TALKING THROUGH THE TEXT
RAKUGO AND THE ORAL/LITERAL INTERFACE

by

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ABSTRACT

The students of 'oral literatures' traditionally viewed 'orality,' the spoken mode of communication, as inferior to 'literacy,' the written mode. They depicted 'oral literatures' as legacies from the past, and the products of socially, economically and geographically marginalized, illiterate populations, and are hence doomed to disappear in a literate society. Many also assumed that 'oral literatures' are characterized by little structural complexity and individual creativity, and thus they possess an insignificant esthetic value.

This study attempts to re-examine the validity of such traditional claims by examining the coexistence and interaction between orality and literacy in a Japanese traditional narrative art known as *rakugo*. *Rakugo* is a highly stylized form of narrative delivered by urban professional storytellers in Japan. The study will reveal rakugo's structural features, which are derived from both oral and literate traditions, as well as its generic relation to Japanese literary genres. The study will also examine the esthetic dynamics of live performance where the performer's creativity is brought into parity with tradition and social norms; and hence it will highlight the significance of oral tradition in a highly literate, modern society.

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To Our Grandfathers and Grandmothers
whose dreams we are yet to live

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Scholars in many different fields have shared interest in studying 'oral literature' of 'non-literate' populations. In many traditional studies of oral literature, 'orality' i.e. spoken mode of communication, is depicted as fundamentally incompatible with 'literacy' i.e. the written mode. It is generally assumed by many students of oral literature that there are fundamental differences in both form and function between the oral and literate texts they were describing and the canonical written texts which formed the subject matter of literary scholarship *per se*. Lord (1960), however, in his study of Homeric verse, *The Singer of Tales* , pointed out the incongruity inherent in this artificial distinction between oral and written. He focused on "oral formulaic expressions," the fixed phrases used as the building blocks of metrical lines by bards in the area of the former Yugoslavia, showing that such expressions are a hallmark of Homer's usage, in works traditionally considered to lie at the very core of the classical Western literary canon.

The problem which Lord had raised — what in fact constituted oral literature? — drew increased scholarly attention to the study of verbal arts.[1] In attempts to better conceptualize "the oral" and "the literary," scholars in a number of areas began to research the impact of writing and

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[1] The term "verbal arts" refers to various types of folklore whose primary means of expression is spoken language. It includes all the genres more commonly referred to by the less technical term "oral literature" — myths, legends, folktales, and oral poetry (Bascom 1981).

printing upon human culture. This new approach to the nature and function of verbal arts has come to be known as the study of *orality and literacy* (cf. Finnegan 1988, Havelock 1991).

Unfortunately, many workers in this new field have found themselves haunted by old attitudes. Chief among these has been the overwhelming temptation to consider the oral mode of communication as *fundamentally inadequate* when compared to the written mode. This inadequacy is alleged to be of two kinds. First, it is said that the spoken mode of knowledge transmission is technologically inferior to the written mode, and thus doomed to a steady degeneration in the unfavorable environment of a literate society. Second, it is asserted that verbal arts are intrinsically lacking in esthetic qualities.

Folklorists, for instance, have traditionally assumed that verbal arts are characteristic products of non-literate societies situated on the geographic and economic periphery of the literate world, doomed to eventual displacement and replacement by a literate tradition:

> It is an ajtys — a singing-duel....The boy and girl go on battling with their voices — and Tchitcherine understands, abruptly, that soon someone will come out and begin to write some of these down in the New Turkic Alphabet he helped frame...and this is how they will be lost.[2]

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[2] Thomas Pynchon, *Gravity's Rainbow* (New York: Penguin, 1987): 356-57. Of course, Pynchon is a novelist, not a folklorist; but the fact that intelligent outsiders take the inevitable displacement of oral by written as a given shows how pervasive this assumption is.

They saw transformation from an oral to a literate culture as a unilinear, *irreversible* process, not just a technological shift but also a change which would leave inescapable marks on the social and economic system of the whole people. It was seen as a fated development, a "technological determinism," as Finnegan (1988: 12) calls it.

Dundes (1977) has pointed out that this dismissive view of verbal arts is deeply rooted in the nineteenth century social evolutionist concepts of "folk" and folklore. Andrew Lang, a dominant figure in traditional folkloristics, wrote in "The Method of Folklore":

> There is a science, Archeology, which collects and compares the material relics of old races, the axes and arrow-heads. There is a form of study, Folklore, which collects and compares the similar but immaterial relics of old races, the surviving superstitions and stories, the ideas which are in our time but not of it. Properly speaking, folklore is only concerned with the legends, customs, beliefs of the folk, of the people, of the classes which have least been altered by the education, which have shared least in progress. But the student of folklore soon finds that these unprogressive classes retain many of the beliefs and ways of savages....The student of folklore is thus led to examine the usages, myths, and ideas of savages, which are still retained, in rude enough shape, by the European peasantry. (Lang 1884: 11)

Thus, "savages," peasants, and folklore were tied up into one neat, dismissive, and disposable bundle, a triad of unholy survivals from the past that persisted as obstacles to Victorian "progress."[3]

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3   Interestingly enough, given his importance in the evolution of modern theoretical trends in literature, one of the first to disagree with such attitudes was the young Friedrich Nietzsche. When still a professor of philology at Basle, he reacted to

The deterministic view of literate culture as the fated victor over primitive orality still lurks beneath the surface of much contemporary work in the field. The only difference is that nowadays oral traditions or verbal arts are linked with the 'third' and 'fourth' worlds rather than with the local peasantry. Ong, for example, asserts the absolute transformative power of literacy (and electronic media) over oral culture:

> [There are] basic differences...between the ways of managing knowledge and verbalization in primary oral cultures (cultures with no knowledge at all of writing) and in cultures deeply affected by the use of writing....The shift from orality to literacy and on to electronic processing engages social, economic, political, religious and other structures. (Ong 1982: 1, 3)

Similar attitudes towards the respective worth of the oral and the written can be seen in the writings of development specialists and policy-makers, as economic and "social development today is widely regarded as dependent on the ability to read or write" (Finnegan 1988: 23). UNESCO publications, for example, stress that the acquisition of literacy is essential to "raise productivity and welfare in the underdeveloped world." (1970: 10).

As we have already mentioned, the *inevitability* of the shift from the oral to the written mode of communication is sometimes put down to the alleged esthetic poverty of oral art. Again, this view is rooted in

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Wagner's idealization of the "folk" by remarking that "we gain nothing with our theory of the poetizing soul of the people,...we are always referred back to the poetic individual" (*Homer and Classical Philology* [1869], cited in Hollingdale: 75).

nineteenth century evolutionist concepts of folklore, which was seen as a bastion of reactionary unenlightenment. The new rationalism "regarded the folk and its creative, especially literary, products with contempt and derision, as lacking in refinement, learning, mastery of diction, and subtleness and elevation of thought" (Ben-Amos 1982: 21-22). The evolutionist perspective thus established an image of verbal art as simple, formless, lacking in artistic quality, and devoid of structural complexity when compared to modern, written literature. Worst of all, those who would have taken loud exception to any denigration of lower class *people* still took the crudity of their *art* for granted. Take for example this excerpt from John Greenway's book *American Folksongs of Protest*, published in 1953:

> ...to demand literacy worth of folk song is to deny them one characteristic of folk material — unsophistication. There are many inarticulate poets among the folk, but few are mute Miltons; to look for work on the Miltonic level in folk song is to bring it to the level of conscious art (Greenway 1953: 18-19).

By definition, folklore remained eternally divorced from the realm of "conscious art." Moreover, those who shared this view regarded oral literature as the *collective* expression of non-literate population "constrained by tradition and the weight of social norms against individual creativity of expression" (Bauman 1986: 7). What could one expect of a menial except "inarticulate" groans and whimpers?

A similar tendency to neglect the individually creative side of oral literature characterizes both seminal writers in the structural study of verbal art, Vladimir Propp and Claude Levi-Strauss. Propp's approach to

the analysis of Russian fairy tales identifies the sequential units of narrative structure called *functions* — the *morphological* approach.[4] However, Propp was preoccupied with the collective, social side of verbal arts — he claimed that Russian fairy tales were totally uniform in their construction, and concluded that "they all originated from a single origin" (Propp 1968: 106). Levi-Strauss, who saw myths as made up of gross semantic constituent elements called *mythemes*, too, based his analytical framework on the assumption that myths are the offspring of the collective and unconscious imagination. This led him to suggest that they represent universal structures of human thought (Levi-Strauss 1962).

The esthetic bias against verbal arts can still be identified in the writings of some of the most influential scholars in the field of orality and literacy, though it takes more subtle forms than it did with Greenway forty years ago. Wallace Chafe, for example, writes:

> The fact that writing is a slow, deliberate, editable process, whereas speaking is done on the fly, leads to a difference that I called the integrated quality of written language as opposed to the fragmented quality of spoken (Chafe 1985: 105).

Feldman has much the same attitude:

> In our culture, artful genres are typically written rather than spoken. Indeed, there may be something about the acquisition of general literacy in a social group, with its advantages for memory for text, that leads to a gradual transformation of oral artful genres to writing and a consequent depletion of the range of artful oral forms. (Feldman 1991: 50).

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[4] Functions are the constant actions of characters (which may vary), actions that have implications for the advancement of the plot.

Furthermore, we find frequent and strong assertions that the cognitive capacity to appreciate the esthetic complexity of oral literature is constrained by the illiteracy of the listeners. Since the creative process involves reflexive activities such as interpretation and reconstruction, the transition from oral to literate culture is often assumed to entail the development of new and perhaps more profound levels of intelligence. Thus Havelock (1991: 25) states that the invention of the Greek alphabet provided the foundation for the later "conceptual revolution" by which "European culture slowly moved over into the ambiance of analytic, reflective, interpretative, conceptual prose discourse."

The standpoint described above is so pervasive that it may fairly be called the dominant tradition. However, this tradition has increasingly been challenged by researchers examining "secondary orality," verbal arts functioning within literate societies, as opposed to "primary orality," verbal arts in non-literate societies (cf. Ong 1982). There are now a large number of ethnographic works on verbal arts that do not accept the received wisdom, and this study aspires to follow in their footsteps.

One challenge to the dominant tradition has been the emergence of "urban folklore" studies. For example, Dundes (1977) points out in his essay "Who are the folks?" that the term *folk* can refer to any group of people who share some kind of common identity that can serve as the foundation for a collective mythology. To demonstrate the rich variety of folk groups in today's Western society, he examined the joke as a folkloristic construction. Brunvard, in *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, conducted a similar exploration of the urban legends presently circulating

in the United States, with the conclusion that "legends are definitely part of our modern folklore — legends which are as traditional, variable, and functional as those of the past" (Brunvard1981: 2).

This interest in secondary orality provoked the development of more dynamic analytical frameworks for the study of verbal arts. To cite only a few of many examples, Labov and Waletzky (1967) studied the conversational activities of Americans, and found unsuspected structural complexities in ordinary narratives. They were able to prove that such narratives have not only "referential" functions but also an interpretative, reflective aspect which they dubbed the "evaluative" function. Bauman (1977) linked the study of verbal arts with that of performance arts. He stresses that verbal arts are constitutive, and are spontaneously created as they are performed; they are not simply abstracted from a model, or text, whether written or spoken. He thus suggests that the artistic dynamics of verbal arts must be sought in their emergent form and message. Tannen (1982) has applied the method of conversational analysis to the structural study of narrative. Drawing examples from Greek and American narratives found in ordinary conversation, she demonstrated that ordinary narrative discourse contains an abundance of 'literary' strategies, in the same way that written literature makes abundant use of ordinary conversational strategies. She thus argues that the significance of the oral-literate debate does not lie in the issue of whether or not something is written or spoken, but rather in what kind of expressive strategies one chooses to achieve a desired goal.

The study which follows will adopt the necessary tools and strategies from these and other non-traditional studies to take a fresh look at the oral and literary aspects of a verbal art known as *rakugo,* more specifically Edo *rakugo.*[5] *Rakugo* is a highly stylized form of narrative delivered by professional storytellers in Japan. It is not only regularly performed in a number of public theaters in Tokyo, including the traditional theater called *yose,* but is also broadcast regularly on nationwide radio and television. There are over three hundred professional *rakugo* performers in Tokyo, and they perform both classical works (*koten rakugo*) and modern, innovative stories (*shinsaku rakugo*). Closely linked with the world of professional *rakugo* are the numerous amateur *rakugo* clubs, the *ochiken.* The members of ochiken both perform *rakugo* on their own account and offer expert critiques of professional performances. *Rakugo* is thus not merely a living fossil, but a dynamic tradition constantly reevaluated and invigorated by a society that appreciates its value.

This study is based on both a survey of the literature on and about *rakugo* and three months of field work that I conducted in Tokyo in the summer of 1992. During my stay, I observed the activities at several *yose,* particularly at Shinjuku Suehirotei, the oldest *yose* in Tokyo. I attended a number of *rakugo* performances on stage, some of which were video-taped for the purpose of analysis, as well as observing the backstage

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5   *Rakugo* is a generic term which includes two major regional sub-varieties. One is *Edo rakugo,* "rakugo, Tokyo style." The other is *kamigata rakugo,* "rakugo, Osaka style." Below, I will confine myself to the former.

activities of the performers and interviewing a number of them. I also gathered historical documents including a textual collection of *rakugo* stories, and consulted Japanese students of *rakugo*.

The second chapter surveys the background of *rakugo*. *Rakugo* is rooted in the ancient Buddhist sermon tradition and it draws its motifs and structural conventions from a number of oral and literary narrative genres. The professionalization of Edo *rakugo* took place during the Edo period (1595-1867) in the town of Edo, later called Tokyo. Its audience were primarily *chônin*, the merchants and craftsmen in Edo, who had gained a high degree of economic independence. The professionalization of *rakugo* went hand in hand with the development of the popular literature called *gesaku*, as Edo literary circles were closely linked with the network of storytelling specialists. In the early Meiji period (1868-1912) *rakugo* provided valuable linguistic and literary input to assist the standardization of a national language; it influenced the modern literary movement known as *genbun itchi undô*, "the unification of the spoken and the written language"; and it even came to be used in public education, as the new parliamentary government sought national integration through education for mass literacy education (cf. Morioka and Sasaki 1990, chapter eight).

In the third chapter, I will give an account of *rakugo* in today's society, based primarily on the ethnographic data I obtained during the summer of 1992. Besides the general commercial outlook for *rakugo*, I will discuss modes of story composition, *rakugo* in literary forms, and *rakugo* with modern communication technology.

In the fourth chapter, I will examine some esthetic dynamics of a *rakugo* performance that cannot be captured in *any* texts, written or otherwise. I will discuss the ways in which the performer Sanshôtei Charaku synthesized his individual creativity with the tradition and social norms in his performance of "Sannen-me (The Third Anniversary)." In creating his version of the story "Sannen-me," Sanshôtei Charaku used two texts of the same story, one written and one televised, by a distinguished performer, the late Sanyûtei Enshô. Although the sequence of events is identical in all three versions, Charaku's and Enshô's versions were classified under different subgenres of *rakugo*, due primarily to the differences in the two performers' use of *kusuguri*, a *metanarrative* device for establishing the narrator's perspective on the story.

In the concluding chapter, I will highlight the significance of oral storytelling in a modern, literate society, as illustrated by the case of *rakugo*. Contrary to the still-strong belief that verbal arts lack structural complexities and esthetic quality, I will suggest that their expressive conventions and esthetic qualities retain a great deal of artistic and esthetic value in contemporary industrialized society.

Chapter 2

Edo *Rakugo* in Historical Context:
From Spoken to Written to Once More Spoken Words

The Edo period (1595 – 1867) saw the emergence of many types of art considered traditional in present-day Japan. These genres frequently found their most enthusiastic support among the *chônin*, the lower class urban population of the time. *Rakugo* was a characteristic product of this milieu, which it was eventually able to transcend with a popularity and appeal that has allowed it to flourish right down to the present.

Rakugo may be subdivided into at least two regional styles. Edo *rakugo*, the more popular, is named for Edo, the largest urban center in premodern Japan.[1] Although it came to full development in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, its roots lie in the Buddhist sermon tradition, dating back to the importation of Buddhism from China and Korea to Japan in the sixth century AD. The sermon tradition, in addition to producing a large number of religious texts for courtly preachers, also influenced the structures and themes of secular narrative literature, the written collections of oral tales circulating among the commoners. Today's *rakugo* shows clear traces of this ancient inheritance, not only in its general nature but also in its forms and motifs.

The tendency to combine the written and the oral strongly characterizes the development of *rakugo* during and after the Edo period.

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[1]   Edo was renamed Tokyo at the Meiji restoration.

The centralizing and urbanizing forces of late Edo promoted the spread of literacy and broadened the circulation of popular literature, a development which more or less paralleled the professionalization of *rakugo* as an urban theatrical art. It simultaneously expressed and propelled the emergence of a characteristically Edo literati, a close association of professional storytellers and authors of popular literature. The succeeding Meiji period (1868 – 1912) saw *rakugo* texts, both written and oral, transformed into a tool of nationalization — an expression of both cultural centralization and the diffusion of centralized culture. The popularity of *rakugo* influenced the establishment of a "national" form of Japanese, based on the Tokyo dialects. *Rakugo* texts even found their way into the state education system, as the new constitutional monarchy sought national integration through mass literacy and moral education.

In this chapter, I will examine the development of Edo *rakugo* and discuss the structural and thematic links between it and a variety of historical narratives and literary genres. In discussing these latter, I will employ the time-honored Japanese terminology, which frequently represents both analytic and "folk"/ethnic categories, and has thus become the center of a vigorous debate among contemporary scholars. However, even though these traditional terms may appear arbitrary, lacking both an obvious basis and consistent analytic criteria, they are valuable data in themselves. They encapsulate the traditional paradigm, and thus offer a view of the structure of *rakugo* that seemed "obvious and natural" to those who were part of its historical development. They also demonstrate, once again, how free perspectives really are in the "natural" but culture-bound process of categorization.

1. The Roots of *Rakugo*

Rakugo and the Buddhist sermon tradition

The Law of the Buddha has been preached in Japan for nearly fourteen hundred years, ever since it was first introduced in the sixth century AD. The Buddhist priest Ryô Kôsô (502-557) brought Chinese preaching methods to Japan, methods that were ultimately rooted in the styles of ancient India. These included vocal variations summed up as the *shiben hachion* "four modulations of fluency and eight pitches," and the presentation of parables and karma tales.

The techniques and themes of these preaching styles form the twin root of contemporary *rakugo*. The earliest Buddhist missionaries employed a five-part sermon structure: (1) *sandai*, the introduction of a religious expression from the sutras; (2) *hôsetsu*, the exposition of the meaning of the expression employed; (3) *hiyu*, the parables which served to concretize and contextualize the *sandai-hôsetsu* pair; (4) *in'nen*, using karma tales to reinforce the *hiyu* and further strengthen the impact of the *sandai* and *hôsetsu*, and finally (5) *kekkan*, a conclusion which leaves the listener in a tranquil and accepting state of mind. Even at this high level of abstraction, unmistakable similarities can be detected between *rakugo* and Buddhist sermons. The introduction device known as a *makura* or "pillow" is comparable to the *sandai* and *hôsetsu* which begin the sermon, though the contemporary *makura* uses popular proverbs or trendy phrases rather than canonical religious expressions. The comic devices used in the main *rakugo* narrative, the *kusuguri* or "ticklers," are similar to *hiyu* and *in'nen*,

which often employed humor to induce audience participation.[2] Many items of *rakugo* jargon, such as the *kôza* "podium," as well as the conventional use of a fan, are derived from the sermon tradition. Furthermore, karma tales were the direct ancestors of an important *rakugo* subgenre called *kaidan-banashi* or "ghost stories" (Sekiyama 1973a: 103-105; cf. also 1978).[3]

For all this, the sermon tradition in Japan was shaped not only by the monks and missionaries who catered to the upper classes, but also by a lower, broader, less refined but far more numerous array of traveling preachers who spread stories promoting Buddhist ethical values. What these lacked in doctrinal subtlety, they more than made up in mass appeal. These popularizers traveled over the country with a mission to spread Buddhism to everyone, and to solicit contributions for pious purposes, such as the *Kôya-hijiri* to be discussed later. All of them functioned not only as priests but also as entertainers, since preaching was a social event, a rudimentary form of "mass media," whether the audience was a relatively educated group at court or large groups of the illiterate masses (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 211-213; Sekiyama 1973a: 59-80).

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2   Sekiyama (1973a: 105) notes that the traditional five-part sermon was *hajime shinmiri, naka okashiku, owari toutoku* "solemn at first, funny in the middle, and holy at the end."

