of the *biwa hōshi* 琵琶法師 (lute-playing blind itinerant priests) as one type of performance.⁹ Fujiwara's text makes mention of "*senzu manzai no saka hokai*," or the *senzu manzai* prayer for sake. Apparently, *manzai* performers' blessings were one of the ingredients that ensured the quality of a new stock of sake. *Manzai* was also performed when a new building was being erected. This particular ceremony, called *hashiradate* 柱立て (pillar erection), involved songs which invoked the various gods who were believed to inhabit each pillar of the building.¹⁰ Elements of the *hashiradate* ceremony have remained within the repertoire of song and dance routines of classical *manzai*.

In the Kamakura period (1192-1337), the following description of

⁸ Yoshikawa, 84.

⁹ Tsurumi, 30.

¹⁰ Oda Shōkichi, *Waraihanashi no jidai: tachiyomi engeikan* [the era of humorous tales] (Kobe: Nojigiku Bunkō, 1967), 1.

the *senzu manzai* is given in the *Meigoki* 名語記 : "Sanjo beggar priests, imitating the dress of legendary mountain wizards, come bringing a small pine in their hand while repeating congratulatory verses, and receive a stipend. This celebration occurs on the first day of the Rat." *Sanjo* 散所 was one of the appellations of the *shūgenshoku*. The word designated individuals who were subordinate to nobles or temples, and who performed entertainment or conducted augury and prayers. Since the performance only happened on one day, Yamaji suggests that it was something which they did for specific patrons.¹¹ As for their stipend, records from the period indicate that the performers received small amounts of sake, sweets, beans, rice or the monetary equivalent. This was not enough to feed their families, since they only did this once a year. Therefore, they would perform other various arts or work as farmers and physical labourers during the rest of the year.¹²

In the late Kamakura period, as the authority of the wealthy patrons began to decline, these subordinate performers needed to search for new clients and a new mode of existence. Although the precise details are not clear concerning their reorganisation, by the time of the Northern and Southern Dynasties (1336-1392), the function of this celebratory performance was entirely assumed by those called *shōmonji* 声聞師 or 唱門師 or alternatively *onmyōji* 陰陽師 . These were individuals who specialised in performing augury, prayers, and any number of performing arts. They were particularly well-known for performing *kusemai* 曲舞 , a form of entertainment which involved

¹¹ Yamaji, 176.

¹² Tsurumi, 29-30.

dancing and singing to the accompaniment of a *tsuzumi* 鼓 hand drum. Later in the Muromachi period (1392-1573), these *shōmonji* would group together in specific neighbourhoods of Kyoto and visit the imperial palace at the beginning of the year as an established custom.¹³ At the same time, whereas *senzu manzai* had previously been limited to the day of the Rat and the day of the Rabbit in the first month, it now spread into festivities throughout the new year.

The words used in the performance began to take on a stronger entertainment value. This was due to the fact that *senzu manzai* was now widely demanded, not only by wealthy patrons, but also by the common citizens of Kyoto who were experiencing a cultural renaissance at the time. As a result, interest would have been lost if its content only consisted of ritualistic elements following old customs and manners. The common citizens of Kyoto demanded entertaining material in order to experience the celebratory mood of *manzai* in a more tangible manner. As evidence of this qualitative change in the nature of *manzai*, Yamaji cites an entry in the *Danjinki* 断塵記 dated January 5, 1302. The *senzu manzai* performers who visited the Imperial Palace on this day are described performing a form of *sarugaku* 猿樂 acrobatics called *temari* 手毬.¹⁴

In the provinces, performing arts of a celebratory nature developed under slightly different circumstances than in Kyoto. During the middle ages, the *onmyōji* would exercise various religious powers in the vicinity of provincial capitals and in settlements near important

¹³ Ozawa, 16.

¹⁴ Yamaji, 176.

points on travel routes. Especially in these settlements, the *onmyōji* came into contact with religious figures who wandered from province to province. As a result, these places saw the development of new folk performing arts. By the end of the fourteenth century, the provincial performing artists were known as *maimai* 舞々, because they had taken up *kusemai* dancing which had gone out of fashion in Kyoto and incorporated it into their repertoire of performances.¹⁵

By the age of the Warring Countries (1482-1558), these provincial performing artists became subordinates of military commanders. One of the reasons they were able to thrive during this age of civil wars is because they were proficient in fortune-telling and magic, two skills highly in demand at the time. In addition, the *maimai* repertoire which they performed at new year's time was perfectly suited to the sensibilities of military commanders since it dealt with such subjects as the battle of Gempei or the Soga brothers' revenge.

As for *senzu manzai*, although textual sources confirm its distribution from Kyoto throughout Western Japan, there is no evidence that *maimai* performers in eastern Japan performed *senzu manzai* at new year's. Yamaji cites the *Ietada Diary* 家忠日記 of the Tokugawa-related Matsudaira Ietada clan who lived in Mikawa. The first half of the diary contains articles from the Tenshō years (1573-1592) which describe among other things how *maimai* performers came in great numbers to Ietada's mansion. However, none of them came for new year's celebrations, and *senzu manzai* was not mentioned as part of

¹⁵ Ibid., 177.

their repertoire of performances.¹⁶

Only after the end of the sixteenth century did *senzu manzai* find its way into eastern Japan, and more specifically in the counties of Mikawa and Owari. According to Yamaji, this change was provoked by Toyotomi Hideyoshi 豊臣秀吉 in 1594, when he sent the majority of the *onmyōji* living in Kyoto, Osaka and Sakai into forced labour to cultivate the wastelands of Kiyosu and Owari.¹⁷ According to the *Gien Junkō Diary* 義演准后日記 of Daigo temple, the *senzu manzai* performers stopped appearing in the capital as of that year and did not reappear until six years later, which coincides with the exodus of *onmyōji* into Owari. With Toyotomi's death, the relocation movement effectively ended. Among the *onmyōji* who moved to Owari and Mikawa, naturally some of them contacted the local *onmyōji* villages where they were sent and joined their company. These Kyoto *onmyōji* served as a stimulus to their local counterparts. Yamaji infers that this is the method through which *manzai* was transmitted to these regions.

Whereas the *senzu manzai* that flourished in Kyoto effectively lost its power under these circumstances, the *maimai* of Owari and Mikawa inherited a celebratory performing art, and took this with them as they toured their new patrons. In particular, those Mikawa *maimai* performers whose patrons advanced to become *daimyō* 大名 lords, not only in Kantō (Tokyo area) but in all provinces, relied on those connections to go out and carry on their profession. While Mikawa *manzai* performers made their territory the entire Kantō region, with

¹⁶ Ibid., 178.

¹⁷ Ibid., 179.

mainly the newly established samurai of Edo as their centre of operation, Owari *manzai* performers made their territory the area surrounding Nagoya castle and the western parts of the country. In those places where Mikawa *manzai* and Owari *manzai* performers didn't visit, each province's *onmyōji* and low-class religious performing artist followed Mikawa *manzai*'s example and divided each territory among themselves.¹⁸

By the Edo period, *manzai* was mostly performed in the Yamato 大和 and Mikawa areas. Apart from Owari *manzai* (see figure 1), there was also *manzai* in different parts of the land, namely Kawachi 河内, Mino 美濃, Iyo 伊予, Echizen 越前, Kaga 加賀, Aizu 会津, Sendai 仙台 and Akita 秋田. However, Mikawa *manzai* was without a doubt the most prevalent of them all during this period. As it was deeply connected to the Tokugawa Ieyasu 徳川家康 shogunate, it became representative of classical *manzai* as a whole. In fact, Mikawa was the home of the Tokugawa family. When Ieyasu moved into Edo in 1590, the *maimai* performer Kandayū 勘太夫 of Okazaki village who had Ieyasu as his patron followed. Kandayū received land in the Asakusa area of Edo and was appointed head dance official in religious services for the eight provinces of the Kantō area.¹⁹ In addition, Ieyasu gave the Mikawa *manzai* performers a privileged status, even allowing them to head the government bureau of the court noble Tsuchimikado 土御門 family's Mikawa office. Mikawa *manzai* performers could claim a special connection to the shogunal house and were able to

¹⁸ Ibid., 180.

¹⁹ Ibid., 179.

obtain passes giving them the license to tour through the provinces freely. It appears that Ieyasu may have also used them as spies.²⁰



Fig. 1. An illustration of Owari *manzai* from *Owari Meisho Zukai* 尾張名所図会 [Pictures of Famous Places in Owari]. Reprinted from Ozawa Shōichi, "Manzai 1990," *Shukufuku suru hitobito*, eds. Ozawa Shōichi et al. (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1990), 19.

After a long period of prosperity during the Edo period, Mikawa *manzai* began to falter once the Meiji period (1868-1912) began. With the imperial edict of Meiji 3 (1871), the government began to promote State Shinto, and the *onmyōji* who performed *manzai* severed their ties with the Tsuchimikado family. Anticipating the rise of Shintoism, practitioners of Mikawa *manzai* eventually acquired the qualifications

²⁰ Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868*, trans. and ed. Gerald Groemer (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 120.

of Shinto officials, donned the dress of Shinto priests, and performed *manzai* only after reciting Shinto prayers. In addition, they replaced the words of *manzai* with material strongly influenced by Shintoism. As a result, their *manzai* necessarily became something refined yet lacking in entertainment value. At one point in the mid-Meiji period, Mikawa *manzai* flourished, however it declined thereafter.²¹ Owari *manzai*, on the other hand, experienced an astounding diversification in the Meiji period, and became a thriving popular performing art form.

Already since before the Meiji period, Owari *manzai* was influenced by the performing arts and had developed into a wide variety of styles to suit various needs. For example, Owari *manzai* gave birth to stage versions of *manzai* called *shibai manzai* 芝居万歳. These included *sangyoku manzai* 三曲万歳, which was performed to the accompaniment of the drum, the *samisen* and the Chinese fiddle, and *fukuramokura* 福倉持倉, a style of *manzai* replete with joyous words and humorous phrases. These stage versions of *manzai* would thrive in Osaka in the late Edo – Meiji period. In addition, the repertoire of Owari *manzai* diversified to suit its clientele's religious beliefs. For example, *hokekyō manzai* 法華經万歳 was performed for members of the Tendai 天台宗 and Nichiren 日蓮宗 Buddhist sects, *rokujō manzai* 六条万歳 for the Jōdo Shin 浄土真宗 sect, *gojō manzai* 御城万歳 for the Jōdo 浄土宗 sect and *shinriki manzai* 神力万歳 for Shintoists. There were even song variants suited to the businesses and products of various locales visited by *manzai* performers on tour, such as the horse song and the sake song. There was *jiwari manzai*

²¹ Ozawa, 20.

地割万歳 — which literally means ‘ground-breaking’ *manzai* — for the construction of the foundations of a house, as well as *funadama manzai* 船玉万歳 for shippers. Therefore, into the Meiji period. Owari *manzai* performers, unlike Mikawa *manzai* performers, were given the official license of ‘working entertainers’ since they performed many varieties of arts.²² As a result, Owari *manzai* was able to adapt to the changing times and would eventually make a significant contribution to the stage performance of *manzai*, which we will examine at length throughout the remainder of this thesis.

At present, however, I would like to turn to Mikawa *manzai*, which was destined to become a representative example of the extant classical *manzai* performance tradition. The following section will focus on a description of Mikawa *manzai* — the appearance of the performers, the context within which it was performed and the content of the performance.

A Description of Classical Manzai

In *Tayū Saizō Den* [the *tayū* and *saizō* legacy], Tsurumi Shunsuke cites a description of Mikawa *manzai* from the Meiji 20’s (1888-1898) by a scholar named Hayakawa Kōtarō. I will use it as an example of *manzai* in the nineteenth century:

No sooner had they entered the gate than they sat themselves down on the tatami mat, and before even giving you the time to say ‘please come this way,’ they would say ‘happy new year’ and ask ‘how is everyone?’ As soon as these greetings were completed, they would strike their *tsuzumi* drum, and while seated sing for a time. The two would then stand up, and with the

²² Ibid., 20-21.

tayū taking the lead, they would begin to dance. The *tayū* wore a pale *suō* [素襖] and a *tate-eboshi* [立烏帽子] while the *saijō* wore a *Daikoku* hood [大黒頭巾]. While dancing, they would smile, looking at each other. I couldn't help laughing. Why does [the *saijō*] put on that [happy] Ebisu face? It was a wonder to see how the *tayū* could keep a serious face. The *saijō* would do many humorous things. He would make comical sounds and put on a clown face, after which he would turn his attention to the children and begin to chase after them, all around the house . . . When the dance was finished, he would quietly return to his seat. Then, the members of the household would come out and greet them. They put an envelope with some money in it in a bowl and served them tea. Before the two left, they would leave a print of Ebisu Daikoku and a prayer card to protect against fire . . . These prints had piled up from year to year, so that they practically overflowed from the shrine. The prayer card to protect against fire was affixed to the pillar next to the oven.²³

The distinct roles of the *tayū* and the *saijō* are made clear in this passage. One is always formal and severe, while the other breaks form and behaves humorously. The passage also reveals one of the highlights of the performance: how they smile at each other "in a strange, mysterious way"²⁴ (see figure 2). Since this happens just before the *saijō* jumps into his comical routine, I presume that the moment served to increase the dramatic tension of the performance and reinforce its theatrical aspect. It also provides evidence of the many little flourishes classical *manzai* took on in order to heighten its entertainment value for its patrons. From this passage, it is also apparent that classical *manzai*'s ceremonial significance for its patrons was indeed valued and demanded. Ebisu 恵比須神 and Daikoku 大黒神 are two of the seven

²³ Hayakawa Kōtarō, "Mikawa no manzai no koto" [about Mikawa *manzai*], *Minzoku Geijutsu* [folk art] 2, no. 1 (Jan. 1929): n.pag., qtd. in Tsurumi, 57-8.

²⁴ Nishiyama, 120.

gods of happiness believed to bring good fortune to the home and protect the hearth. The prints of Ebisu and Daikoku 'overflowing' from the shrine in the kitchen make obvious that this home relied on the *manzai* performance every new year to ensure their good fortune for the twelve months to come.



Fig. 2. An illustration of classical *manzai* from *Jinrin Kinmō Zui* 人倫訓蒙図彙, 1690. Reprinted from Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Tayū Saizō Den* (N.p.: Heibonsha, 1979), 17.

Oda Shōkichi transcribes some lines spoken by the *tayū* in Mikawa *manzai*. This example is from *Mikawa manzai shahon* [manuscript], provided by NHK:

Auspiciously in spring, once more the god of happiness comes . . . When he comes to this home, your household will

prosper, your business will prosper, the spirits will prosper and you will escape misdeeds and misfortune. O, how your wealth will grow and your money will spring forth²⁵

The *saizō*, on the other hand, would recite a humorous medley of nonsensical phrases and little anecdotes in a sing-song way. Oda gives the following example of what the *saizō* said:

You know the horse, he likes money and he likes beans. He's big and he works hard. The horse, I say, he likes the master and the missus. He began at an early age, riding on here and riding on there, always riding on, riding anew. You children there, don't follow me, or I'll twist your breasts. And watch out for your father's testicles! *Hohoyare macharakoya, macharakoya, macharakoya!*²⁶

One aspect of the *manzai* performance that may not have made its way into Hayakawa's account is the bawdy nature of the *saizō*'s comical interlude. As this last example illustrates, the *saizō*'s speech was livened with sexual references. Furthermore, he would not only chase around children, but he would also race around the room "lifting up the skirts of good-looking servant girls, or slapping the mistress of the house on the back."²⁷ Particularly when *manzai* performers visited homes of the nobility, such displays of feigned lower-class affection provoked laughter, which was considered auspicious and served to heighten the good fortune of the occasion. According to Kikuchi Ki'ichirō's *Ehon Fūzoku Ōrai* [public morals in picture books], "the *saizō* should have rustic features, should appear foolish without being foolish, should appear lustful without being lustful, uncouth yet

²⁵ Oda, 2.

²⁶ Ibid., 3.

²⁷ Nishiyama, 120.

amiable, and above all, he should be plain.”²⁸ Since Hayakawa is recalling something he experienced when he was nine at the most, it is quite possible that he did not understand such things and did not commit them to memory. It is also possible that he chose not to include such aspects of the performance, since they may not have been suitable for printing in 1929 when the text was published.

According to Higuchi Kiyoyuki, many old folk tales which are familiar to Japanese people today formerly contained sexual material. As an example, he cites the didactic tale of “The Cut-Tongued Sparrow” (*Shitakiri suzume*), in which a nasty old woman cuts the tongue of a sparrow that she catches eating her glue. When her husband is rewarded by the sparrow for consoling the bird, she tries to imitate him, only to be punished by the bird instead. Higuchi explains that the tale used to have one ending in which the nasty old woman falls off a bamboo branch and dies when a sharp stump impales her in the genital area from below. In the current version, she dies from snakes and insects. According to Higuchi, old tales such as these were ‘sanitised’ by the academic researchers and collectors of tales who first heard them.²⁹ Similarly, Hayakawa may have chosen to sanitise his account of Mikawa *manzai*, although this is mere conjecture.

Another way in which the character distribution of the *tayū* and *saijō* is apparent is through their clothing. The *tayū*’s dignified clothing suggests a man of good social standing. The *suō* is a coat made

²⁸ Qtd. in Oda, 4-5.

²⁹ Higuchi Kiyoyuki, *Warai to nihonjin* [laughter and the Japanese], vol. 9 of *Nihonjin no rekishi* [history of the Japanese] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1982), 136.

of hemp with emblems of family crests printed on it, which, together with the *eboshi* hat, typified the dress of samurai. The *saijō* on the other hand, wore a *Daikoku* hood, which was typically worn by priests or old men (see figure 3). A more detailed description of the dress code used by *manzai* performers is provided in the *Morisada Mankō* 守貞漫稿, a comprehensive manuscript describing the manners and customs of the late Edo era, written in 1854. Here, *manzai* performers from Kubota and Hashio in Yamato province are described in one of their visits to the regions east of Mikawa province:

The *tayū* wore a samurai *eboshi* hat, a yellow-green *suō* coat with white *tachibana* orange circular emblems and a blue cotton section around the waist emblazoned with chrysanthemum and paulownia designs. His *hakama* [袴] pants also had the same colours and emblems, with a sword attached. The *saijō*, however, had no set uniform, simply carrying a long blue cotton bag over his shoulder with which to hold rice or money that they received.³⁰

In this instance too, the contrast between the *tayū*'s dignified, stately clothing and the *saijō*'s more casual attire is made clear.

³⁰ Tsurumi, 67.



Fig. 3. Akita *manzai* performers in 1990. Photograph by Motohashi Sei'ichi 本橋成一 . Reprinted from Yamaji Kōzō, "Eizō Kaisetsu," *Shukufuku suru hitobito*, 194-5.

The Preservation of Classical Manzai

Over the past hundred years, the popular performing arts of the stage flourished in urban centres and modern *manzai* eventually grew into a major entertainment industry. At the same time, classical *manzai* disappeared from the cities and was pushed back into rural areas. Here it stayed, in many ways unchanged since the Edo period. Especially after the Second World War, the number of classical *manzai* performers began to steadily decline as younger generations moved to the cities or chose more contemporary lifestyles. Not many classical *manzai* practitioners presently remain. Many of the regional *manzai* performers

who appeared on stage at the Pan-Japan Classical Manzai Performance Convention, held in Aichi prefecture, Chita city on August 25, 1990, were among the last representatives of their art (see figure 4). Some regional forms were already extinct, such as Yamato *manzai*, which disappeared shortly after the Second World War. The extant forms represented were Echizen *manzai*, Kaga *manzai*, Akita *manzai*, Iyo *manzai*, Takadēra *manzai* 高平良万歳 from Okinawa, *goze manzai* 瞽女の万歳 — originally performed by blind women who played *samisen* —, Mikawa *manzai* and Chita *manzai* 知多万歳 . Of the extant forms, this only left Aizu *manzai* and Bungo *manzai* 豊後万歳 as absentees.³¹

³¹ Ozawa, 23-4.

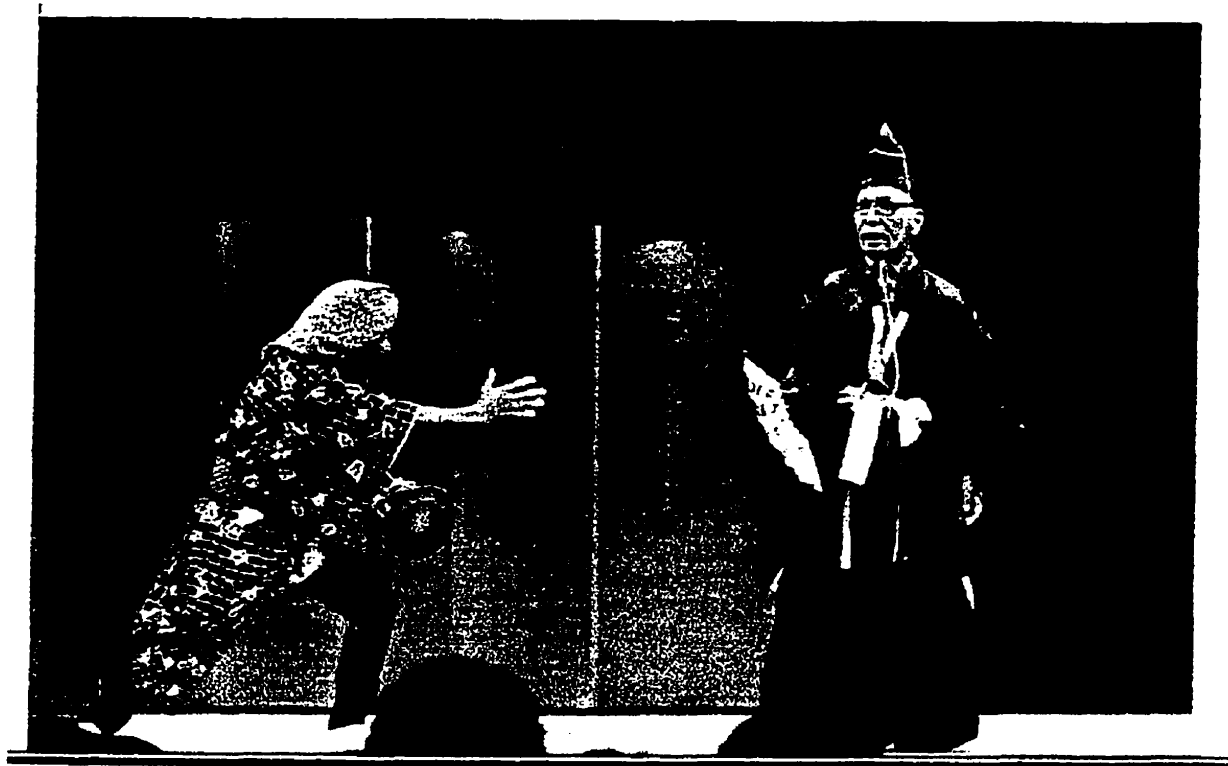


Fig. 4. Chita *manzai* performers at the Pan-Japan Classical *Manzai* Performance Convention, held in Aichi prefecture, Chita city on August 25, 1990. Reprinted in Ozawa Shōichi, "Manzai 1990," *Shukufuku suru hitobito*, 50.