3   Sekiyama (1978: 9-14) also points out that the performance hierarchy used by preachers, *zenza* (curtain raiser), *chûza* (the middle one) and *kamiza* (the superior one) is echoed in the *rakugo* tradition as *zenza, futatsume* (the second one), and *shin'uchi* (the star performer). Moreover, the strictly hierarchical, person-to-person transmission of knowledge between the master preacher and his apprentices is paralleled by the similar master-apprentice relationship of the *rakugo* tradition.

The various types of secular entertainers also participated in the popularization of the Buddhist religion. They generally lacked any formal theological training, but through their exposure to Buddhist sermons and interaction with traveling preachers, they adopted Buddhist motifs and conventions into their performances. Some of these entertainers were the heirs of ancient oral historians, transmitting material based on the pre-Buddhist Japanese world view, which was gradually harmonized with the new faith through their efforts (Norioka 1968: 78, 212).[4]

By the Muromachi period (1392-1573), Buddhism had spread through the whole of Japanese society. It influenced not only the day to day conduct of ordinary people, but also artistic standards at every level. The latter half of Muromachi was characterized by incessant civil wars, and it

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[4] Many of these traveling entertainers were similar to the "minstrels" of medieval Europe, but there were also some who were ethnically distinct from the peasantry and therefore regarded as social outcasts — analogous to the gypsies of Europe. This may be rooted in the ethnic plurality of ancient Japan, the often-discussed contrast between the Jômon and Yayoi peoples. It is often suggested that the original inhabitants, the nomadic Jômon peoples, continued to maintain their unsettled way of life after the invasion of the Yayoi from mainland Asia, though as time went by they were increasingly dispersed. According to this theory, these under-classes were given many designations, including *sanka*, a term whose official use was banned as a result of the *Buraku kaihô undô*, the Movement for Liberating Communities of Social Outcasts after the Second World War. Gotô (1989: 1-17), for example, points out the similarities between *sanka* and European gypsies, both of which groups made their livings producing and selling crafts and entertainment, spreading folklore tales as they traveled. Norioka (1968: 115) also discusses the various nomadic cultural groups in south-western Japan who had distinct religious perspectives, and who excelled in music, story-telling, and performance arts prior to their encounter with Buddhism and other powerful spiritual movements.

was then that the regional warlords began to employ professional storytellers from a number of different occupational backgrounds. These were referred to as *otogishû*, or "official entertainers." The core of the *otogishû* consisted of trained preachers and masters of tea ceremony (itself inseparable from Zen Buddhism), as well as the best-known of the performance artists associated with temples and shrines.

The stories which formed the material for the *otogishû* were set down between the eighth and the early seventeenth century, to form a genre broadly referred to as *setsuwa bungaku*.[5] "Setsu" means to say or explain, and "wa" means words or story. *Setsuwa bungaku* includes both Buddhist exemplary tales, and secular pieces such as myths, legends, fairy tales, epics, and local folk stories, which often shared features with the Buddhist stories. It can be classified into several groups, which will be discussed below in rough chronological order: In this section, I will examine these narrative genres as they relate to the sermon tradition, and point out their structural and thematic contributions to contemporary *rakugo*.

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[5]   The actual term *setsuwa bungaku* did not appear until the early twentieth century, when it was created out of a concern, particularly among scholars of Japanese national literature, to legitimize their scholarly interest in this genre (Sekiyama 1973a: 93-98; Nishio 1980: 19-20).

Ancient Oral History[6]

The best-known early *setsuwa* are the *Kojiki* and the *Nihonshoki*,
histories of ancient Japan compiled on the basis of orally transmitted
material, finished in 712 A.D. and 720 A.D. respectively. There were also
many other attempts, less well known, to set down the oral histories of
various regions in documents called *fudoki*. The motivation for writing
these histories, both national and regional, was the strong imperial effort to
expand and integrate the country through military invasion and cultural
assimilation (Ienaga 1987: 27).

Many episodes in the historical literature give folk etymologies of
personal and place names. Here in particular we find an abundance of
orally-based rhetorical devices reminiscent of those in contemporary
rakugo — puns, tongue twisters, nonsense songs, and scraps of undoubted
poetry, various metrical devices for versification, and elaborate punch lines
which combine several of these techniques for increased effect (cf.
Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 8, Sekiyama 1973a: 95).

Although little is known about the nature of oral tradition in Japan
prior to the introduction of Buddhism and its elaborate sermon tradition, it

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[6] The Japanese counterparts to the historical categories "ancient" and "medieval" are
as follows: *kodai* (ancient) is from the 4th century A.D. to late 12th century, from
the establishment of the Yamato Imperial Court to the end of the Heian period;
chûsei (medieval) is from late 12th century to the early 14th century, from the
Kamakura period to the Azuchi Momoyama period. The term *chûko* (medieval) is
also used by scholars of Japanese literature to designate the Heian period. In the
broadest sense, "modern" (*kinsei*) in Japanese history begins with the Edo period in
the seventeenth century (Shinmura 1983: 655-657, 873, 1559, 1562).

is clear that there were storytelling specialists and oral historians called *kataribe* as early as the fourth century AD. These *kataribe* were employed by the Imperial Court (Sekiyama 1973b 67-69); and as mentioned earlier, their followers became traveling entertainers whose performances had a religious dimension. Unfortunately, almost nothing is known about the indigenous secular oral tradition during the thousand years which separates the first mention of the *kataribe* and the emergence of *otogishū* in the fourteenth century (Sekiyama 1973a: 100).[7]

Buddhist Exemplary Tales

Because of the strong imperial promotion of Buddhism, the Heian period (794-1191) produced numerous religious texts. Since the impetus for expansion came from the top down, the audience for the Buddhist sermons based on exemplary tales was usually composed largely of court nobles and their followers up to the thirteenth century. These sermons were both entertaining and ecclesiastically informative. The oldest known collection is *Nihon reiiki* (or *ryōiki*), compiled in 822 by a priest named Keikai (or Kyōkai) of the Yakushi-ji temple in Nara. Although his audience was predominantly upper class, the stories he used for his sermons originated in folklore current amongst the commoners and

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[7] This is partly because of the general lack of scholarly attention to ancient oral tradition. More trouble has been created by traditional literary and/or folkloric inquiry into "oral tradition," since it tended to overlook numerous "oral" means of esthetic and/or knowledge representation which happened to overlap with other major analytical categories (such as music, dance, puppetry, ceremonial event, ritual, chant, act of teaching, and so forth), neglecting the fact that stories and knowledge circulate under a number of different guises in an oral culture (Sekiyama 1973b: 69, see also Hoff 1978 preface).

exemplary tales spread by traveling missionaries, most notably the *Kôya-hijiri*, the semi-secular preachers affiliated with the Temple of Mount Kôya in Wakayama prefecture.[8]

Contemporary *rakugo* still retains some features from the material in the *Nihon reiiki*.[9] This collection includes 116 miraculous stories, which have the usual structure of the ancient Japanese sermon — the five-part arrangement discussed earlier, similar to that of *rakugo*. The stories in the *Nihon reiiki* shares motifs with *rakugo* as well. Morioka and Sasaki discuss

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[8] The Temple of Mount Kôya is a lay term for the Kongô-buji on Mount Kôya, established in 816 by Kûkai, the founder of the Shingon sect of Buddhism in Japan. *Kôya-hijiri* were trained in the Kongô-buji for the religious education of local people, and to solicit contributions for pious purposes (Shinmura 1983: 825). *Kôya-hijiri* are only one of a number of different types of traveling "entertainers" with semi-religious functions: *seimon/shômon-shi, shôdô-shi, sasara, sekkyô, kanjin-shi, ongyoku-dô* and so forth. *Sekkyô*, however, has become the accepted collective reference for this group.

Muroki (1970: 44, 281) discusses the significance of *kôya-hijiri* in some ballads of medieval Japan such as "Kamata" and "Karukaya," both of which entered the Noh repertoire . Sekiyama notes the intimate connection between *kôya-hijiri* and the *Nihon reiiki*: the copies of the *Nihon reiiki* known as the *kôya-bon* , or "*kôya-*version," were passed down in the temples of the Shingon sect (1978: 49).

[9] Morioka and Sasaki discuss the relation between the *Nihon reiiki* and the *Uchigiki shû, Uji shûi monogatari* and *Konjyaku monogatari shû* thus: "the function of the *Nihon ryôiki* as an exemplar handbook for preachers was carried on in the *Uchigiki shû* of the first half of the twelfth century. The *Uchigiki shû* has become important in recent years in connections with studies on the relationship between two *setsuwa* tale collections which are believed to be the prototype of *rakugo* narration: the *Konjyaku monogatari shû* and the *Uji shûi monogatari*. Twenty two of the 27 stories in the *Uchigiki shû* bear a similarity to items in the *Konjyaku monogatari shû* as do 9 items in the *Uji shûi monogatari*." (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 214)

the similarity between the *rakugo* story "Nozarashi" ("Weather-beaten skull") and two stories from the *Nihon reiiki*, which forms a good example of the borrowings at work here.[10]

"Nozarashi" embodies an important Buddhist moral principle, *juon hôon*, which means, "if one receives kindness, one must repay it with kindness." In a typical "Nozarashi" a man goes fishing and finds a weather-beaten skull. He offers a poem and some *sake* to it, and returns home. That night, a beautiful female ghost visits his place to repay his benevolence. Upon hearing about this, one of his neighbors goes fishing to find a skull of his own. He finds a piece of skull, pours *sake* over it, and tells it where he lives. A professional jester who happens to be eavesdropping mistakenly believes that the man is arranging a secret date, and follows him out of curiosity. When night comes, the jester visits the man's place and starts his performance. The man asks who he is, and he replies that he is a *taiko-mochi*, "jester" or "the one that carries the drum." Then, the man realizes that the skull he found at the beach was a horse skull, for the jester's drums are made with horse leather (Yano 1989: 220).

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[10] The motif of a man finding a skull that then speaks to him in a dream is very old, deriving originally from ancient Chinese philosophy. In the *Zhuangzi* [fourth century BC], chapter 18, there is a tale of how the Daoist master Zhuangzi finds a skull, addresses a series of rhetorical questions to it, and finally uses it for a pillow when he goes to sleep. He is visited by the spirit of the skull in a dream, which describes for him how delightful the world of the dead is (Graham 1981: 124-125). It is quite possible that this was the ultimate source for the "Nozarashi" stories, especially since the themes of the *Zhuangzi* had made it a favorite among early Chinese Buddhist monks such as Seng-zhao (lived 384-414; Fung 1983: 258-259, 269).

In *Nihon reiiki* I:12, a traveling monk sees a weather-beaten skull when passing through a valley. He has his attendant place it on a tree and intones a prayer for the repose of the soul of the deceased. On New Year's Eve, the time that the souls of the dead visit their families, the soul of the skull assumes the disguise of a man, comes to the temple where the monk lives, takes the attendant home with him, and entertains him with an abundance of food and drink. Similarly in *Nihon reiiki* III:27, a traveler pulls out a bamboo shoot growing up through the eye socket of a weather-beaten skull, and is repaid by its soul (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 213).[11]

The compilation of these religious *setsuwa* occurred at the same time as two important developments in popular sermonizing: *Hokke hakkô,* the "Eight Lotus Sermons," and the *mandala* preaching known as *etoki.*

Hokke hakkô were first given in 796 for the members of the Imperial Court. By the latter part of the Heian period their audience had expanded to include common people (Sekiyama 1978: 50-58):

[11] Morioka and Sasaki discuss a common fox motif: "A fox sometimes appears on the *rakugo* stage in the disguise of a beautiful woman who becomes a faithful wife to somebody, as, for instance, in *Hakami,* 'A Visit to the Grave.' Such a story is told in *Nihon ryôiki,* I:2, 'On Taking a Fox as a Wife and Bringing Forth a Child.' A man who is in search of a good wife meets a pretty and responsive girl and takes her as his wife. Soon she gives birth to a boy. One day a fiercely barking dog chases the woman. Terrified, she betrays her husband, who is deeply in love with her. The story is told as an 'origin' tale of the word *kitsune* (fox). By arbitrary syllable splitting *kitsune* looks as though it might be derived from *kitsu-ne,* 来寝 meaning 'come and sleep (with me),' or from *ki-tsune* 来毎 , meaning 'come always (to me)!' Both 'etymologies' would fit perfectly into a *rakugo* gag" (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 212-213).

Renowned preachers of Kyoto and the surroundings illustrated the Lotus Sutra (Hokke; Sanskrit *Saddharma-pundarika*) in cycles of eight sermons. The preachers were called *kôji* (=*kôshi*), and they spoke from an elevated podium (*kôza*), which greatly resembled the stage setting of a modern *kôdan* or *rakugo* performance. During mid-Heian (eleventh century), many temples and even Shintô shrines imitated the *gohakkyô* of the court and competed in gathering the people for semi-annual events with sermons, narrations and entertainment (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 213).

In retrospect, the *Hokke hakkô* were an important step in the direction of professional *rakugo* performances.

At the same time, another common genre of religious performance was flourishing: *etoki,* or mandala preaching. *E* means "picture" — in this case, a religious picture or mandala — and "*toki* " means explanation. The preachers displayed pictures of Heaven and Hell and explained the consequences of one's good or bad conduct on earth. *Etoki* were performed widely by the traveling preachers and entertainers, wherever a crowd could be gathered: at street corners, in temples and shrines, or near the inns and entertainment districts (Sekiyama 1973a: 106, 1978: 87).

The source material for *etoki* was drawn from the *Ojô yôshû* (*Collection of Essentials for Rebirth in Amida's Pure Land*), compiled by Genshin (942-1017; Morioka and Sasaki: 214). The vivid description of Hell and Heaven by means of *etoki* was such an emotionally powerful method of spreading Buddhist moral values and the doctrine of rewards and punishment that it captured the imagination of many visual, performance and literary artists during later times. In *rakugo, etoki*

developed into the parodies entitled "Jigoku meguri" ("Traveling through Hell") and "Gokuraku meguri" ("Traveling through Heaven"). In these, a performer gives a vivid description of Hell or Heaven through the eyes of a humorist who finds a funny side to everything that he sees.

The Kamakura period (1192-1333) saw Buddhism extend itself throughout Japanese society, with the appearance of its two most important popularizers, Hônen (1133-1212), the founder of the Jôdo sect, and Shinran (1173-1262), the founder of the Monto sect. Their disciples founded a prosperous sermon school at Agui Temple in Kyoto. Right up to the Meiji Restoration, this school provided models for sermon performances, including the most elaborate form of popular Buddhist preaching, the *fushidan sekkyô* or "melodious preaching"[12] (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 214-215, Sekiyama 1973a: 81-82).

Through the efforts of Agui preachers, the Jôdo and Monto sects spread quickly through the lower levels of society. Apart from the professional preachers, monks, nuns, and even lay persons engaged in *tsuji seppô*, or "street preaching." A collection of such sermons inspired by the Agui school was compiled by Mujo Ichinen, whose preaching transcended sectarian boundaries. This collection, the *Shaseki shû* (*Collection of Sand*

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[12] In the middle of the thirteenth century, another sermon school, the Miidera-ha, arose to compete with the Agui school. "Contrary to the vehement appeal and quick-wittedness of the Agui school, Miidera stressed insistent and patient persuasion and developed a refined style of ballad-like *jôruri* recitation. In the seventeenth century, the Miidera school declined and finally merged into the Agui school." (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 215)

and Pebbles) was written in the vernacular language of the common people (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 216).[13]

Though Mujô Ichinen is seldom given a place in the pedigree of *rakugo*, Morioka and Sasaki points out that many of his exemplary tales may have been utilized in one way or another. For example, the humorous technique in Ichinen's story "Nun's Name" is echoed in the *rakugo* long-name story "Jugemu" ("Eternal Happiness"). In "Nun's name," a woman receives an absurdly long name upon entering religious orders, made up of the names of many different gods and Buddhas. In "Jugemu," the parents also give their son a lengthy name made up of all the lucky terms they can think of, with the hope that he will have a long and happy life. However, it turns out that his long name causes him nothing but trouble (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 216).

Other *Setsuwa* Literature of the Heian Period

The Heian Period also produced a number of anonymous compilations of *setsuwa* literature, legendary tales such as the *Taketori monogatari (The Tale of the Bamboo Princess)*, the *Ujishûi monogatari (Tales from Uji)*, and the *Konjyaku monogatari (Tales From Long Ago)*.[14] These often contain episodes which speak of Buddhist priests and their preaching, as well as influences from the sermon tradition (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 218). For example, the *Konjyaku monogatari shû* contains several

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[13] *Shaseki shû* is also pronounced *"saseki shû."*

[14] There is also a subgenre of Heian *setsuwa* literature known as *uta-monogatari* (stories interwoven with verses), one example being the *Ise monogatari (The Tale of Ise)*.

miraculous episodes analogous to the religious tales in the *Nihon reiiki*. Included is the gruesome tale of the tapeworm woman, which appears to have been the inspiration for the *rakugo* story, "Soba no haori" ("The *haori* jacket for buckwheat noodles").

In the tale of the tapeworm woman, a woman who had a tapeworm becomes pregnant and gives birth to a baby boy. When the boy grows up, he is appointed Governor of Shinano. On his way to Shinano, he is welcomed by the local people, who serve him dinner. All the dishes are dressed with walnuts, a local delicacy. But when the Governor sees the walnuts he feels uneasy and wriggles like a worm in pain — for in fact, he is the offspring of a human being and a tapeworm, and walnuts are a vermifuge in traditional medicine. Finally, he melts away after taking a sip of walnut-flavored *sake*. In "Soba no haori," a man consumes a large quantity of buckwheat noodles and then takes a dose of a medicinal herb to aid his digestion. He melts away, leaving his *haori* jacket sitting around a pile of noodles (*Koten Rakugo Hyakkasen*: 1989: 220-222; Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 225)

Apart from these occasional similarities in theme and development, the stories found in *setsuwa* literature characteristically display the opening conventions of later *rakugo*, such as the use of "ima wa mukashi" ("once upon a time"), or "mukashi aru otoko ga" ("once there was a man who"), as well as an abundant use of what would later become the conventional closing, the humorous punch line that still characterizes present-day *rakugo*. These structural conventions are likely to have been the everyday tools of professional storytellers, indicating that this literature might have

served as source material for priests at court and traveling preachers alike (Sekiyama 1973a: 65-67).

Since the language of the *Konjaku monogatari* and *Uji shûi monogatari* is vigorous and colloquial, very close to that of oral literature, these books were a handy source of topics for *rakugo* performers when the genre fully emerged in the Edo period. The first generations of professional *rakugo* performers held the *Uji shûi monogatari* in very high esteem. Utei Enba (1743-1822), an important satirist-storyteller-writer, often presented one of its tales at the beginning of his narrative performance. When public storytelling was restricted by the Tokugawa government in 1794, he camouflaged his activities by renaming them "Readings of the *Uji shûi monogatari*," since *setsuwa* tales were not affected by the government restrictions. Again, in 1817, a storyteller named Asanebô Muraku I[15] announced a storytelling contest under the pretext of "an exhibition of paintings and the reading of tales from the *Uji shûi monogatari*" (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 217-218).

Thanks to these performers, present-day *rakugo* has a large overlap with the *Konjyaku monogatari* and *Uji shûi monogatari*. Several important features of *rakugo* stories, such as the conventionalized name of the jester (which ends in *-roku*, as in "Tôroku" or "Hikoroku"); a number of eccentric character types; and the Guardian proprietor, who takes the form of an animal such as an *uwabami* "big serpent," fox, or badger are all found in either or both of these two works (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 219-228).

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[15] Names of performers are frequently reused, leading to their being numbered like royal appelations in European countries.

Setsuwa Literature During and After the Muromachi Period

Popular sermon activities and the contribution of lay people to *setsuwa* literature both continued during the Muromachi period (1392-1573). However, the latter half of Muromachi, known as the Age of the Warring States, saw a significant fusion of the secular and religious narrative traditions, which resulted in a large production of popular short story collections. These anthologies are commonly called *otogizôshi* today, after the title of the 23 Muromachi period stories selected and reprinted by an Osaka publisher in early Edo (Roch 1980: 182).[16]

While it is likely that many of these short stories were orally spread by a large variety of traveling entertainers (whose ranks were swollen by unemployed warriors, craftsmen and landless peasants as the wars created social and economic chaos),[17] they also formed the stock in trade of the well-respected storytelling experts hired by military leaders, known as

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[16] *Otogizôshi* is no more than a general designation given to the various collections of short stories which appeared in the Muromachi period. The definition of the term *otogizôshi* has been as controversial as the identities of their compilers (cf. Ôshima 1968).

[17] Toyota discusses the socio-cultural context behind the emergence of *otogishû*.. The prolonged civil wars destroyed the traditional social order, resulting in the phenomenon known as *gekokujô,* the overthrow of superiors by inferiors (*ge* means "low/inferior," *jô* means "high/superior,'" and *koku* means "to take control over." Warrior status could be easily obtained by any male willing to fight for a clan; and any warrior could in theory become a lord, given sufficient wisdom, skill, and luck. This *gekokujô* spirit influenced the creation of popular legends and myths justifying achieved rather than ascribed social status, as well as their counterpart, tales expressing the pathos of a hero's loss of power and status (Toyoda 1980).

otogishû.[18] As we mentioned above, the *otogishû* came from a diverse occupational and social background. They not only served as entertainer-educators for the lords and warriors but often worked as spies, gathering information on enemies under the cover of their ordinary occupation (Sekiyama 1973a: 100-101).[19]

After the end of the civil war, when the Japanese state was reunited, most of these *otogishû* were deprived of their previous source of employment. They and their successors perforce became public entertainers, the performers of what would develop into *rakugo* and other narrative arts. In the seventeenth century, they began to compile handbooks of favorite stories. This genre of literature, commonly dubbed *kanazôshi*,[20] was circulated relatively widely, thanks to woodblock and copperplate printing.

It was evidently under the influence of *kanazôshi* that Anrakuan Sakuden wrote his eight-volume *Seisuishô (Laughs That Shake Off Sleep*;

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[18] *Togi* means "to narrate" and/or "to contribute a partnership"; *shû* means "group"; and *o-* is an honorific indicating the person's status.

[19] Sekiyama points out the important place masters of tea ceremony occupied among the *otogishû* For example, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, who eventually succeeded in conquering the country, had many renowned masters as his *otogishû*, including Sen no Rikyû. The tea ceremony was then inseparable from the practice of *cha-banashi*, or "stories to accompany tea." Expert tea masters were all well versed in storytelling, which was seen as a necessary part of their hospitality (Sekiyama 1973a: 101-102).

[20] *Kanazôshi* were written in the plain *kana* syllabary without the use of Chinese characters, and thus could even be read by a child (Shinmura 1983: 478).

Mutô 1971). Sakuden[21] was a priest of the Jodo sect affiliated with the Agui school, at the same time as he was a master of the tea ceremony who served Toyotomi Hideyoshi as one of his *otogishû*. The *Seisuishô* quotes or alludes to numerous *setsuwa* stories and exemplary tales of different time period, demonstrating how widely read its author was in these forms of literature.[22]

Sakuden made at least one significant structural contribution to the development of *rakugo*. This was the recognition and elaboration of an ending technique known as *ochi* (or *sage,* meaning "fall" or "drop"), the point made by the short concluding statement. His contribution gave rise to the term *otoshi-banashi*, "stories with *ochi*," which are direct ancestors of *rakugo*. In fact, the *ochi* has become the most important structural feature of *rakugo* today, since it forms the ending of the typical *rakugo* narration.

Although the *Seisuishô* was sermon literature, it became widely read by later *rakugo* performers. Santô Kyôden, a well-known writer of the late Edo period, for example, recognized Sakuden as an expert *rakugo* narrator. Even today, many of the stories from the *Seisuishô* are used by the *rakugo* performers in largely unchanged form. According to Morioka and Sasaki

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[21] In referring to important storytellers, I prefer to use their first names. First, this is the normal practice among Japanese scholars. Second, the individual's unique identities is highlighted by his individualistic first name — the last name often indicates his lineage.

[22] Sekiyama (1973a: 118) lists *Konjyaku monogatari, Makurano sôshi, Ujidainagon monogatari, Ujishûi monogatari, Kokon Chomon shû, Kyôgen,* and *Otogi-zôshi,* as well as religious texts such as *Gen Kyôsyoku sho, Saseki shû,* and *Seppô Meigan ron .*

(1990: 229), about thirty stories from the *Seisuishô* reappear, wholly or partially, in present-day *rakugo* .

One of these is the short story "Hirabayashi" 平林 ("Flat forest"). In this story, Sakuden mocks the over-learnedness of a priest, and at the same time makes fun of his own secular surname, Hirabayashi. Hirabayashi is written with two simple Chinese characters, 平 and 林. The character 平 can be read *hira, taira, hei,* or *hyô,* and its components are 一, 八, and 十. 一 can be read *ichi* or *hitotsu,* both meaning "one" or "single." 八 can be read *hachi* or *yatsu,* meaning "eight." 十 can be read *tô* or *jû,* meaning "ten." As for 林, it can be read *hayashi* or *rin,* and its components are two 木 , which are read *boku, moku,* or *ki,* meaning "tree." In "Hirabayashi," a letter is addressed to someone called Hirabayashi. The boy who has to deliver the letter asks a priest how to pronounce the name, which he cannot read. The priest promptly gives every possible pronunciation: "Hyôrin," "Heirin," "Tairarin," "Hirarin," "Ichi-hachi-jû-no-moku-moku," or finally, the correct "Hirabayashi" (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 230, see also Sekiyama 1973: 110-119).

2. The Formation of Edo *Rakugo*

The formation of *rakugo* went hand in hand with the emergence of a strong *chonin* culture in the town of Edo. Both were steady processes, and both took some time to complete.

The evolution of Edo *rakugo* saw it pass through three stages to become a commercial theatrical art. The first was the appearance of professional street storytellers. This was followed by the popularity of

hanashi no kai, or "storytelling gatherings," put on by literary-minded semi-professional storytellers. Finally, there was the popularization of commercial performances of *otoshi-banashi*, and consequently the building of communal variety halls called *yose* (Enomoto 1984: 21). Since all three stages are part of the more general historical development towards Edo *chonin* culture, I shall begin by providing a brief account of Edo culture and society.

Edo *chonin*: the Influence of the Periphery over the Core

In 1603, Tokugawa Ieyasu established the center of his feudal government in the town of Edo, where his successors ruled for the next two hundred and sixty years. This political stability owed much to the laws and policies established by the Tokugawa government, including their isolationism. However, the Tokugawa was also an era of competition between the south-central urban centers (Kyoto, the traditional capital, and Osaka, the merchant's town) and Edo, which had had a meager population in the early seventeenth century.

The Tokugawa government's laws and policies to strengthen and stabilize its institutional foundations relied heavily upon a capacity to promote Edo as the bureaucratic, educational, commercial, and linguistic heart of the country.[23] Of course, this process of urbanization and centralization required a massive migration of the population from all

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[23] Nagai discusses the linguistic diversity and cultural complexity of Edo. In addition to the traditional diglossia between the written and spoken languages, social and regional dialects, gender-related, and occupation-related languages all rapidly appeared as the town expanded (Nagai 1971a: 59-60).

regions, with diverse socio-economic backgrounds. After this process began, Edo began to assert its own heterogeneous and pragmatic *urban* identity, generated by those who considered themselves *Edokko*, or "genuine Edo urbanites," who formed strong aesthetic, ideological, and commercial networks transcending the feudal caste (cf. Hino 1976, Ienaga 1987: 135-157, Nagai 1971a: 59).

The Tokugawa government established many strict laws and policies to sustain its power and influence. Here, we will touch on the three best known: the establishment of the feudal caste system, the promotion of neo-Confucianism, and the compulsory system of *sankin-kôtai*, a daimyô's alternate-year residence in Edo.

As we have remarked, the lengthy civil wars encouraged people to aspire towards a better life and upward social mobility. In order to prevent further rebellions and stifle political competition, the Tokugawa government restored the feudal caste system, with warriors highest and farmers, artisans, and merchants below them, merchants the lowest of all (Ienaga 1987: 123-124).[24] This hierarchy was justified through a variety of

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[24] One should note that the warriors were of commoner origin, not noble (cf. note 17 to this chapter). Thus this caste is a somewhat artificial one, based less upon its members' antecedents (if so, then most warriors would have been farmers) but more upon loyalty to the system of politico-economic organization, analogous to the company-system of present-day Japan. The irony of this system was that the warriors' cultural inferiority to the merchants was built into it. The new warrior class elites lacked the "noble" manner of life — they lacked proper education (many of them were self-taught), esprit, and aesthetic taste. These powerful "country bumpkins" studied the "high" culture with the masters of tea ceremony, the intelligentsia of the merchant class. Merchants from the town of Sakai were

moral teachings, particularly the neo-Confucianism adopted by the Tokugawa government as its ethical framework.[25] This arrangement demonstrated considerable strategic ingenuity: the farmers, the least socio-economically advantaged group, were peacefully incorporated into the national economy; and the merchants, the most economically advantaged, were assigned the lowest rank and were therefore subjected to the most onerous social regulations. However, in the expanding town of Edo, the system did not prove to be as effective as it was elsewhere. Skilled craftsmen and merchants migrated from all over Japan to Edo, and gradually acquired a high degree of economic independence as *entrepreneurs*, vital suppliers of goods and services to the warrior class.[26]

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especially respected, since Sakai was kept out of the war to protect the personal wealth and productive capacity found there — the Switzerland of medieval Japan!

[25] In China a similar four-part system goes back very early, except that there, the four rankings are *scholar*, peasant, craftsman, and merchant, with fighting men not mentioned at all. In each country, the group responsible for propagating the ideology put itself in the highest place.

Although it is appropriate to regard Confucianism as a philosophical school rather than a religion, it is also important to note that Confucianism came to Japan from China in the 6th century, together with Buddhism; and before its promotion in Edo period, it had been studied by Zen priests (Ienaga 1987: 21, 139). Ooms (1985) points out that the enforcement of feudal morals during early Edo was done through Buddhism and Shintoism as well as Confucianism.

[26] Such economic independence owed much to the completeness and complexity made possible by the exceptionally high population concentration in downtown Edo. In the late 18th century, the population of Edo reached one million. About 50% was warrior class, who resided in the upper town, and the rest were merchants and craftsmen in the lower town (Nishiyama 1981).

Another way in which the Tokugawa government sought to throttle any political competition at birth was the system of *sankin-kôtai*. This was the obligation of each regional lord to reside in Edo every other year; that is, for one year out of every three. *Sankin-kôtai* was an effective control mechanism for two reasons. First, the lord's periodic physical absence from his governing region weakened his powers of immediate decision-making, reducing efficiency and causing local problems to pile up for him to deal with later. Second, it imposed a great financial burden upon the lords, who were responsible for paying for their retinue in Edo, as well as the costs of the journey there and back, which had to be managed in appropriate (and expensive) style.

Although the *sankin-kôtai* system succeeded for a long time in preventing any accumulation of bureaucratic or economic power in the local clans, it ironically brought about a corresponding concentration of economic and cultural power among the townspeople in Edo. Because most of the warriors in Edo were not native to the city, the local merchants and artisans came to have far deeper roots in the region than the warriors. Over the generations many merchants emerged as proprietors of long-established stores with brand-name products. Many craftsmen, too, began to operate large-scale establishments, including ones devoted to printing and publishing. Thanks to the evolution of this spirit of entrepreneurship, such merchants and craftsmen came to posses a conscious collective identity as Edo urbanites, or *Edokko*, by the latter half of the Edo period (Hino1976: 157). Many disillusioned, unemployed, or bankrupt warriors joined this

emerging cultural group, often completely abandoning their former careers.[27]

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, wealthy merchants were able to purchase nearly all the goods and services that a warrior might possess — the education, lifestyle, entertainment, weaponry, and even the financial assets of the feudal lords (Nishiyama 1981). Heartened by such economic strength, the townspeople invested in and developed their own means of artistic expression, such as *kabuki, kyôgen*, satirical and humorous poems, and many verbal arts genres, including *otoshi-banashi*.

Such arts reflected the distinct world view of the townspeople, whose values were epitomized by two concepts, *tsu* and *iki*. *Tsu* means expertise, especially in secular matters, and *iki* means stylishness or chic. These concepts and the lifestyle they informed were in direct opposition to Confucian doctrine, which taught people to look down on earthly pleasures and unrestricted individual expression, and emphasized formality and tradition. The townspeople's culture was thus liberal in nature, and the *otoshi-banashi* and other art forms of Edo tended to reflect the uncompromising attitudes of the townspeople towards the ruling class (Nishiyama 1981). One example of this attitude is provided by the following excerpt from a popular *rakugo* story, "Kubi-jôchin" ("A head

[27] For example, the Confucian doctrine was at first only of interest to the warrior class, but later many lower-class townspeople came to study it. Some of the most representative thinkers of Edo period are of *chônin* origin: Itô Jinsai, Tominaga Nakamoto, and Motoori Norinaga, for example (Ienaga 1987: 140-141).

lantern"), which uses the type of *tanka*, or "stylish caustic words" a *chônin* might have hurled at a warrior :

> "...If I am afraid of samurai, I can't watch the battle plays. What? You've got two of those 'sticks' (= swords)? Don't you think I know that? A broiled eel wears several sticks, even a cheap baked *tôfu* has two, you idiot! Well, maybe you've never eaten such eel, hah!? Are you going to kill me with those swords? O.K., go ahead and cut me into pieces! (Tugs his clothes and shows his neck, arms and legs) you want my neck, or arm or my ass? Slice me into pieces; I won't charge you if my blood ain't red, just like good watermelons are always red! Come now! (Ekuni 1978: 119, translation mine).

The Development of Edo *Rakugo*

The first notable step towards the formation of *rakugo* after Sakuden was made by Shikano Buzaemon (1649-1697), the pioneer professional storyteller (in the modern sense) in Edo. Buzaemon gave indoor performances (*zashiki*) to warriors and wealthy merchants. Since his performances employed gestures, *shikata* , borrowed from *kabuki*, his style of storytelling came to be called *Zashiki shikata banashi* (Nobuhiro 1971: 166). He also set up a marsh-reed shelter and told stories to the people passing by in the street. Hence, his stories were also known as *tsuji-banashi*, or "street storytelling" (Enomoto 1984: 18-19, Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 235).

His narratives are collected in *Shikano Buzaemon Kuden banashi (The Stories Orally Transmitted by Shikano Buzaemon)* and *Shikano Makifude*

(Shikano's Written Work).[28] Buzaemon was characterized by the use of Edo vocabulary and dramatic plots in his stories, both of which became prominent features of later classical *rakugo* (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 235). His works are some of the large number of humorous books produced in the late seventeenth century, called *karukuchi-bon*, or "light-mouthed books." The vast majority of the *karukuchi-bon* were produced by amateur storytellers in Osaka, Kyoto and Edo,[29] who gathered to share the joy of storytelling. Many of them were inspired by professional performances by such figures as Buzaemon[30] (Mutô 1971: 133).

The next significant stage in the evolution of *rakugo* was marked by the rise of *hanashi no kai*, or "storytelling-gatherings" in the mid-eighteenth century. The forerunner of this was the popular practice of exchanging *kyôka*, satirical poems (Enomoto 1984: 20-21). Thus, the *kyôka* poets were frequently expert storytellers as well.

The most important promoter of such gatherings was Utei Enba, a master carpenter, satiric poet, playwright, storyteller, and *gesakusha*, or a writer of popular fiction.[31] He held the first of his own storytelling contests

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[28] Literally, his "scroll and pen" (*maki* means either "scroll," "roll," or "curl"; *fude* means "brush pen").

[29] Seventy to eighty percent of the *karukuchi-bon* were produced in Kyoto and Osaka (Mutô: 137).

[30] Street storytellers appeared in Osaka and Kyoto about the same time as Buzaemon in Edo: Yonezawa Hikohachi in Osaka, and Tsuyuno Gorobei in Kyoto (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 234).

[31] He was one of the most important literary figures of later Edo, along with Ota Nanpo, a *gesaku* writer/literary critic with the status of a government officer. Enba

in 1786, and the second two years later. After that he held monthly meetings until 1792, when storytelling activities were restricted by the government's Kansei reform. He then camouflaged his meetings as "readings of *Ujishûi monogatari*," as already noted; but they were again suspended by a government order in 1797. The results of these contests between 1757 and 1797 were published in the collections *Kibidango (Millet Dumplings)*, *Kotoba no hana (Blossoms of Words)*, and *Bujishûi* (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 237, Nobuhiro 1967, 1969, 1971, 1986).

Enba's books were but one contribution to a new and widely circulated genre of popular literature called *kobanashi-bon*.[32] The emergence of *kobanashi-bon* is a watershed in the history of the Japanese publishing industry. Earlier, most books had been published in Osaka or Kyoto, but most *kobanashi-bon* were put out in Edo and then exported to other regions. Enba lived at the time when Edo was becoming the cultural capital of Japan in fact as well as in name, with the *chônin* culture building strength. The *kabuki* theater was at its peak, and popular fiction in two subgenres was widespread, *share-bon* , or "stylish fiction," and *kokkei-bon* "humorous fiction."[33] The temple-based, private education system called

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was also a great fan of the *kabuki* actor Danjûro V. Enba organized Danjûro's fan club, called the "*mimasu-ren*" (*mimasu* means "to watch," or "three square-shaped measures," and *ren*, "group.") Enba made three square-shaped measures 回 the trademark of his carpentry firm, conscious of its advertising effects (Nobuhiro 1967: 442-445, 1971: 180-181, 1986: 2-107.).

32 *Kobanashi* means "short narration," *bon* (*hon*) means "book."

33 *Share-hon* described the world of red-light districts and earthly pleasures. After the Kansei reform, the term *kokkei-bon* came to be used in place of *share-hon*, but both types are similar in content (Shinmura 1983: 878, 1122).

terakoya, "temple-school," widened the access to literacy in Japanese and Chinese among townspeople. In fact, many popular Chinese comic stories were translated into Japanese about this time, while on the other hand there were also attempts to translate Japanese comic stories into Chinese (for Japanese readers; Mutô 1971: 138-142, Tanaka Y: 149-159).

By this time, virtually everything that *rakugo* would need was in place: basic structure, source books, potential practitioners and supporters, and context for the performances: everything but professional performers and regular theatrical performances. These final pieces in the puzzle were to be supplied through the popularity of *otoshi-banashi* in the later Edo period. *Otoshi-banashi* then became one of the most vital means of generating and defining the norms of *chônin* culture, because its communal variety halls, the *yose*, were universally accessible. The *yose* were sometimes situated in special buildings, but more often they were accommodated by temporary conversion of a workshop, operating only in the evenings. By the early nineteenth century, the number of *yose* in Edo had exceeded one hundred by the most conservative estimate.[34]

The founder of the *yose* in Edo was Sanshôtei Karaku (1777-1833), a close associate of Enba.[35] Karaku opened up a temporary theater at the

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[34] The exact number of *yose* is unknown. However, it is commonly said that at the peak of *yose*-based *otoshi-banashi*, at least one *yose* (of some kind) could be found in every town district. There were supposed to be a total of 808 districts in Edo.

[35] Sanshôtei Karaku restored Enba's storytelling gatherings in 1800. Before this, satiric poets had been the most active participants in the contest. Their roles were now taken over by professional *otoshi-banashi* performers (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 237).

Shitaya Inari Shrine (in present-day Ueno) in 1798. However, he ran through his repertoire in five days and closed down. In spite of this disaster, Karaku decided to become a professional storyteller, investing all of his personal belongings in his professional future. After some years of practice in suburban areas, Karaku opened another *yose* at Shitaya. By 1815, he had become not only a successful performer but also a busy manager of several different *yose* halls (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 241).

In order to keep his audience attentive, Karaku developed many interesting methods of contextualizing his narratives. The most notable was the instant creation of impromptu *rakugo* stories based on three topics suggested by the audience. These were called *sandai-banashi* (three-topic-stories; Nobuhiro 1967: 446; 1986: 127-156). *Sandai-banashi* were longer than the narrations (*kobanashi*) which had been performed at Enba's storytelling gatherings — *rakugo* narration was getting longer and more dramatically refined. It was to become an independent, and popular, genre a few decades later: literati near the end of the Edo period organized *sandai-banashi* fan clubs to promote it and its most notable practitioners, such as Sanyûtei Enchô (Okitsu 1979: 41-42).[36] It was also during this time that the genre of *ninjô-banashi*, tragi-comedy without a humorous *ochi*, was established (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 241).

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[36] After the big earthquake that hit Edo in 1855, the *yose* audience quality changed drastically. Craftsmen, particularly carpenters, became regular patrons, since they possessed the most needed and well-paid skills and services (to reconstruct the town). This encouraged the inclusion of their favorite masculine stories such as those pertaining to gambling, drinking, and red-light districts (Okitsu 1979: 55).

Karaku thus came to form the center of a literary-minded artistic circle made up of storytellers, playwrights, novelists, and painters. His followers included many famed *otoshi-banashi* performers such as Ishii Sôshuku and Asanebô Muraku (the founders of *ninjô-banashi*), Sanyûtei Enshô I (who excelled in *shibai-banashi*, adapted from *kabuki* stories), and Hayashiya Shôzô I (who specialized in *kaidan-banashi*, or ghost stories; Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 241). Shikitei Sanba, a famous novelist, based the first half of his novel *Ukiyo Buro (In the Public Bath)* on Karaku's *otoshi-banashi* narrations. Karaku himself wrote a *kokkei-bon* (humorous fictional book) entitled *Kareki no Hana (The Blossoms of a Dried-Up Tree)*, as well as printed collections of his own *otoshi-banashi* stories such as *Sanshôtei Karaku Jihitsu Kobanashi shû (Short Stories written By Sanshôtei Karaku Himself)* (Nobuhiro 1967, 1986; Okitsu 1979: 33). We can thus see that the rigid distinction between oral literature and written literature assumed by many modern scholars, and the destructive supremacy of the latter over the former, does not appear to have affected the work of master storytellers like Karaku and his associates. They switched from oral to written and back again, using whatever form was appropriate for the task at hand, without a noticeable impoverishment of either.