Today, there are conservation societies for classical *manzai*, just as there are for many other forms of Japanese folk performing arts. Although some regional varieties of classical *manzai* have now disappeared, many of them live on in this manner. The justification for the creation of conservation societies to preserve folk performing arts in Japan is a complex subject to which I cannot do justice within these pages. Nonetheless, I will briefly discuss the issue of 'conservation' of 'tradition' in Japan in order to place current-day classical *manzai* in perspective.

According to Marilyn Ivy, the Japanese interest in its own

traditions — in other words, in its origins — became “a truly national, pervasive, *mass* phenomenon” in the post-war era.³² The development of communication and transportation networks, and the influence of television made it possible for anyone to pursue such interests freely. The urban sprawl, along with rural devastation and depopulation gave the post-war generation in Japan a strong urge to ‘escape to its origins’. One form in which this sentiment expressed itself was the ‘Discover Japan’ campaign of the Japan National Railways in the 1970’s, “the first highly visible, mass campaign urging Japanese to discover what remained of ‘tradition’ in the midst of loss.”³³ Ivy explains that the campaign echoed many of the themes of the *nihonjinron* 日本人論 ‘discourses on Japaneseness’ found in popular works at the time:

In the producers’ theory of travel and origins . . . the traveler’s ‘self’ equals an original Japanese self which equals the authentic Japanese *kokoro* [心 ‘heart’], which in turn equals the rural, remote, non-American, and non-rational. Travel is the operator which connects the terms of the equation, by allowing the displacement of discovery to occur. Travel permits a temporary recuperation of a lost self.³⁴

When *manzai* scholar Ozawa Shōichi laments : “Looking at *manzai* clothes from various regional conservation societies in Japan today, they have somehow become showy, gaudy costumes, but the clothes that I actually saw at the beginning of the Shōwa era weren’t so lavish,”³⁵ he is referring to the costumes of performers assembled at the

³² Marilyn Ivy, “Tradition and Difference in the Japanese Mass Media,” *Public Culture Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (1988): 21.

³³ *Ibid.*, 21.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 22.

³⁵ Ozawa, 14.

aforementioned Pan-Japan Classical *Manzai* Performance Convention. Whether or not such gaudy costumes were partly an attempt to appeal to tourists — folk performing arts have been known to become more showy for such reasons — does not matter.

Such concern for authenticity often disregards the subjectivity of the practitioners, who incidentally, may have been perfectly satisfied with their appearance on stage. As a result of a law signed in 1992 which officially permits ‘traditional’ activities to be tied in to tourism, classical *manzai* has now become a tourist attraction. For example, an internet page for Chita city states that the Owari Manzai Conservation Society is continuing to promote the art both as “a new year’s celebratory event and as a regional attraction.”³⁶ Another internet page outlining Japanese travel spots lists Iyo *manzai* as a highlight of the Matsuyama Oshiro Matsuri 松山お城祭 festival in Ehime prefecture, one of the major festivals of Japan.³⁷ Many folk studies scholars are sceptical of the recent association of tourism and folk traditions. For example, in “The Changing Face of Japanese Folk Beliefs,” Norman Havens writes: “. . . the objective of preserving local folk culture may be a worthy goal. But in fact, the very self-consciousness of ‘tradition’ represented by the concept of a festival preservation association seems

³⁶ Aichi ken shōkōkai rengōkai [Aichi Prefecture Chamber of Commerce Confederation], “Saiji jōhō / chita shi ‘kuni shitei san manzai kyōenkai’” [event information / Chita city ‘three nationally designated *manzai* joint performance’] [information service on-line]; available from http://www.xxyyy.or.jp/content/syoroken/sakakibara_home/homelaunch78.htm; Internet; accessed 25 Nov., 1997.

³⁷ Tokyo English Life Line (TELLnet), “Nihon no omo na matsuri ‘chūgoku, shikoku chihō’” [major festivals of Japan ‘Chūgoku and Shikoku region’] [information service on-line]; available from http://www.majic.co.jp/TELLnet/hot/j_travel/j_chugoku.01.html; Internet; accessed 25 Nov., 1997.

somewhat an aberration in the context of a genuine folk culture."³⁸ Yet, what is this 'genuine' folk culture Havens refers to?

Hiroyuki Hashimoto has argued that the time is ripe to move the focus away from concerns over the cultural authenticity of folk performing arts and towards an examination of the identity of local people. Even if the performance of classical *manzai* changes as a result of this tourism, it will still be a valuable cultural manifestation for both visitors — who will have an opportunity to enjoy the festivities while 'rediscovering Japan' — and for the participants, who will be defining themselves through the appropriation of this 'tourism culture' and will continue to feel tied to their community through their performance.³⁹

It may be this feeling of belonging to a community that keeps classical *manzai* alive in the regions where it still survives and serves its function. Ozawa gives the example of Shōhei Wakasugi, a *tayū* from Anjō 安城 city in Ibaraki prefecture. Anjō was formerly known as Besho 別所, the most famous *manzai* village of Mikawa *manzai*. The Wakasugi family has carried on the tradition of *manzai* for generations. Mr. Wakasugi also practised *manzai* from a young age and toured through Tokyo, Ibaraki and Gunma prefectures. Now, with his son at the helm, he runs a fish farm and a restaurant specialising in river fish. Ozawa explains that although he is retired, Mr. Wakasugi feels that he cannot simply stop his *manzai* touring since he and his patrons have a

³⁸ Norman Havens, "The Changing Face of Japanese Folk Beliefs," *Folk Beliefs in Modern Japan*, pt. 3 of a series *Contemporary Papers on Japanese Religion*, trans. Norman Havens, ed. Inoue Nobutaka. (n.p.: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin U, 1994), N. pag.

³⁹ Hashimoto Hiroyuki, Lecture on Folk Performing Arts in Japan, McGill University, Montreal. 24 Nov., 1995.

relationship going back generations. Therefore, with his eldest son Noriyoshi as the *saijō*, and every year without fail, he visits the houses designated in the ancestral register of Buddhist temple supporters. However, the son Noriyoshi had this to say before driving off to the next house with his father in the back seat: "When I see my old man beginning to get fidgety at spring [new year's] time, I become the *saijō* and follow him with the intention of carrying out my filial duty."⁴⁰ While his father's commitment to *manzai* comes from a sense of duty towards the continuation of the community, his concerns don't seem to reach that far.

Is this the last of the Wakasugi *manzai* family? Is classical *manzai* destined to fade away for lack of successors? Perhaps not, if trends in *chiiki okoshi* 地域おこし or regional 'promotion' are any indication. In recent years, the preservation and development of regional assets, both natural and cultural, has been closely tied to the movement towards governmental decentralisation. Of particular importance to the affirmation of regional power are cultural activities such as regional traditional performing arts which strengthen the solidarity of the community. One hopes that classical *manzai* will live on, representing the cultural richness of the respective communities where it is practised.

⁴⁰ Qtd. in Ozawa, 22.

CHAPTER II

MANZAI ON STAGE

It was not until the Muromachi period that classical *manzai* began to incorporate the concept of making people laugh. As the entertainment value of classical *manzai* increased in response to its clientele, naturally, so did the comical nature of the art. By the Edo period, and especially in the major cities of Edo and Osaka, the part of the performance in which the serious *tayū* is mocked by the cocky *saisō* became the highlight of *manzai* for the common people. As a result, the humorous aspects of classical *manzai* eventually became emphasised over its original religious function of blessing the community, and *manzai* soon found itself secularised in urban centres.¹

Entertainment in Osaka

It would be impossible to understand the process through which modern *manzai* emerged from the chrysalis of classical *manzai* without examining the history of public entertainments in its native city of Osaka. An astonishing variety of performance and entertainment flourished during the Edo period. According to Tada Michitarō, the emergence of mass culture in Osaka is closely tied to the city's historical development. In "Osaka wa mizu no miyako ka" [is Osaka the city of water?], he explains that Osaka was developed on land reclaimed from the sea between the Muromachi and Edo periods. In order to solidify the land, Osaka leaders set up various kinds of amusements and

¹ Yoshikawa, 76.

entertainments to attract people.² As a foreign witness to city life in Osaka, Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716) wrote in his travel diary (1690-1692):

The Japanese people call Osacca the universal theatre of pleasures and diversions. Plays are to be seen daily both in publick and in private houses. Mounte-banks, Juglers, who can shew some artful tricks, and all rary-shew [raree-show] people . . . resort thither from all parts of the Empire³

This description gives us a feeling for the teeming diversity of performances which competed for attention in Osaka at the time. The variety and number of public entertainment forms would continue to increase throughout the Edo period, peaking between the Kasei and late-Edo period (1804-1868), otherwise known as the “golden age of popular performing arts.”⁴

It is quite likely that many of the performances Kaempfer witnessed were conducted on temple grounds. As in many other major cities, shrines and temples were well-known attractions since they were at the centre of festivals and fairs as well as destinations for religious pilgrimages. In Osaka, the Ikukunitama shrine 生国魂神社 was a gathering spot for many public performers, including *kadozuke gei* 門付付芸 ‘door-to-door’ or ‘strolling’ entertainers such as classical *manzai* performers. There is evidence showing that *manzai* was already present as a secular entertainment form at least as of the Hōei period

² Ibid., 89.

³ Engelbert Kaempfer, *The History of Japan*, trans. J. G. Scheuchzer (London: n.p., 1727), bk. 2:476, qtd. in Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki, *Rakugo: The Popular Narrative Art of Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 138 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), 234.

⁴ Nishiyama, 228.

(1704-1711), if not as early as the Genroku period (1688-1704). An illustration (see figure 5) in the realistic Edo-period novel *Gonyūbu Kyara Onna* 御入部伽羅女, written in 1710 by Yuzuke Gansui, depicts a scene at the Ikukunitama shrine. Four types of entertainment are portrayed being performed within a partitioned hut sheltered with marsh-reed screens with the following captions: *kyōka zaimon* 京歌祭文, *kōshaku* 講釈, *tayū manzai*, and “Yonezawa Hikohachi’s gestural mimicry of the present times.”⁵ *Kōshaku* was a popular form of storytelling in which war chronicles, biographies and even love stories were read and supplemented with explanations. At first a common sight on street corners and public places in Osaka, by the Hōei period, *kōshaku* had moved into temporary huts such as the one depicted here. The reader is familiar with the term ‘*manzai*’; the only notable distinction here is the expression ‘*tayū manzai*’ to describe the secular form performed within cities.

⁵ Mochida Toshi’ichi, *Ōsaka owarai gaku: warai to nori ni kaketa menmen* [the study of Osakan laughter], vol. 1 of *Naniwa zatsuraku shi* (Tokyo: Shinsensha, 1994), 64.



Fig. 5. An illustration from *Gonyūbu Kyara Onna* 御入部伽羅女 . Reprinted from Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki, *Rakugo: The Popular Narrative Art of Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 138 (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990), 242. From left to right: *kōshaku*, *tayū manzai*, Yonezawa Hikohachi, *kyōka zaimon*.

Kyōka zaimon was a form of *uta zaimon* 歌祭文 , which itself was derived from *saimon* (see figure 6), originally stories based on Buddhist scripture sung to the accompaniment of a conch trumpet by priests in the guise of *yamabushi* 山伏 mountain ascetics. By the Genroku period, *saimon* had become secularised, giving rise to *uta zaimon*, which were mostly songs about local news. Another derivative of *saimon* which became a popular entertainment in the latter half of the Edo period was *deroren zaimon* でろれん祭文 , a *kadozuke gei* which drew its name from the 'deroren deroren' sound of the conch played by the original *saimon* performers. *Deroren zaimon* evolved into *chongare* ちょんがれ and *ahōdarakyō* 阿呆茶羅経 . These two street

performances were characterised by fast-pitched singing, the former using vulgar language and the latter entertaining people with recitations of mock Buddhist sutras. In the Meiji period, these *saimon*-derived forms gave birth to the *naniwa-bushi* 浪花節 ballad, otherwise known as *rōkyoku* 浪曲 . A form of recitation and singing accompanied by *samisen*, *naniwa-bushi* remains to this day an important traditional folk music genre.



Fig. 6. *Left, a yakuharai exorciser; right, a saimon performer.* From *Jinrin Kinmō Zui*, 1690. Reprinted from Nishiyama Matsunosuke, *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868*, trans. and ed. Gerald Groemer (Honolulu: U of Hawai'i P, 1997), 115.

The final caption introduces us to Yonezawa Hikohachi 米沢彦八 . Active during the Genroku period, Yonezawa was one of

the three most famous *tsujibanashi* 辻咄 or 'crossroads story' raconteurs, along with Tsuyu no Gorōbē 露の五郎兵衛 in Kyoto (1643-1703) and Shikano Buzaemon 鹿野武左衛門 in Edo (1649-1699). These three were the first professional raconteurs in Japan, and would be instrumental in laying the foundations for *rakugo* 落語 professional storytelling. Whereas *tsujibanashi* were short comic tales (also known as *karukuchi* 軽口 'light-mouthed' talk), *rakugo* stories were much longer, adding a narrative dimension, providing more detailed descriptions and emphasising the punch line. *Rakugo* flourished in the Edo period, and up until the beginning of the Showa era (1926-1989), it was the only legitimate performance art of a humorous nature in Japan. Yonezawa and his *tsujibanashi* is accredited with establishing the roots of comedy in Osaka.⁶

Undoubtedly, Kaempfer's mention of plays in private houses was in part a reference to *ayatsuri jōruri* 操り浄瑠璃, a descendant of *jōruri*, the narrative ballad born in the late Muromachi period which was originally accompanied by the *biwa* 琵琶 (Japanese lute) and later by the *samisen*. In the early Edo period, it became popular in Edo and the Kyoto-Osaka area. During the Jōkyō period (1684-1688), Takemoto Gidayū 竹本義太夫 created a form called *gidayū jōruri* which would become representative of *jōruri* generally, thanks to the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon 近松門左衛門. This form of *jōruri* combined with puppet theatre in the Genroku period to become *ayatsuri jōruri*, the ancestor of present-day *ningyō jōruri bunraku* 人形浄瑠璃文楽 or *bunraku* for short. The Kaempfer diary (1690-1692) coincides with the

⁶ Ibid., 58.

time in which *ayatsuri jōruri* began to be performed at the Takemoto-za 竹本座 and Toyotake-za 豊竹座 theatres in Osaka. While such theatres were gaining high acclaim, *tsujibanashi*, *kōshaku* and *tayū manzai* flourished in the streets.

Niwaka – Osaka's First Popular Stage Comedy

Another location for popular performing arts was the Dōtonbori 道頓堀 area, which to this day remains a vital cultural centre of Osaka. All kinds of stage entertainment, such as kabuki and *jōruri*, were performed in Dōtonbori by the Enkyō period (1744-1748); likewise the Takemoto-za where Chikamatsu performed his most famous works. Dōtonbori is also known as the place where the impromptu stage performance of *niwaka* 俄 or 仁輪加 began, which provided the impetus for modern stage *manzai*. According to Hamamatsu Uta-kuni's sixty-volume collection *Setsuyō Kikan* 摂陽奇観, *niwaka* began in the Kyōhō period (1716-1736), and between the Hōreki and Meiwa periods (1751-1772) in Dōtonbori, "*niwaka* stages were built and decorated with paper lanterns."⁷ In the Kyōhō period, on evenings of summer festivals, *niwaka* was mostly performed within the Osaka Sumiyoshi Shrine 大坂住吉神社 and surrounding areas. As with *tsujibanashi*, it became very popular, and amateur *niwaka* conventions became fashionable.

Apart from Osaka, *niwaka* also developed in Fukuoka prefecture. At first, *niwaka* simply consisted of humorous language or gestures designed to provoke laughter. Later, as it developed into a stage

⁷ Qtd. in Mochida, 86.

performance, it acquired a stronger narrative dimension.⁸

Niwaka stems from an ancient festival activity called *dontaku*, which is now synonymous with one of Japan's most famous festivals, the Hakata Dontaku Matsuri 博多どんたく祭り in Hakata city, Fukuoka prefecture. One of the central elements of the *dontaku* is the *matsubayashi* 松囃子, which originated in the Muromachi period as a procession of *onmyōji* and *sanjo* members, along with merchants and common folk who would sing blessings at new year's. In this respect, it was quite similar in tone to classical *manzai*. Within the *matsubayashi* was a section called *fūryū* 風流, a word which combined *fūzoku* 風俗, meaning 'manners and customs', and *ryūkō* 流行, meaning 'current trends'. The *fūryū* section in *dontaku* evolved with the times to allow various types of spontaneous performances in an informal setting.⁹ *Dontaku* transforms the city into a giant theatre with stages in various locations where people may participate in any number of performances. A recent flyer handed out at the Hakata Dontaku Matsuri summed up the spirit of this festival: "Participation in *dontaku* is fundamentally free. You can jump right in by yourself. Please think of *dontaku* as a once-a-year informal occasion when you can perform the dances and songs you practice all year long in front of the citizens."¹⁰

Similar to the *fūryū, nagashi niwaka* 流し仁輪加 or 流俄 'strolling *niwaka*' was performed in the streets by amateurs. It provided entertainment for the common folk. Anyone was free to put on a

⁸ Higuchi, 114-5.

⁹ Tsurumi, 46.

¹⁰ Qtd. in Tsurumi, 48.

costume and participate. Performers took the lines of *jōruri*, Noh plays or popular songs and arranged them in their own way while strolling along the streets, in a style reminiscent of today's karaoke. This eventually evolved into jokes with punch lines accompanied by dancing performed by two or three people wearing *bote katsura* ぼて髷 or 'papier mâché wigs'¹¹ (see figure 7). In Hakata, the performers would wear paper *hanmen* 半面 'half-masks' that covered their eyes and nose. This form of *niwaka* first came to be performed on stage in the theatre houses of Osaka. By the Meiwa period (1764-1772), *niwaka* also spread to the licensed 'pleasure quarters' of Shimabara 島原 in Kyoto and Yoshiwara 吉原 in Edo, where it was styled *Yoshiwara niwaka*.¹² By the Kasei period (1804-1830), *niwaka* had diverged into two different styles, one which dealt exclusively with parodies of kabuki and *jōruri* hit plays, and the other which consisted of impromptu comedy in the shape of one-liners, gags and humorous gestures.¹³

¹¹ Mochida, 90.

¹² Higuchi, 114-5.

¹³ Mochida, 88-90.



Fig. 7. Actors wearing *bote katsura* in a *niwaka* program from the Tenpō years (1830-1844). From *Kyōdo Kenkyū Kamigata* 23 『郷土研究上方』 第 23 号 . Reprinted from Mochida Toshi'ichi, *Ōsaka owarai gaku: warai to nori wo kaketa menmen* (Tokyo: Shinsensha, 1994), 89.

The Meiji Restoration brought with it a number of changes to the world of popular entertainment in Osaka. One of the factors that contributed to these changes was the collapse of the Edo economy. The end of the Tokugawa Shogunate dealt a serious blow to the merchants of the city – they were no longer able to thrive on lending money to the *daimyō* lords; their monopolistic trade associations were disbanded, and the *ginme* 銀目 monetary unit that they used to count silver and gold was abolished. In addition, the establishment of prefectures in the place of feudal domains brought about the closure of the numerous Osaka storehouses where national produce and rice collected as land tax were sold. With the end of the rice system and the gold and silver markets, the entire Edo distribution network held together by brokers and

wholesalers effectively ceased functioning.¹⁴ For those in the entertainment business, however, the beginning of the Meiji period was a time of opportunity. Even while a power struggle raged on between the Tokugawa shogunate and feudal armies, the theatres of Dōtonbori continued to operate.

Another event that had a significant impact on the entertainment world was the Osaka government's order in Meiji 5 (1872) to abolish stage entertainments at shrines and temples. The performers who relied on these shrines and temples suddenly found themselves searching for new homes. Many performances, including *niwaka*, found their way into the red-light districts of Shinmachi 新町, Horie 堀江 and Kitano Shintchi 北乃新地. However, this only relieved part of the problem, and other measures were necessary to create new stages for popular entertainment. Thus, there resulted a move to develop entertainment districts in busy areas of the city so that they could accommodate more visitors and house more theatres. Of particular importance to *niwaka*, and by extension, to the emergence of modern *manzai*, was the development of the Sennichimae 千日前 area. Thanks to the efforts of Okuda Benjirō 奥田辨次郎, a former street hawker with an entrepreneurial spirit, the execution ground and cemetery of Sennichimae was relocated in Meiji 5, and the land was soon transformed into a thriving entertainment and shopping district.¹⁵ Along with Dōtonbori, Sennichimae would eventually become home to many of Osaka's most active comedy houses.

¹⁴ Ibid., 97-8.

¹⁵ Mochida, 98-103.

When the performers of *jōruri*, *uta zaimon*, *tayū manzai*, *otoshibanashi*, *niwaka*, and other forms of singing and dancing moved into Sennichimae after Meiji 5, so did the mountebanks, peddlers, hawkers and their likes who made their business in the vicinity of the shrines and temples. In the early years, Sennichimae was alive with a carnival mood, bustling with all manner of stalls, some selling foods and wares, others providing petty entertainment – almost all of them humorous in some way. A popular phenomenon at the time was the *misemono* 見世物 or ‘raree-show’ which greatly increased the number of visitors to the area by showing curiosities. For example, many stalls were exhibits of ‘genuine’ articles from famous figures of the past. The humour came from the fact that they were obvious forgeries. There were acrobatics for dogs and monkeys, as well as exhibits of rare creatures. One stand advertised it had a live weasel – which is pronounced ‘itachi’ in Japanese. However, on opening the curtain, the curious passer-by would discover a board (‘ita’) smeared with blood (‘chi’). These sorts of word plays and jokes were everywhere in Sennichimae, from the *misemono* shows to the *otoshibanashi* and *niwaka* stage. Other *misemono* included burlesque shows featuring young girls performing variations of folk singing and dancing.