3. Edo *Rakugo* in the Meiji Period

In 1868, the Edo feudal government and its official isolationist policy were brought to a close by an alliance of local military leaders from the southern island of Kyushu. The subsequent Meiji period was characterized by a massive effort to import western values and commodities. Nationalism, democracy, capitalism, colonialism, mass-education and

industrialization were all introduced under the general rubric of "modernization," presented as a necessity for national survival. The increasingly grim fate of China at the hands of western imperialism served as an object warning of what would happen if the effort faltered or failed.

The organization and articulation of this effort seemed to require a common linguistic medium, a standardized "national" language that could be publicly spoken, written, and taught, and understood by all. Such a language was only beginning to emerge in the early Meiji period. However, since the town of Edo continued to be the capital, under the new name of Tokyo, it was inevitable that such a national language would be based on the languages found there. The question was, which form of Japanese was most widely shared by the residents of the city?

Of all places, the answer was found in the *yose*, where two forms of popular public narration, *rakugo* and *kôdan* , or "historical narrative," were regularly performed. These two forms constituted the only *kowa*, or "public discourse" easily accessible to every level of Tokyo society, being in this respect somewhat similar to radio and television broadcasts today. Thus, *rakugo* came to play a vital role in the promotion of a uniform national language. In the following paragraphs, I will briefly examine *rakugo*'s contribution to the development of political oratory, modern literature, and public education during the Meiji period.

Rakugo and Political Oratory

The relationship between early Meiji politicians and *rakugo* performers was tense, but mutually dependent. While the politicians turned

to *rakugo* as an important public source of linguistic expression in Tokyo, they also exercised a strict control on *yose* activities. Thus *rakugo* contributed to the shaping of the modern political discourse, at the same time that its expressive power was brought into a necessary conformity to the new political establishment.

The language situation in Tokyo at the beginning of Meiji was pluralistic. The population shift due to the termination of feudalism and the civil war accelerated the traditional social and regional language diversities: the old warrior class and many of the townspeople left the city, while the new political elites, intellectuals, and military officers from Southern regions flooded into it. Since the old warrior class had resided in the upper town, *yamanote*, which was the preferred place of residence for the new power-holders from outside, the uptown manner of speaking came to be regarded as the most appropriate form for the standard language (Iwabuchi 1988: 84-85, Tanaka A. 1988: 6-9).

However, upper town speech was not unified. Once again, it was a fusion of social and regional language varieties, constantly influenced by the language of the townspeople, lower town (*shitamachi*) speech, textualized in popular literature of all kinds. As more and more warrior class residents had come to share the culture of the Edo townspeople in later Edo, they had recognized esthetic value in lower town speech as well (Tobita 1988: 17-28). Thus when the new political elites came from the south, they were inevitably advised to attend the various forms of public narration given at *yose* theaters in the lower town to familiarize themselves with urban culture. Only thus could they hope to adjust their political

rhetoric — the linguistic tool of modernization — to a form of discourse that would make sense to Tokyo residents (Iwabuchi 1988: 91, Tanaka A.1988: 6-9).

This was when the actual term *rakugo* came to be used, instead of *otoshi-banashi*: the new social environment encouraged the new term to demonstrate the political innocence of *otoshi-banashi*.[37] Thus, the much-banned *otoshi-banashi* became *rakugo*, the Chinese pronunciation of the same characters. The Meiji restoration did not immediately bring greater freedom to the masses, and Dajôkan, "the first Meiji Cabinet," treated nonconformists harshly. In 1872, the newly formed Ministry of Religious Education requested that all educators, scholars, writers, actors, and storytellers promulgate the spirit of *kôdô*, "the Imperial Way," as laid down in the *Sanjô no kyômon*, "the Three Charters of Education." During the following two decades, restrictive edicts were repeatedly issued, accompanied by persistent police control of *yose* activities. Police regulations used the Sino-Japanese reading, *rakugo*, which was the source from which it entered popular usage (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 249-250).

Rakugo and Modern Literature

The most difficult task that the Meiji language planners and educators faced in the standardization of a national language was probably the unification of the spoken and written languages: the traditional diglossia was seen as a serious obstacle to public literacy. This inspired the

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[37] See Morioka and Sasaki for the repeated government restrictions on yose activities during Edo and Meiji periods (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 238-240, 248-252).

movement known as *genbun itchi undo*, or the unification of the spoken and written language, initiated by the new wave of literati in Tokyo seeking a fresh literary style (Iwabuchi 1988: 91, Morioka 1988: 45-53).

This movement would have been much hindered without the contribution from the professional storytellers, most notably Sanyûtei Enchô (1839-1900), the father of modern classical *rakugo*. The new literati,[38] who desired to create national literary works that could compete with Western literary works, believed that in "modern" (= Western) nations, spoken and written languages were unified. In their attempts to create their own identity, they thus sought their model in Edo language and the culture it expressed, especially the *rakugo* performed by Enchô (Morioka 1988: 47).

Sanyûtei Enchô was a Zen-trained professional storyteller who excelled in performing all subgenres of *rakugo*. He synthesized the different elements of these genres into longer stores, which were much more dramatic and realistic, following the tradition of *ninjô-banashi* as opposed to *otoshi-banashi* (Sekiyama 1973a: 143-151). Thanks to the introduction of stenography, his first transcribed work, *Botan Dôrô (Peony Lantern)* appeared in print in 1884. The oral style of *Botan Dôrô* had an unexpectedly great influence upon the new literary circles. It was only two years later, in 1886, that the first novel written in colloquial style, *Ukigumo*

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[38] The Meiji novelists who favored and used *rakugo* motifs and expressions included some of the representative writers of *junbungaku*, "pure literature" or "literature for literature's sake," such as Natsume Sôseki and Shiga Naoya.

(*Floating clouds*) by Futabatei Shimei was published (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 255).[39]

Enchô deserves to be regarded as one of the most prominent Meiji writers, although he may not have physically "written" his books. To this day, his collected works, which come to 13 volumes in all, are considered literary classics, ranked together with representative modern novels. His pioneering contribution to the Japanese literary world also included the adaptations of western literary works. He was acquainted with many scholars and intellectuals, who served as his source for information about foreign literature. Enchô was thus able to learn the stories of a number of Western novels and literary works. He performed Japanese versions of many popular Western stories even before they had been translated into Japanese and published in written form (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 257, Nagai 1971b: 246).[40]

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[39] Shimei frequently visited *yose* to study Enchô's work, and was not shy about expressing his indebtedness (Ozaki 1989: 19). Many Meiji novelists were inspired by favorite *rakugo* performers and stories. Natsume Sôseki, for example, was a great fan of Sanyûtei Enyû, and he used *rakugo* motifs in his novel *Wagahai wa neko de aru* (*I am a cat*). Shiga Naoya admired the performances of the master Yanagiya Kosan III. Yoshida Isamu and Kubota Mantarô wrote a play and a novel out of their great admiration for Kokontei Shinshô IV and Yanagiya ("Blind") Kosen. During his youth, Nagai Kafû became an apprentice under Sanshôtei Muraku VII, and even appeared on stage until the day a family retainer happened to attend one of his performances "and he was led home by the ear" (Seidensticker 1965: 11; Enomoto1971: 261).

[40] Morioka and Sasaki discuss the rivalry which existed between Enchô and his Australian disciple, Kairakutei Black, the only foreigner who became a full-fledged *rakugo* performer: "Like his master, Enchô, Black gained considerable popularity

In addition, the Meiji period also witnessed massive attempts to preserve *rakugo* and other narrative arts performances in written form, through the use of stenography. *Rakugo* texts were regularly published in newspapers and literary reviews, and there were several journals dedicated to the collection of *rakugo* and other narrative arts, such as *Hyakkaen*, *Hanakatami* and *Momochidori* (Okitsu 1979: 200-201).[41] The availability of a large quantity of *rakugo* transcriptions enabled the later compilation of an important guide booklet for *rakugo* performers. This was the *Mukashi banashi moro moro (Old Tales of All Kinds)*, by the Yanagi school, one of two prominent modern schools concerned with the preservation of the artistic quality of *rakugo* (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 263).[42]

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through adaptations of popular Western novels, and a strong sense of rivalry existed between the two. In quick succession, Black presented no fewer than 8 Western romances and *ninjô-banashi*-like popular crime stories to his audiences. Black became the unchallenged authority on Western novels, and his narrations were not only listened to attentively but were also widely read in book form. In 1894, he presented Charles Dickens' Oliver Twist as *Minashigo*, 'The Orphan.' In turn, in 1895, Enchô offered an adaptation of Guy de Maupassant's *Un parricide* (1882) as *Meijin Chôji*, 'Master Cabinet-Maker Chôji.' These two *rakugo* artists were the first to introduce Dickens and Maupassant to Japan" (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 257).

41 These journals were widely circulated. For example, *Hyakkaen*, first published in 1890, appeared twice a month and had a print run of 150,000 (Hino 1976: 22).

42 This booklet listed 494 titles of stories which *should* be performed. It is also during the Meiji period that *rakugo* was canonized as "traditional" therefore to be conventionalized and preserved in the forms these schools considered it had been during the late Edo (cf. Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 261-263).

Rakugo and Public Education

Enchô's contribution to the national language was also recognized by educators. The early Meiji period saw the establishment of a compulsory education system, and by 1902, over ninety percent of primary-school-age children in Japan were attending public schools.[43] In Tokyo, six public schools had been opened in 1889, with space for over fifty percent of the school-age population. The primary aim of the public education was the promotion of literacy, which was considered synonymous with the promotion of a national language. The foundation for the all but universal literacy in present-day Japan was thus laid in early Meiji.[44] Since this education was implemented in parallel with the movement to unify the written and spoken languages, educators acknowledged the importance of the spoken form of Tokyo-based standard Japanese (Iwabuchi 1988: 85-59). This was one of the major reasons why Enchô's biographical work, *Shiobara Tasuke Ichidai-ki (The Biography of Shiobara Tasuke)* was adapted for ethical education textbooks in 1892 (Nagai 1971b: 241).[45]

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[43] This figure reached 99.5 % by 1926 (Iwabuchi 1988: 85).

[44] We should note that private institutions such as the *terakoya* had already paved the way for the state's effort. This was especially true in Edo where many — perhaps up to fifty percent — of the townspeople acquired functional literacy. We should also note that the written media such as newspapers, magazines, and journals were already in a wide circulation in Edo before they were further expanded in Meiji period (Iwabuchi 1988: 85).

[45] *Shiobara Tasuke Ichidai-ki* was performed before the Meiji Emperor in 1892. We must understand, however, that this favorable attention was double-edged. Enchô as well as other narrative artists were considered educators and therefore were subjected to the strict moral edicts issued by the Meiji government. Enchô's

4. Post-Meiji *rakugo*

The popularity of *rakugo* has remained undiminished in the face of twentieth-century communication technology and the new artistic media it has spawned. The introduction of phonograph recordings, radio, and television has had a generally positive effect, by expanding both the subject matter and the audience for *rakugo*. Edo *rakugo*, whose live *yose* performances were usually confined to the national capital and its suburbs during the Edo period, has now become popular nationwide.

Of course, not all modern influences have been good for *rakugo*. The competition of the cinema, for example, which was quickly and enthusiastically adopted in Japan, drained audiences away from *yose* beginning in the Taishô period (1912-1925; Sekiyama 1973a: 169). Radio and television broadcasting have inflicted similar damage, even as they brought *rakugo* to many who would never have heard it before. From time to time, *rakugo* has been subjected to restrictive edicts by public authorities, which has occasionally forced modification of the forms and messages utilized. Yet *rakugo* has managed to steer a middle course between change and conservation, never letting one completely dominate the other. As a result, it has been able to act both as the vehicle for a mass of traditional culture and as an arena for tradition to negotiate its constantly evolving compromises with modernity.

Shiobara Tasuke Ichidai-ki proved to be an ethically exemplary tale (Ozaki 1989: 13-17).

Chapter 3

Rakugo today:
Yose and the Urban Professional Storytellers

Tokyo. Approaching from the air, with its sky-high buildings, its transportation network as complex and orderly as a spider's web, multi-layered highways feathering out into smaller and smaller roads and lanes — to foreign eyes Tokyo probably appears just another metropolis, albeit a very large one. Yet should the visitor takes a closer look, its distinct cultural history can be seen everywhere. Tucked in between the gray concrete motor roads there are narrow, shaded paths leading to mossy temples and shrines; among the towering buildings there are bridges overlooking the rivers that still carry old-fashioned boats lit with paper lanterns; and every now and then, people crowd the roads to the graveyards with flowers, foods, and *sake*, to worship their ancestors. In Tokyo, one can find every possible modulation of "modernity," exisiting side by side or mingled with a popular way of life unchanged for many centuries.[1] Performance arts are no exception.[2]

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[1] This passage (and some that will appear later) might be criticized as overly "nostalgic." However, I am in no way persuaded that the "past" that one sees in present-day Tokyo (or Japan) is any better than the "present" or "modernity." What I wish to bring over is its *relative* strength, the cultural tendency to retain the past while accepting newer developments. This forms a thematic parallal for the coexistence of orality and literacy in Japan.

[2] Some may grimace at the "Orientalist" flavour here, but it is a deliberate part of my design. Many still assume that there exist boundaries between "West" and "East," political, cultural, or geographical, and to theoretically challenge that view, working anthropologists must take it into account.

Walking down the main streets leading to the East Gate of Shinjuku Station, the center of activity for Tokyoites and tourists alike, you can find nearly all forms of contemporary visual and performance art, from the latest North American, European and Japanese films, live jazz music from New York, Los Angeles, or smaller centers, Broadway musicals and ballet, down to street performance artists from all over the world. Yet, as you move through the crowds in their colorful and stylish dress, pass the tall Alta building whose wall is a television screen, the six-story Kinokuniya bookstore, the MacDonald's and Shakey's outlets, moving towards *Shinjuku san-chôme*, the Third Block of Shinjuku, you will come upon a distinctly traditional theater — the Shinjuku Suehirotei. Its old-fashioned wooden exterior, and the calligraphy on wood and paper listing the performers' names, stands in sharp contrast to the lavishly commercial surroundings. This is one of several places in Tokyo where *rakugo* is performed every day. The sound of the traditional drum occasionally proclaims the theatre's presence to the passers-by, but for most of the time, the *yose* remains quiet. But once you enter the theater, the silence is gone. The verbal broadsides of the performers await us should we step in unprepared — a novice audience can easily become the butt of their gags and satirical remarks.

This chapter has two parts. The first part is an examination of the present social position of *rakugo* in Tokyo. The second part is the ethnographic account of a performance — the event which will be further analyzed in the next chapter — done as a first person narrative.

Part 1: Contemporary Social Norms

Methods of Research

The information presented below is primarily based on field research conducted between July and mid-September 1992 in Tokyo. During this period, I was graciously permitted to observe the performances and various *yose* activities at the Shinjuku Suehirotei. I also observed *rakugo* and other performances at other *rakugo* theaters; studied the backstage and extra-*yose* activities of the storytellers; and conducted interviews, both formal and casual, with storytellers, theater owners and employees, regular *yose*-goers, amateur performers, and *rakugo* experts. This information has been supplemented by literary data, as well as the ethnographic knowledge on *rakugo* I have acquired as a native Japanese.

1. Performers

At present, there are over three hundred professional *rakugo* storytellers, *hanashika*, in Tokyo. Most of them are male: there are only a handful of female *hanashika*. They can be classified into three groups according to rank: *zenza, futatsume,* and *shin'uchi*.

The first step in a *rakugo* career is to begin studying under a master *hanashika*. A master *hanashika* belongs to one of the main *hanashika* "houses," nominal and stylistic lineages that go back for generations. The novice, once he or she has progressed far enough to be allowed to appear on stage, is called a *zenza,* or "curtain raiser." The age of a *zenza* is typically between fifteen and twenty-seven. Although it used to be

common for a *zenza* to live in his master's house, nowadays very few do so, primarily due to the modern preference for a more private and individualistic home life (Irifunetei 1992).[3]

A *zenza*'s performance responsibility is marginal: he or she is not expected to be creative, or even particularly expert. During the several years *hanashika* spend as *zenza*, they are expected to learn the social norms operative in *hanashika* circles, by doing a variety of work for their seniors. *Futatsume*, literally "the second one," is the rank between *zenza* and *shin'uchi*, the full-fledged *hanashika*. A *futatsume* performs second, after the *zenza*, and his/her stage repertoire is expected to be larger. It is during his or her time as a *futatsume* that a *hanashika* gradually becomes the subject of artistic evaluation, as well as beginning to enjoy more personal freedom.

Shin'uchi are *hanashika* who are judged to have reached artistic and personal maturity, capable of taking on the responsibility of being the final "star" performer of a *yose* programme. To become a *shin'uchi* usually takes ten to fifteen years of apprenticeship, during which time many turn to other careers, primarily because of financial need.[4]

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[3] It is also very difficult for a master *hanashika* to own a house in Tokyo that is large enough to provide comfortable living space for a young apprentice. In 1990, one square meter of land in Tokyo cost an average of 854,000 yen, or approximately 9000 Canadian dollars (*Nihon no Tôkei*: 1990: 203).

[4] About eighty percent of *zenza* today are university graduates, and thus capable of taking up various part-time jobs that pay reasonably well. Still, many face financial difficulties; others are supported by their parents. *Futatsume* often find jobs in the

Moreover, since there are nearly two hundred *shin'uchi* in Tokyo at present, the top ranks are marked by fierce competition, even for the mere chance to appear regularly on the *yose* stages. Nevertheless, it is said that once a *hanashika* becomes a *shin'uchi*, he or she should no longer face serious financial difficulties, especially after the receipt of some prestigious award, such as those given at the government-sponsored *Geijutusai* "Fall Art Festival." There are, moreover, many job opportunities available to them outside the *yose*, including various kinds of public speaking, instructing amateurs, and performing at small theaters.

Changes in status are marked symbolically by changes in the performer's name. A *zenza*'s name is a light-hearted, personal appelation, usually without any allusion to famous *hanashika* of the past, while a *futatsume* and a *shin'uchi* take a more professional-sounding name, identical to or reminiscent of famous names that have appeared for generations. During his or her career, a *hanashika* has at least two different names, a *zenza* name and a *futatsume/shin'uchi* name, but there can be many more. The late Kokontei Shinshô, for example, changed his name sixteen times (Anada 1989:177).

Rakugo performers belong to one of four associations: the *Rakugo Kyôkai* (*Rakugo* Association), the *Rakugo Geijutsu Kyôkai* (*Rakugo* Art Association), the *Tatekawa-ryû* (*Tatekawa* School), or the *Rakugo Enraku-tô* (Enraku *Rakugo* Faction). The *Rakugo Kyôkai* (RK), headed

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mass media, as reporters, actors, comedians, and so forth, and have these as their main source of income.

by Yanagiya Kosan, is the largest *hanashika* association in Japan, with approximately one hundred *shin'uchi*, fifty *futatsume*, and fifteen *zenza*, plus forty or so musicians and other types of *yose* entertainers called *iromono* (Anada 1989: 160-161). The *Rakugo Geijutsu Kyôkai* (RGK), headed by Katura Yonemaru, is its closest rival, with over eighty *hanashika* and about forty musicians and *iromono* entertainers (Shunpûtei 1979: 34-36).

The other two *hanashika* associations, headed by two influential former associates of RK, are smaller but still cannot be neglected. Sanyûtei Enraku left the RK in 1978, and founded the *Sumirekai* (Violet Association), now called the *Enraku-tô*. Enraku's faction has fifteen *hanashika*, and maintained its own *yose*, the Wakatake *Yose*, from 1985 to 1991.[5] Since the closure of the Wakatake *Yose*, the *Enraku-tô* is not as active as before; and Enraku himself rarely performs on stage at present, though he frequently gives lectures on *rakugo*, and appears on television programmes.

Tatekawa Danshi, an outspoken, gifted *hanashika*, the only one to have become a member of the House of Councillors, took himself and his disciples out of the RK in 1983, and founded the *Tatekawa-ryû*, based on the master-disciple relationship known as the *iemoto* system.[6] He has

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[5] Enraku was said to have spent six million dollars of his own money to build the Wakatake *Yose* (Anada 1989: 165).