Sometimes, the *misemono* were subject to censure by Osaka police. A series of laws and regulations on entertainments issued by the local Osaka government during the early Meiji period cracked down on forgeries as well as burlesque shows. For example, a show featuring young girls performing a popular singing style called *ondo* 音頭 was discontinued on charges of ‘corrupting public morals’ when it was

discovered that the girls revealed the hem of their kimonos while they danced.¹⁶ However, such interventions did little to dampen the ebullience of the entertainment districts of Osaka.

The relationship between censors and those who resist censorship helped to define the character of stage *niwaka* as well as that of modern *manzai*, both of which emerged from the optimistic humour peppered with vulgarity that animated the streets of Sennichimae. The authority against which *niwaka* rebelled was that of the kabuki theatres of Osaka, which had gained a national reputation for the quality of their performances. In the Edo period, these theatres – almost all of them located in Dōtonbori – “boasted a lineup of stars: . . . Arashi Hinasuke [嵐雛助] (1741-1796) and Ichikawa Danzō IV [四世市川団蔵] (1745-1808) were appearing at the Kado [角座] and Naka [中座] kabuki theaters, respectively.”¹⁷ Therefore, when the *niwaka* group led by Shinanoya Ohan II 二代目信濃家尾半 decided to perform a parody of the famous work *Ōshū Adachigahara* 奥州安達原 at the Kado theatre in Meiji 13 (1880), the reaction from kabuki aficionados was one of outrage. From Meiji 9 (1876), there also appeared a handful of *niwaka* groups who performed kabuki *niwaka* and *shimbun niwaka* 新聞仁輪加, or ‘newspaper *niwaka*’ – which consisted of humorous re-enactments of current events – in Dōtonbori, but most of them were unsuccessful. Meanwhile, the mood in Sennichimae was very ripe for the irreverent humour of *niwaka*.¹⁸ As if to spite the naysayers of

¹⁶ Ibid., 104-6.

¹⁷ Nishiyama, 130.

¹⁸ Mochida, 108-9.

Dōtonbori, *niwaka* would thrive in Sennichimae, where it continued to sharpen its parodistic bent, tackling kabuki and even the *shimpageki* 新派劇 ‘new school drama’ – which developed in contrast to kabuki in the mid-Meiji period and typically dealt with sentimental domestic themes. *Niwaka* also returned to the shrines and temples of Osaka when they were later reopened to public performances.

The half-mask that characterises *niwaka* helps explain the genre’s critical edge. Hakata *niwaka* takes this expression literally, using a paper mask that covers the eyes and nose of the performer. The *bote katsura* headpiece of Osaka *niwaka* is also a form of ‘half-mask’ since it represents one half of the kabuki performer’s costume. According to Tsurumi, the *niwaka* performer’s half-mask does not take on the role which the performer is playing: “If it fully appropriated the role – if it was tied up to any given role – it would be carried away by destiny and become tragic. In this non-appropriated state . . . the *niwaka* performance criticises roles which are fixed to faces in theater,” and instead shows amateurs unable to get rid of their own lifestyles, who “move about with eggshells still stuck to their bottoms.”¹⁹ This propensity for criticism and self-criticism along with a lack of pretence also became trademarks of the *manzai* comedian.

A prime example of *niwaka*’s parody of kabuki theatre can be found in the stage life of Tsuruya Danjūrō 鶴家 團十郎 (see figure 8), a performer who, along with his sidekick Dankurō 団九郎, brought *niwaka* to the height of its popularity at the close of the nineteenth century. Everything about Danjūrō was a parody, beginning with his

¹⁹ Tsurumi, 52.

name. His stage name Tsuruya was taken either from the family crest of the fiction writer Tsuruya Namboku 鶴家南北 or from kabuki actor Ichikawa Udanji 市川右團治 (1843-1916), and his actor's name Danjūrō was taken from Ichikawa Danjūrō IX 九世市川團十郎 (1838-1903), known as the acting prodigy of the Meiji era. He also took the latter's family crest as his own. Considering that Tsuruya Danjūrō was an amateur and a complete outsider to the world of kabuki, such name borrowing was considered the height of arrogance. Even the titles of the performances he mounted were parodies. For example, in Meiji 23 (1890), he took the Kado theatre by storm with an original piece whose title (酒妓院の選挙騒ぎにて大詰は滑会妓院妓事堂) can be loosely translated as "sake-serving geishas in a commotion over an election decide in the end on a building for the institute of geisha amusement." When pronounced, however, the Japanese characters composing the title are homonymous to the expression "Members of the House of Representatives in a commotion over an election decide in the end at the Diet Building." Such political parody was well received by Tsuruya Danjūrō's audience since it reflected a critical stance towards Tokyo which was shared by many of Osaka's citizens.²⁰ Tsuruya Danjūrō's troupe would lord it over Sennichimae for thirteen years at the Kairyōza 改良座 theatre from 1894 to 1906, laying the groundwork for the *kigeki* 喜劇 comic theatre of Osaka which is famous throughout Japan to this day.²¹

²⁰ The Osaka-Tokyo opposition is a recurring theme in Osakan comedy, one that later influenced the character of modern *manzai*.

²¹ Mochida, 112-4.

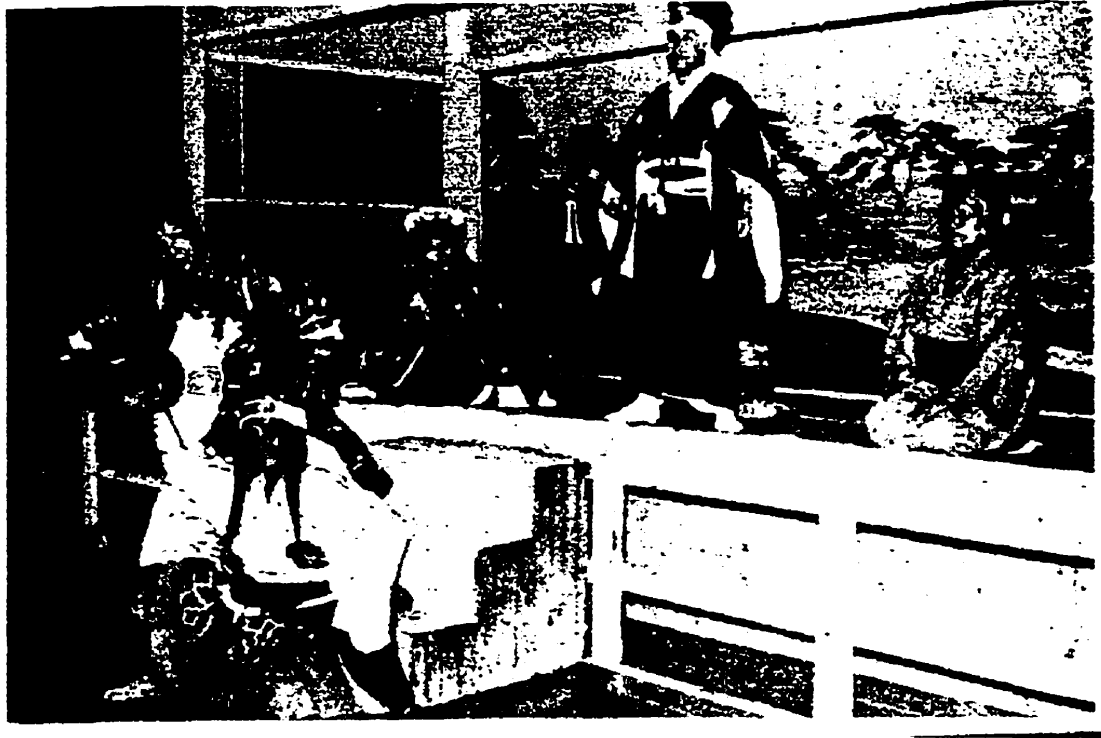


Fig. 8. A scene from the *niwaka* version of *Taikōki Jūdanme* 仁輪加版「太功記十段目」, performed by disciples of Tsuruya Danjūrō. Reprinted from Mochida Toshi'ichi, *Ōsaka owarai gaku*, 121.

Manzai: From 'Ten Thousand Years' to 'Ten Thousand Talents'

While *niwaka* was enjoying its heyday, *tayūmanzai* continued to be performed within the theatre halls of Osaka. At the turn of the century, however, *manzai* would undergo the first of two metamorphoses, changing from a minor entertainment based on the secularised version of a classical folk performing art to a completely new genre of popular performance which would capture the spirit of Osaka's new salaried and working class.

The man responsible for this first metamorphosis is Tamagoya Entatsu 玉子屋圓辰 (1864-1944), known among *manzai* aficionados as 'the founder of modern *manzai*' (see figure 9). Born Nishimoto

Tamekichi 西本為吉 in Naka-Kawachi 中河内 (present-day east Osaka), Tamagoya ('egg vendor') received his unusual stage name from his occupation as a travelling salesman. In his home town, he was known for his beautiful renditions of Kawachi *ondo* 河内音頭 . He was also a talented lead dancer of *bon odori* 盆踊 , the dances for the Bon festival – the Buddhist festival of the dead.²² Nishimoto's reputation spread in Mikawa and Owari where he often performed for his customers. Realising his potential as an entertainer, Nishimoto decided to try his luck in Sennichimae towards the end of the Meiji 20's, and enjoyed a brief stint in a small *yose* under the name Tamagoya Tamemaru 玉子屋為丸 . He soon left Osaka, however, to continue his training in various folk performing arts, after which he returned in the Meiji 30's (1897-1907).

²² Akita Minoru, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi* [a history of humorous tales from Osaka] (Osaka: Henshū Kōbō Noa, 1984), 18.



Fig. 9. Tamagoya Entatsu. Reprinted from Aiba Akio, *Kamigata manzai nyūmon* [Introduction to Kamigata *Manzai*] (Tokyo: Kōbun, 1995), 23.

During his time in Osaka, Nishimoto discovered that the popular singing style of the day was *Gōshū ondo* 江州音頭, from present-day Shiga prefecture, and not the *Kawachi ondo* that he performed. *Gōshū ondo* had just made its appearance in Osaka at the beginning of the Meiji 20's. At the time, it was known as *Yōkaichi saimon ondo* 八日市祭文音頭 because it originated in the city of Yōkaichi as a variation of the *saimon* singing performed during the Bon festival. By the Meiji 30's, *Gōshū ondo* was all the rage in Sennichimae, but not because of its originality or novelty: two *ondo* performers would sit on the stage, the leader singing while shaking a metal staff, and his partner

performing *saimon* and blowing the conch horn. Rather, the popularity of Gōshū *ondo* can largely be attributed to the presence of the young ladies who were lined up in front of these two and performed the *teodori* 手踊 Bon dance while revealing the hems of their *yukata* (unlined cotton kimonos). As mentioned previously, this dance was in fact a kind of *misemono* burlesque show.²³

Nishimoto's training led him to several different regions. His first destination was Yōkaichi, where he learned Gōshū *ondo* from the successors of its originator, Sakuragawa Dairyū 桜川大龍. Next, Nishimoto travelled throughout his native Aichi prefecture to learn classical *manzai*. Although all of the sources consulted for this account state that he learned Mikawa *manzai*²⁴ – probably in Nagoya – other sources claim he also received training in Owari *manzai*.²⁵ One source claims he learned Iroku *manzai* 伊六万才,²⁶ which was created at the end of the Meiji period by a man of the same name. A variation of Chita *manzai*, Iroku *manzai* is performed in a half-seated stance, and incorporates a variety of arts in between the dialogue sections, including riddles, impersonations, *naniwa-bushi* and *ahōdarakyō*.²⁷

²³ Mochida, 158-60.

²⁴ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 19; Mochida, 159; Aiba Akio, *Kamigata manzai nyūmon* [introduction to Kamigata *manzai*] (Tokyo: Kōbun, 1995), 22.

²⁵ Aiba, 22.

²⁶ Takemoto Kōzō, *Hoete odorasete: shōbainin Hayashi Shōnosuke den* [a biography of Hayashi Shōnosuke, merchant of mirth] [book on-line] (serialised in *Ōsaka Shimbun* from 11, Sep., 1996 to 14 Feb., 1997); available from <http://www.osakanews.com/series/h/>; Internet; accessed 15 March, 1997.

²⁷ Amano Hiroshi, "Owari Tsushima – aki matsuri" [autumn festival] [personal web page]; available from <http://www.aichi-ele.co.jp/~amano/mytown/akimatsuri/akifesta/>; Internet; accessed 19 Nov., 1997.

When Nishimoto returned to Osaka, he demonstrated the fruits of his labour by opening in a small *yose* near the Tenma Tenjin temple 天満天神 . His performance began with the *tayū* versus *saijō* ceremonial repartee of classical *manzai*, then followed with Kawachi and Gōshū *ondo*.²⁸ Nishimoto improved the Gōshū *ondo* he learned in Yōkaichi by elaborating the narrative aspect of the verses, which he adapted from *jōruri*, while emphasising their emotional content.²⁹ The classical *manzai* he used was a combination of orthodox Mikawa *manzai* and *manzai* incorporating musical elements such as *sangyoku manzai*. As explained earlier, *sangyoku manzai* involves the *tsuzumi* drum, the Chinese fiddle and the samisen. It is also characterised by the presence of more than two performers: one *tayū* flanked by several *saijō* who typically play the instruments. Another characteristic of *sangyoku manzai* is the finale called *ainarae* in which the players show off their musical talents in tune with a short story that ends with a punch line, to which all the performers respond in unison “*yawano, choito, ainarae!*”³⁰

Inspired by his travels in Aichi prefecture, Nishimoto called his performance Nagoya *manzai* 名古屋万歳 and first took the stage name Tamagoya Entatsu. Soon afterwards, a travelling fan salesman by the name of Toyomaru 豊丸 saw Tamagoya's performance and decided to perform Nagoya *manzai* as well. He set up his stage near the Sumiyoshi temple, and just like Tamagoya, gave himself a name inspired by his

²⁸ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 19.

²⁹ Mochida, 161-2.

³⁰ Oda, 10.

profession: Sensuya ('fan vendor') Toyomaru 扇子屋豊丸 . These were the first contemporary *manzai* stage names, as well as the origin of the first *manzai* families.³¹

Tamagoya's Nagoya *manzai* undoubtedly raised quite a few eyebrows in Osaka, since it was a heterogeneous amalgam of arts, combining rural folk performances of religious ancestry with urban, secular entertainments nurtured in the streets of Osaka. At first, audiences attracted by the novelty flocked to see Nagoya *manzai*. Yet the heterogeneous nature of Nagoya *manzai* also had its disadvantages: the numerous breaks within the show as one act followed the next created a disorganised atmosphere. To lessen the discontinuities, Tamagoya played the part of the 'disk jockey', intervening between acts through comic dialogues with a partner.³² This proved to be a very successful strategy for Nagoya *manzai*, which became increasingly popular thereafter. Tamagoya's inspiration for his comic interludes was the *karukuchi* often used in *niwaka* as an act-opener or even as a preliminary performance to draw audiences before the curtain rose. Just as in *tayū manzai*, *karukuchi* was based on a dialogue between a straight character, called *shin* シン - *tsukkomi* 突っ込み or ツツコミ in modern *manzai* - and a foolish character, called *boke* ボケ . From the end of the Meiji period and into the Taishō period (1912-1926), *karukuchi* would become an independent form of *yose* entertainment and enjoy greater popularity than *manzai*. However, as *manzai* flourished into the Shōwa period (1926-1989), it gradually absorbed

³¹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 19.

³² Aiba, 22.

karukuchi, contributing to the emergence of rapid-fire comic dialogue in modern *manzai*.³³

Within ten years of its appearance, Nagoya *manzai* grew into a very popular form of entertainment, although it was still not widely recognised by the general public. As the number of converts to Nagoya *manzai* from *ondo*, *rōkyoku*, *rakugo*, *niwaka* and other recitation-based and narrative-based performing arts began to increase, further enriching the palette of performances, the format of Nagoya *manzai* became more complex. Since the public was bored by *ondo* recitals alone, Nagoya *manzai* performers decided to add variety to their act by incorporating new entertainment venues, called *iromono* 色もの, such as juggling, magic, and other physical performances. After a while, the audiences also grew tired of hearing the same Kawachi and Gōshū *ondo* over and over again. Therefore, Nagoya *manzai* performers and producers would go on 'research trips' to various provinces in order to learn regional varieties of *minyō* 民謡 traditional folk ballads.³⁴ Tamagoya Entatsu would continue to play an active role in refining and promoting the art of *manzai* in Osaka throughout the Meiji and Taishō periods, frequently changing partners, and through his numerous travels to the remotest regions of the country. Before retiring from the entertainment world in Shōwa 8 (1933), he had gone as far north as Hokkaido and even visited Karafuto 樺太 – in the present-day Sakhalin islands now under Russian domain.³⁵

³³ Oda, 13.

³⁴ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 21.

³⁵ Mochida, 181-2.

As Tamagoya's students expanded the reach of Nagoya *manzai* outside of Osaka, it would undergo several name changes. By the end of the Meiji period, Nagoya *manzai* was performed not only in Osaka and Kobe, but all around the Kinki area 近畿 – the central part of the main Honshū island comprising the prefectures of Hyogo, Nara, Wakayama, Shiga and Mie, as well as the cities of Kyoto and Osaka. Finally, in Taishō 5 or 6 (1917-18), Nagoya *manzai* made its way to Tokyo. Since it would be strange to call something born in Osaka 'Nagoya *manzai*,' a different name was needed. The Meiji period trend of using English words for fashionable items – a trend born in an era of prosperity that accompanied the infusion of foreign capital into Japan – had toned down by that time in Osaka. Instead, the Japanese expressions *kōkyū* 高級 or *kōtō* 高等, meaning 'high-class' or 'deluxe' had become the popular words of the day, and appeared almost everywhere. As a result, when Nagoya *manzai* made its debut in the Asakusa area – the equivalent of Sennichimae in Tokyo –, it was given the name *kōkyū manzai* 高級万歳. Eventually, the prefix 'Nagoya' was entirely dropped, and the amalgam of performances became known simply as *manzai* 万才, but written not with the ideogram for 'years' 歳, but with the ideogram for 'talent' 才.³⁶ Thus, the spelling symbolised the definite transition from celebratory performances to usher in 'ten thousand years' of good fortune to 'ten thousand varieties' of dancing, popular singing, comic dialogue and mimicry.

In this new form of *manzai*, *tayū* and *saizō* were replaced by the words *tsukkomi* and *boke* (pronounced 'bo-keh'). The etymology of the

³⁶ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 23-4.

word '*boke*', originally written 惚 or 呆, ranges from 'dull-headed' or 'senile' to 'amazed' and 'beside oneself'; '*tsukkomi*' means 'poking' or 'sticking' but can also imply 'going after someone's weaknesses'. Indeed, unlike classical *manzai*, the *boke* no longer carried a *tsuzumi* drum, and the *tsukkomi* no longer used his fan for dancing but rather used a *harisen* 張の扇 'slapping fan' meant to whack the *boke*'s head when he misbehaved.

Manzai – The Early Years

Through the first half of the Taishō period (1912-1919), the 'legitimate' narrative performing art of the Kamigata 上方 area was *rakugo*, and *manzai* was a second-rate venue, far lower in status. This was about to change. Several factors contributed to the emergence and recognition of *manzai* as a proper form of entertainment in Osaka.

One of the secrets of *manzai*'s appeal during this early phase of its development as a contemporary stage performance was that it had the potential of bringing to life anything which the public desired. Contrary to other Osaka entertainments such as kabuki and *jōruri* which presented its audiences with a completed art form, *manzai* was still unformed and malleable. *Manzai* involved a joint effort on behalf of performers and audiences, producers and consumers. In *yose*, there was no clear boundary between stage and audience. The audience could address its desires and opinions to the performers without reserve. Since the performers on stage for the most part shared the same lifestyles as the audience, the latter felt as if they were at home, and not audiences going to a theatre. The mood in *yose* was as if both

performers and audience members were casually engaged in *sekenbanashi* 世間話 or 'small talk'. In this manner, current events and local news became a part of the comedy routine on stage.³⁷ Furthermore, the number of performances and entertainment forms which *manzai* incorporated was limitless. "*Manzai* alone began to encompass the whole of *yose* (vaudeville) with its mimicry, puppetry, traditional Japanese music, songs, skits and even kabuki. *Manzai* began to have the reputation that one could see everything in it."³⁸ *Manzai*'s sensitivity to its environment, as well as its capacity to imitate and absorb all manner of performances, information, cultural products, mores and customs was most fittingly described at the time by the expression '*maneshi manzai*' まねし漫才, meaning '*manzai* that mimics.'³⁹ This is one of the defining features of *manzai* which have remained central to its nature throughout its development in the twentieth century.

Another reason behind *manzai*'s expanded appeal lay in changes in the social class of *yose* audiences. The First World War (Taishō 3-7 or 1914-8) allowed Japan's capitalist economy to make rapid progress. It was after this period that Japan moved from an agriculturally centred nation to an industrialised nation. As a result, the social class of those who sought out entertainment in the *yose* gradually shifted from the merchant class of the harbour area, that had supported Osakan *rakugo*, to the salaried and working class. These new theatre-goers cared less

³⁷ Ibid., 43-7.

³⁸ Yoshikawa, 79.