[6] *Ie* means "house" and *moto* means "origin," "root," or "head." *Iemoto* thus is "the head of the house." It implies the possessor of a recognized esthetic style, passed down through nominal or real lineages, as in flower arrangement, tea-ceremony, and so on.

about eleven followers, and they cater *rakugo* performances for any individual or group who can pay the fees demanded (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 288-289).[7]

2. Theatrical Context

Not a single day passes in Tokyo without a *rakugo* performance on the stage. Even outside the *yose*, *rakugo* performances constantly take place at a wide variety of locations, for an equally wide variety of audiences. Contemporary *rakugo* has an extremely diverse theatrical context: it is frequently performed in large halls and theaters, but young *hanashika* have become highly creative in their use of various small theaters.

Yose Today

In spite of the interest in *rakugo*, there are only four *joseki* — *yose* that open every day — in Tokyo: the Suehirotei in Shinjuku, the Asakusa Engei Hall in Asakusa, the Suzumoto Engei Jô in Ueno, and the Kokuritsu Engei Jô in Nagata-chô. The Suehirotei is the oldest of them, located in the most popular shopping and entertainment district in Tokyo, Shinjuku. It is the only *jôseki* which still has tatami-sections for seating, in addition to chairs. The decor of this *yose* is subtle, and its stage is reminiscent of a traditional tea room. The Asakusa Engei Hall, in contrast, has a bright and cheerful atmosphere. It is located in the mecca of modern Japanese

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7 "The current fee (1988) for a 'pack' [package] is 99,800 yen [ca. $1000] plus travel and lodging expenses" (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 289).

vaudeville arts, Asakusa, though today this *yose* is the only remaining outpost of its once vigorous tradition. The Suzumoto Engei Jô has the largest and newest *yose* building, although its origin can be traced back to the late Edo period (Anada 1989: 14). In addition to these, there is the Tokyo Kokuritsu Engei Jô (the National Entertainment Theater of Tokyo), opened in 1968, which is the only government-sponsored theater presenting *rakugo*, located beside the Tokyo Kokuritsu Gekijô (the National Theater of Tokyo), the national theater for Kabuki, Noh, and other traditional theatrical arts. Each *yose* is capable of seating over three hundred spectators. However, they are not often full on weekdays, and are definitely suffering from an audience shortage. During the summer of 1992, the Asakusa *yose* attracted the most patrons, but it was only about two-thirds full even on weekends.

These *jôseki* work on a ten-day schedule: the first ten-day section of the month is called *kamiseki* (the upper shift), the second is *nakaseki* (the middle shift), and the final ten days are the *shimo seki* (the lower shift). There are a different group of performers for every shift, and an extra, surprise show takes place on the thirty-first of a month. The Suehirotei, the Asakusa Engei Hall, and the Kokuritsu Engei Jô feature RK and RGK performers alternately, while the Suzumoto Engei Jô is reserved for the RK. The Yoshiike Hall in Okachimachi, while not a *jôseki*, puts on the Saturday *Yose* by RGK performers. The schedules of both regular and special performances is changed to reflect seasonal and cultural events, both secular and religious. In the January *kamiseki* of each year, for example, the best *shin'uchi* appear, to offer special performances for the New Year; and mid-summer is the time for ghost stories and Buddhist

Karma tales, because of the *obon* festival, the Buddhist Celebration of Returning Spirits, in July and August.

The *jôseki* normally run two programmes a day, a matinee and an evening programme. The matinee goes from noon until about four-thirty; the evening show starts around five and lasts until nine. One programme features about twenty performers. The price of a *jôseki* ticket is very reasonable: a full-day ticket is around 2000 yen ($20) on weekdays, which is the price for a single programme on weekends.

The opening of the *yose* is signalled by the sound of the drums played by the *zenza*; and it is also heard during the ten-minute intermission two hours before the end of the show, as well as at the end. The order in which the performers appear reflects their status and popularity. The younger apprentices appear near the beginning of the show, while the *shin'uchi* are not seen until the middle and later parts. The most important performer of the day, the *tori* (star), is reserved for the final position.

Before the appearance of each performer, his or her theme music, *hayashi*, is played on the samisen. The performer then appears on the stage (*koza*) in kimono, with a fan in his/her hand, and sits on a futon-mat at center stage, knees folded and a microphone in front. He or she then bows and begins the story. At one side of the performer is a rectangular piece of white paper, hanging vertically from a wooden stand, with his or her name in black Japanese ink. At the *yose*, audiences are never told the titles of the stories in advance. Only the names of the performers are explicitly given in their handbills and on this stage prop.

The atmosphere in a *jôseki* is casual — the audience eats, drinks, and even chats while watching the show. Each *jôseki* has a small shop that sells snacks, refreshments, and *yose* souvenirs, though not all provide alcoholic beverages. The audience is made up of all kinds of people: young and old, students and businessmen, Tokyoites and tourists from other parts of Japan, men and women; single people, couples, families with young child(ren) or grandparent(s), or large groups of businessmen, students, or package-tour tourists, from almost every economic and social background possible. Each *yose* has a group of hard-core regulars, *jôren,* of various ages and socio-economic backgrounds (though they are predominately male). Theatre owners and managers recognize these *jôren* as important sources for constructive criticism, as well as sponsors and popularizers of *yose* events.[8]

Another important group within the *yose* audience is the members of the *ochiken,* or "*rakugo* research clubs." Almost all Japanese colleges and

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[8] I found myself sitting right beside one of the oldest *jôren* at Asakusa Engei Jô, with another senior *jôren* across from me one Saturday. As I was busy taking field notes during the show, the younger gentleman noticed me and nodded. During the intermission we sat on a couch in the theater hallway, and he gave me his name card — he was the president of a local manufacturing company — and identified himself as a *jôren*. He was keeping his own journal, writing down the titles of *rakugo* stories as statistical evidence for his occasional public lectures on *yose-rakugo*. This gentleman said that he had known the older *jôren* for many years but did not know his name. However, when we returned to the theater, the older person brought with him a package of rice-crackers, quietly forwarding it to the younger person. They chatted, commenting on the performance. Since then, every time I saw this elder *jôren* at Asakusa, he silently bowed to me, and I returned the bow. I never asked his name; it did not matter.

universities have *ochiken*, to encourage amateur performances, promote *rakugo* research, and share the pleasure of the art. An *ochiken* is often associated with a particular *yose* or group of *hanashika*.[9] Furthermore, many accomplished *hanashika* serve as instructors for amateur *ochiken* performers. Such connections between a *hanashika* and an *ochiken* will be particularly strong if the *hanashika* is a former member of the *ochiken* in question (Kimura 1992).

The *yose* have their own particular media for advertisement: pamphlets, bills, and posters. The posters feature pictures of the star performers, or large pictures may be posted at the front of the *yose*.[10] But probably the most effective way of advertising *rakugo* events is through *Tokyo Kawaraban*, a monthly journal providing a schedule of all *rakugo* and other narrative performances in Tokyo and its suburbs, both live and broadcast. It also contains articles by performers and critics, many of which appear in serial form and are published later as books. *Rakugo* is also advertised in monthly or weekly journals of current events such as

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[9] For example, on the tenth day of the July *nakaseki* I observed the members of the *ochiken* from Tokyo Agricultural University at the Suehirotei, changing the woodblocks with the *hanashika*'s names placed above the theater entrance, used for advertisement as well as external decoration. This particular *ochiken* tradition (the Tokyo Agricultural University *Rakugo* Club) has lasted for nearly twenty years.

[10] There are several interesting aspects about *rakugo* advertisements. First, the style of writing used for the names of performers, the titles of the stories and so on is called *yose-ji*, or "*yose*-style writing." *Yose-ji* is a highly conventionalized calligraphy developed in the late Edo period; Tachibana Sakon is its best-known master at present. Second, *yose* used to advertise their activities by hiring *yobikomi*, or "barkers," who would wear kimono-style uniforms with the name of the *yose*, and talk to the passers-by. Today, only the Asakusa Engei Hall still uses *yobikomi*.

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Pia. Pia is a weekly/monthly activity guide, covering all upcoming events and activities in Tokyo, from performance arts to athletics to new shops and restaurants. Its circulation is enormous. It is sold at every kiosk and bookstore, and the whole print run invariably disappears within a few days.

Hôru-rakugo

Rakugo is often presented in somewhat more formal settings than the *jôseki*. This type of performance is called *hôru-rakugo*, since it takes place in special halls and theaters within the larger buildings, usually commercial establishments.[11] *Hôru-rakugo* provides the audience with the opportunity to appreciate selected performances free of time limitations, for at the *yose* the length is normally restricted to twenty minutes. *Hôru-rakugo* can be a solo or joint performance, or it can be a *yose*-like programme featuring both *hanashika* and *iromono* entertainers.

The atmosphere at a hall tends to be formal, and the ticket price is usually higher than at a *yose*. For instance, the consumption of food or drink during the performance is often forbidden.[12] Major literary figures, academics and *rakugo* critics may receive free passes to *hôru-rakugo*,

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[11] The best-known *hôru-rakugo* are Mitsukoshi Rakugokai, Tokyo Rakugokai, Kinokuniya Yose, Rakugo Kenkyûkai, and Nikkan Rakugokai (Anada 1989: 141).

[12] At the Ikebukuro Rakugokai, a *hôru-rakugo* with a *yose* programme five evenings monthly at the newly established Tokyo Art Theater, I observed the audience (many of whom were very well-dressed, like opera-goers) enjoying coffee, tea, or fruit juice at the concession stand in the hallway during the intermission. Taking these refreshments inside was not permitted.

which would be unusual at a *yose* (Mita 1973: 150-151 Andô 1968: 286-288).

Small Theaters

Because only four *jôseki* remain today, and the *hôru-rakugo* tend to concentrate on well-established *hanashika, zenza* and *futatsume* suffer from a shortage of performance opportunities. They have attempted to overcome this shortage by seeking out novel, more flexible narrative settings, performing at very reasonable prices without necessarily involving more senior *hanashika*.

Small-scale *rakugo* performances now amount to about one-third of all *rakugo* staged outside a *yose* . A well-respected *shin'uchi* may, from time to time, perform in front of a smaller audience, but it has become quite common for younger *hanashika* to perform in a variety of settings. Small-scale *rakugo* is by no means new, but younger apprentices have never before taken as much initiative in creating their own performance contexts. This may reflect the changing relationship between senior and junior *hanashika* today — young *hanashika* tend to be outspoken, individualistic, and business-minded, often more so than their seniors, whereas in the old days the senior *hanashika* would have had absolute power.

3.   Structural Conventions and Innovations

The performance structure of *rakugo* evolves under the influence of two opposing drives: towards structural preservation and towards

structural innovation. While most *rakugo* performances are informed by traditional structural conventions, these are freely reinterpreted and modified to fit their personal styles by many ambitious *hanashika*.

Before discussing conventions and innovations, let us introduce the story types found in *rakugo. Rakugo* stories are divided into classic and modern. The term "classic *rakugo,*" *koten rakugo,* appeared as a broad label for "traditional" *rakugo* stories as opposed to modern, innovative ones, *shinsaku rakugo* (Anada 1989: 61-62).[13] Although the distinction is not clear-cut, certain structural regularities can be identified for each type. For example, a *koten rakugo* story will be set in the Edo period while *shinsaku rakugo* occurs in more recent times; most *koten rakugo* stories were in circulation before the end of Meiji while *shinsaku rakugo* were created after that time; and the authors of *koten rakugo* stories are often anonymous, whereas the authors of most *shinsaku rakugo* stories are known.

Both types can be classified into several subgenres, although such classifications are more commonly used for *koten* stories. The most important of these are *ninjô-banashi* (human drama), *otoshi-banashi* (farce), *kaidan-banashi* (ghost stories), *shibai-banashi* (acted-out stories), and *ongyoku-banashi* (stories with musical accompaniment). *Ninjô-banashi* aims not at laughter but at the development of a dramatic narrative, which often moves the audience to tears. *Otoshi-banashi*, on the contrary, tries

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13 According to Morioka and Sasaki, "In titles of printed rakugo text collections, *koten* does not appear before 1968, while *shinsaku* has been in use since 1902" (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 279).

for comedy even at the cost of interrupting the dramatic flow.[14] *Kaidan-banashi* is closely related to the *karma* tales discussed in the previous chapter; while *shibai-banashi* features the prominent use of gestures. Finally in *ongyoku-banashi*, music is used to achieve dramatic effects.

A single set of structural conventions dominates in the performance of all the above types. Here, we will touch upon only the most important, sequential structure and verbal and non-verbal conventions. The story usually has three parts, the *makura* (introduction), *hanashi* (main story), and *ochi* (punch line).[15] In the *makura*, a performer attempts to attract the audience's attention to the main story, by making remarks with a seasonal relevance, cracking a few jokes, and/or bringing up proverbs or parables thematically related to the main story. The transition from the *makura* to the main story should be smooth and seamless — a skilled performer moves from *makura* to the main story without being noticed. The ending, *ochi*, should also come naturally, without overemphasis.

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[14] As we mentioned in the previous chapter, *otoshi-banashi* is the name by which *rakugo* was known before Meiji. Today it designates only one subgenre of *rakugo*, though many Japanese tend to think that all *rakugo* stories are farcical, that is of the *otoshi-banashi* type.

[15] There are stories, particularly *shinsaku* stories, which do not follow the three-part structure. Although all stories must have punch lines, the dramatic structure can be absent — a *shinsaku* story is often a juxtaposition of short skits and jokes, much like stand-up comedy in the West. While it can be argued that these story-less *rakugo* are contemporary products, influenced by television and other mass media, it is equally possible that they have always existed side by side with the performance of dramatic stories (Kata 1987: 56-58).

Rakugo has adapted a number of theatrical techniques commonly found in *kabuki*. While sitting on a mat, for instance, performers use their upper bodies to the full to convey meaning. Facial expressions, movements of the arms and fingers, and postures are all important parts of the performance, just as in a play. The theatrical conventions attached to the left and right of the stage also entered *rakugo*. In some traditional Japanese theatre arts, the entrance and the exit of characters with a higher status is always through the right side of the stage as seen from the audience. The *hanashika* thus look towards the left of the stage when assuming the role of a superior person (Ryûtei 1967: 49-50).

We should also note the conventionalized use of two props, a fan and a handkerchief. These two props (the only ones traditionally used by a *hanashika* in addition to his/her costume, kimono and kimono jacket) can stand in for almost anything. The fan, for example, can be used for sound effects, or it might represent objects such as a knife, chopsticks, a brush, a spoon, a letter, a lamp, and so forth. The handkerchief might become a book, a cigarette case, a wallet, a piece of underwear, a rope, and so forth (Andô 1968: 219-219).

However, these conventions are by no means obligatory. In recent years, a trend towards challenging the traditional forms has developed, especially among young *hanashika*. A *hanashika* might now stand on the stage in the middle of his or her performance, walk around, or even sing a jazz song. Some show their audacity with gaudy-colored or modern kimonos, or by bringing extra props such as baseball bats, golf clubs, or guitars. Particularly in the smaller theaters, young *hanashika* try to gain

popularity by doing virtually anything that might impress or please the audience, combining *rakugo* with stand-up comedy, acting, musical performances, and other traditional or modern performance arts. Yet these attempts tend to be no more than momentary successes, and they usually remain matters of personal style which die with their creators.[16]

Finally, it should be pointed out that the *rakugo* tradition has been exclusively male-centered until very recently. It has operated according to a set of androcentric assumptions that still inform not only the *hanashika*'s social world but also the linguistic norms of *rakugo* narration. Male craftsmen and warriors remain the core characters in most stories. There are a minority of narrations in which a *wakadanna*, "young gentleman," plays the pivotal role, but almost never do we find a woman there. Such norms pose serious difficulties for a prospective female *hanashika*, who may well be expected to accept these norms in the course of apprenticeship to an older male *hanashika* who fails to acknowledge the intricate gender issues surrounding *rakugo*. However, there is now a significant minority of *hanashika*, both male and female, who have begun to challenge the biases restricting the artistic capacity of *rakugo* narration and performance, and who are rewriting and reperforming such narrations with greater respect and sensitivity to the feminine (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b).

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[16] There are exceptions, of course. Morioka and Sasaki (1990: 279-281) discuss Sanyûtei Enjô and his followers as examples of this radical, "experimental" *rakugo*. Enjô produces 13-14 new narrations per year, some of which seem to have an excellent chance of surviving as "classics" of *shinsaku* .

5. *Rakugo* and Modern Communication Technology

The advent of modern communication media has helped diversify *rakugo* performance contexts and textual preservation, as well as modifying the way it is composed. Today, *rakugo* performances are regularly broadcast all over Japan. The vigor of the Japanese art and publishing industries has ensured that large number of recorded performances are commercially available on tape cassettes and videotapes, replacing the earlier use of phonograph records and film, while at the same time the written texts of *rakugo* narrations remain crucial. With such a diversity of sources available, contemporary performers have an exceptional degree of freedom in practicing and composing their stories.

Diversification of the Performance Context

Radio broadcasting of *rakugo* began in 1925, to be followed by television in 1953. The immediate effects of both were strikingly similar: the *yose* were deserted whenever *rakugo* was on the air. Following the introduction of mass media techniques, the popularity of *jôseki* have on the whole declined, while that of *rakugo* itself has steadily risen, as radio and television transmit *rakugo* sessions to every part of Japan. However, the *jôseki* have benefited in one way: they advertised *rakugo*, making many of the audience interested in seeing their favorite performers in person at the *yose*. Hence, while some *yose* halls have had to close down, others have increased in popularity. The TBS radio and television station even took the initiative in arranging live performances: the company revived an important *rakugo* research association, the Society for the

Study of *Rakugo*, and has been sponsoring its regular sessions which take place in the National Theater at Tokyo (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 265-266).

At present, several broadcasting stations in Tokyo regularly feature *rakugo* programmes, either live or from their studios: NHK, Nihon Television, TBS, and Bunka Broadcasting. NHK, the public broadcasting network, has two television and two radio programmes featuring *rakugo*. Nihon Television has one long-lasting comedy show, "Shôten" ("The spot for laughs"), which regularly features popular *hanashika*. TBS broadcasts master performances on radio weekly, as does Bunka Broadcasting. These programmes are all on weekends, primarily during Sunday at lunch hour and in the evening (*Tokyo Kawaraban*: 36). In addition, there are special seasonal programmes featuring *rakugo* performances, such as the year-ending and/or New Year's Day shows.

In addition to broadcasting of *rakugo* performances, the mass media provide an excellent source of financial opportunities for *hanashika*. Many contemporary *rakugo* performers take full social and economic advantage of television to become comedians in a broader sense: they may host talk shows or variety shows, or appear in soap operas. Their popularity on television sometimes allows them to branch out further into film, music, or the theater. Many young *hanashika* thus become television idols, which may easily have the unfortunate effect that their audience never gets to see a televised *rakugo* performance by them.

Even though television serves to advertise *rakugo* — by introducing a number of multi-talented *hanashika* and thus attracting the audience's

attention back to the *yose* — there is a serious price to pay. A television-dependent *hanashika* tends to lose touch with the *jôseki*. Since the *Jôseki* run on a ten-day cycle, a *hanashika* will be required to appear at least seven days out of ten, on a fairly rigid schedule. This means that any *hanashika* whose outside activities become too pressing may have thus made it impossible for himself or herself to perform at the *jôseki*. Should this happen, which is not at all uncommon, the *hanashika* may have sacrificed his or her primary career for the sake of a more general media popularity.

Preservation of Texts

Rakugo narrations are preserved in both written and unwritten forms. The former, published and unpublished texts, includes the different types of *rakugo* literature; and the latter is comprised of more modern and commercial products such as phonograph records, cassettes, and videotapes.

Rakugo texts have been published in enormous quantity ever since the term *rakugo* was coined, and the rate of production shows no sign of slackening. The study by Morioka and Sasaki lists nearly four hundred *rakugo* texts appearing since mid-Meiji (1884), but they admit that their list is far from exhaustive (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 323-338). Besides these independent publications, a large amount of *rakugo* material appears in literary and narrative-arts journals. Each year, several *rakugo* texts in book form are published: every bookstore has a selection in its Traditional Performance Arts section, ranging from expensive hard-cover

volumes to cheap paperbacks, in addition to the even more popular ethnographic literature on *rakugo*.

The production and preservation of both *rakugo* texts and the related ethnographic literature is consumer-centered to a high degree (as is also true for the cassettes and videotapes discussed below). Thus, different types of text have been tailored to different audiences. In a society where literacy is a shared social norm, and where the domestic publication market is highly competitive, the readers' demands for specialized publications easily results in the quick creation of such services.

Speaking generally, there are three major types of text: transcriptions of narrations by master *hanashika*, more general collections of stories, and encyclopedic lists which give only the story outlines. The first are usually published under the *hanashika*'s names, sometimes with the addition of editors or transcribers; the others are usually left without attribution, apart from their editors. On occasion, the so-called *rakugo* experts create their own versions of stories. Many of these texts also include commentaries by either their *hanashika* authors or their editors, which provide a certain amount of basic analytic framework.

The audience for these publications can likewise be divided into several different classes. First, both professional and amateur storytellers use the transcriptions as stylistic models and memory aids. Second, they are drawn upon by those who need to identify stories for research purposes, formal or informal. For this, the encyclopedic collections are best, but the general story collections are also useful. Third, there are general readers who wish to familiarize themselves with the *rakugo*

repertoire without being exposed to the narrative detail or the individual peculiarities of a *hanashika*'s style. For example, my father used to read this type of *rakugo* text to me during my childhood, and I have done this with my children as well. Such texts thus have a good chance of entering family or school libraries.

In addition to *rakugo* literature, there is a large quantity of literature about *rakugo*. This includes both scholarly and semi-scholarly studies of aspects of *rakugo* or the art of the *hanashika*, constituting a diverse assortment of informal ethnographic studies for the entire range of potential readers, from novice to expert. A large part of this literature is made up of biographical sketches of master *hanashika* by their acquaintances. *Hanashika* autobiographies are rarer, but they do exist. Even more popular are descriptive studies of *rakugo* "conventions" and their philosophical basis. The seasonal activities, foods, jargon, social customs, historical incidents, esthetic positions, and secular and religious rituals that appear in *rakugo*, especially in *koten* stories, are not always readily understood by contemporary Japanese. This need has given birth to a lively demand for books which explain and interpret these details, and about a dozen such works are published each year.

Finally, master *rakugo* performances are available on large quantities of cassette tapes, compact disks, and videotapes. These are usually sold at music stores. For example, a music store which forms part of the Kinokuniya bookstore, located a few blocks away from the Suehirotei *yose*, has a large selection of recordings in all three types of media. According to the store manager, purchasers include a number of

professional *hanashika*. Moreover, many Japanese libraries have good collections of *rakugo* performances on cassette tapes.

Before the advent of these newer forms of recording, master performances were widely available on phonograph records. Although such records are no longer sold commercially, they are widely collected. The *hanashika* Miyakoya Utaroku, in particular, is famous for his personal library of *rakugo* records. He is the author of *Rakugo Rekodo Hachijû-nen shi* (*The Eighty-year History of Rakugo Phonograph Records*), an extensive handbook covering from the first recording in 1903 up to 1987.

The main center for the collection and preservation of *rakugo*, historical and contemporary, is the library of the National Entertainment Theater, the only public library devoted to narrative arts texts. However, the National Diet Library also contains extensive holdings. Moreover, public libraries throughout Japan and many locally-funded libraries in Tokyo carry *rakugo* texts and literature, in more or less quantity. The library of the National Art Theater also has an excellent collection of old phonograph recordings of *rakugo* performances.

Mode of Composition

The traditional method of mastering a new story relied heavily on face-to-face training sessions given by master performers, the so-called *Sanben-geiko*, or "three-practice sessions." In *sanben-geiko*, a more senior *hanashika* performs a story for a junior up to three times, usually giving a performance a day for three days. The pupil is expected to have

memorized the story by the fourth day, when he will have to perform the story for the master *hanashika*, who will then correct errors and give advice on matters of detail. Since there was no tape recorder in the old days to back up the *hanashika*'s memory, he would spend hours memorizing and practicing the story by himself. Often, he would take long walks, repeating the story he had heard from his master (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b).

Another important way through which a *hanashika* can pick up techniques from a master performer is to "eavesdrop" from backstage. While *sanben-geiko* is excellent for acquiring the text of a story, it cannot communicate the dynamic flow of the actual performance, especially the interaction with the audience. This is more easily learned by on-the-spot observation. In either case, a younger *hanashika* does not have complete freedom to study with whomever he wishes. He must seek permission from his master not only to practice with someone else, but also to perform whole or part of a story he learns in this way (Ryûtei1967: 148-150; Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b).

While these two traditional practice methods remain widely used, performers, regardless of rank, have many other methods to learn their material that were unavailable in the past. The traditional *sanben-geiko* is now often replaced by a single lesson, where the master allows the pupil to tape his performance. Alternatively, a skilled *hanashika* may compose his story using commercially available *rakugo* texts, on videotape, compact disks, or cassettes, or by watching performances broadcast on television and radio.

Creating a new *rakugo* story requires a great deal of research and reading as well as the task of composition itself. *Hanashika* in general read a lot of classical *rakugo* texts. This is especially necessary when a mature *shin'uchi* wants to perform a story that has not been given for a long time. This is called *neta-oroshi*, "trying new material."[17] To find a story or story material useful for his or her performance, a *hanashika* must read very widely, not only classical and modern Japanese novels but also translations of Western works.

When the background work is finished, finally the time comes when the *hanashika* puts his or her version of the story down on paper, creating a script which will be the basis of the performance. Sometimes, these handwritten scripts by respected *hanashika* circulate among a small group of associates. This was the case with Yanagiya Kingorô, a *hanashika* who wrote numerous innovative modern *rakugo* stories under the pen name Arisaki Tsutomu (Sansyôtei Charaku 1992b, Sanshôtei Muraku 1992).

In spite of the changes brought about by the introduction of modern communication technology, *hanashika* still place the ultimate value in the more old-fashioned face-to-face methods of knowledge transmission and story composition. No matter how much assistance one can get from literary texts and recorded material, a story is never complete without some feedback from equals and seniors. The difference such consultation makes is so marked that experts can tell at once if the story a *hanashika* has composed is based only on transmitted texts. Face-to-face consultation

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[17] *Neta-oroshi* literally means "(performing) a story for the first time."

may take the form of lessons, as already described, or informal gatherings, including spontaneous remarks exchanged backstage. But most important, in the mind of the *hanashika, a story is perfected on stage,* with the assistance of a live audience. The written script and the off-stage rehearsals do not fix a final version of the story. In fact, there can never be a final version, because the performance differs each time, harmonizing with its changing context. Thus *hanashika* typically remark that "one composes a story with the live audience — good stories have survived many audiences over centuries, never mind if one *hanashika* could achieve such a result in his lifetime!" (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992)

Part 2: An Account of a Performance

1. Introduction

On Saturday, August the twenty-ninth, 1992, I was rushing up the stairs of the Yoshiike department store in Okachimachi to the Yoshiike Hall, which is located on the seventh floor. There I was to meet Sanshôtei Charaku, the star performer of that day's matinee of the Yoshiike Saturday *Yose* at one p.m., to discuss videotaping his performance. I was late by a few minutes, and could have taken the elevator (which was right beside the stairway) instead, but the heat and crowds outside the store, and the noise and glitter within, made the stairs my choice after only an instant of thought. This shadowy, silent corner seemed an unexpected haven of coolness and quiet, a cave into which I could escape.

Actually, I had always chosen to take the stairs when I came to the Yoshiike Hall, the only *yose* that still seats its entire audience on tatami.

Walking up, flight upon flight, I would imagine myself making a gradual transition to a different world, one clearly distinguished from mundane reality governed by the clock, money, hunger, and sleep: a world of imagination, the *theater*. I thought thereby to enter a "past", where I could indulge myself in tradition perfectly embalmed and exhibited in an eternally tranquil atmosphere. For these reasons, I nurtured a romantic vision of that world as "sacred," floating above and beyond earthly phenomena, transcending the street-level traffic jam, the hawkers' voices, and the faces of the innumerable people I had jostled aside to get there.

In my fantasy, the stairs to the elevated hall had come to resemble a *hashigakari*, the entrance path leading through the audience's space to the performance area, employed in many Japanese theatrical arts, by which performers would enter and exit with quiet dignity. It became my mind's *metaphorical* path, leading me through meaningful research activities to the ideal stage itself, transforming what I understood as "present" into "past," "modern" into " traditional," "real" into "imaginary," perhaps even "Tokyo" into "Edo."

Despite my haste, I was enjoying this imaginary prelude, not knowing that I was to be thoroughly disappointed in short order. But that day, I also had another *great* expectation: an opportunity to see Charaku in kimono, off stage. Charaku had told me a few days before that he would be wearing his kimono, since it was required for the performance appointment he had after Yoshiike. Since most *hanashika* nowadays decline to wear kimono outside the theater, I felt genuinely fortunate and privileged. Although Japanese women often wear kimono on cultural

occasions, and there are professional female companions who wear kimono regularly, it is much rarer to see Japanese men in kimono other than at home. The two most obvious exceptions are sumo-wrestlers and *hanashika*, though the former still wear kimono in public as well as "on the job." I thought that it would be a great chance to take a photograph, the two of us together!

Rushing up to the head of the stairs, I was simultaneously approaching the *height of my exoticism*, a burden I had borne without hestitation or questioning ever since I had purchased my ticket to Japan in Vancouver, the three-month trip being the longest, by far, of the three times I had returned since leaving in 1980.

But, to my surprise, Charaku stood at the top of the stairs, beside a window, in a delicately-toned whitish-green suit and a matching tie with autumn colors running brightly through it. As I looked up at him, he glanced in my direction, smiling with his eyes which seemed to be saying, "That's a long way, isn't it?" Trying to control my gasping, I somehow managed to apologize for being late. Charaku showed me to a chair to sit and relax, and went briefly inside the theater to find the hall manager. I sat, listening to the voice of a performer inside, and realized that with my picture of the "authentic" theater at Yoshiike shaping my vision, I had never before noticed that there were chairs in the hall.

Soon Charaku returned. I was introduced to the hall manager, and received his permission to videotape Charaku's performance. When the manager went back inside the theater, Charaku invited me for lunch at a German restaurant on the sixth floor, since he had a couple of hours of

free time before his performance. I gratefully accepted his invitation, and we took the elevator one quick floor down, to settle technical matters over fine malt beer.

2. The Performer

The bright, sunlit restaurant, with its soft background music, made quite a contrast to the atmosphere at the *yose*. Before we sat down, we stopped in front of a large poster on a wall, which said, in English, "The Republic of Germany." Charaku muttered a brief remark on the recent political changes in Germany, and quickly shifted the topic to food and drink.

This youthful-looking, fifty year-old *hanashika*, associated with the RGK, is in many respects a unique figure among his peers, in spite of — perhaps because of — the fact that he does not play the role of a jester on stage. Thirty years ago Charaku began to study under the late Sanshôtei Karaku, after an unsuccessful attempt to enter the University of Tokyo to study law — comparable to applying to the law school at Harvard University. His master, a very well respected *hanashika* who excelled in performing classical *rakugo*, passed away a few years after he became an apprentice. He continued his studies under an elder pupil of Karaku's, Sanshôtei Muraku, who is today a well-known talent both on television and at the *yose*. Charaku's career development also owed a great deal to the late Kokontei Imasuke, the former Chairman of the RGK and the most accomplished modern *rakugo* performer of the last generation, with whom he spent a great deal of time. At the age of thirty-three, he became

a *shin'uchi*, but his teacher Imasuke died shortly after Charaku's final promotion as a *hanashika*.

This blend of formal training in both classical and modern *rakugo*, and academic subjects is rather uncommon for a *hanashika*. However, it is Charaku's uncompromising artistic attitude which makes him exceptional. He *tells stories* rather than peddles jokes, in defiance of the current *yose* norm. His favorite genre is *ninjô-banashi*, especially the more classical stories, with subtle humor and intricately woven narration. He particularly excels at female roles, rather than the more typical and vulgar masculine figures which dominate the *rakugo* casting list. Thus, even though he has received a prestigious award at the Fall Art Festival, *Geijutusai yûshûshô*, he felt until very recently that there would be very little opportunity for his establishing himself as a respected *hanashika*, unless he made compromises which he was very unwilling to consider.

However critical he may be when evaluating his own career, he is at present doubtless one of the most competent *shin'uchi* of his generation.[18] His *jôseki* performance schedule during my stay in Japan included being the star performer of the evening programme at the Asakusa Engei Hall

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[18] In October 1992, Tatekawa Danshi said during a television show that Charaku was the only *hanashika* to deserve his attention at present. Charaku has known Danshi for a long time, and they have often exchanged ideas about *rakugo*. However, Danshi's remark was so provocative that some of the people around Charaku were shocked: it translates literally as "Among *hanashika*, only Charaku licked my cock" (*hanashika de ore no rosen o nameta nowa Charaku dakedana* — *rosen* is storytellers' slang for the male organ). Over the phone, Charaku explained to me that Danshi was signalling him to be more aggressive in his performances, and was challenging him: "that's how they talk, oh, those *hanashika*!"

during the July *nakaseki*, as well as the regular day performance during the August *shimoseki* there; the star position at the Yoshiike Saturday *Yose* in August and September; and a regular evening performance at the Suehiro-tei during the September *kamiseki*. In addition to working at the *yose* in Tokyo, he occasionally appears overseas.[19] Furthermore, he also gives solo shows four times a year at a private membership pub in Shinjuku, the Jôhoku Pairasu Club,[20] for a somewhat smaller but very eager audience.

3.   Surroundings of the Theater

The Yoshiike is located within easy walking distance of Okachimachi, a Japan Railway station; it is also very close to Nakaokachimachi, a Hibiya-line subway station. Both provide quick access to Ueno, Asakusa, Nihonbashi, Fukagawa, and Ningyô-chô, the areas that were once the lively centers of *shitamachi*, downtown Edo. The Great Earthquake of 1923 and the Second World War brought about drastic modifications to the external appearance of *shitamachi*, and since then Metro Tokyo has steadily expanded eastwards, creating numerous new cultural and commercial centers. Yet these older parts of Tokyo have remained as

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[19]   He was, for instance, the star performer at the Vancouver JAL *Yose* in December of 1991, which is where I first met him.

[20]   This club is supported by the graduates of Toyama high school, well-known for its academic reputation. Many Toyama graduates have risen high in the government after attending the University of Tokyo; still others have been highly successful in business or the professions. Charaku is the only *hanashika* Toyama has ever produced. However, this club, located very close to Suehirotei, is also used by other *hanashika* for their solo shows.

lively as the newer ones. With their unassuming air and vigorous mercantile spirit, they assert a powerful influence upon Tokyoites and tourists alike.

Like many of these districts, Okachimachi is a lively mix of diverse social and cultural values, and their spiritual and material manifestations. The seven-storied Yoshiike is surrounded by street venders of many kinds, from cheap compact disc stands playing Bill Evans to daily-special food stalls featuring tempura, cooked fish, or cutlets. The narrow side streets are thronged with shoppers and browsers fitted out in any trendy or traditional fashion that may have taken their fancy, from kimono-jacket to Kenzo to Levis to Lanvin. Rows and rows of shops, restaurants, and other commercial places assert their particular personalities with bright neon-signs, shop-signs, flags, and sidewalk-sales; while the automobiles, Japanese, American, and European, nudge through the crowds like well-disciplined monsters. Gutsy yet amenable, Okachimachi is just one of the numerous places that express the Japanese vigor to accept and digest foreign goods and values *along with* the way of life already familiar to them.

4. Theatrical Setting

We went back to the seventh floor just before three o'clock, since I needed to set up my video equipment during the ten-minute intermission which began at three. Charaku's performance was scheduled to commence at ten after four, but he wanted to spend some time rehearsing, so he disappeared backstage.

At the Yoshiike Hall, the audience must take their shoes off and keep them in small lockers along the wall. Above the lockers are large square cards with the signatures of famed *hanashika* — a familiar *yose* wall decoration. A young male receptionist wearing a kimono coat bearing the letters for "yoshiike" sat quietly behind the reception desk across from the lockers. I signed my name on the audience list kept on the counter. The man remained sitting there, without a word.

As will be apparent from the title "Yoshiike *Saturday Yose*," this hall presents *rakugo* on Saturdays only. Seven years ago, the RGK began this programme as the result of a disagreement with the Suzumoto Engei Jô in Ueno. The RGK's original intention was to use this hall as their *jôseki*, comparable to the RK's Suzumoto; but fire regulations prevented this. Like other *yose*, the Saturday *Yose* runs from eleven forty-five to nine p.m.; the matinee ends at four thirty, and the evening programme starts at quarter to five. There is a somewhat restricted selection of performers, because only those who are performing at other regular *yose* can appear here each Saturday. However, the hall is often used for solo or joint shows by RGK members.[21]

The hall can seat a maximum of nearly one hundred fifty people. When I slipped quietly inside the theater through the sliding doors, it was half full. Seventy-odd people were there, seated on futon-mats with

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[21] The hall has a few technical problems due to the fact that it was not originally intended for *rakugo* performances, and was erected long before the theatre moved there. First, the stage is to the left of the spectators rather than in the center, because

backrests, drinking refreshments and eating snacks.[22] According to Charaku, one third of the Yoshiike audience are regulars. Although these rarely visit backstage, they often communicate with the performers during, between, and after the shows. For example, I witnessed a *hanashika*, on stage, openly asking a young regular if he had any request. It is also evident that this *yose* has a relatively high proportion of young but keen audience members.

5. Aspects of the Performance

I found a place for myself and my video camera in the fourth row from the front, near the right of the stage. When I began watching the programme, it was already two-thirds over: there were five more performances left, three *rakugo* and two *iromono*. At other *yose*, there are usually six to eight acts following the intermission. However, the total number of performances at the Yoshiike is much smaller than that in other *yose*: about a dozen compared to twenty or so. This means that each performer has more time, approximately five minutes longer at the Yoshiike.

As the sound of the drum signalled the end of the intermission, a *zenza* appeared. He flipped the paper hanging from a wooden stand to the right of the stage to show the next performer's name, and brought a

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of the space occupied by part of the backstage. Second, there is a large pillar in the audience area, which makes viewing from some positions impossible.

[22] The audience here receive one free nonalcoholic refreshment with the purchase of a ticket. Ticket prices are 1,800 yen (approximately 18 Canadian dollars) for an adult, 1,300 yen (13 dollars) for a student, and 1,000 yen for a child (10 dollars).

microphone stand for him. The *zenza* customarily invert the futon-mat on stage before a *hanashika*'s performance, this act serving to symbolically renew the *hanashika*'s space. They may also adjust the microphone height, arrange props, or on occasion place a cup of hot green tea beside the mat.[23] Their work between the performances, as well as their brief appearance as storytellers at the beginning of the show, allows them to act as scouts for their seniors. While on stage, they quickly form an idea of the quality of the audience, or any change in it (gender, age, size of parties, occupations, proportion of regulars to newcomers, and so on), and convey this information to the main performers backstage. Hence a *zenza*'s primary contribution is not so much to get the audience' attention but to gather information that will ensure the smooth flow of the programme.[24]

Such cooperation is an unspoken rule governing the operation of any *yose* programme. All performers assume responsibility for the harmonious working of the entire show: they follow the time limits strictly, take note of who has preceded and will follow them, and what

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[23] A few decades ago there used to be a *hibachi*-stove, with a tea kettle on its top, placed on stage. A *hanashika* would take the kettle, pour the tea into his tea cup, and take sips, while he was talking. The manner in which he handled the tea kettle and cup were often considered just as indicative of a *hanashika*'s true artistic worth as his actual performance. Sanyûtei Enshô and Kokontei Shinshô exemplified these manners. Today, few performers keep their tea cup beside them on stage. I once saw how Katsura Utamaru had his *zenza* place his tea cup near the mat at the Asakusa Engei Hall, but he did not even try to reach the cup during the performance.

[24] In fact, a *zenza* performs other secretarial work backstage, pouring tea for the main performers, assisting them in costume changes, and writing down the titles of the stories performed.

they did or will do, expressing their respect for other performers when on stage. The success of a *yose* performance thus depend greatly on a collaborative efforts by all participants. It is never an individual achievement.[25]

After the final *iromono*, which was a comic talk by two performers, Charaku's *hayashi* was played. The *zenza* appeared, inverted the mat and adjusted the microphone, then quickly retreated. As soon as Charaku appeared in his black kimono, the audience began to applaud in welcome, and a young regular in the front row called out "Mattemashita!" ("Here you are!") Charaku seated himself on the mat, and bowed politely.

The bow is an important part of a performer's style, and it can be short, long, comical, or polite. Charaku's bow is impressively polite, without any touch of comedy. The bow, almost magnetically, altered the atmosphere in the theatre — the air suddenly became crisp and sharp.

When the audience calmed down, Charaku began to speak in a clear, musical voice. Although he is small in stature, his presence filled the stage. His story was *Sannenme*, or "The Third Anniversary," a humorous ghost tale appropriate to the month of *obon*, the Celebration of the Spirit Returning. Despite the fact that Charaku's narrative style is rather "dry"

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[25] This is even the case with the star performers, the special features of the day, whose final appearance signals that they are expected to excel in their individual performances. There are many ways for the stars to handle the tension arising from the need to excel individually on one hand, and the need to satisfy a collective goal on the other. Charaku also faced such pressures, which are briefly discussed in Chapter 4.

— almost devoid of the exaggerated comic gestures and expressions commonly used by most *hanashika* — the audience listened attentively.