³⁹ Aiba, 14.

for *rakugo* – which provided character descriptions according to a clear plot, and told of human feelings in days of yore – than for *manzai*, which was far more lively and entertaining.⁴⁰

Naturally, the rise of *manzai*'s status was closely tied to the emergence of companies that managed *yose* theatres and controlled the entertainment industry. In the tumultuous years which followed the First World War, old theatres and entertainment halls disappeared as fast as new establishments appeared in Osaka. When the dust settled in Taishō 11 (1922), these new establishments fell largely into the hands of two companies: Shōchiku 松竹 – later known as Shōchiku Entertainment Corp. – and Yoshimoto Kōgyō 吉本興業. While Shōchiku became known as the 'kingdom of theatre', Yoshimoto Kōgyō became the 'kingdom of entertainment'. Shōchiku first imposed itself in Osaka. Having previously gained control of the theatres in Kyoto in the Meiji 30's (1897-1907), Shōchiku made its way into Dōtonbori, and by Meiji 45 (1912), controlled the five major theatres. In the same year, Yoshimoto Kichibē 吉本吉兵衛 and his wife Sei せい founded Yoshimoto Kōgyō, and soon began acquiring *yose* as well. With the appointment of Sei's brother Hayashi Shōnosuke 林正之助 (1899-1991) as chairman in Taishō 6 (1917), and under Yoshimoto Sei's supervision after her husband died in Shōwa 13 (1924), Yoshimoto Kōgyō began actively recruiting new performers. In Osaka at the time, there were over a hundred *rakugo* performers, divided into two camps: the Katsura faction 桂派 and the Sanyū faction 三友派. Just as Shōchiku had consolidated the theatre industry – primarily *kigeki* and

⁴⁰ Oda, 18-20.

shimpageki -. Yoshimoto Kōgyō took these two factions under its wing and consolidated the *rakugo* world. By Taishō 11 (1922), Yoshimoto Kōgyō had expanded its presence into Tokyo, Yokohama and Kobe, and had acquired over thirty *yose*, establishing itself as the undisputed king of entertainment in Osaka.⁴¹

In the history of *manzai*, one event stands out clearly as a pivotal point: the Great Kantō Earthquake of Taishō 12 (1923). Some twenty years after *manzai* emerged as stage entertainment, there were over two hundred pairs of performers throughout Japan. A considerable number of them were Osaka-based performers who had followed the *kōkyū* *manzai* movement and were just beginning to settle down in Asakusa. Others had also settled in outlying areas of the Kantō region. When the earthquake ravaged Tokyo, they had no choice but to return to Osaka. This had two important consequences for *manzai*. First, Osaka suddenly found itself with a thriving *manzai* population. Naturally, this brought about an increase in competition, which led to certain improvements in performances. Second, this was the beginning of a new role for *manzai*. The performers returning from Tokyo used *manzai* to report news of the earthquake to their Osaka audiences. When word of this spread, *manzai* began to attract an even wider audience, one that included people who previously never considered attending *yose* theatre.⁴² Whereas in earlier years, the audience often brought local topics to the performers within their *seken banashi*, now *manzai* performers brought news to the audience. Modern *manzai* comedians often provided an alternative to

⁴¹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 27-9.

⁴² Ibid., 33-5.

newspapers, presenting under a different angle the news gathered on their travels, and providing social or political criticism – sometimes openly, sometimes covertly – through their humour.

In the years that followed the earthquake, there were signs that Kamigata *rakugo* was beginning to decline while *manzai* continued to gain recognition. In Taishō 13 (1924), the famous raconteur Katsura Bundanji III 三代桂文団治 passed away and the talented Shōfukutei Shōkaku IV 四代笑福亭笑鶴 retired from the stage.⁴³ Meanwhile, Yoshimoto Kōgyō's chairman, Hayashi Shōnosuke, had high hopes for *manzai*, even though it was not considered a mainstream entertainment at the time. Partly based on his evaluation of the changing *yose* audience's needs and partly guided by intuition, Hayashi came up with a new company strategy of *manzai*-centred performances.⁴⁴ His ideas were not met with approval at first, but Hayashi stood firm on his decision: "In any company whatsoever," he said, "when one does or thinks something unconventional, there is a backlash. If one worries too much [about the backlash], one never makes progress."⁴⁵ For his shrewdness, determination and leadership, Hayashi would be known throughout his seventy-four year career as 'the lion of Yoshimoto'.

While Hayashi's efforts focused primarily on *manzai* performers, there was one notable exception which deserves mention: raconteur Katsura Harudanji I 初代桂春団治. Recruited by Yoshimoto Kōgyō in Taishō 10 (1921), Harudanji's popularity soared despite the fact that

⁴³ Oda, 18.

⁴⁴ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 18.

⁴⁵ Takemoto, 68.

the world of Kamigata *rakugo* was fading. His success was due to the fact that he did not follow the narration style of *rakugo* and made wide use of *manzai*-like gags and jokes. He disregarded character descriptions, coming out instead with a succession of nonsensical dialogues which provoked explosive laughter. Harudanji's existence bears testimony to the transitional phase between the end of the Taishō period and the beginning of the Shōwa period in which the mainstream of Kamigata entertainment shifted from *rakugo* to *manzai*.⁴⁶

Another factor which contributed to *manzai*'s recognition and its general acceptance within Osakan society was the appearance of husband and wife *manzai* duos. When *ondo* was incorporated into Nagoya *manzai*, it was essentially a showcase for young male singing talents. *Manzai* was known as an entertainment for bachelors performed by bachelors, and the content of comic repartee was vulgar and often indecent. In the early Taishō period, however, as young *manzai* performers took brides, they decided to appear on stage as a couple, and they began talking about conjugal life. Until then, the repertoire of subjects which *manzai* presented was relatively limited. The *seken banashi* of *manzai* couples introduced a soft touch and a greater depth. Husband-wife duos on stage signaled that *manzai* was 'growing up'. Gradually, *manzai yose* began to change from a bachelor hang-out to a place where couples felt comfortable as well. At the time, a Meiji sense of decorum still reigned, and it was not acceptable for couples to be seen walking about together on working days. The only exceptions were tinkers, who worked as couples all the time, and were praised for their

⁴⁶ Oda, 22.

harmonious lifestyle. However, *manzai* couples eventually replaced tinkers as the ideal double-income couple. Neighbours envied them because the harmony required to perform together on stage carried over into their conjugal life.⁴⁷ This notion not only attracted many new performers to *yose*, but it also contributed to *manzai*'s social acceptance as the content improved and the vulgarity diminished. Today few *manzai* married couples remain; their rate of divorce increases proportionally to their popularity. Often, the popularity of the husband with young female fans led to extramarital affairs.⁴⁸ Female duos, on the other hand, first made their appearance in Taishō 13, and have remained popular ever since.

⁴⁷ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 54-6.

⁴⁸ Aiba, 35.

CHAPTER III

MANZAI ON THE AIR

Between Taishō 14 (1925) and Shōwa 28 (1953), *manzai* was profoundly influenced by new forms of mass media such as radio broadcasting, records and film. These technological innovations altered the form and content of modern *manzai*.

Manzai: From 'Ten Thousand Talents' to 'Chock-Full of Talent'

The Great Depression, triggered by the U.S. stock market crash in the fall of Shōwa 4 (1929), had serious repercussions for the Japanese economy. As the Osakan entertainment districts would soon discover, however, the comedy business thrives in a depression. The following year, in Shōwa 5 (1930), Yoshimoto Kōgyō chose the Nanyōkan 南陽館 theatre in Sennichimae to inaugurate a new strategy called *jussen manzai* 十銭万才 or 'ten-sen *manzai*'. At the time, admission fees for entertainment halls ranged anywhere from thirty to a hundred *sen* (one yen). At the Nanyōkan, not only was the admission fee very inexpensive – about the price of a magazine –, it was the only *yose* which catered exclusively to *manzai*. *Jussen manzai* was an immediate hit, and the Nanyōkan filled to capacity every day. In Shōwa 5, Yoshimoto Kōgyō commanded forty-eight pairs of *manzai* comedians, and all of them performed regularly on stage. In the years that followed, the competition between *manzai* duos at the Nanyōkan became fierce. Yoshimoto Kōgyō evaluated each duo's abilities when they entered the company, and determined their order of appearance accordingly. Every

duo was conscious of their rank since it determined their salary. Backstage, *manzai* performers would discuss how the audience responded to the duo on stage. New duos would benefit from backstage evaluation sessions when their act was finished. Every duo strove to discern the advantages and disadvantages of their competitors, while trying to come up with unique elements. Some duos chose to change the form of their *manzai*, by dressing up in costumes, for example. Others chose to concentrate on the content by developing unique talking styles. In any case, the congregation of so many performers under one roof and under such competitive conditions had great impact on *manzai*, which benefited from the continual refinements and innovations.¹ The Nanyōkan was known thereafter as '*manzai*'s training ground'.

Shōwa 5 (1930) was a very eventful year for *manzai*. Not only did it mark the beginning of the Nanyōkan theatre's fame, it was also the year in which the trailblazers of modern *manzai* first took to the stage. Two performers, Yokoyama Entatsu 横山エンタツ (1896-1971) and Hanabishi Achako 花菱アチャコ (1897-1974), became 'the fathers of modern *manzai*' (see figure 10). Both Entatsu and Achako had experience performing *manzai* before Hayashi Shōnosuke brought them together. Entatsu was born in Hyōgō prefecture, the son of an army doctor. Aspiring to become an entertainer, he left his home and drifted between theatre troupes until he reached Tokyo. He subsequently travelled to Manchuria, and in Shōwa 4 (1929), decided to tour the United States where he performed for Japanese Americans. Later, he despaired of the entertainment profession and aspired to become a

¹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 104-9.

hairpin manufacturer. Failing miserably, he returned to Osaka, where he settled into the Tamatsukuri area and began to perform once again. Hayashi had already enlisted Hanabishi Achako in Taishō 15 (1926), and was looking for a partner to match him with. For Hayashi, Entatsu's humorous facial expressions, along with his timing and tempo made him the perfect *manzai* partner.²

Achako was born in Fukui prefecture under the name Fujiki Tokurō 藤木徳郎³. Before pairing off with Entatsu, Achako had already achieved popularity in a duo with the former *kigeki* actor Chitoseya Imao 千歳家今男, with whom he delivered a unique *manzai* style that combined *karukuchi* with riddle-solving.⁴ In Taishō 8 (1919), a local evening newspaper selected the duo as the number one *kōkyū manzai* performers.⁵ When Hayashi caught sight of Achako with Imao at the Aishinkan 愛進館 theatre in Sennichimae, he decided to recruit him into Yoshimoto Kōgyō.⁶

² Takemoto, 69, 73.

³ Ibid., 69.

⁴ Mochida, 250.

⁵ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanshi shi*, 77.

⁶ Takemoto, 69.



Fig. 10. *Left*, Yokoyama Entatsu; *right*, Hanabishi Achako. Reprinted from Inoue Hiroshi, *Ōsaka no warai* [The Laughter of Osaka] (Osaka: U. of Kansai Press, 1992), 65.

In May of Shōwa 5 (1930), Entatsu and Achako made their debut at the Tamatsukuri Sankōkan 玉造三光館 theatre, and *manzai* would never be the same. Previously, *manzai* performers would appear on stage in a *montsuki* 紋付き crested kimono, hold a *harisen* fan, play instruments, sing *ondo* or other musical repartee, dance, and only in between acts, engage in comic banter. Entatsu and Achako appeared in Western clothes – dressed in three-piece suits, wearing a bow tie and bowler hats. They did not play, sing or dance; they engaged in comic banter from beginning to end. Their *manzai* consisted of foolish small talk in a conversational format using a succession of puns and jokes, similar to *karukuchi* in *niwaka*. This fast-paced comic banter, known as *shabekuri manzai*, was a complete novelty at the time. Instead of the

stage language used by other *manzai* and *karukuchi* performers. Entatsu and Achako spoke the everyday language of salaried workers and students. They would talk about the latest trends in society as well as current events. The audience that expected *ondo* singing with a little comedy thrown in, was at first unpleasantly surprised by their performance. Jeers erupted throughout the theatre, and Entatsu and Achako were met with shouts of “Do *manzai*, will you?” or “Let’s hear some singing!”, or even “Go home! We didn’t come to hear *karukuchi*!”⁷ Nevertheless, the young salaried workers in the audience enjoyed the performance immensely.

Entatsu and Achako would shortly rise to national stardom and even become screen actors. The duo had radically altered *manzai*. They had taken the *karukuchi*-inspired dialogue – previously an interlude between *ondo* singing and other arts – and turned it into the centrepiece of their performance, thereby making comedy the focus of the entertainment.

In order to understand what motivated Entatsu and Achako to make such a bold departure from the *manzai* of their peers, we must step back for a moment and consider Japan’s experience of the modern. After the industrialisation triggered by the First World War, Japan entered an era marked by socio-economic and cultural transformation in which old establishments were cleared away and novelty became commonplace. The *manzai* stage reflected these transformations. For example, a popular singing routine within the *manzai* performance at the end of the Taishō period was a *kazoeta* 数え歌 – a song which

⁷ Mochida, 251-2.

enumerates things – called “How the Times Have Changed”. The song includes these comments:

Two. Through a mysterious wireless broadcast, one can hear various arts without even being there; unusual things happen every day. Truly, how the times have changed!

.....
Four. People going abroad are becoming numerous. Japanese people speak English, foreigners wear Japanese night clothes. Truly, how the times have changed!

.....
Six. It's difficult to succeed if one is unlettered, so more people work their way through school. If you don't know the new words, you'll be embarrassed. Truly, how the times have changed!

.....
Eight. In baseball and student sumo, the winner waves the pennant as a victory for his province. Truly, how the times have changed!

.....
Ten. The popular arts of the times : cinematograph, *yasugi-bushi*, *manzai*, *owara-bushi*, Sawada Shōjirō's sword plays are all the rage, ballroom dancing is also interesting. Truly, how the times have changed!⁸

Entatsu and Achako took the principles of *manzai* mimicry to their fullest implications. Retaining only dialogue, they were able to devote their attention fully to the task of incorporating the changing times into their performance.

Contrary to previous *manzai* which often included talk one might hear in a row house in a back alley or in a domestic quarrel, [Entatsu and Achako] would talk about residential districts in the suburbs or about cafes and coffee shops popular at the time.⁹

Radio, baseball, new words, movies, new fashions and popular trends – these were the topics that animated Entatsu and Achako's *manzai*.

⁸ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 63-4.

⁹ Yamazaki Toyoko, *Hana Noren*, serialised in *Chuō Kōron* (January 1958 and subsequent issues), qtd. in Oda, 18.

Entatsu and Achako's Western appearance also reflected changing times, specifically the Western media culture consumed through movies, movie posters, photographs and advertisements. After World War I, as American films became international in character and dominated the world market, Greta Garbo, Rudolph Valentino and Charlie Chaplin became icons in Japanese popular culture. Charlie Chaplin particularly influenced the entertainment business. "By the onset of the Pacific War, Japanese filmgoers were familiar not only with Chaplin but with Japanese Chaplin look-alike comedians in films, a Japanese character named Chaplin in a comedy, and plot lines in Japanese films were based on Chaplin's story lines."¹⁰ Although Entatsu wasn't the first Japanese comedian to emulate Charlie Chaplin – Nihon Chappurin 日本チャップリン, a *manzai* performer in a duo with Umenoya Uguisu 梅廼家ウグニス, has that distinction for his Tokyo debut in Taishō 6 (1917) – he first achieved national fame. "[Entatsu] had profound respect for Chaplin as his teacher. In his *manzai*, *konto* [skits] and in his movie acting, you could see Chaplinesque moves everywhere. What was more, that little moustache [of his] was just like Chaplin's."¹¹ Entatsu also emulated American film comedian Harold Clayton Lloyd, wearing dark-rimmed eyeglasses like his.¹²

Entatsu's appearance was not merely a fashion statement; it

¹⁰ Miriam Silverberg, "Remembering Pearl Harbor, Forgetting Charlie Chaplin, and the Case of the Disappearing Western Woman: A Picture Story," *Positions* 1, no. 1 (1993): 49.

¹¹ Takemoto, 76.

¹² Oda, 18.

served to reinforce the comical effect of his performance. In her novel modelled on the lives of Yoshimoto Kōgyō founders Yoshimoto Kichibē and his wife Sei, entitled *Hana Noren* 花のれん, Yamazaki Toyoko 山崎豊子 describes Sei's first encounter with Entatsu before he was paired with Achako, performing in a Kobe theatre:

He wore black-rimmed eyeglasses and a serious-looking small moustache, and was neatly dressed up in a suit with a bowler hat. It was the first time she had ever seen an entertainer come on stage with glasses and a moustache. Until then, even if they usually wore glasses, it was common practice for entertainers to remove them before going on stage. For Taka [the character modelled after Sei], Entatsu's appearance and attitude suggested either an elementary school teacher or a country village mayor. Apparently, his aim was to say foolish things with that rigid, serious-looking face.¹³

In other words, in an age when Western clothes were associated with rigidity and authority, Entatsu had created a visual equivalent of deadpan humour. Due to the novelty it represented, the popularity of Charlie Chaplin and the comic effect it produced, Entatsu and Achako's Western appearance became quite a sensation in Osaka. In fact, soon after their debut, there was a rapid increase in Western style clothing among audience members.¹⁴

Entatsu and Achako won a loyal following among students and young salaried workers who enjoyed laughing about the events related to their daily lives. Yet, the *ondo* fans in the audience were not easily won over. They often jeered the duo when they appeared on stage. Nevertheless, even they came to appreciate Entatsu and Achako thanks in part to the police officer in the official seating area. In those days, a

¹³ Yamazaki, qtd. in Oda, 17-8.

¹⁴ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanshi shi*, 75.

police officer was usually present in *manzai* theatres to make sure that nothing too vulgar or inappropriate was being said or displayed on stage. If a *manzai* performer made a slip of the tongue on stage, he was required to submit a written apology to the officer the next day.¹⁵ When Entatsu and Achako noticed the police officer struggling to control his laughter, they decided to make it their objective to make him laugh, which in turn motivated them to produce funnier material. At the same time, the officer's presence in the *yose* served to block the jeers of the audience. Eventually, those who restrained themselves out of deference to the police officer realised that, contrary to their expectations, Entatsu and Achako's *manzai* was entertaining, even without *ondo*.¹⁶

In recognition of Entatsu and Achako's ground-breaking innovations, Yoshimoto Kōgyō concluded that it was time to change the spelling of *manzai* once again, and entrusted the neologism to newly appointed Arts and Advertising Department director Hashimoto Tetsuhiko 橋本鐵彦 – known among cognoscenti as the brains behind Yoshimoto's twentieth century 'success story'.¹⁷ Hashimoto changed the spelling to a homonym 'manzai' 漫才, drawing his inspiration from *manga* 漫画 comics – which means 'overflowing pictures' – and *mandan* 漫談, or 'overflowing' comic monologues, both of which were gaining popularity at the time. Therefore, *manzai* had made its third transformation, changing from a display of 'ten thousand talents' to an entertainment 'chock-full of talent'.

¹⁵ Ibid., 88.

¹⁶ Ibid., 82.

¹⁷ Mochida, 237n.

Manzai Meets the Mass Media

The invention of radio contributed to Entatsu and Achako's success and to the establishment of modern *manzai* as a nationally-recognised genre. As soon as radio officially began in Osaka in Taishō 14 (1925), *naniwa-bushi*, *rakugo* and *kōdan* 講談 – professional storytelling – was broadcast live from theatre halls.¹⁸ The same year, the comic duo Katsura Tarōbō and Jirōbō 桂太郎坊・次郎坊 broadcast a form of *karukuchi* dialogue in Osaka under the title of 'humorous *manzai*'. Yet *manzai* would not be broadcast again on radio for another nine years, mostly because theatre owners – including *manzai* monarch Yoshimoto Kōgyō – were concerned that audiences would stop coming if they could enjoy the performances at home for free.¹⁹ In Shōwa 4 (1929), the Tokyo Entertainers Union demanded that radio stations stop broadcasting from theatres at night, for fear of losing audiences in their most lucrative time slot.²⁰

When radio broadcasting began in Osaka, Hayashi felt particularly threatened by the wireless menace. He went so far as to write a notarial deed prohibiting employees from performing in places unauthorised by the company²¹. Ironically, it was a Yoshimoto employee – the *manzai*-styled *rakugo* star Katsura Harudanji I – who would prove that radio in fact benefited the entertainment business.

¹⁸ Inoue Hiroshi, *Ōsaka no warai* [the laughter of Osaka] (Osaka: U. of Kansai P, 1992), 115.

¹⁹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 70-2.

²⁰ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 116.

²¹ Takemoto, 75.

Contrary to Hayashi's fears, listeners who tuned in to Harudanji's unauthorised appearance on NHK radio in Shōwa 5 (1930) subsequently became regular theatre-goers. As a result, Yoshimoto Kōgyō quickly changed its position. It thereafter became a strong ally of all forms of mass media.²²

In Shōwa 9 (1934), *manzai* returned to radio when Entatsu and Achako performed a routine called "Sōkeisen" 早慶戦 in a live nation-wide broadcast. This began the duo's national recognition.²³ From that moment, *yose* performances on the air became family entertainment. Other *manzai* performers quickly followed Entatsu and Achako's lead, performing *manzai* in front of a microphone in a radio studio. Radio posed different challenges than *yose*. Sensing the need for *manzai* tailored to radio, Yoshimoto Kōgyō's Akita Minoru 秋田実 (1905-1977) – *manzai* scriptwriter and a leader of Osakan entertainment culture in the Shōwa period²⁴ – wrote a radio script called *Katei Tenkizu* 家庭天気図 or "Family Weather Map" which launched family-oriented *manzai*.²⁵ Indeed, faced with the knowledge that any man, woman or child could potentially become an audience member, *manzai* comedians in the radio studio were instilled with a sense of responsibility with respect to content. As a result, they suppressed the vulgar or indecent jokes that sometimes appeared on the *manzai* stage. The new, 'wholesome' radio *manzai* contributed to its popularity and national

²² Mochida, 236n.

²³ Ibid., 255.

²⁴ Ibid., 184n.