Looking at him through the viewfinder of the video camera, I whispered to myself *ichigo ichie*, a well-known expression by Senno Rikyû, a tea master in the Edo period. Its literal meaning is, "meeting once; and only once in a lifetime." According to the spirit of *ichigo ichie*, no meeting, planned or chance, occurs without a potential for the participants to share each other's hospitality. Charaku had said that this was his favorite expression; it was not only the philosophy which underlay his performance, a commercially motivated human encounter, but also that which guided his day-to-day social encounters. No one meeting can ever be wasted, since each is unique and has its own potential for perfection. The words and the movements of the performance, like the conversation and interaction of a social event, will be indelibly imprinted on the participants' minds, if they realize that each meeting is the *first* and the *final* one.

As I recalled his words, I felt as if I were on the stage myself, as if I were an anonymous voice echoing Charaku. I looked around the audience, and sensed their unspoken desire, to obliterate the boundaries between their own stories and the one being narrated.

Soon the performance came to an end. It took a little longer than twenty minutes for Charaku to finish his *Sannenme*, probably the driest but most delicately narrated *Sannenme* ever performed. He bowed deeply, his head and shoulders almost touching the floor, and the audience's applause enfolded him.

6. Conclusion

As I slowly walked down the hall towards backstage, I saw Charaku standing in the middle of the crowd of people putting their shoes back on. He noticed me and said "I'm sorry," shrugging. Unable to comprehend what he meant, I said "Sorry for what?" His performance had been nothing to be sorry about — did he think I was that harsh a critic? He added, in English, "Go ahead, beat me." In his hands was the tape recorder I had given him earlier because the sound of the narration could be better recorded right at the edge of the stage, hidden from the audience's eyes. He switched back to Japanese: "I forgot to tape-record my performance for you." To this, I instantaneously responded with a fainting gesture, covering my heart with my hands. "I, I set it up there, you know, but I was so busy rehearsing, because I wanted to do a good job for you. So I forgot to press the recording button. I should have told the *zenza* to do it!"

I looked into his eyes, wondering if he was really the same person I saw on the stage. His lips relaxed, and a smile returned. In that moment, he felt like a long-lost friend at last returned to my company, travelling towards a common achievement.

"Never mind. My video will probably catch it."

I glanced at the stairway. It was dark, but I heard the sound of footsteps going down. And then it was silent again, like the unvoiced voices and stories I had heard and not heard earlier.

Chapter 4

Performance Analysis:
Emergent Form, Emergent Message

The structure of social roles, relations, and interactions; the oral
literary text and its meaning; and the structure of the event itself
are all emergent in performance. The collective, the communal,
the conventional are not forsaken here; rather, the individual and
the creative are brought up to parity with tradition in a dialectic
played out within the context of situated action, a kind of praxis.

— Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event*

In this chapter I will examine aspects of the actual performance event,
where the performer's individual creativity, cultural tradition, and specific
participant framework are brought together in dynamic harmony. Just as no
two utterances are completely identical as acts of communication, each oral
performance is unique. The formal *content* of the utterances and stories, the
texts, may in some cases be identical, but the *meaning* of any
communicative act depends upon its immediate context.

"The texts we are accustomed to viewing as the raw materials of oral
literature," Bauman (1986: 2) writes, "are merely the thin and partial record
of deeply situated human behavior." Duranti and Goodwin (1992: 11)
similarly points out the significance of the *interactivity* of storytelling —
the story is shaped by *audience participation*. Texts, written or recorded,
however detailed they may be, can never fully capture the dynamics of oral
performance, because form, meaning, and participant framework are never
fixed, but are invariably *emergent*. Developing the insights found in

Bauman, and Duranti and Goodwin, I will explore the professional *rakugo* performance as a dynamic process of communication in which a performer's creativity is harmonized with traditional and collective norms. Although the primary focus of my study is how individual performers verbally structure their stories, I will also give a brief discussion of the influence of the audience on the performance structure.

In creating his own version of "Sannen-me," Sanshôtei Charaku drew upon two older versions of the same story, one written and one videotaped, by a well-established *hanashika*, the late Sanyiûtei Enshô. Both of these gave the same sequence of events, yet the ways in which the stories are told by the two performers differed significantly, to the point that they are classified into different subgenres of *rakugo*: Charaku's is considered *ninjô-banashi*, Enshô's *otoshi-banashi*. But as with any other act of communication, each performer's conduct was subject to various social rules of interaction. As we shall see, Charaku's age, status, artistic reputation, lineage affiliation, position in the day's programme, and the presence of his fans in the audience, for example, all played important roles in shaping the form of the text.

This chapter is divided into several sections. In the first, I will briefly discuss the historical background of the story Enshô and Charaku were narrating, "Sannen-me." As part of this, I will also examine how the texts of "Sannen-me" have been preserved.

In the second section, I will analyze the structural features of Charaku's performance. Although my primary concern here will be the

manner in which he adapted the models provided by Enshô, this inquiry will also reveal major stylistic differences between the two performers, particularly differences in their *metanarration,* the device to establish a narrative frame. At this point I will touch upon the audience's participation in the act of storytelling, through their verbal response to the performer, as an important structural element; and I will take note of certain limitations which affect textual preservation.

In the third section, I will discuss the pragmatics which underlie the choice of structural features to make up a generic pattern. This will include examination of the social roles and relations, directly or indirectly present in the performance context, which determine the modes and motivations for the use of expressive devices.[1] I will argue that Charaku's performance was a dual pragmatic act which both challenged and conformed with tradition and social norms — an open-ended attempt to reflect on *rakugo* as an art genre.

In the concluding section, I will suggest that orality, when expertly utilized in a *rakugo* performance, is a far more effective means of esthetic expression than the literary mode, because its sensitivity and immediacy enhances the form and meaning unique to each performance rather that

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[1]   Labov and Waletzky say that a narrative has two functions, referential and evaluative. The evaluative function shapes the narrative units that sort the sequence of events into a meaningful pattern, a genre or a generic sub-part. The evaluation of a narrative is defined as "that part of the narrative which reveals the attitude of the narrator towards the narrative by emphasizing the relative importance of some narrative units as compared to others" (Labov and Walentzky 1967: 37).

merely constituting one more mechanical reproduction of a text, an artifact which of its very nature is permanent, fixed, and inflexible.

1. "Sannen-me" ("The Third Anniversary")

Basic Plot of Its Main Story

There is a young married couple. The wife is suffering from a terminal illness, and as her deathbed wish, she forbids her husband to remarry. In response, the husband asks her to come back as a ghost on his wedding night should people arrange a match for him, since the appearance of his dead wife's ghost would destroy the new marriage. She promises to do so and then dies. Some time after her death, his relatives do arrange another marriage for him, and the wedding takes place. The man waits for his wife's ghost on the wedding night, but she fails to show up. Disappointed, he decides to settle down permanently with his new wife. Three years after the wife's death, the couple decides to perform a memorial service for her, and they visit her grave. To the husband's surprise, his late wife's ghost finally appears on the night of her memorial service. He asks her about the delay, and she replies that she had to wait until her hair grew back, which had been shaved off at her funeral ceremony. She says, "You wouldn't like me if I came back as a nun."

Literary Sources

This story is said to be an expansion of a short comic tale by Sakuragawa Jihinari (1761-1833), a prominent writer of popular literature (*gesaku*) in the late Edo period, who is also famed for his contributions to

the development of *rakugo* during that time. The original story appears in his *Yûshi Chin Gakumon,* published in 1803 (Tôdai Kenkyû Kai 1969: 215; Mutô 1969: 264-266):

> A man is eating his lunch. Over the small dining table, a pale woman in a pure white dress suddenly appears: her lower body is invisible, and a peculiar ghostly sound accompanies her. The man is surprised. But as he looks at her closely, he realizes that she is his deceased wife.

> Husband: "Hey, you've been dead for five or six years. Why do you suddenly show up?

> Ghost: "Because of my desire to see you, for I haven't seen you for a long time."

> Husband: "You're such a helpless fool! A ghost should appear at night. Why you have to show up during the day?"

> She responded to his criticism with tears in her eyes, "Because I'm afraid of the dark." (translation mine)

According to the *Koten Rakugo Meijin Kai* (see Appendix Two, Sanyûtei 1969-1970: 86), this story has several variations. It is said to be an elaboration of the latter half of "Sara-ya" ("The Ceramic Dish Merchant"), and the first half of "Sara-ya" in turn is adapted from an older story, "Hanami-Ogi" ("Fan for Cherry-Blossom Viewing") "Sutoku-in" ("Ex-Emperor Sutoku") is another variation of "Sara-ya"; it has traditionally been seen as a *kamigata* (Osaka-style) *rakugo* story, but it has re-entered the repertoires of many storytellers in Tokyo. Another *kamigata* story, "Chazuke Yûrei" ("Meal-Time Ghost"), is a further variation of "Sannen-me."

In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to provide a brief overview of the structural relationship between these stories, although the historical process through which they came to share structural elements is not clear.[2] I also wish to show how different versions of *rakugo* stories have been preserved in texts since the late nineteenth century.[3]

The *rakugo* story called "Hanami-Ôgi" ("Fan for Cherry-blossom-Viewing)" is a romantic comedy in which a man and a woman fall in love at a flower-viewing gathering (Yanagiya Tsubame, 1916). The woman passes him a fan with a love poem of the famous ex-emperor Sutoku's on it. They part, but thanks to the help of the fan and its poem, are able to find each other again. The general plot structure of "Hanami-Ôgi" and its happy ending are shared by "Sutoku-in" ("Ex-Emperor Sutoku"). Even the poems in both stories are identical (Katsura Mikisuke III 1910, 1963, 1968; Shôfukutei Shôkaku 1918; Katsura Beichô 1970, 1981; Shôfukutei Nikaku 1974; Irifunetei Senkyô 1974).

"Sara-ya" ("The Ceramic Dish Merchant"), on the other hand, seems to have two basic versions, one with a happy ending, the other with a more restrained conclusion. The former version, that which is said to appear on stage to this day, is similar to "Hanami-Ôgi" ("Flower Viewing Fan") and

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[2]   I have not been able to find a source that discusses the historical aspect of the structural links between these stories.

[3]   This discussion is based upon the textual data I was able to obtain, which may not cover every possible detail of the written texts of all the stories. The bibliographic information concerning the different textual versions of the five stories which I was able to examine is provided in the appendix.

"Sutoku-in" ("Ex-Emperor Sutoku"; cf. Sanyûtei En'u I 1908; Yanagiya Kosen 1929-1930, 1935a, 1935b; *Rakugo Zenshû* 1962; Yanagiya Kingorô 1927). The poem on the fan in this version of "Sara-ya" is the same as in the other two. However, this "Sara-ya" continues with a ghost story after the happy ending (cf. Shunpûtei Ryûshi, 1910). Still another version transcribed and published in 1910, said to have been performed by Shunpûtei Ryûshi, has an additional episode: after finding each other again, the couple weds. The couple desires children, but the wife cannot conceive; they choose to bring in a concubine, Okiku, to bear a child for them, but Okiku commits suicide, not able to withstand the jealous wife's harsh treatment. Okiku's ghost then haunts their house.

"Chazuke Yûrei" ("Meal-Time Ghost") is structurally the closest to the original skit by Sakuragawa Jihinari, and therefore to the main story of "Sannen-me." "Chazuke Yûrei" shares the same basic plot (the wife predeceases her husband and comes to visit him as a ghost) with both "Sannen-me" and Jihinari's story. It shares the latter's setting (a man eating his lunch when his late wife appears), and the same ending (the ghost is too afraid to come back at night; *Koten Rakugo Taikei*, 1974). The ending of "Sannen-me" retains the comedic foundation of "Chazuke Yûrei," that is, the untimely return of the wife's ghost.

However, in many written versions of "Sannen-me" (both older and more recent ones), the basic romantic, happy-ending motif (as in "Hanami-Ogi" and "Sutoku-in") appears in the *makura* or introduction (cf. *Edo Rakugo Meisaku Sen* 1969; *Koten Rakugo Zenshû* 1973; *Rakugo Zenshû* 1952; *Sanyûtei Enshô V* 1935; *Sanyûtei Enshô IV* 1961, 1980). This

makura is then followed by the main story described above. For example, a written text published in 1935, with a note that it was performed by Sanyûtei Enshô V, contains a *makura* in which the narrator explains how a match-maker made his or her career in the old days — by faking a "love-at-first-sight" story to arrange a marriage. This *makura* was often re-used, without significant changes, by the late Enshô VI, the adapted son of Enshô V.

2. Performance Structure

Before examining the specific structural characteristics of Charaku's performance, two important aspects of its general structure need to be discussed. One is the basic formal elements of *rakugo* performance and their sequential patterning, and the other is the structural distinction between the genres mentioned earlier, *ninjô-banashi* and *otoshi-banashi*.

As related in the previous chapter, a *rakugo* performance usually consists of three parts, the *makura* (introduction), the *hanashi* (main story), and the *ochi* (ending/punch-line). However, there are two other features: prologue and epilogue. In the prologue, a performer may refer to himself or herself in relation to the general unfolding of the performance event, or comment on something which has happened immediately preceding his or her appearance. In either case, a prologue marks the transition from one performance to another, and it has no necessary relation to the thematic structure of the particular story chosen for the performance. The epilogues, naturally enough, mark the conclusion of the performer's turn, after the end of the story has been signaled by the punch-line. Again, the epilogues are transitional, signaling an imminent shift from one performer to another,

from one type of performance to another type, or even the end of a programme. Verbal realization of these additional elements is not obligatory. However, we may interpret the performers' bows, opening and ending, as the minimum non-verbal realization of prologue and epilogue. This is justifiable when we consider the stylistic significance of these bows, the fact that each performer tries to make his or her bow distinct and impressive.[4]

The most common subdivision in contemporary *rakugo* is that between its two subgenres, *ninjô-banashi* and *otoshi-banashi*. *Ninjô-banashi* literally means "human-feeling story," and the best non-technical description for it is perhaps tragicomedy. Although it ends with a comical punch-line, and humor (though often subtle) is used constantly, it always contains underlying pathos (Nagai 1971b: 223). *Ninjô-banashi* is comedy only in the Classical sense:[5] its primary purpose is not to elicit laughter but

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[4]   This observation about the bows is based upon my native knowledge about *rakugo*. I have been told by many *rakugo* fans (including my parents) how they even judge the quality of a performance or a performer just by examining the way the performer enters and bows.

Charaku also told me that when he bows he tries to keep his entire upper body low, not just his neck and shoulders, in order to make his bow appear humble and polite.

[5]   A *ninjô-banashi* might also be called a comedy in the Greek sense, which does not have to be farcical. Norwood writes, "Comedy is that type of drama which employs action tolerably close to real life and an expression light, charming, often laughable. Allied to comedy, and often confused with it, is farce, which may be defined as exaggerated comedy: its problem is unlikely and absurd, its action ludicrous and one-sided, its manner entirely laughable. Some of the finest works included under the conventional title of 'Greek Comedy' should in strictness be called farce' (Norwood 1931: 1). Henderson (1990: 389-390) similary states, "The

to communicate moral values presumed to be universal. For this reason, the punch-line of a *ninjô-banashi* often appears awkwardly "pasted in":[6] this comical punch-line has become the symbolic essence of contemporary *rakugo* regardless of genre. *Otoshi-banashi*, on the contrary, is farce; it aims at evoking laughter from the audience. Although *otoshi-banashi* is often highly satiric, the message of the story must be well balanced by laughter. Consequently, the representation of human pathos and moral values are not as important to *otoshi-banashi* as they are to *ninjô-banashi* (cf. Anada 1989: 125).

Although there is a tendency for native researchers to define *rakugo* genres in terms of story ("stories A and B are *ninjô-banashi*"),[7] a generic

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Comic Poets of fifth-century Athens aimed, in the words of the Initiate-Chorus of *Frogs* , 'to say much that is humorous and much that is serious, and to win the prize by playfulness and mockery, worthy of the festival.' For students of Old Comedy, 'humorous' and 'playfulness' are relatively unproblematic: the words and actions of the performers would make the spectators laugh. But the claim to be 'serious' raises serious issues about the genre of Old Comedy, for the poets consistently said that their advice and admonishment to the spectators were true and just, that their explicit and often mordantly abusive treatment of individuals (through 'mockery') would purify the *polis* and advance the people's interests, and that their portrayal of contemporary reality, however novel or facetious, was essentially believable" (Henderson: 271).

6 See, for example, Enshô 1961: 86.

7 See Anada 1989: 125, for example. Morioka and Sasaki define *ninjô-banashi* with more focus on the thematic content: to them, *ninjô-banashi* is a "blanket term for various types of sympathy-arousing stories which picture complications of life with a gentle touch of humor and irony" (Morioka and Sasaki 1990: 450) Nagai (1971b: 233) similarly points out the importance of *ninjô*— human feeling, or what I more bluntly called pathos — as the determining element of *ninjô-banashi*. He goes as far as to state that it is not the "script" (*daihon*) of a *ninjô-banashi* that gives it

distinction is better realized through structural features specific to each genre. The same story can easily be given two different story types, for example, one *otoshi-banashi*, and the other *ninjô-banashi*.

The major structural device which enables such generic patterning is *metanarration*. Babcock defines metanarration as follows:

> (Metanarration) may refer to the performance itself and the genre to which it belongs, and/or the performer and his audience, [and] a metanarrational comment may refer to any of these factors constituting the speech event and may be either metacommunicative or metalinguistic or both....In metanarration the subject of discourse is the narrative itself and those elements by which it is constituted and communicated (Babcock 1977: 68)

Dundes (1966) used a more specific term, "metafolklore," to address the phenomenon of reflexivity in storytelling; and Zellig Harris (1963: 340-50) coined the term "metadiscourse" to refer to narrative discourse about narrative discourse. Labov and Waletzky similarly discussed the "evaluative function" of narrative as opposed to the "referential function." The former, contained in certain narrative units, shapes the narrative into a meaningful pattern (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 13, 33-41). In short, metanarration is the structural frame which defines narration within the specific interpretive mode — the story within the story.

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authority and its generic identity but its "representation and technique" (*enshutsu* and *gihô*) which enable a story to "exuviate" (*dappi*) from *otoshi-banashi* to *ninjô-banashi* . Anada's view is in harmony with my discussion here, except that I use the term "metanarration" to replace his more general terms "representation" (*enshutsu*), and "techniques" (*gihô*).

The following discussion is concerned with three major metanarrative devices common to the *rakugo* prologue, the *makura*, and the *kusuguri*. The prologue establishes the mode, the frame within which the performance to follow should be understood. As we have mentioned, the literal meaning of *makura* is "pillow": a pillow upon which the main story is placed — embedding a narrative within another narrative. *Kusuguri*, the "tickler," is a comical device used within the main story to evaluate the development of the story, in order to elicit the audience's participation in the form of laughter. Since the *yose* setting symbolically asserts, through the omission of story titles, that an audience should be familiar with the plot of most stories that are told, an expert audience will anticipate finding out *not* which story is to be told but *how* it is to be told. Through the intentional manipulation of these metanarrative devices, each performer frames his or her story in a distinct way.

In the case of Charaku, Enshô, and "Sannen-me," the plot of the story was the same, but the two performers made of it versions which belonged to different *rakugo* subgenres. In creating his own "Sannen-me," Charaku had two main artistic foci. In an interview, he said that one of his major concerns was to perform a fine piece,[8] rather than to create a comic masterpiece (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b). He was trying to do this by a focus on portraying two young women, one who was healthy, and one who was dying. His "Sannen-me" is thus characterized by a highly restrained humor throughout the story; most particularly, by a restricted use of

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[8] The term Charaku used to describe the kind of story he had in mind is *kireina hanashi*, a "beautiful story" (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b).

kusuguri. This, coupled with the romantic undertone established by a selective use of particular lexical items and expressions, make it a tragicomedy — a *ninjô-banashi*.

In the immediate task of constructing his story, Charaku used the late Sanyûtei Enshô VI's texts of "Sannen-me," one written and one televised, as models.[9] However, both of Enshô's versions appear to be firmly within the genre of *otoshi-banashi*, with more frequent and less semantically restricted use of overtly vulgar expressions within *makura* and in *kusuguri*. Enshô's determination to perform "Sannen-me" as *otoshi-banashi* is evident in his comment that "the ending for this story should be short and light, for that is the key point of an *otoshi-banashi*" (Sanyûtei Enshô 1961: 87).

The following chart, "Structural Description of the Three Texts," summarizes the most significant verbal structural features of the three texts created by the two different performers. For the prologue, only the data from Charaku's performance is available, because Enshô's prologue was accidentally cut off in the videotaped version and eliminated in the literary text. However, we can see from Charaku's prologue, "Anecdote," that it is meant to signal the transition from the openly comical performance norm that preceded him to a more serious and restrained one. In his *makura*, Charaku reworked only a small part of Enshô's *makura* from the televised version, the story which I term the "louse skit." While in both versions,

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9   The written text is taken from *Koten Rakugo Meijin kai* (1969-1970). The televised version is from "Ohayô Meijin Yose" broadcast by NHK. Unfortunately, the date of its first showing is not available.