²⁵ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 117.

recognition.²⁶ Entatsu and Achako, for example, often focused on comfortable themes of innocence and naïveté.²⁷ The most striking difference between the stage and the radio studio, however, was that *manzai* comedians could no longer rely on visual cues. *Shabekuri manzai*, as opposed to other forms of *manzai* which relied strongly on visual cues, proved most suited for radio since it relied on dialogue alone. Performers who wanted to be on the air were thus obliged to adopt the *shabekuri manzai* format. This, in turn, increased the number of *shabekuri manzai* comedians on the *yose* stage. Although *manzai* that included singing, dancing and musical instruments would still continue beyond the 1930's, such styles gradually diminished in comparison to *shabekuri manzai*.²⁸

After Shōwa 12 (1937), the year in which Japan went to war with China, *manzai* comedians who had yet to experience a radio broadcast were given a powerful incentive when microphones and loudspeakers began to appear in *yose* theatres. Since microphones were the symbol of radio at the time, speaking into a microphone on stage gave performers the illusion that they were in fact preparing for the day when they would enter the studio. As a result, they became more nervous and made concerted efforts to improve the quality of their performance. In addition, hearing their voice magnified over a loudspeaker made *manzai* comedians more conscious of their dialogue, which also contributed to verbal sophistication. The microphone had another effect

²⁶ Ibid., 118.

²⁷ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanshi shi*, 75.

²⁸ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 118.

on modern *manzai*. Previously, a small table with a tea cup sat back from centre stage, as on the *rakugo* stage. The comedians would move and shift position. With the microphone, comedians were obliged to remain close to it. The microphone introduced a fixed point on stage and eliminated unnecessary movements. It thus focused comedians' attention on deliberate movements. This was crucial to the refinement of visual humour on the *manzai* stage.²⁹ *Manzai* duos developed their own body language, which further reinforced their stage identity.

Before radio, the gramophone had made inroads in Japan. The first *manzai* duo to record their performance was Sunagawa Sutemaru 砂川捨丸 (1890-1971) and Nakamura Haruyo 中村春代 (see figure 11), some time before Taishō 10 (1922).³⁰ Whereas Entatsu and Achako are credited with creating modern *manzai* and raising its position as an entertainment genre in the Kamigata area, Sunagawa is credited with spreading *manzai* to the rest of the country. With a career spanning the Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa periods, Sunagawa is a god-like presence in the *manzai* world.³¹ He also cuts a unique figure in Japanese entertainment: throughout his career of over seventy years, he retained the style of stage *manzai* dating back to Tamagoya Entatsu's day, wearing a *montsuki* kimono, beating the *tsuzumi* drum and singing *ondo*.³² One of the reasons for his national reputation was his records, enjoyed by families throughout Japan. In Shōwa 9 (1934), Yoshimoto

²⁹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 215-7.

³⁰ Ibid., 126.

³¹ Aiba, 98.

³² Mochida, 190.

Kōgyō entered into collaboration with record companies Polydor and Teichiku in order to produce its own records.³³ Entatsu and Achako recorded their first performance the following year, and other *manzai* comedians followed suit. Record companies began to make compilations of *manzai* performances geared to family enjoyment, often selling sets of several records with such advertisements as 'a *manzai* convention you can listen to at home'. Thus, the record industry worked with radio to turn *manzai* into a wholesome family entertainment.³⁴

³³ Ibid., 258.

³⁴ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 126-7.



Fig. 11. *Left*, Sunagawa Sutemaru; *right*, Nakamura Haruyo. Reprinted from Aiba Akio, *Kamigata manzai nyūmon*, 99.

Entatsu and Achako's career as *manzai* comedians on stage was remarkably short-lived, their last performance in Shōwa 9 (1934) coming a mere ten months after their Tokyo debut. After retiring due to an ear infection, Achako teamed up with his former partner Imao Chitoseya, and Entatsu teamed up with Sugiura Enosuke. Their break-up caused much speculation among *manzai* cognoscenti. Some argued that Hayashi Shōnosuke, who considered Achako miscast as a *tsukkomi*, wanted him to play a *boke* role. Others claimed that Entatsu had gripes about his salary.³⁵ Although no longer together, the duo of Entatsu and Achako lived on thanks to a new medium, the talking film.

³⁵ Takemoto, 84.

The Nikkatsu film company produced its first experimental talkie, *Furusato* or 'Home' in Shōwa 5 (1930), and by Shōwa 7, talkies had become increasingly popular.³⁶ Yoshimoto Kōgyō jumped at the opportunity to cash in on Entatsu and Achako's popularity, and came out with a film featuring the beloved duo in Shōwa 10 (1935), called *Akireta Renchū* あきれた連中 – which means something like "those jerks". The first three films in the series were written by Akita Minoru. In the war years alone, Yoshimoto Kōgyō made over ten films featuring Entatsu and Achako³⁷ (see figure 12). Other movies were soon made starring equally talented *manzai* comedians. The relationship between the stage and the silver screen was a two-way interaction, however. Successful film performances were often converted to stage versions. For example, *Akireta Renchū* led to a stage production in Asakusa called "Akireta Bōizu", performed by four comedians. Thus began group *manzai*, and subsequent practitioners would retain the title 'bōizu' – 'boys'.

³⁶ Matsuda Film Productions, "Timeline of Japanese Silent Films," [information service on-line] available at <http://www.infoasia.co.jp/subdir/matsuda>; Internet; accessed 9 Dec., 1997.

³⁷ Mochida, 258.



Fig. 12. A scene from *Akireta Eiga* あきれた映画, starring Yokoyama Entatsu and Hanabishi Achako, one of the films in the “akireta” series. Photo provided by Akita Minoru. Reprinted from Mochida Toshi’ichi, *Ōsaka owarai gaku*, 257.

One of the most successful comedy films of the day was a parody of the historical epic *Mito Kōmon Manyūki* 水戸黄門漫遊記. The stage version “was performed and well received in Osaka at the Kadoza Theater. This stage show starred other comedians such as Takase Minoru [高勢実乗] and Yanagiya Kingorō [柳家金語楼], the number one *rakugo* performer, who made audiences roar with

laughter.”³⁸ Movies thus created an opportunity for a new type of stage performance in which *manzai* was accompanied by various other performing arts to create a unified comedy repertoire. This new arrangement contributed to *manzai*’s diversification as *manzai* comedians became more versed in other forms of humour.³⁹

Manzai Goes to War

When Japan invaded Manchuria and created the puppet state of Manchukuo between Shōwa 6 and 7 (1931-2), Yoshimoto Kōgyō reacted by planning the Japanese entertainment world’s first consolation visit. Naturally, the visit aimed to boost the morale of Osakan troops stationed in Manchuria. The job was given to Entatsu and Achako, and Ishida Ichimatsu 石田一松, an *enka* 演歌 ballad singer who originated a musical performance style called the *nonki-bushi* のんき節, or the ‘happy-go-lucky tune’. The three entertainers spent close to a month in Manchuria in the cold of winter, cheering up the soldiers and observing the events around them.⁴⁰

Yoshimoto Kōgyō’s decision to organise the visit evoked the spirit of volunteerism. Takemoto explains that one of the company’s current policies, ‘serve the populace,’ was present from its early days. For example, when a fire broke out in the neighbourhood, Yoshimoto employees would come out in full force to help with fire-fighting activities. Wearing *happi* coats and carrying paper lanterns emblazoned

³⁸ Yoshikawa, 80.

³⁹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 137-42.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 95.

with the company name, the men would arrive and shout out:
“Yoshimoto is here! . . . We’ve come to help. No need to worry!” The women would arrive with freshly steamed rice, shouting: “. . . these are Yoshimoto’s rice balls!” Although Hayashi claimed that this was purely volunteer work, Takemoto states that it obviously aimed at publicity.⁴¹ Likewise, the consolation tour of Manchuria may have been a publicity stunt.

When Entatsu and Achako returned to Osaka, they reported everything that they had witnessed abroad on the *yose* stage with a comical twist. Akita provides this snippet of *manzai* as an example:

ACHAKO. I can’t even put into words how cold it was in Harbin.

ENTATSU. It wasn’t an easy-going kind of cold. It was a cold that hurts.

ACHAKO. The instant you went outside, the cold gave you a sharp sensation on your skin as if you had been pricked by a needle [pronounced ‘*hari*’ 針] or a pin [pronounced the same].

ENTATSU. So that’s why they call that town ‘*haripin*’.⁴²

Their ‘news *manzai*’ created a sensation everywhere. Osakans flocked to *yose* to learn about the conditions in Manchuria in an entertaining fashion. *Manzai* began to appear in the society section of newspapers.⁴³ For the first time, *manzai* had made an impact on society at large. By the time of the China Incident in Shōwa 12 (1937), “it was taken up in newspapers as well as magazines. Even short stories and novels began to include comic and *manzai* characters in them.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Takemoto, 34.

⁴² Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 96.

⁴³ Ibid., 97.

⁴⁴ Yoshikawa, 80.

Consolation visits on the war front continued on a regular basis through Shōwa 17 (1942).⁴⁵ Visits were also organised within Japan to military factories. Eventually, comedians who participated in the wartime effort gained a name. Inspired by the Japanese air force unit known as the 'fierce eagle corps' or *arawashi butai* 荒鷲部隊, they called themselves the 'laugh-making corps' or *warawashi butai* 笑わし部隊.⁴⁶ This new comedy brigade included the *manzai* duo of Miss Wakana ミス・ワカナ (1910-1948) and Tamamatsu Ichirō 玉松一郎 (1906-1963). Wakana and Ichirō's innovation consisted in combining *shabekuri manzai* with musical elements.⁴⁷ The duo owes much of their success, however, to their experiences as members of the *warawashi butai*. "It can be said that their popularity as *manzai* [performers] became unshakeable thanks to their numerous *manzai* 'accounts of the struggles of the *warawashi tai*' which they would report each time they returned to Osaka."⁴⁸ Wakana and Ichirō were later recruited and elevated to star status by a company called Shinkō Engei 新興演芸 or 'New Entertainment Company', established in Shōwa 14 (1939). The company was known for developing a well-rounded entertainment repertoire combining comedians with actors and singers. Eventually, "the New Entertainment Company . . . grew into a company large enough to challenge Yoshimoto Entertainment Inc."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Takemoto, 88.

⁴⁶ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 229.

⁴⁷ Mochida, 263-4n.

⁴⁸ Takemoto, 88.

⁴⁹ Yoshikawa, 81.

Shōwa 12 was a turning point for Japan, marking the beginning of its steady escalation towards the Second World War. Because of the prolongation of the China Incident "which in essence lasted until Japan's total defeat in 1945 . . . the Japanese were drawn further and further into an all but fruitless effort which hastened the conditions of militarism and regimentation at home . . ." ⁵⁰ This affected the way in which *manzai* comedians behaved on stage. *Manzai* comedians had previously represented themselves as common people talking frankly about their everyday lives. In the war, however, *manzai* comedians portrayed themselves as common people who also co-operated with home front activities. ⁵¹ *Manzai* was considered a valuable resource during the war, since it allowed people to forget, if only momentarily, the harsh reality with which they struggled from day to day. Due to the stringent censorship imposed on entertainers, however, it became increasingly difficult for *manzai* comedians to draw laughter from their audiences. Not only were they obliged to use scripts which had been censored beforehand, but the policeman in the official seating area was particularly vigilant as well. *Manzai* comedians thus went to great lengths to keep their audiences entertained. Theatre hands would purposefully make some excuse to bring the policeman into the theatre office to gain some time, or the comedians would wait until the policeman went to the bathroom. They would then deliver racy and side-splitting material in a rapid burst. Nonetheless, at the height of the

⁵⁰ John Whitney Hall, *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times* (Tokyo: Tuttle, 1971), 339.

⁵¹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanshi shi*, 228.

war hysteria, when all forms of entertainment conformed to the 'exaltation of the fighting spirit', even audiences were afraid to laugh. Under such conditions, the techniques which *manzai* comedians used to entertain their audiences proved ineffective.⁵² During these difficult times, Shinkō Engei had a definitive advantage over Yoshimoto Kōgyō since it had many other forms of entertainment to offer its audiences in addition to *manzai*.⁵³

⁵² Ibid., 230.

⁵³ Yoshikawa, 81.

CHAPTER IV

MANZAI ON TELEVISION

The Post-War Manzai Radio Revival

After the war, the Japanese entertainment industry was in shambles. The thirty odd *yose* of the Osaka area were completely obliterated, and the two major entertainment companies, Yoshimoto Kōgyō and Shōchiku Entertainment were practically disbanded. Nevertheless, the Osakan people are known for their optimism in the face of adversity. Only one month after Japan's acceptance of the Potsdam Declaration on August 14, Shōwa 20 (1945), Yoshimoto Kōgyō had converted the ruins of the Osaka Kagetsu Theatre 大阪花月劇場 in Sennichimae from a mortar shack and had reopened it for business with a new entertainment programme.¹ Two years later in Shōwa 22 (1947), the Shōchiku Theatre in Ebisubashi 戎橋松竹 reopened and became a centre of activity in the revitalisation of the entertainment world. Still, many established performers were not satisfied with the pittance that the major entertainment companies offered in the immediate post-war years. They thus decided to create independent performance units in which they could develop different styles and schools of acting.²

One event that helped *manzai* break free from its post-war lethargy was the launching of a wave of radio shows featuring the performing arts of the Kamigata area. The trailblazer was NHK radio's

¹ Takemoto, 94.

² Yoshikawa, 81.

“Kamigata Engeikai” 上方演芸会 or ‘Kamigata Performing Arts Convention’ in Shōwa 24 (1949), hosted by the veteran duo Ashinoya Gangyoku 芦乃家雁玉 and Hayashida Jūrō 林田十郎, one of Entatsu and Achako’s competitors in the early days of *yose* broadcasting. Although there were already programmes on the air such as “Rajio Yose” ラジオ寄席 and “Hōsō Engeikai” 放送演芸会, or ‘Broadcasted Convention of Performing Arts’, they mostly comprised *kōdan* narration and *rōkyoku* ballads. “Kamigata Engeikai” and subsequent shows placed *rakugo* and *manzai* in the spotlight. By Shōwa 25 (1950), *manzai* had overtaken *rakugo* as the predominant form of comedy on the radio, beginning a ‘*manzai* boom’. Radio became a second stage where *manzai* performers could perfect their talents. The initiation of commercial broadcasting stations in Shōwa 26 (1951) only served to accelerate this trend. By the following year, the number of people owning radio sets in Japan had exceeded ten million, and many of them became avid fans of radio comedy. Several shows heralded the beginning of the first ‘*manzai* boom’. In Shōwa 25 (1950), there was the “Kimagure Shōbōto” 気まぐれショーボート or ‘The Whimsical Showboat’ – starring Yokoyama Entatsu and the *manzai* duo of Kashima Rakkī 香島ラッキー with Misono Sebun 御園セブン, one of the first stars of *shabekuri manzai* in Tokyo after Shōwa 10 (1935). Entatsu’s former partner Achako also shared the limelight when he starred in “Achako no Seishun Techō” アチャコの青春手帳 or ‘Achako’s Diary of Youth’ in Shōwa 27 (1952), an Osaka-produced radio drama written by Akita Minoru that garnered national popularity.’

³ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 119-20, 222-3.

The programme attained a record fifty-five percent listening rating in the summer of Shōwa 29 (1954), and spawned a movie.⁴ By the mid 50's, the number of *manzai* comedians had grown to 150 pairs in the Kamigata area and a hundred pairs in Tokyo.⁵

Ten-Year Cycles

Within the world of Kamigata performing arts, there is a widely held belief that the popularity of comedy, and of *manzai* in particular, has moved in regular cycles ever since the 1950's, with waves peaking every ten years in 'booms'. People speak of an *owarai būmu* お笑いブーム 'comedy boom' or of a *manzai būmu* 漫才ブーム. According to Inoue Hiroshi, such booms go beyond the dictionary definition of 'rapid expansion or increase': "[*Manzai*] booms in this case do not simply mean that theatres flourished, it signifies that [*manzai*] thrived within the broadcast media of radio and television [*Manzai* booms] cannot possibly occur without the broadcast media."⁶

Japan entered the age of television in Shōwa 28 (1953). NHK Osaka Television broadcasts began the next year, followed by the commercial stations Osaka Television, Yomiuri Television and Kansai Television in Shōwa 33 (1958), and Mainichi Television (1959). By the end of the decade, television had established itself throughout the country. Meanwhile, the world of the stage was undergoing important changes. After the war, Yoshimoto Kōgyō and Shōchiku Entertainment

⁴ Mochida, 272n.

⁵ Yoshikawa, 81.

⁶ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 222.

had catered to the American occupation army by converting existing theatres into movie houses and cabarets.⁷ In the late 1950's, however, many of these buildings converted back to performance halls to satisfy the television industry's programming needs. As with radio some thirty years earlier, television began live broadcasts from *yose* theatres.⁸

After the first radio-based *manzai* boom in 1950-51, the second wave in 1960-61 was not a *manzai* boom per se but rather a boom in comedy programmes. While *manzai* comedians appeared in growing numbers on television, they were well outnumbered by other varieties of comedians and artists, including *kigeki* actors. In Shōwa 35 (1960) alone, there were 710 different *kigeki* programmes broadcast on Kansai Television.⁹ Among the *kigeki* actors who appeared on television in the early 60's, two of them deserve mention since they became important cultural icons in the world of Osakan entertainment. They were Shibuya Tengai II 二代目渋谷天外 (1906-1983) and Fujiyama Kanbi 藤山寛美 (1929-1990), both actors from the Shōchiku Entertainment Company. In Shōwa 23 (1948), Shibuya Tengai II established Shōchiku Shinkigeki 松竹新喜劇, an updated form of *kigeki* theatre based on contemporary themes. As a scriptwriter, he is famous for his theatrical adaptation of the life of Katsura Harudanji I, in which Fujiyama Kanbi played the role of a liquor shop apprentice. As a Shinkigeki comedian, Fujiyama was renowned for mastering the *ma* 間 or 'interval,' that is,

⁷ Takemoto, 94-6.

⁸ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 223.

⁹ Ibid., 224.

the timing of delivery.¹⁰ One of his most memorable performances was in “Oyabaka Kobaka” 親バカ子バカ on Yomiuri Television between Shōwa 34 and 35 (1959-60).

As for *manzai*, the two most representative duos of the early 60's on television were the brothers Nakada Daimaru (1913-1982) and Raketto (1920-1997) 中田ダイマル・ラケット , and the *manzai* couple Nanto Yūji 南都雄二 and Miyako Chōchō ミヤコ蝶々 (b. 1920). Daimaru and Raketto were one of the major duos of the post-war Kamigata *manzai* world. Known for their motto of ‘one laugh every three seconds,’ they were crowned the ‘kings of explosive laughter.’¹¹ One of their best contributions to televised entertainment was “Bikkuri Torimonochō” びっくり捕物帳 or ‘The Astonishing (detective) Casebook’ on Osaka Television between Shōwa 35 and 36 (1960-1961). Miyako Chōchō, a veteran of the stage from age seven, received her *manzai* training in the pre-war radio years. Paired with Yūji, she then rose to stardom after the war through numerous appearances on television, radio and movies.¹² The duo is probably most famous for their “Meoto Zenzai” 夫婦善哉 – an expression which suggests harmonious conjugal life – a highly successful programme which began on the radio in Shōwa 30 (1955), and was converted to television in Shōwa 38 (1963). Featuring frank discussions of marital problems between Chōchō, Yūji and the audience members,

¹⁰ Meiji Mutual Life Insurance, Osaka General Operations Division, 114th Anniversary ‘Thinking of Kansai’ Association, *Kamigata: warai no shinfonī* [Kamigata: a symphony of laughter] (Osaka, 1995), 58-9.

¹¹ Aiba, 100.

¹² Meiji Mutual Life Insurance, 59.

the show created "a major breakthrough in Japanese culture. Private marital problems (not traditionally discussed in public) were let out of the closet."¹³

With the rapid economic expansion of the 1960's, the distribution of television sets increased dramatically, and the television industry surpassed film and radio as the dominant mass medium. Whereas the previous decade was characterised by performers firmly rooted in the theatre medium who branched out into broadcast media, the 60's witnessed the success of new talents planted by television stations. Appearing in front of a camera on television began to take on more importance for comedians than stepping onto the *yose* stage. Television programmes now incited viewers to attend theatres.¹⁴

The third wave in 1970-71 was truly a *manzai* boom, centred on the city of Osaka. Two factors triggered the boom – the first was the Osaka World Fair in 1970, which brought throngs of people from across the nation to 'the city of laughter'. The sudden increase in audiences revitalised the *manzai* theatres of Sennichimae and Dōtonbori. The second factor was the introduction of *manzai* awards by the broadcast media in the latter half of the 1960's and early 70's. Osaka Radio took the first initiative in Shōwa 41 (1966), with the launch of "Kamigata Manzai Taikai" 上方漫才大会, or 'Kamigata Manzai Convention'. Television followed suit with the "NHK Kamigata Manzai Contesuto" NHK 上方漫才コンテスト in Shōwa 45 (1970) and the "Kamigata Owarai Taishō" 上方お笑い大賞 or 'Kamigata Comedy Grand Prize'

¹³ Yoshikawa, 82.

¹⁴ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 121-2.

on Yomiuri Television two years later. These awards fuelled competition between veteran comedians, as well as the new generation of *manzai* comedians – which had emerged in the late 60's – whose efforts to create new styles of comedy brought unprecedented diversity to *manzai*.¹⁵

Among the 70's boomers who made significant contributions to *manzai* were the duo of Yokoyama Yasushi 横山やすし (1944-1996) and Nishikawa Kiyoshi 西川きよし (b. 1946) (see figure 13), the *manzai* couple Shōji Toshie (b. 1940) and Reiji (b. 1939) 正司敏江・玲児, Komedi Nambā Wan comprised of Maeda Gorō 前田五郎 (b. 1942) and Sakata Toshio 坂田利夫 (b. 1941), the *manzai* trio Retsu Gō Sanbiki レツゴー三匹 comprised of Shōji 正児 (b. 1941), Jun じゅん (b. 1945) and Chōsaku 長作 (b. 1943), and the duo Nakada Kausu (b. 1949) and Botan (b. 1948) 中田カウス・ボタン. Toshie and Reiji are an example of a *manzai* couple who continued together despite their divorce – or in their case, thanks to their divorce. Building upon the success of Chōchō and Yūji's "Meoto Zenzai," they entertained their audiences with *manzai* based on mutual muckraking stories, bringing out humorous details of their personal lives. Komedi Nambā Wan are still popular today. They were the first duo to use a group name, a practice now common among young *manzai* artists. Masters of humour through exaggeration, they are a perfect illustration of *boke* versus *tsukkomi* role distribution, Maeda playing a straight-faced reasonable character and Sakata a buffoon of such proportions he is known by everyone as 'Sakata the fool'. Letsu Gō Sanbiki were a *shabekuri*

¹⁵ Ibid., 122.

manzai trio, a new style of comedy initiated in the early 60's by the Manga Torio 漫画トリオ. Letsu Gō Sanbiki are credited with perfecting the kind of clever repartee which only trios can accomplish, alternating between *tsukkomi* and *boke* combinations. Today, this style of *manzai* has all but disappeared, yet groups of more than two performers are still alive in the form of *konto* or 'skit' *manzai*. Kausu and Botan are another duo to survive to the present day. They are disciples of the Nakada 'family' founded by Daimaru and Raketto. Their humour often deals with poverty, a traditional theme since the days when entertainers struggled to make a living. Inspired by the hardships of his youth drifting between part-time jobs, Botan plays the poor man on stage and becomes the object of Kausu's jokes. For example, Kausu would say to him : "Botan, the chime at the entrance to your house goes *bimbō bimbō!*" – *bimbō* means 'poor.'¹⁶

¹⁶ Aiba, 72-100 passim.



Fig. 13. *Left*, Yokoyama Yasushi; *right*, Nishikawa Kiyoshi. Reprinted from Inoue Hiroshi, *Ōsaka no warai*, 226.

The *manzai* boom of the 70's quickly dissipated, and many *yose* broadcast programmes faded from television. Only "Owarai Nettowāku" on Yomiuri Television and "Dōtonbori Awā" (hour) on Asahi Television survived. Since *yose* theatres partly relied on broadcast media to bring in audiences, the end of the boom signaled hard times for theatre owners. Many *yose* were forced to close their doors in the latter half of the decade.

The fourth wave was in fact a *manzai* tsunami of national proportions. Although the idea of a ten-year cycle is well-known among those involved in the entertainment world, for the general population the term '*manzai* boom' is usually reserved for this period between 1980 and 1981 that witnessed the appearance of *manzai* on prime-time

television and the idolisation of *manzai* performers. One of the events which heralded this new phase was the sudden popularity of “Kaō Meijin Gekijō” 花王名人劇場, or ‘Kaō Master’s Theatre,’ a television show featuring *manzai* artists which first aired in October of 1979. When the show recorded an incredible thirty-three percent Nielsen rating in April the following year, television stations took that as a sign that *yose* broadcast programmes were in demand again. For their spring line-up in April 1980, Mainichi Television created “Kamigata Yose” 上方寄席, Kansai Television added a show called “The Manzai” and Yomiuri Television created “Manzai Shōgakkō” 漫才笑学校 or ‘Manzai Laughter School’, and “Owarai Ēsu Tōjō” お笑いエース登場 or ‘Enter the Aces of Comedy’. Before “Kaō Meijin Gekijō”, however, certain forces conspired to set the *manzai* boom in motion; groups like the Shō no Kai 笑の会 or ‘laughter society’ (initiated in 1975), together with Akita Minoru and other scriptwriters, *manzai* performers and novelists banded together to create innovative and intelligent material. In 1979, the Shō no Kai won a prize of excellence for arts for a *manzai* piece it had performed.¹⁷

The idolisation of *manzai* artists characterised the *manzai* boom of the 1980’s. Already in the previous boom, young female fans idolised Nakada Kausu, the first *manzai* performer to earn a loyal following of *okkake* 追っ掛け groupies.¹⁸ In the 1980’s, young *manzai*

¹⁷ Furukawa Ka’ichirō, “Sengo Kamigata owarai kai no nagare to sono shūhen,” [the current trend of the post-war Kamigata comic world and related subjects] *Kamigata shōgei no sekai* [the world of comic arts in the Kamigata area], Furukawa et al., eds. (Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1984), 15-6.

¹⁸ Aiba, 78.

artists such as Za Bonchi ザ・ぼんち . B&B. and Ōru Hanshin and Kyojin オール阪神・巨人 became idols to junior and senior high school students. Thus began a new trend in *manzai* that has become ever more pronounced. Young comedians started to target their *manzai* to audiences from their own generation.¹⁹ The subdivision of comedy according to age groups has become so exaggerated that "today, older audiences cannot understand the humour of *manzai* comedians who emerged after the 1980's."²⁰ In addition, *manzai* comedians were no longer limited to appearing in yose broadcast shows. Popular performers began to diversify their activities in the entertainment world, becoming disk-jockeys, quiz show hosts, starring in television dramas, commercials and later, as we will see, some of them even became musicians and writers. Therefore, the age of idolisation of *manzai* performers was also an age of stratification.

The 1980's saw radical changes in the content of *manzai*. The agents of change were the duos of Shimada Shinsuke and Ryūsuke 島田紳助・竜介 , and the Tsū Bīto ツー・ビート duo composed of Bīto Takeshi and Kiyoshi ビートたけし・きよし . Shinsuke and Ryūsuke developed a style known as *ochikobore manzai* 落ちこぼれ漫才 or 'dropout *manzai*'. With a no-nonsense attitude, they confronted issues that previous *manzai* comedians had neatly avoided, such as discrimination. Without artifice, contrived situations or dialogues, they drew their humour by exposing reality. Although their approach

¹⁹ Furukawa, 17.

²⁰ Kizugawa Kei, interview by author, tape recording, Kyoto, 19 June 1996.

differed, Tsū Bito in Tokyo also shared this attitude.²¹ These two *manzai* duos joined Za Bonchi, B&B, Ōru Hanshin and Kyojin and the others on the airwaves, appealing to younger viewers. Through television, Osakan comedians for the first time gained recognition on a national level.

Yoshimoto comedians generally have been marginal in language, geography, social class, and vocation (if not gender), and in previous decades had not experienced widespread fame as a whole. However, just as the margins of society were being swallowed up by the middle-class norms, the popular media were reproducing the socially marginal for youth culture consumption in the form of these fast-talking, street-smart *manzai* pairs.²²

Since most of these *manzai* pairs carried the Yoshimoto banner, the 1980's *manzai* boom was in a sense a Yoshimoto boom.²³ As with previous booms, the excitement quickly faded away during the remaining years of the decade. "By 1982, the oversaturation of *manzai* radio and television created a glut that led to a rapid decline in popularity."²⁴

The *manzai* boom of 1990-91, characterised as before by an increase in *manzai*-related television programmes, was fuelled by the emergence of 'no-brand' *manzai* comedians from an independent *manzai* training school. Although Akita Minoru had originally tried this idea in Shōwa 12 (1937) with his 'Manzai School,' the school format

²¹ Furukawa, 17.

²² Joel Stocker, "Japanese Media Culture: An Osakan Entertainment Enterprise Promotes Comic Dreams" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., 19-23 Nov., 1997), 3.

²³ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 124.

²⁴ Yoshikawa, 83.

was not as popular as the *shitei seido* 師弟制度 or 'teacher-pupil system' that then dominated the traditional performing arts. All aspiring *manzai* artists needed to become disciples of an established master or *shishō* 師匠. This involved a long, tedious training process in which the disciple or *deshi* 弟子 would follow the *shishō* to their performances, handle their household chores and attend to their personal needs for several years before having an opportunity to perform independently. In the early 1980's, young *manzai* comedians were displeased with Yoshimoto Kōgyō's central stage, the Namba Grand Kagetsu Theatre 難波グランド花月 (NGK for short) since it was extremely difficult to gain a chance to perform there. Therefore they initiated an 'anti-Kagetsu' movement against the conservative orthodoxy of the *shitei seido* that symbolised the NGK. In response, in 1982, Yoshimoto Kōgyō created the Yoshimoto Sōgō Geinō Gakuin 吉本総合芸能学院 (NSC) (see figure 14), or 'Yoshimoto General Entertainment Institute' (the NSC stands for 'new star creation'), so that new talent could be independently trained and quickly brought into the market.²⁵ Since its opening, the NSC has consistently produced popular entertainers, many of whom have attained national recognition and fame, such as first-year graduates Downtown ダウンタウン (see figure 15), Tomizu トミーズ and High Heel ハイヒール, as well as ninth-year graduates Ninety-nine ナインティナイン. While Yoshimoto's NSC is the most famous of such independent vocational schools for comedians, there are several small entertainment companies

²⁵ Mizutani Nobuhiro, interview by author, tape recording, Osaka, 26 June 1996.

that train no-brand comedians as well. Although these institutes offer students an independent environment where they are able to develop their individual talents free from the pressures of the *shitei seido*, on the other hand, they do not receive the instruction in humility and politeness which training under a *shishō* would have provided. Many graduates of the NSC, for example, have been criticised by senior comedians for lacking in respect. Some of the early graduates are also anti-authoritarian on account of the 'anti-Kagetsu' sentiment.

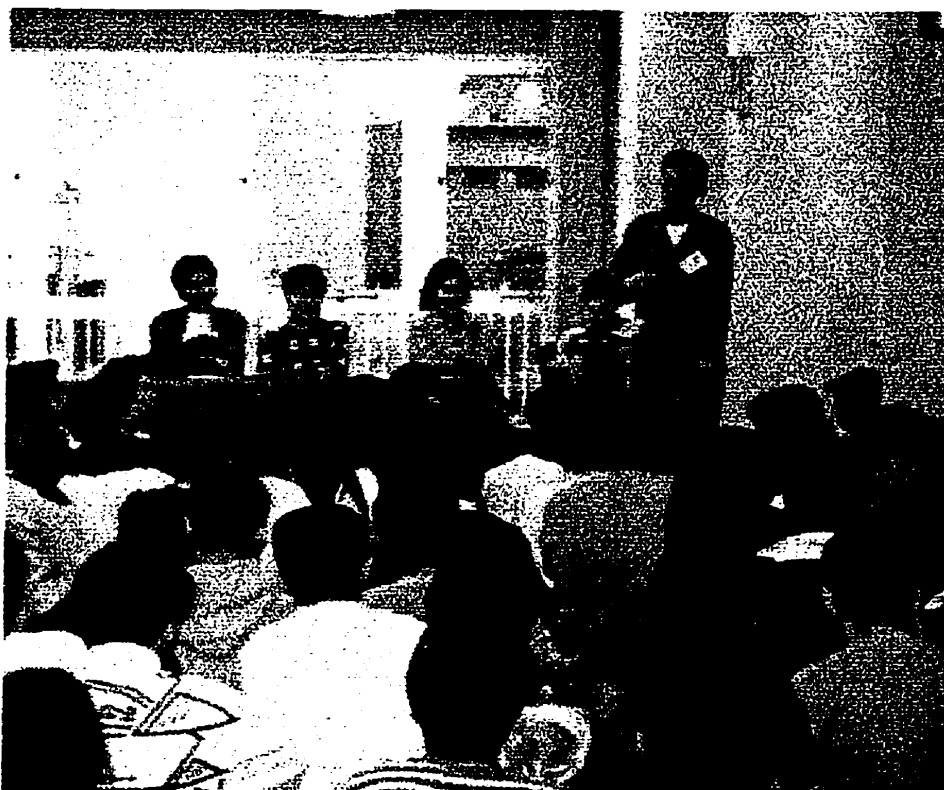


Fig. 14. A classroom scene at Yoshimoto Kōgyō's NSC. From an advertisement for the NSC in *Monthly Yoshimoto* 184 (June 1996): 47.

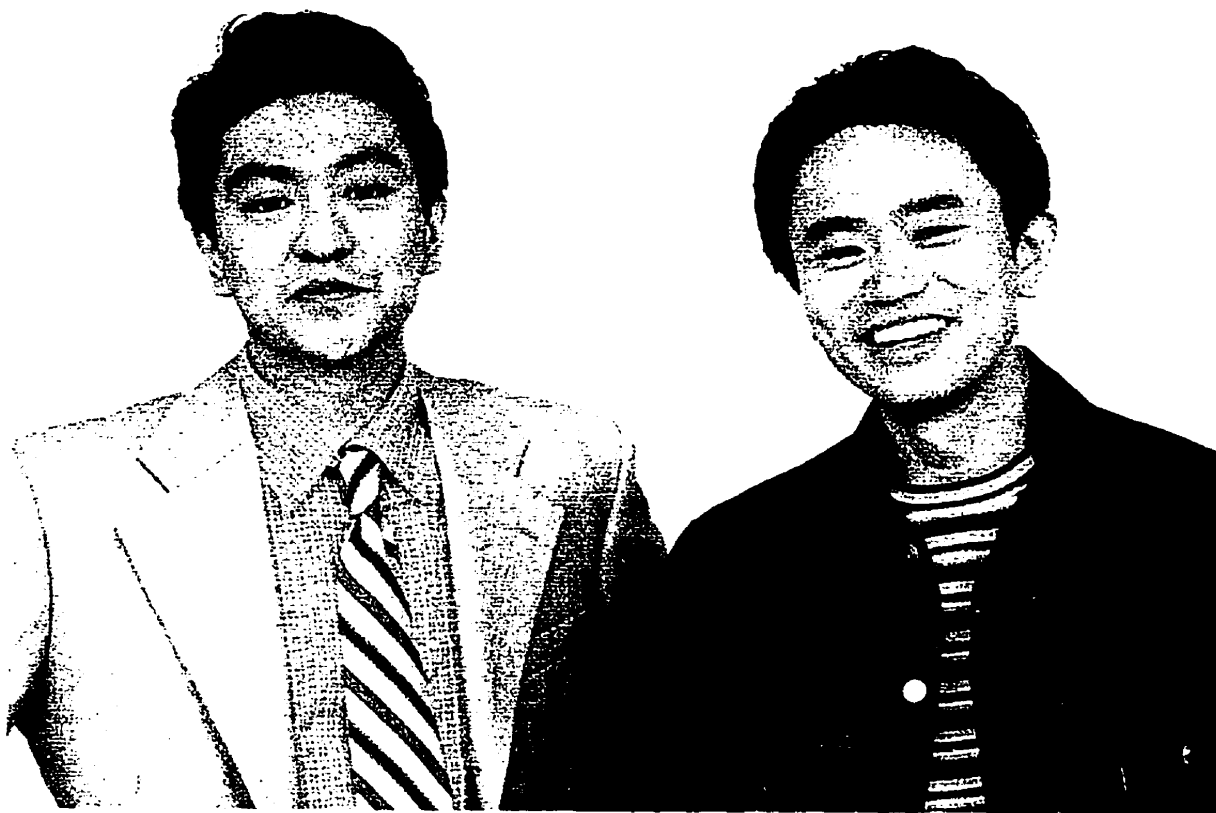


Fig. 15. Downtown. *Left*, Matsumoto Hitoshi; *right*, Hamada Masatoshi. Reprinted from Yoshimoto Kōgyō Corp., *Talent Profile* (March 1996), 17. Privately published company booklet.

CHAPTER V

MANZAI EXCERPTS

Entatsu and Achako

Entatsu and Achako's claim to fame was a *manzai* dialogue entitled "Owarai Sōkeisen" お笑い早慶戦, which they first performed in the fall of Shōwa 7 (1932). The occasion was the first *manzai* convention in Tokyo, held at the Shimbashi recital hall 新橋演舞場.¹ "Sōkeisen" 早慶戦 – an acronymic expression combining the first ideograms in the names of Waseda University 早稲田大学 and Keiō University 慶応大学 – was a baseball competition between these two top-ranking institutions. Thanks to live reporting via radio, the *sōkeisen* match had become a national craze at the time, and people would crowd around radios at the entrance of coffee shops to follow the action.² Entatsu and Achako's performance was an instant hit at the convention. "Owarai Sōkeisen", or "Sōkeisen" for short, incorporated all of the newest topics of the day: radio, baseball, the *sōkeisen* competition and play-by-play sports broadcasting. The duo's innovative Western appearance, their high-tempo *shabekuri manzai* style, their imitation of radio sports announcers and their clever use of word-plays and misunderstandings created a powerful combination which had audiences bursting their sides laughing.³

¹ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 66.

² Akita Minoru, ed., *Akita Minoru meisaku manzai senshū* [a collection of *manzai* masterpieces from Akita Minoru, pt. 2] (Tokyo: Nihon Jitsugyō, 1973), 288.

³ Ibid., 74.

Entatsu and Achako's "Sōkeisen" "greatly opened up the field of *shabekuri manzai* and . . . marked the beginning of *manzai*'s prosperity through to the present day."⁴ Since it provided the basis on which all subsequent modern *manzai* performers would build their career, it deserves to be cited at length for the purpose of introducing certain key elements and features that characterise the genre:

ACHAKO. Hey, how are you? I haven't seen you in a while.

ENTATSU. Well, I'm not feeling too well.

ACHAKO. Caught another cold, have you?

ENTATSU. Yes.

ACHAKO. You're one fellow who often catches colds, aren't you?

ENTATSU. What can I say? But you, you're looking healthy.

ACHAKO. Thank you.

ENTATSU. Really.

ACHAKO. I've put on a little weight again.

ENTATSU. It seems you've become fatter.

ACHAKO. Yes.

ENTATSU. How much do you weigh?

ACHAKO. Recently, I'm at sixteen *kan* and five hundred [about sixty-two kilograms].

ENTATSU. Sixteen *kan* and five hundred?

ACHAKO. Right.

ENTATSU. Does that include the legs?

ACHAKO. The le-le-legs?!

ENTATSU. Yes.

ACHAKO. Well, of course it does! You're not going out to buy an octopus. Are you going to weigh the legs separately?

ENTATSU. Oh.

ACHAKO. All of me!

ENTATSU. I see.⁵

Entatsu and Achako performed "Sōkeisen" several times in different theatres, as well as on the radio. In each case, however, the opening

⁴ Ibid., 288.

⁵ Ibid., 268-9.

segment differed slightly. This is a typical pattern in *manzai*, in which the performers use the opening segment either to introduce current topics or to ad lib.⁶ In this case, the informal nature of the dialogue clearly demonstrates one of the characteristics of *shabekuri manzai*, namely that it is simply two people engaging in small talk on stage. This is reinforced by Entatsu and Achako's use of the informal terms for 'you' and 'I', *kimi* 君 and *boku* 僕, typically used by students.

As soon as the first comic element is introduced, the audience is made aware of the role distribution between the two comedians. Entatsu's question about the legs is unmistakably a *boke* statement, in other words, a dimwitted or illogical statement. This prompts Achako to take a *tsukkomi* jab at Entatsu with his reply "Of course it does!" Thus, the tone has been set for the entire performance: Entatsu is the fool and Achako is the foil. Achako's next comment is doubly clever. It not only makes fun of Entatsu by suggesting he mistook Achako's legs for that of an octopus which one could weigh separately from the body, it also recontextualises Entatsu's earlier question "Sixteen *kan* and five hundred?" from a question on human weight to a question on the weight of an octopus at a seafood market.

In a later segment, Entatsu and Achako have moved from each other's health to their education. They broach the subject of Entatsu's

⁶ However, the practice of performing the same *manzai* piece to different audiences was gradually discontinued with the advent of televised *manzai* broadcasts which dramatically increased the viewing audience. Today, *manzai* scripts are never used twice. In an interview by the author, Yoshimoto Kōgyō *manzai* writer Masanori Honda explained: "Pick up the latest news, put it into *manzai*, then throw it away on the spot." In a reference to the ubiquitous *tsukaisute kamera* 使い捨てカメラ or 'disposable cameras', he added: "That's my ideal, '*tsukaisute manzai*'."

father:

ACHAKO. What line of business is your father in?

ENTATSU. Manufacturing.

ACHAKO. What kind of things does he manufacture?

ENTATSU. Oh, uninteresting things.

ACHAKO. Uninteresting you say, but still, it's manufacturing...[so it must be something important].

ENTATSU. Things like battleships, aeroplanes, cannons and rifles; and also, torpedoes.

ACHAKO. Hey, that's a major enterprise of national proportions.

ENTATSU. Don't make such a big deal of it!

ACHAKO. But it is a big deal. I think I'd like to take a look at your factory.

ENTATSU. Come on over. I'll give you a guided tour of everything.

ACHAKO. Thanks.

ENTATSU. It's just behind Osaka station, you know...

ACHAKO. Behind Osaka station?!

ENTATSU. Yes.

ACHAKO. Is there really a large shipyard there?

ENTATSU. No, it isn't steel.

ACHAKO. But battleships and cannons are all made of steel, aren't they?

ENTATSU. Celluloid!

ACHAKO. Ah, a toy store, is it.

ENTATSU. Yes, I'm the son of a toy maker.

ACHAKO. No wonder, I thought you had a face like a toy.

ENTATSU. Don't say that. So, that's why my elementary school was a commercial school.

.....
ENTATSU. And then, I stayed at *kāshō*[transliterated phonetically] for a while.

ACHAKO. So, you're a graduate of a commercial high school [*kāshō* 高商], then?

ENTATSU. No, I'm not.

ACHAKO. What *kāshō* was it?

ENTATSU. The artillery arsenal [*kāshō* 工廠]!

ACHAKO. Don't say such senseless things.⁷

Apart from the play on words and the amusing misunderstanding concerning the nature of Entatsu's father's manufacturing business, this segment is noteworthy for its military content. Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1931 and bombed Shanghai in 1932. At the time of "Sōkeisen," the Japanese nation was increasingly overcome with patriotic and nationalistic sentiments. Therefore, when Achako calls Entatsu's father's presumed military manufacturing business "a major enterprise of national proportions," his comments could be perceived as being sympathetic to Japan's military endeavours. Yet, although the material in "Sōkeisen" received a green light, at other times Entatsu and Achako's efforts to draw humour from sensitive issues such as military involvement backfired. One evening on stage, Entatsu told Achako that his father, who worked for the city hall as a dog catcher, was retiring. When Achako asked him why, he replied that a rabid dog had forced him to quit: "*kyōken onore wo jishi*" 狂犬おのれを辞し. This involved a play on words, being homonymous with a phrase in the Imperial Rescript on Education that asked Japanese citizens to bear themselves in modesty and moderation (恭儉己れを持し). The policeman in the official seating area stood up in protest, and Entatsu immediately sat on the stage to bow in apology.⁸

Let us now examine a few selections from the baseball segment, including Achako's famous imitation of the *sōkeisen* play-by-play announcer:

⁷ *ibid.*, 271-3.

⁸ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 91.

ACHAKO. But you know, when it comes to baseball, you can say what you like but *sōkeisen* is where it's at.

ENTATSU. He who has not seen *sōkeisen* does not know baseball.

ACHAKO. You're absolutely right.

ENTATSU. It's quite impressive: that huge Jingū Stadium fills up with people.

ACHAKO. People from all walks of life attend.

ENTATSU. It's truly something.

ACHAKO. It's something, yes.

ENTATSU. The world-famous *sōkeisen*! The proud tradition of *sōkeisen*! Oh, who was the opponent again?

ACHAKO. What? The opponent?

ENTATSU. That's right.

ACHAKO. Listen you, we're talking about *sōkeisen* here.

ENTATSU. Right, but it's *sōkei* versus someone or other.

ACHAKO. Versus ... versus ['tai' 対]?!

ENTATSU. Yes, versus.

ACHAKO. It's neither sea bream ['tai' 鯛], halibut, stonefish nor anything else, for that matter. When you talk about *sōkeisen*, you say *sōkei* because it's Waseda and Keiō, don't you?⁹

.....
ACHAKO. (Taking on the tone of a play-by-play announcer)

Runner on first with no outs. Ogawa gets ready for his first pitch.

ENTATSU. Ready for his first pitch.

ACHAKO. He throws it. Ball.

ENTATSU. He throws it. Ball.

.....
ACHAKO. The ball's a little close [pronounced 'chikame' 近め].

ENTATSU. What? A nearsighted ['chikame' 近眼] ball.

ACHAKO. A big wind-up ['waindo appu'] for the third pitch.

ENTATSU. A big handbag ['handobakku'] for the third pitch.¹⁰

.....
ACHAKO. Oh, a pick-off throw [pronounced 'kensei' 牽制] to second base.

ENTATSU. (Singing) Who is it who said there is no sincerity

⁹ Ibid., 277-8.

¹⁰ Ibid., 282-3.

among courtesans [*'keisei'* 傾城]? He didn't even visit them long enough for their sincerity to appear...

ACHAKO. Don't use that lecherous voice. He's headed towards the shortstop. The shortstop can't touch him. He's safe, safe! [pronounced *'sēfu'*]

ENTATSU. So this was government [*'seifu'* 政府] business after all.

ACHAKO. What are you talking about? Very cautious signs in the battery. Fourth pitch.

ENTATSU. Fourth pitch.

.....

ACHAKO. Hit, hit [pronounced *'hitto'*].

ENTATSU. It's murder [*'hitogoroshi'* 人殺し].

ACHAKO. The ball's heading farther and farther.

ENTATSU. Going farther and farther.

ACHAKO. Going farther and farther [the verb *'nobiru'*].

ENTATSU. It'll be postponed until next year [*'nobiru'* 伸びる can mean both stretching out and postponing].

ACHAKO. Why is that? Centre field. Back. Back [pronounced *'bakku'*].

ENTATSU. His hair's combed straight back from the forehead [*'ōrubakku'* (all-back)].

ACHAKO. Don't talk to me like a barber. The runner goes from second to third.¹¹

Most of the humour in "Sōkeisen" is derived from Entatsu going off on a tangent through his apparent misinterpretation of Achako's words. This kind of 'deviation humour' is what the duo are most famous for. Many of the references, such as 'government business' and the 'ōrubakku' hair style, also provide glimpses of the social conditions in 1930's Japan.¹²

¹¹ Ibid., 284-5.

¹² Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 66.

Yasushi and Kiyoshi

Yasushi and Kiyoshi may be one of the most famous comic duos since Entatsu and Achako. First appearing as a pair in Shōwa 41 (1966), they experienced a meteoric rise in popularity, capturing the Kamigata Manzai Grand Prize only four years later. Thereafter, they continued to bask in the limelight well into the fourth *manzai* boom of the 1980's. One of their defining characteristics is their alternation of the *tsukkomi* and the *boke*. Both "would switch back and forth in a blur of faultlessly timed routines. They were also much more physical than other manzai acts, who stand rigidly in front of the microphone. Yokoyama and Nishikawa used the whole stage."¹³ As with many *manzai* duos, Yasushi and Kiyoshi played opposites. Wild and unpredictable, Yasushi gained notoriety for numerous scandals off stage, due to his violent outbursts, gambling or boat racing. Kiyoshi, on the other hand, was stable and serious. He became a councillor in the House of Commons, and remains active both in politics and entertainment.

Let us examine one of their *manzai* performances from the television show "Owarai Nettowāku". This example will serve to demonstrate the changes which took place between the radio-scripted *manzai* of the pre-war period and televised *manzai* of the post-war period:

KIYOSHI. But when it comes to boats ...

YASUSHI. It's hard [to say goodbye]!

KIYOSHI. Really, when the boat slowly leaves the wharf under the setting sun like that ... You know, and a barge sails along the

¹³ Philip Brasor, "The last of the he-men *manzai*," *Japan Times*, Feb. 1996 [newspaper on-line]; available from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/features/feat2-96/yokoyama.html>; Internet; accessed 13 Oct., 1997.

side ...

YASUSHI. Right, right ... The barge goes 'popopopopopo ...'

KIYOSHI. Right, right.

YASUSHI. (Imitating various boat sounds) 'popopopopo ...
fueeee! fueeee! Pohhhhhn.

KIYOSHI. Hey, that's an unusual act you have there ... Come on,
we're celebrating Mr. Meisei's 2,500th [*manzai* script].

YASUSHI. That's right.

KIYOSHI. So, do it again, one more time.

YASUSHI. Huh?

KIYOSHI. One more time now. The big boat leaves the harbour...

YASUSHI. Right, right. And the little barge goes 'popopopopo ...
fueeee! fueeee!'

KIYOSHI. Hey, you!

YASUSHI. Pretty good, huh?

KIYOSHI. I'm going to die of cerebral haemorrhage, here!

YASUSHI. Now that ... You ...

KIYOSHI. They're really clapping for you, aren't they? Do it one
more time. The big boat ...

YASUSHI. The little barge goes 'popopopopoo ... fueeeeee!
fueeeeee!' And the Scandinavian Liner sets sail.

KIYOSHI. For an adult audience, you've dragged on long enough.
What will you do if I really do rupture [a vein] now? Look, the
kids are clapping for you. You should do it again.

YASUSHI. Fueeeeee! Fueeeeee!

KIYOSHI. What about the boat leaving? Don't cut corners! Huh?

YASUSHI. That's...

KIYOSHI. OK ... But that's the truth.

YASUSHI. Now that, that's really the way it is.

KIYOSHI. Parting by boat is the hardest.

YASUSHI. Parting by plane is the hardest!

KIYOSHI. With a plane, it just flies away and that's the end of it.

YASUSHI. That's the end of it when the plane flies away, but it's
still the hardest, you idiot. With a boat, after it leaves the
wharf and you hear that 'fueeeeee! fueeeeee!,' at least you can
still see each other's faces, can't you?

KIYOSHI. No, you see that's why ...

YASUSHI. You can't just say that's the end of it when the plane
flies away.

KIYOSHI. No, that's right, but ...

YASUSHI. When the plane goes 'zoom!' and takes off like that ...

Huh? Huh? Where did it go?

KIYOSHI. Hey, today you're doing some acts you don't usually show us!

YASUSHI. Pretty good, huh?

KIYOSHI. Hmmm? He hardly ever does this kind of act, folks ...

Nowadays, it's only for NHK and Yomiuri Television. He

doesn't do it elsewhere ... Those kids are pleased, aren't they?

YASUSHI. All I've been doing is kid stuff!¹⁴

In comparison with "Owarai Sōkeisen," one of the first things which are immediately apparent when examining this extract is that the performance relies heavily on visual cues to carry the action forward. Although Yasushi's imitations of boat sounds are perhaps amusing to listen to, the body language which he uses in conjunction with those imitations are what elicit laughter from the audience. In the second example, and this might not even have been clear from the script, Yasushi imitates the reaction of someone watching a plane fly overhead at high speed. Simply hearing "Zoom! Huh? Huh? Where did it go?" is totally uninteresting. However, watching Yasushi cast his gaze up towards the sky in an exaggerated movement and then twist his head in a hundred directions like an electrocuted woodpecker provokes a roar of laughter from the audience.

Secondly, one realises that the scenario depicted in this scene is not particularly humorous per se. In fact, the audience's reactions are not provoked by the script at all. There are no puns or word plays as in "Sōkeisen". All of the humour in this scene is derived first from Yasushi's *boke* imitations and gestures, then from Kiyoshi's facial

¹⁴ Nishikawa Kiyoshi and Yokoyama Yasushi, *Owarai nettowāku hatsu manzai no dendō: Nishikawa Kiyoshi, Yokoyama Yasushi* [comedy network manzai hall of fame presents: . . .], videocassette (Yomiuri Television Enterprises, 1996).

expressions and body language as he delivers *tsukkomi* replies.

Finally, Yasushi and Kiyoshi are in front of a live audience. Kiyoshi comments on the audience's reactions, saying "they're really clapping us now" or "those kids are pleased." He even addresses his audiences face to face when he says "he hardly ever does this kind of act, folks." When an audience views *manzai*, the *tsukkomi* becomes its representative on stage. Since the audience cannot allow the unreasonable actions of the *boke* to continue unchecked, it demands that the *tsukkomi* intervene and restore order.¹⁵ There is an identification of the audience with the *tsukkomi* from the moment the duo steps on stage. Consequently, when Kiyoshi points to audience members or involves the audience in different ways to play them against Yasushi, he makes that link explicit. Yasushi and Kiyoshi's style of *manzai* shows the differences between radio-scripted *manzai* and *manzai* broadcast on television with a live audience.

Downtown

The *manzai* duo of Downtown – Matsumoto Hitoshi 松本人志 and Hamada Masatoshi 浜田雅功 – are two of the most popular comedians in Japan today. First-year graduates of Yoshimoto Kōgyō's NSC in 1983, they soon made their way up the ranks in the entertainment industry, first appearing on local TV and radio in Osaka, then as regulars in Tokyo comedy shows by 1988. In 1989, they appeared in their first network programme, called "Gaki no tsukai ya

¹⁵ Honda Masanori, interview by author, tape recording, Osaka, 25 June 1996.

arahende!!” ガキの使いやあらへんで!! or “This is no job for kids!!” In 1991, they starred in a prime-time comedy show called “Downtown no gottsu ē kanji” ダウンタウンのごっつええ感じ or “Downtown’s feeling good.” With their irreverent humour and casual style, they became idols in Osaka by the late 1980’s, attracting thousands of young female fans. “Besides Matsumoto’s cultivation of the boke (buffoon) role to new heights of unique, insular absurdity in his manzai routines with Hamada, they also performed skits with a group of other New Star Creation graduates.”¹⁶ Into the 90’s, their idol status swelled larger as they began appearing in many different roles. They have appeared in television commercials, hosted talk shows and quizzes, starred in melodramas, written comic essays, and even recorded ‘*manzai rap*’ music with internationally renowned musician Ryuichi Sakamoto.

Let us now take a look at Downtown’s *manzai*. This first extract comes from “Gaki no Tsukai ya Arahende!!”:

MATSUMOTO. Anyway ... let's talk *manzai*. It's been a while, but we're going to do this, aren't we?

HAMADA. We're gonna do it, all right.

MATSUMOTO. Yep. Sure brings back the good old days, doesn't it?

HAMADA. That's right.

MATSUMOTO. I bet Tokyo people hardly know about us.

HAMADA. Well, I guess they hardly ever see us.

MATSUMOTO. Guess so.

HAMADA. That's because we aren't in any TV shows.

MATSUMOTO. Most people probably don't even know what company we're from.

HAMADA. Really?

¹⁶ Stocker, 3-4.

MATSUMOTO. We're from that place, you know. Yoshimoto Kōgyō.

HAMADA. (to the audience) Do you know Yoshimoto Kōgyō? Sure you do ... they're famous for being irresponsible ... The pay's cheap, and they work you like a slave.

MATSUMOTO. Yeah.

HAMADA. You've gotta work like a horse!

MATSUMOTO. That's right. You know, we can relax and do our thing in these kinds of situation, but when we're doing it in Osaka, now that's tough.

HAMADA. Oh yeah.

MATSUMOTO. The big shots from Yoshimoto Kōgyō come and see us.

HAMADA. Right in the middle of our show, they come in the back.

MATSUMOTO. Yeah, in the back of the audience, the big shots from Yoshimoto Kōgyō's main office ...

HAMADA. Yep.

MATSUMOTO. But they weren't called "the big shots from Yoshimoto Kōgyō's main office," they went by another name, "yakuza."

HAMADA. Hey, hey! They aren't yakuza ... but, that's close enough.

MATSUMOTO. Anyway, the chairman sometimes comes to see us too.

HAMADA. (to the audience) The chairman, do you know Yoshimoto Kōgyō's chairman? His name's Hayashi Shōnosuke ... An old fogey.

MATSUMOTO. He's an old fogey ... with grey hair and a cane.

HAMADA. Yep.

MATSUMOTO. He's got a cane, but he's a feisty fellow.

HAMADA. You can say that again.

MATSUMOTO. He sure likes to use his cane, you know.

HAMADA. Get outa here.

MATSUMOTO. No kidding, he's always saying: "I wanna use it, I wanna use it." Sometimes that one comes to see us.

HAMADA. Come on, "That one?"

MATSUMOTO. Then it's hard to do our thing.

HAMADA. Yep.

MATSUMOTO. What a pain ... When we're on stage, he's there just looking at us.

HAMADA. Never laughs.

MATSUMOTO. He never laughs ... Just looks at us all the time.
Actually, he doesn't really know us. There are so many
entertainers out there that he doesn't know us ... Anyway, so
then another guy calls us over, another guy from the main
office.

HAMADA. Yeah, right in the middle of our act!

MATSUMOTO. "*Who's that?*"

HAMADA. Yep.

MATSUMOTO. "*Who's that on stage?*"

HAMADA. Yep.

MATSUMOTO. "Uhhh ... They're called Downtown, boss."

HAMADA. Yep.

MATSUMOTO. "*Exterminate 'em!*"

HAMADA. Get outa here! No matter how cruel the guy is, he
wouldn't go that far! ... "*Exterminate 'em*" ... please!

MATSUMOTO. Some of them really have a way with words.¹⁷

This segment reflects the anti-Kagetsu spirit in which the NSC was created. Downtown's spirit of rebellion against authority is clear in the way they make fun of Yoshimoto and its chairman. On stage is a neon sign with their name, indicating that they are on their way to becoming idols. The movement away from conservatism is also apparent on the visual level. For example, in this last segment, Matsumoto wears a sports jacket, and Hamada jeans. Formerly, the coordination of clothes on stage was a convention used to homogenise appearance, to focus the audience's attention on the narrative aspect of their performance.¹⁸ But for Downtown and other comedians who appeared after the *manzai* boom of the 1980's, clothing is simply a part of their image, fashionable and popular.

¹⁷ Matsumoto Hitoshi and Hamada Masatoshi, *Downtown no gaki no tsukai ya araken de!!*, pt. 1, videocassette (Nippon Television Broadcasting Network Corp., 1995).

¹⁸ Akita, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi*, 59-60.

The following excerpt is from a more recent recording of the show. Matsumoto's off-the-wall humour is given free reign:

MATSUMOTO. (reading postcard): "Some people crack their knuckles before a fight. What is that for?"

MATSUMOTO. (to Hamada): You know about dog whistles, right?

HAMADA. Yeah, I know.

MATSUMOTO. The kind only dogs can hear . . .

HAMADA. Yeah.

MATSUMOTO. Well, it's the same thing as that.

HAMADA. But what's that "poki poki" sound?

MATSUMOTO. That "poki poki" is calling for Exciting.

HAMADA. Huh?

MATSUMOTO. Exciting is feeding pigeons ... Listen to my story, will you? I'll tell it so you understand! So then ... Come on, are we doing this or not?

HAMADA. Yeah.

MATSUMOTO. "Poki poki." This "poki poki" is carried by the wind.

HAMADA. Carried by the wind.

MATSUMOTO. And reaches Exciting.

HAMADA. O.K.

MATSUMOTO. Exciting, completely unaware of all this, was feeding pigeons, O.K?

HAMADA. Yeah.

MATSUMOTO. At that time, from somewhere it heard the "poki poki" sound before a fight about to happen. And that entered Exciting's ear. "Hey! They're calling me!" And then, Exciting came running to the scene.

HAMADA. O.K.

MATSUMOTO. So then, that fight becomes exciting.

HAMADA. Oh ...

MATSUMOTO. For every exciting situation, there's a person called Exciting who ...

HAMADA. A person, did you say?

MATSUMOTO. Well, not a person. There must be a spirit called Exciting. A fairy, of sorts.

HAMADA. Oh.

AN AUDIENCE MEMBER. Can't you see it?

MATSUMOTO. It's not human. It's a fairy! And I've seen it before,

this Exciting. He's a guy with a scar on his cheek. you know.¹⁹ This performance follows a format called 'response entertainment.' in which comedians perform in response to audience members' requests, communicated through a post card, for example.²⁰ Apart from being a good method to improve viewing ratings, it allows the comedians to inject elements of improvisation – or at least to create that illusion for the audience. In this segment, the duo appear to be unrehearsed. This move can be seen as an escape from the mechanical aspect of pre-rehearsed dialogue which characterised *manzai* under the *shitei seido*. As far as the content is concerned, this segment illustrates the kind of nonsensical and imaginative humour that Matsumoto has become famous for. Furthermore, on the visual level, the disappearance of the microphone stand has liberated the comedians' movements on the stage.

¹⁹ Matsumoto Hitoshi and Hamada Masatoshi, *Downtown no gaki no tsukai ya araken de!!*, pt. 2, videocassette (Nippon Television Broadcasting Network Corp., 1995).

²⁰ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 125.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUTURE OF MANZAI

Overcoming Limitations and Erasing Boundaries

By the end of the boom in the early 80's, *manzai* had fully established itself as a mainstream performing art genre. Yet comedians and producers alike began to question whether or not *manzai* had exhausted its creative potential. In 1984, Kanō Takeo addressed this issue in “Manzai metsubōron” (theory on the downfall of *manzai*):

[By saying that *manzai* is] only a technique to give the appearance of speaking nonsense . . . Beat Takeshi probably meant to say that the more that technique of speaking nonsense reaches a high level and the more one becomes skilled at it, the more *manzai*'s format becomes settled and the more it becomes complete as a performance. At the same time, however, the impact of the humour conversely weakens, and therein lies *manzai*'s limitation.¹

Thus, Beat Takeshi and many other *manzai* comedians disbanded and launched solo careers in the entertainment world.

What Kanō could not have imagined at the time, however, was the phenomenal success of NSC graduates in the 90's. They succeeded in overcoming *manzai*'s apparent limitations by breaking away from the established conventions to create new content and formats – such as we have seen with Downtown – and even new categories of *manzai*, such as the short, action-oriented *konto manzai* which have gained popularity with younger audiences in recent years. Yoshimoto Kōgyō's former chairman Hayashi Shōnosuke likened this process of rejuvenation to the three stages of military strategy in Gorin no sho 五輪の書 (the Book

¹ Kanō Takeo, “Manzai Metsubōron” [theory on the downfall of *manzai*], *Kamigata shōgei no sekai*, 68.

of Five Rings) by Miyamoto Musashi: *shu ha ri* 守破離 . meaning “defend, attack, withdraw”: “*Shu* means to faithfully defend what has originally been taught. One should base oneself on those teachings, break them, and create one’s own ideas. Then, at the right moment, one should leave.”² Thus, while Hayashi insists future comedians should learn the principles of *manzai*, he also encourages them to extend the genre beyond its boundaries.

An episode I videotaped in 1996 demonstrates that this process continues to the present day. In the following segment, NSC instructor Honda Masanori is reviewing the performance of each pair of students:

HONDA: OK, those who must leave now, go ahead please . . .

A pair of students bring out two chairs and a microphone stand.

HONDA: [at the pair] *Konto? Konto?*

STUDENT 1: We’re not quite sure ...

They sit down and begin.

STUDENT 1: From now on we’re going to give it our best, right?

STUDENT 2: Let’s do our best ... So, why are we sitting down?

STUDENT 1: Huh? This is ...

STUDENT 2: Yeah?

STUDENT 1: You know how these days, high-definition television has become more commonplace ...

STUDENT 2: Oh, those wide and narrow TVs, right?

STUDENT 1: Right. Well, this is *manzai* for that kind of format!³

Within the NSC classroom environment, chairs are the standard icons for *konto manzai* and the microphone stand is the icon for *shabekuri manzai*. Since no corresponding reality had been established for this new icon – chairs and microphone stand combined – the teacher’s immediate reaction was to try to re-establish a frame of reference:

² Takemoto, 11.

³ Yoshimoto Kōgyō Corporation, NSC, var. artists, videocassette recording by author, 25 June, 1996.

either *konto manzai* or *shabekuri manzai*. The reason this duo chose their new format, however, was precisely to indicate that they wanted to widen the frame through which they were being viewed, both literally and metaphorically. In other words, they were trying to break out of the established conventions in an attempt to create a new form of expression. According to Honda, young comedians today have stopped making distinctions between *shabekuri manzai* and *konto manzai*. They are simply doing what they think is interesting.⁴

Mediatized Manzai and Commodified Comedians

The preceding *manzai* segment illustrates the way in which advances in media technology have influenced *manzai*'s evolution. In the past, these influences have been mostly beneficial to *manzai*: radio enriched *manzai*'s dialogue and television expanded its range of visual expression. Nevertheless, the consequences of *manzai*'s mechanical mediation, particularly by the camera lens, deserve to be examined in further detail.

The experience of *manzai* in a theatre is a collaborative effort between the audience and the comedians. A *manzai* routine's success depends on the comedians' ability to 'read' the audience and adjust their timing accordingly. The fact that *manzai* comedians speak of 'matching their breathing' to that of the audience testifies to the symbiotic nature of the performance. Moreover, not only does the audience collaborate with the comedians, they also collaborate with

⁴ Honda Masanori, interview by author, tape recording, Osaka, 16 June, 1996.

each other in their interpretation of the performance. Finally, the actual experience of stepping outside of one's home to enter the specially designated space of the theatre gives *manzai* a ritual quality which separates it from mundane activities.

The presence of the comedians on stage, the psychic energy or 'vibration' generated between performers and audience members, and the ritual nature of the theatre space all contribute to what Walter Benjamin called the 'aura' of art – its authenticity, its uniqueness and its link to the domain of tradition. According to Benjamin, the aura of the work of art withers in an age of mechanical reproduction.⁵ As opposed to the stage actor, the film actor is forced to operate without his aura, which is strongly tied to his stage presence. Benjamin explains the consequences as follows:

The film responds to the shrivelling of the aura with an artificial build-up of the 'personality' outside the studio. The cult of the movie star, fostered by the money of the film industry, preserves not the unique aura of the person but the 'spell of the personality,' the phony spell of a commodity.⁶

The performance of *manzai* in a television studio is no longer an intimate collaboration between performers and audience members but rather a product made by entertainment companies for the purpose of generating income. The personality of popular *manzai* comedians has indeed become a commodity to be packaged and consumed by the masses, not only through various media products such as television

⁵ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John G. Hanhardt (Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1990), 32; reprint from *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken Books, 1969).

⁶ Idem, 36, 38.

programs, commercials, movies and videotapes, but also through a myriad by-products ranging from *kyarakutā guzū* ('character goods') to books, music records, and drawings. The commodification of popular *manzai* comedians such as Downtown is reinforced by the fact that "Yoshimoto's entertainment empire has been, more than ever, strengthened and unified into an overarching *brand* name."⁸

The popularity of *manzai* comedians who perform almost exclusively in television studios proves that this process of commodification does nothing to harm *manzai*'s entertainment value. *Manzai*'s artistic value, however, is another matter entirely.

When a *manzai* performance is mechanically mediated for purposes of replicability and commercial exploitation, there are two consequences: The first is that comedians are alienated from the product of their labour. Karl Marx describes this process of alienation through an optical analogy: In the same way that 'contact' between the perceiver and the perceived object is subsumed into the 'copy' of that object on the retina, 'contact' between producers and consumers is removed from our awareness and displaced into the 'copy,' in other words, the commodity.⁹ Michael Taussig explains that "it is this subtle interaction of sensuous perceptibility and imperceptibility that accounts for the fetish quality, the animism and spiritual glow of

⁷ These can often be found in specialty 'talent shop' boutiques and can include anything from stuffed toys and keychains to t-shirts and stationery.

⁸ Stocker, 5.

⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1967), 72; quoted in Michael Taussig, "Physiognomic Aspects of Visual Worlds," *Visual Anthropology Review* 8, no. 2 (spring 1992): np.

commodities, so adroitly channeled by advertising (not to mention the avant-garde) since the late nineteenth century."¹⁰

The second consequence is that viewers are confined to the passive consumption of an objectified image. According to Luigi Pareyson, the work of art has two modes of existence: *forma formata* and *forma formans*, or "completed form" and "form in becoming." Pareyson explains that any original work of art is always potentially *forma formans*, since the *forma formata* – the well-rehearsed performance, in the case of *manzai* – must be extended and infinitised by the hermeneutical activity of the viewer.¹¹ Without this activity, the work of art becomes fossilised, fixed in its own conception and thus ceases to evolve. Therefore, since the fetishistic spell of commodified and idolised *manzai* comedians generates a petrification of creative energy and psychic mobility, it is clear to me that the mass-mediation of *manzai* through television poses a considerable threat to its artistic development.

On Stage and in Cyberspace: A Look at Manzai's Future

What measures can be taken to break the fetishistic spell and restore the collaborative process between performers and audience members? One measure would be to ensure the survival of *yose* and theatre halls where live *manzai* performances can be enjoyed. Although the emergence of television originally prompted many *yose* to close

¹⁰ Taussig, np.

¹¹ Luigi Pareyson, *Conversations sur l'Esthétique* [conversations on aesthetics], trans. Gilles A. Tiberghien (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 33, 102, 127.

their doors as *manzai* comedians shifted their base of activities from the stage to the television studio. theatre halls have made a comeback in recent years. Inoue explains that the appeal of televised *manzai* was that it allowed audiences to narrow the distance between themselves and the performers. At the same time, however, it trivialised the art of *manzai* by making it a part of mundane reality.¹² Describing a parallel situation for *rakugo*, Lorna Brau writes: "Television has depersonalized the art of *rakugo* and 'de-sacralized' it. In making entertainment an integral, continuous part of everyday life, mass-media have robbed it of some of its specialness."¹³ According to Inoue, two types of *manzai* performance spaces will thrive in the coming years. On one hand, there will be small, intimate *manzai* 'clubs' providing the same kind of proximity with the comedians as television does. On the other, there will be giant theatre halls equipped with high-tech audio-video facilities that will create a festival mood and offer a unique entertainment experience to its audience.¹⁴

There are also practical concerns ensuring the survival of stage *manzai*. Mizutani Nobuhiro explains that popular *manzai* comedians sometimes grow tired of performing in front of live audiences and find it easier to face a television camera. Since they are the breadwinners of the company, the producers and directors in the studio fawn over them regardless of the quality of their material. Comedians performing for an

¹² Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 126, 128.

¹³ Lorna M. Brau, "Kimono Comics: The Performance Culture of Rakugo Storytelling" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1994), 296.

¹⁴ Inoue, *Ōsaka no warai*, 128.

audience after a prolonged period often discover that they are no longer funny. Therefore, the stage is a necessary safety net for such comedians who have 'fallen from grace' as well as for other comedians who have failed in the television industry. "No matter how diversified comedy becomes on television . . . the stage is a comedian's home."¹⁵ Finally, Yoshimoto Kōgyō's strategy for rural expansion depends on the creation of new theatres where local talent will be raised.¹⁶

Looking towards the future, there is another prospect for *manzai* which could break the fetishistic spell and restore creative imagination. This involves the use of the World Wide Web as well as digital software to create 'virtual manzai.' In personal correspondence with the author, Nakai Hidenori, project manager for Yoshimoto Kōgyō's Multimedia Division, revealed that his company is currently experimenting with CD-ROM projects which would approach the interactive experience of a live performance. Yet even these projects, Nakai admits, are limited by the very nature of the software medium:

With CD-ROM, we can create simulated interactivity, but in the end, this is nothing more than the user making a selection from choices that we have prepared. After all, we cannot claim to have created truly interactive software if we don't transmit the vibration in the air [of the theatre]¹⁷

The only way that 'digital *manzai*' could become truly interactive would be to imagine a future scenario in which highly sophisticated artificial intelligence would allow the computer to simulate a live

¹⁵ Mizutani, interview by author, 26 June, 1996.

¹⁶ Arikawa Hiroshi, interview by author, tape recording, Osaka, 1, July, 1996.

¹⁷ Nakai Hidenori, e-mail to author, 19, February, 1998.

manzai comedian and adjust its 'performance' according to the user's reactions. Even then, however, without the participation of other users, this experience would fall short of generating those theatre 'vibes.' This is where the World Wide Web shows positive signs.

As opposed to mass-mediated forms of image production based on uni-directional flow, Pierre Lévy notes, in cyberspace "everyone is potentially transmitter and receiver in a space which is qualitatively differentiated, not fixed, organised by the participants, explorable."¹⁸ Thus, cyberspace offers both the promise of communication and community.

There are several web pages (addresses) on the Internet devoted to *manzai*. Some of them offer a selection of pre-recorded video clips or even live 'webcasts' (live Internet video broadcasts) of *manzai* performance. This is no improvement over television or videotape, however, since the user does not participate in the *manzai* experience. Nevertheless, there is an important aspect of that experience which has been successfully transmitted to cyberspace: interaction between audience members. Through message boards, chat rooms, or email, *manzai* aficionados are sharing their opinion on the performance of comedians. These various methods of communication create a sense of community which parallels the interactive spectatorship of audience

¹⁸ "Chacun y est potentiellement émetteur et receuteur dans un espace qualitativement différencié, non figé, aménagé par les participants, explorable": Pierre Lévy, "l'Hyperscène: De la Communication Spectaculaire à la Communication Tous-Tous," [Hyperstage: from spectacular communication to all-all communication] *Les Cahiers de Médiologie*, no. 1 (Paris: Gallimard, 1996), 141.

members at a live performance.¹⁹

There are no Internet projects to date which come close to reproducing the 'aura' of stage *manzai*. Nevertheless, it is feasible with today's teleconferencing technology to conduct an interactive webcast in which a group of audience members would be linked with *manzai* comedians in cyberspace. Since comedians and audience members would see and hear each other, this would recreate the necessary conditions for a collaborative performance. In the future, virtual reality may even reproduce in exact detail the experience of going to a yose. The unlimited creative potential of virtual reality will undoubtedly extend the genre beyond its boundaries in ways we cannot imagine today.

¹⁹ *Yoshimoto 2-Chōme Wachanetto*, the website for Yoshimoto Kōgyō's Shinsaibashi 2-Chōme Theatre in Osaka (available at <http://town.hiho.ne.jp/enterT/yosimoto>), is a good example of an Internet project combining pre-recorded and live *manzai* broadcasts as well as bulletin boards, etc. for fan communication.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Aiba Akio. *Kamigata manzai nyūmon* (Introduction to Kamigata *Manzai*). Tokyo: Kōbun, 1995.

相羽秋夫、『上方漫才入門』、弘文出版、1995年。

Aichi ken shōkōkai rengōkai (Aichi Prefecture Chamber of Commerce Confederation). "Saiji jōhō / chita shi 'kuni shitei san manzai kyōenkai'" (Event Information: Chita City 'Three Nationally Designated *Manzai* Joint Performance'). Information service on-line. Available from http://www.xxyyy.or.jp/content/syoroken/sakakibara_home/homelaunch78.html. Internet. Accessed 25 Nov., 1997.

愛知県商工会連合会、『催事情報/知多市「国指定三万才共演会」』。

Akita Minoru, ed. *Akita Minoru meisaku manzai senshū* (A Collection of *Manzai* Masterpieces from Akita Minoru, pt. 2). Tokyo: Nihon Jitsugyō, 1973.

秋田実編、『秋田実・名作漫才選集2』、日本実業出版社、1973年。

-----, *Ōsaka waraibanashi shi* (A History of Humorous Tales From Osaka). Osaka: Henshū Kōbō Noa, 1984.

同、『大阪笑話史』、編集工房ノア、1984年。

Amano Hiroshi. "Owari Tsushima - aki matsuri" (Owari Tsushima: Autumn Festival). Available from <http://www.aichi-ele.co.jp/~amano/mytown/akimatsuri/akifesta>. Internet. Accessed 19 Nov., 1997.

天野博、『尾張津島ー秋祭り』。

Arikawa Hiroshi, Chief Producer, Yomiuri Television. Interview by author. Tape Recording. Osaka. 26 June, 1996.

有川寛、読売テレビ、チーフ・プロデューサー。

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction". In *Video Culture: A Critical Investigation*, ed. John G. Hanhardt. Rochester, NY: Visual Studies Workshop Press, 1990, 27-52. Reprinted from *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Schocken Books, 1969.

- Brasor, Philip. "The Last of the He-Men *Manzai*". *Japan Times*. Feb. 1996. Newspaper on-line. Available from <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/features/feat2-96/yokoyama.html>. Internet. Accessed 13 Oct., 1997.
- Brau, Lorna M. "Kimono Comics: The Performance Culture of Rakugo Storytelling." Ph.D. diss., New York University. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1994. 9502246.
- Furukawa Ka'ichirō. "Sengo Kamigata owarai kai no nagare to sono shūhen" (The Current Trend of the Post-War Kamigata Comic World and Related Subjects). *Kamigata shōgei no sekai* (The World of the Kamigata Arts of Laughter). Eds. Hashimoto Masaki, Hayashi Nobuo, Kanō Takeo, Matsubara Toshimi and Hata Kyōko. Tokyo: Hakusuisha, 1984, 15-23.
- 古川嘉一郎、「戦後上方お笑い界の流れとその周辺」、古川嘉一郎・橋本正樹・林信夫・加納健夫・松原利己・秦京子編『上方笑芸の世界』、白水社、1984年。
- Hall, John Whitney. *Japan: From Prehistory to Modern Times*. Tokyo: Tuttle, 1971.
- Hashimoto Hiroyuki. Lecture on Folk Performing Arts in Japan. McGill University, Montreal. 24 Nov., 1995.
- Havens, Norman. "The Changing Face of Japanese Folk Beliefs." *Folk Beliefs in Modern Japan*. Pt. 3 of a series *Contemporary Papers on Japanese Religion*. Trans. Norman Havens, ed. Inoue Nobutaka. N.p: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics, Kokugakuin University, 1994, n.p.
- Hayakawa Kōtarō. "Mikawa no *manzai* no koto" (About Mikawa *Manzai*). *Minzoku Geijutsu* (Folk Art) 2, no. 1. Jan. 1929. Quoted in Tsurumi Shunsuke. *Tayū saizō den: manzai wo tsuranuku mono* (The Tayū and Saizō Legacy: Those Who Perform *Manzai*). N.p.: Heibonsha, 1979.
- 早川孝太郎、「三河の万歳のこと」、『民俗芸術』二巻一号、1979年1月。『早川孝太郎全集』第三巻所収。

Higuchi Kiyoyuki. *Warai to nihonjin* (Laughter and the Japanese). Vol. 9. *Nihonjin no rekishi* (History of the Japanese). Tokyo: Kōdānsha, 1982.

樋口清之、『日本人の歴史 第九巻 笑いと日本人』、講談社、1982年。

Honda Masanori, NSC Instructor and *manzai* writer. Interview by author. Tape recording. Osaka. 16 June, 1996.

本多正識、漫才作家。

Inoue Hiroshi. *Ōsaka no warai* (The Laughter of Osaka). Osaka: U of Kansai Press, 1992.

井上宏、『大阪の笑い』、関西大学出版部、1992年。

_____, Professor, Kansai University. Interview by author. Tape recording. Osaka. 23 June, 1996.

_____. "Rakugo, Manzai and Kigeki: The Arts of Laughter." *Japan Foundation Newsletter* 13, no. 4 (January 1996), 1+

Ivy, Marilyn. "Tradition and Difference in the Japanese Mass Media." *Public Culture Bulletin* 1, no. 1 (1988), 21-9.

Kaempfer, Engelbert. *The History of Japan*, bk. 2. Trans. J. G. Scheuchzer. London: n.p., 1727. Quoted in Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki. *Rakugo: The Popular Narrative Art of Japan*. Harvard East Asian Monographs 138. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990.

Kanō Takeo. "Manzai metsubōron" (Theory on the Downfall of *Manzai*). In *Kamigata shōgei no sekai*, Furukawa et al., eds.
加納健夫、「漫才滅亡論」、『上方笑芸の世界』所収。

Kizugawa Kei, Professor, Ritsumeikan University. Interview by author. Tape recording. Kyoto. 19 June, 1996.
木津川計、立命館大学産業社会学部教授。

Lévy, Pierre. "l'Hyperscène: De la Communication Spectaculaire à la Communication Tous-Tous" (Hyperstage: From Spectacular Communication to All-All Communication). *Les Cahiers de Médiologie*, no. 1. Paris: Gallimard, 1996, 137-42.

Matsuda Film Productions. "Timeline of Japanese Silent Films." Information service on-line. Available at <http://www.infoasia.co.jp/subdir/matsuda>. Internet. Accessed 9 Dec., 1997.

Matsumoto Hitoshi and Hamada Masatoshi. *Downtown no gaki no tsukai ya arahende!!*, pts. 1-2. Videocassette. Nippon Television Broadcasting Network Corp., 1995.

松本人志・浜田雅功出演、『ダウンタウンのガキの使いやあらへんで!!』1～2巻、日本テレビ、1995年。

Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*. Vol. 1. New York: International Publishers, 1967. Quoted in Michael Taussig. "Physiognomic Aspects of Visual Worlds." *Visual Anthropology Review* 8, no. 2 (spring 1992), n.p.

Meiji Mutual Life Insurance, Osaka General Operations Division, Sōgyō 114-nen kansha 'Kansai wo kangaeru' kai (114th Anniversary 'Thinking of Kansai' Association). *Kamigata: warai no shinfonī* (Kamigata: A Symphony of Laughter). Osaka, 1995. Private publication.

明治生命保険相互会社 大阪総務部 創業114年感謝“関西を考える”会、『上方・笑いのシンフォニー』、同発行、1995年。非売品。

Mizutani Nobuhiro, Yoshimoto Kōgyō, Producer. Interview by author. Tape recording. Osaka. 26 June, 1996.
水谷暢宏、吉本興業、プロデューサー。

Mochida Toshi'ichi. *Ōsaka owarai gaku: warai to nori ni kaketa menmen* (The Study of Osakan Laughter). Vol. 1, *Naniwa zatsuraku shi*. Tokyo: Shinsensha, 1994.

持田寿一、『なにわ雑楽史 第一巻 大阪お笑い学—笑いとノリに賭けた面々』、新泉社、1994年。

Morioka, Heinz and Miyoko Sasaki. *Rakugo: The Popular Narrative Art of Japan*. Harvard East Asian Monographs 138. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1990.

Nakai Hidenori. Yoshimoto Kōgyō, Multimedia Division, Project Manager. E-Mail to author. 19 Feb., 1998.

中井秀範、吉本興業マルチメディア部門、担当者。

Nishikawa Kiyoshi and Yokoyama Yasushi. *Owarai nettowāku hatsu manzai no dendō: Nishikawa Kiyoshi, Yokoyama Yasushi* (Comedy Network *Manzai* Hall of Fame Presents: Nishikawa Kiyoshi and Yokoyama Yasushi). Videocassette. Yomiuri Television Enterprises, 1996.

西川きよし・横山やすし出演、『お笑いネットワーク発漫才の殿堂—西川きよし・横山やすし』、読売テレビ、1996年。

Nishiyama Matsunosuke. *Edo Culture: Daily Life and Diversions in Urban Japan, 1600-1868*. Trans. and ed. Gerald Groemer. Honolulu: U of Hawai'i Press, 1997.

Oda Shōkichi. *Warai banashi no jidai: tachiyomi engeikan* (The Era of Humorous Tales). Kobe: Nojigiku Bunko, 1967.

織田正吉、『笑話の時代—立読み演芸館—』、のじぎく文庫、1967年。

Ozawa Shōichi. "Manzai 1990." *Shukufuku suru hitobito* (Those Who Celebrate). Eds. Ozawa Shōichi, Saigō Nobutsuna, Koyama Sachiko, Yamamoto Kōji, Nomura Jun'ichi and Yamaji Kōzō. Vol. 12, *Oto to eizō to moji ni yoru (taikei) nihon rekishi to geinō* (Japanese history and performing arts (outline) through sound, image and word). Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1990, 10-53.

小沢昭一、『まんざい・一九九〇』、小沢昭一・西郷信綱・小山幸子・山本幸司・野村純一・山路興造編『音と映像と文字による【体系】日本歴史と芸能 第十二巻 祝福する人々』、平凡社、1990年。

Pareyson, Luigi. *Conversations sur l'Esthétique* (Conversations on Aesthetics). Trans. Gilles A. Tiberghien. Paris: Gallimard, 1992.

Stocker, Joel. "Japanese Media Culture: An Osakan Entertainment Enterprise Promotes Comic Dreams." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Washington, D.C. 19-23 Nov., 1997.

Takemoto Kōzō. *Hoete odorasete: shōbainin Hayashi Shōnosuke den* (A Biography of Hayashi Shōnosuke, Merchant of Mirth). Book on-line. Serialised in *Ōsaka Shimbun* from 11 Sep., 1996 to 14 Feb., 1997. Available from <http://www.osakanews.com/series/h>. Internet. Accessed 15 March, 1997.

竹本浩三、『吼えて躍らせて一笑売人・林正之助伝』、『大阪新聞』1996年10月11日～1997年2月14日連載。

Taussig, Michael. "Physiognomic Aspects of Visual Worlds." *Visual Anthropology Review* 8, no. 2 (spring 1992), n.p.

Tokyo English Life Line (TELLnet). "Nihon no omo na matsuri 'Chūgoku, Shikoku chihō'" (Major Festivals of Japan: 'Chūgoku and Shikoku Region'). Information service on-line. Available from http://www.majic.co.jp/TELLnet/hot/j_travel/j_chugoku.01.html. Internet. Accessed 25 Nov., 1997.

TELLnet、『日本の主な祭り「中国・四国地方」』。

Tsurumi Shunsuke. *Tayū saizō den: manzai wo tsuranuku mono*.

鶴見俊輔、『太夫才蔵伝—漫才をつらぬくもの』、平凡社、1979年。

Tsutsui Sayo. "Conversational Joking on Japanese Television, in Everyday Life: Fools and Their Foils Pair Off in the Kansai Region." Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association. Washington, D.C. 19-23 Nov., 1997.

Silverberg, Miriam. "Remembering Pearl Harbor, Forgetting Charlie Chaplin, and the Case of the Disappearing Western Woman: A Picture Story." *Positions* 1, no. 1 (1993), 24-76.

Yamaji Kōzō. "Eizō kaisetsu" (Video Commentary). In *Shukufuku suru hitobito*, Ozawa Shōichi et al., eds.

山路興造、『映像解説』、『祝福する人々』所収。

Yamazaki Toyoko. *Hana noren* (Serialised in *Chūō Kōron*. January 1958 and subsequent issues). Quoted in Oda Shōkichi. *Waraibanashi no jidai: tachiyomi engeikan*.

山崎豊子、『花のれん』、『中央公論』1958年1月号～連載。

Yoshikawa, Muneo Jay. "Popular Performing Arts: *Manzai* and *Rakugo*." *Handbook of Japanese Popular Culture*. Eds. Richard Gid Powers and Hidetoshi Katō. New York: Greenwood, 1989. 75-96.

Yoshimoto Kōgyō Corporation. *Talent Profile* (March 1996). Privately published company booklet.

吉本興業株式会社、タレントプロフィール、1996年3月現在。

_____. *Yoshimoto 2-chōme wachanetto*. Information network on-line. Available at <http://town.hi-ho.ne.jp/enterT/yosimoto>. Internet. Accessed Jan. 5, 1998.

同、吉本2丁目ワチャネット。

Yoshimoto Kōgyō Corporation, Yoshimoto Sōgō Geinō Gakuin (NSC) (Yoshimoto General Entertainment Institute (NSC)). Various artists (instructors and students). Videocassette recording by author. 25 June, 1996.

吉本興業株式会社 吉本総合芸能学院 (NSC)。

_____, advertisement, *Monthly Yoshimoto* 184 (June 1996): 47. 同、マンスリーよしもと184号、1996年6月。