Ensho's *makura* is highly comical, Charaku's *makura* is characterized by a sharply restrained use of humor and elimination of the elements that underlie a romantic theme. And in the *hanashi* (main story), although both performers used exactly the same nine-unit plot structure (initial situation, absenting, interdiction, plan, motivation, plan fails, violation of interdiction, memorial visit, vengeance), their versions conformed to the different structural patterns expected for *otoshi-banashi* and *ninjô-banashi*. Charaku's use of *kusuguri* was much less frequent and more semantically refined than that of Enshô; here, Charaku again attempted to enhance the romantic theme and impart a gentle and delicate feminine beauty. I will look more closely at these structural aspects in the table and discussion below.

Structural Description of the Three Texts

Charaku (live)	Enshô (written)	Enshô (live/T.V.)
Prologue: "anecdote"	(missing)	(missing)
Makura ("pillow")		
	1) "ki"	1)
	2) yin and yang	#2)
	3) dialect	3)
	4) definition of ghost	4)
5) louse skit		5)
	6) ideal marriage	6)
Hanashi ("main story") 1) Initial situation		
—	a) divide food	a)
b) rice cracker	b) rice cracker	b)
2) Absenting		
3) Interdiction		
c) loving care	c)	c)
d) #night alone	d) night alone	d)
e) pussycat	—	—
4) Plan		
f) foolish promise	f)	f)

5) Motivation		
g) sheath	g)	g)
—	h) meet ghost	h)
i) Charaku	—	—
j) carefree girl	j)	—
—	k) dear ghost	k)
—	l) loud snoring	l)
	Farting skit	
	m) farting	m)
	n) wasting electricity	n)
o) wedding-night dialogue	o)	o)

6) Plan fails		
—	—	p)
q) next-door neighbor	q)	q)
r) coming from far away	r)	r)

7) Violation of interdiction		
s) charcoal ball	s) charcoal ball	—

8) Memorial visit		
—	t) fencer	t)
u) gay quarter	u)	u)

9) Vengeance		
v) no sweat	v)	v)
w) bullhead	w)	w)
x) like a bat	x)	x)
y) wise ghost	y)	y)
PU) #hair *kami*	PU) hair *ke*	PU) hair *ke*

"—" means absence of the feature
"#" indicates a structural variation
"PU" means the punch line
The letters a) to y) indicate the subdivisions of verbal *kusuguri*

Prologue

As soon as Charaku appeared on the stage, a young member of the audience in the front row called out "Here you are!" Charaku's response signaled that his story was not going to be as entertaining as what preceded his. This was done indirectly, by means of an anecdote about a fellow who had previously greeted him with "finally, here you are!" and had then left the theater to go to the bathroom, saying that he would not be in danger of missing anything thereby.

Charaku's performance had been preceded by a series of overtly comical performances, including *otoshi-banashi* acts. His prologue did not merely modestly disclaim his popularity, but also conveyed to the audience the transition from openly comical norms of interpretation and interaction to more serious and restrained ones — those expected of *ninjô-banashi*.

Enshô's written text had begun with the *makura*. In the televised version of his performance, the first few moments was unfortunately lost, so I do not know what form Enshô's spoken prologue took. However, since this televised version was a copy from Charaku's own collection, I believe his copy must also have lacked the initial part.

This prologue is an important example of how audience participation influences the verbal structure of a story. Not only does the comment from the audience, "matte-mashita!" ("Here you are!") form an integral part of the final story, but it becomes so in a situation-specific way. It is interesting to observe that there is a strong tendency for a literary text, even a detailed

transcription, to omit the prologue and begin directly with the *makura*. This may indicate that due to the highly *interactive, audience-dependent* nature of prologues, they were not considered properly a part of the *rakugo* story by textual editors. Nonetheless, prologues, as a metanarrative device, are just as much an integral part of the performance structure as the *makura* and the main story. Prologues situate the performance event in an appropriate context, adjusting it for the particular audience being addressed, and conveying to them the proper limits of their evaluative foci.

Makura (introduction)

In this introductory section, the performer typically attempts to gradually lead the audience into the theme or topic of the story, by addressing seasonally, socially, or politically relevant topics, or providing proverbs or parables related to the main story. The length of the *makura* is typically no more than five minutes for a twenty-minute performance, but this can easily be modified according to the judgment of the performer. Charaku, for instance, prefers his *makura* to be short and to the point, which is evident in his *makura* for "Sannen-me."

Charaku's *makura* consisted of a short story which is a humorous expansion of a traditional proverb, "even a one-inch insect has a half-inch soul" ("even a worm will turn"). He introduces it as an anecdote he heard from his late master, Sanshôtei Karaku, a well-respected *hanashika* who excelled in telling *ninjô-banashi*. A traveling entertainer stays at a shabby inn, and finds a louse inside his kimono neck band, plump with his blood. Rather than killing it immediately, he decides to torture it by trapping it in

a little hole in a pillar with a plug of crumpled paper. After ten months, he returns to the same inn and remembers the louse. He finds the louse still in the hole, dried up and barely able to move; but when he puts it on his palm, it bites him. Out of pity he lets it suck his blood, but finally it bites into a main vein and kills him. The story ends with a punch line, *shiranu ga hotoke*, which can be translated as "(this story is called) ignorance is *blice* (bliss)." I refer to it below as the "louse skit."

Although Charaku states that this anecdote originated with his master Karaku, it is in fact taken from Enshô's televised version. Except for a few minor details, the verbal structure of the louse skit as found there is unchanged. In Enshô's version, however, the louse skit is only part of the *makura* — he also uses several shorter gags and skits, making his *makura* longer than that of Charaku.[10] Enshô, in succession, discusses the power of "ki" or feeling as the source of a ghost (1); notes the concepts of yin and yang, as a ghost is associated with the yin (2); comments on the dialect variation in a ghost's self-introductory statement (3); reflects on a ghost as a "dimly-present-spirit," based on the interpretation of the Chinese characters for "ghost" 幽 (4); performs the louse skit (5); and finally, characterizes an ideal marriage as peaceful, but not overly romantic and affectionate (6). With the sole exception of the louse skit, these elements

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[10] This may be due not only to stylistic differences but also to a difference in the time available for their performances. Enshô's was about 25 minutes while Charaku's was about 22 minutes.

appear fundamentally unchanged in his written text.[11] These skits, especially (3), are accompanied by humorous gestures and exaggerated facial expressions.

The style of Charaku's *makura* differs from Enshô's in two major respects: a more restrained use of comical expressions, and an open assertion of his lineage affiliation. Charaku's *makura* contains far fewer gags and humorous skits than that by Enshô. Consequently, Charaku's audience laughed far less than Enshô's. This is due not only to the elimination of Enshô's gags and humorous skits, but also to Charaku's editing of the one story he did use, the louse skit — again he omitted comical touches such as mimicry of the lifeless louse's face. This comedic restraint is constantly present throughout Charaku's performance — it is one of the requirements for *ninjô-banashi*. His mention of Karaku's name also harmonizes with the *ninjô-banashi* framework, for it indicates a stylistic affiliation with his late master. Although many members of the audience would not be familiar with Karaku's work, experts (regulars and *rakugo* fan club members)[12] would understand the significance of this

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[11] In yet other written versions of his "Sannen-me," his 1961 and 1980 texts, Enshô uses a considerably different *makura*, one that is very similar to Enshô V's *makura* for his "Sannen-me," as discussed earlier in the section on literary sources.

[12] I am making this assertion based upon (1) my observation of the *yose* audience as discussed in Chapter Three, (2) the availability and popularity of the ethnographic works on *rakugo* also discussed there, and (3) Charaku's comments on the experts in the audience. He said that regulars often knew more about the history of *rakugo* and *rakugo* performers than the performers did themselves. Therefore, many performers, including Charaku, keep an open mind about the regulars' comments on their performance, which is often delivered verbally backstage, soon after the

assertion, and would recall the time of Karaku, when a star was always expected to perform *ninjô-banashi*.

There is another significant modification Charaku makes in his *makura*, this time a thematic one. His elimination of Enshô's final *makura* element, the comment on the ideal marriage, establishes a romantic and affectionate undertone for the main story. Here, Enshô had said "a home should be peaceful; it is no good if neighbors say that the couple is always fighting — but if a couple loves each other too much, always together, then people around them are annoyed by them." Since an important theme of the main story is the social practice of arranged marriage, this approval bestowed on "moderate" behavior by a married couple promotes the acceptance of marriage as a permanent social institution (as in Confucian ideals). Charaku's elimination of this element again accords with his intention to create a "lovely" piece, emphasizing a romantic tie that persists beyond a partner's death, despite the social practice of arranged marriages and re-marriages.[13]

Hanashi (main story)

A *kusuguri* is a comical expression used to eliciting the audience's attention to, and participation in, the story. One of the most important structural features of *rakugo* is the freedom that *hanashika* enjoy to impart a particular and personal shape to a given story (whose plot is often already

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performance. At the time of his performance at Yoshiike, Charaku confirmed that one such regular (with whom he is acquainted) was present.

[13] Charaku also said in an interview that he felt it would be so "boring" to justify a good marriage in this story (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b).

known to the audience). It is therefore understandable that there is an unwritten rule not to use someone else's *kusuguri* without his or her permission (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b).

A *kusuguri* can be as subtle and erotic as in 3)-e), "pussycat." This occurs in Charaku's performance, as part of the husband's response to his dying wife who has requested that he never remarry after her death: "omae ga shinda-ra mesuneko ippiki hiza-no ue ni nose-ya shinai kara" ("If you die, I swear I'll never put on my lap even a tiny *pussycat*"). At the other extreme, it can be an open gag, as with 1)-b) "rice cracker." This comes when the husband asks his sick wife to tell him what he can do to make her feel better: "O.K., tell me what's bothering you. I'll do anything for you. Anything I will do, I swear, but only things that I can do, like, don't ask me to bite rice crackers with my eyes."

Kusuguri also function to distinguish *ninjô-banashi* from *otoshi-banashi*. Because the goal of an *otoshi-banashi* is to establish a comical perspective on the narrative content, it makes abundant use of *kusuguri*. *Ninjô-banashi*, on the contrary, relies far less upon *kusuguri*. They are significant here only to the extent that they help the audience to follow the story, and to avoid boredom. Although there is no fixed rule for the frequency or kinds of *kusuguri* which distinguish *ninjô-banashi* from *otoshi-banashi*, a *hanashika* must plan their use carefully according to the purpose of the performance. A *ninjô-banashi* often requires more subtle *kusuguri* than those in *otoshi-banashi* because the *kusuguri* must not interfere with the ethical overtones of the story.

Although both performers used exactly the same plot structure, or story-schema, their versions harmonized with the different structural patterns for their respective genres. Charaku's use of *kusuguri* was much less frequent and more semantically restrictive than Enshô's. His *kusuguri* and the selection of lexical items to express them shows a tendency towards semantic refinement, to enhance the romantic theme and establish a gentle and delicate "feminine" beauty. However, before going further, we need to identify the basic story structure shared by both performers. In so doing, I will use the framework proposed by Vladimir Propp.

Story Schema

Propp (1968: xi) states that the structure or formal organization of a folkloric text can be described by following the chronological order of its linear sequence of elements. These elements are called the "functions" — the functions of the dramatis personae — of a tale. Each of them is a fundamental narrative unit, making this a morphological approach.[14] These functions can be represented by nouns or short phrases; and I will refer to the pattern by which these functions are organized as a schema, the term used in cognitive science to designate an underlying pattern of knowledge representation and/or organization (cf. Rice 1980). The story schema of "Sannen-me" can thus be analyzed as follows:

1. <u>Initial situation</u> : there is a young married couple. The wife has been ill, and the husband is doing his best to care for her.

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[14] Dundes (1975: 74) calls this function "motifeme."

2.   Absentation: wife is dying.

3.   Interdiction: as her last wish, she requests the husband never to remarry.

4.   Plan: the husband asks the wife to come back as a ghost on his wedding night so as to ruin any marriage that might be arranged by his relatives, and she agrees to do so.

5.   Violation of the interdiction is motivated (Motivation): after the wife's death, the relatives arrange another marriage for him, and the wedding takes place.

6.   Plan fails: the wife's ghost fails to appear on the wedding night.

7.   Violation of interdiction: the man settles down with his new wife and they have a child.

8.   Memorial visit: the man pays a visit to his late wife's grave and performs a memorial service for her on the third year after her death.

9.   Vengeance: wife's ghost appears to him and blames him for his dishonesty. She gets her revenge on him not by destructive means, but rather by impressing upon him the permanence of her affections.[15]

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[15] Odd-sounding terms such as "absentation," "interdiction," and "motivation" were originally introduced by Propp in his functional analysis of folktales.

This schema is a variation of a basic pattern common to many popular ghost stories or karma tales such as "Yotsuya Kaidan" ("The Ghost Tale of Yotsuya") and "Banchô Sarayashiki" ("The Haunted House of Dishes"), which will be discussed shortly. The most basic pattern for these stories involves "absentation," "interdiction," "violation of interdiction," and "vengeance." Absentation marks the state of someone's death or impending death, caused by natural or human forces such as disease or homicide. This is a precondition for a ghost to appear or a reincarnation to take place. Interdiction may involve any form of regulation which comes about related to the death or the person dying, violation of which will bring a curse on the violator. When this violation takes place, it is revenged by the ghost. This pattern seems to capture an essential Buddhist ethical principle, the idea of karma — if you do harm to a life form, retribution will be exacted on you after death..

The schema in "Sannen-me" is one variation on a pattern observed in many well-known ghost stories from the Edo period. In Tsuruya Nanboku's "Yotsuya Kaidan" ("The Ghost Tale of Yotsuya"), for example, an unemployed samurai tries to murder his sick wife because of his desire to marry a wealthy merchant's mistress; for his part, the old merchant wishes to give her to this young samurai, even though she is pregnant with his child (absentation). Having been requested by the merchant to secretly poison his wife (interdiction), he orders a pseudo-monk who helps around their household to lie to her that the poison is medicine (plan). However, the wife gradually notices that she is getting worse (motivation). On her deathbed, the monk tells her about the husband's plan (plan fails), and so

she discovers that she has been betrayed by her husband (violation of interdiction). The wife's ghost drives the husband mad and he kills the merchant's family and himself (vengeance; Tanaka, Kôtarô 1970: 222-228).

In another well-known ghost story, "Banchô Sarayashiki" ("The Haunted House of Dishes"), a similar pattern can be observed. A young maid throws herself into a well (absentation) because she accidentally breaks one of the special dishes her lord ordered her to keep safely, and is thus in danger of suffering harsh punishment at his hands (interdiction and violation of interdiction). Her ghost haunts the house, appearing at night, endlessly counting the number of dishes (vengeance; Tanaka, Kôtarô 1970: 220-221).

"Sannen-me," however, contains an extra element, the "memorial visit." This function is often part of a ghost story, because a memorial visit to a deceased person's grave or attendance at a memorial service provides a symbolic link between this world and the world of the dead. This in turn provides a bridge through which the dead spirit can access the living to carry out its revenge.

Kusuguri

Charaku's *kusuguri* are for the most part identical to those of Enshô; however, he drops several that would interfere with the atmosphere he is trying to create. The same motivation can be seen behind the cases when Enshô's *kusuguri* are modified, and when he adds new *kusuguri* of his

own. In the next few paragraphs, we will elaborate further on these two points.

a) Elimination

Charaku employed 18 *kusuguri* in all, while Enshô had 22 in his written text and 21 in his televised performance. Although the numbers show no dramatic quantitative difference, Charaku's *kusuguri* include two new ones: he omitted five that were common to both of Enshô's texts. Even more important, he dropped a relatively long farcical skit made up of two *kusuguri* sequences[16] — the "farting skit" of the chart. The first *kusuguri* of this skit is a comical portrayal of a senior couple who freely fart at each other. The second *kusuguri* concerns their sleeping behavior: the wife yells at the husband not to waste electricity by staying up, but when she sleeps she snores so loudly that the husband cannot go to sleep.

This skit is inserted just before the wedding night scene, where the man and his new bride engage in a suggestive conversation. This is in the midst of the story, where the transition from a tragic event (first wife's death) to a happy event (wedding) has just occurred. Thus the skit can be thought of as an interlude, a comic act played by clowns. In Enshô's televised version, this skit is greeted by a burst of laughter in the audience. For Enshô, this is a major attention-getter, for the contrastive context it sets up prior to the young couple's wedding night's conversation.

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[16] This relatively long "farting" skit is a *kusuguri* in the broad sense. This type of insertion is more specifically known among performers as *hamekomi*, literally "inlay" (Sanshôtei Charaku 1993).

However, Charaku sees it quite differently: as a disruptive element in the story. Although he recognizes Enshô as a great *hanashika*, he feels that this skit is esthetically unacceptable in this context.[17] The scene where the senior couple — the clowns — fart, for example, is something he "never wants to perform" (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b). His attitude is understandable when we remember that he is relating the story within the framework of the *ninjô-banashi* genre. This farcical insertion metaphorically represents an external evaluative viewpoint on the physically imposed limits to the romantic: love ages, sweet words change to odorous flatulence, and beauty deteriorates into monstrous or farcical images. One might point out in mitigation that this skit, when paired with the newlyweds' scene, emphasizes the persistence of the marital tie rather than possibly transient feelings of affection. Nevertheless, Charaku sees it as undermining the romantic theme, the perpetual spiritual union of the two lovers.[18] Also, since the skit involves the depiction of an old woman's unpleasant behavior and expressions, it is incompatible with Charaku's purpose of depicting youthful feminine charm.

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[17] In fact, Charaku and I disagreed over the two versions of "Sannen-me." I thought both Enchô's and Charaku's versions were equally artistically valid; Charaku did not like Enshô's style in this particular story (Sanshôtei Charaku 1993).

[18] Charaku said in an interview that he wanted to maintain a subtle balance between the 'real' and the 'imagined.' He said that it would be all too easy to laugh at a funny punch line, fully realizing the story to be fictional; but he could not help but to pose such questions as "What happens if she *really* did come back? Perhaps prettier and healthier than before? What would happen the morning after, and the day after? Can a man truly love two women? " (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b).

The same considerations dictate the elimination of other *kusuguri*. The *kusuguri* 1)-a) "divide food" on chart A is used where the dying wife suspects that the husband is keeping something from her. He tells her that he shares everything with her, "even the food, if there's only one thing to eat, we divide it into two, two into four, well, except we can't eat anything when there's nothing to eat." This skit indicates the practical, profane side of marital life — economic management and related domestic matters. These features would again blur Charaku's focus on the deeper and more personal commitment by the two lovers.

Enshô's 5)-l) "snore loud" and 8)-t) "fencer" are two more segments that would conflict with Charaku's intentions. 5)-l) occurs when the narrator comments, just before the "farting skit," that the man cannot go to sleep on his the wedding night because he is waiting for his wife's ghost; the new wife, observing his restless behavior, and also restless because of the occasion, is equally sleepless, covering this by snoring loudly. The description of the wife's behavior is eliminated in Charaku's text primarily because of this "snoring loudly." In 8)-u) "fencer," the second wife is described as having "the forehead of a fencer" because after giving birth to their child her front hair thinned out. Again, the association of a bald forehead with a young mother is incompatible with Charaku's conception of the story.

b) Modification and Addition

The cases where Enshô's *kusuguri* are used with modification, and those where new *kusuguri* are added by Charaku, are both governed by the

same considerations. Charaku's 3)-d) "night alone" is a case in point. 3)-d) is an expression with sexual connotations: the dying wife says to her husband, who has promised never to remarry, "You are only saying that; I know very well how difficult it is for you to spend a *night alone*." This *kusuguri* appears in Enshô's written text, but there, the wife says, "You are only saying that; I know very well that you *cannot be alone*."

The "night alone" *kusuguri* occurs between two others: 3)-c) "loving care," also found in Enshô's text, and 3)-e) "pussy cat," unique to Charaku's version. Both are polysemic expressions with sexual connotations. 3)-c) occurs when the wife tells the husband that she cannot stand the thought of him caring for his new wife in the same way he has cared for her. Her speech contains the word *kawaigaru*, which can be translated either "to be affectionate to" or "to caress." As we have already said, 3)-e) occurs when the husband tries to assure his wife that he will not remarry: "If you die, I'll never put on my lap even a tiny *pussy cat*." Although Enshô's original "cannot be alone" has a definite sexual connotation, Charaku's "night alone" further enhances the seductive nuance.

An interesting case of the addition of a new *kusuguri* is 5)-i). Here, describing how handsome the man is who just lost his wife, Charaku names three Japanese entertainers, two of whom are young, fresh-looking, popular actors (perhaps Japanese counterparts to Tom Cruise and Michael J. Fox, as I and Charaku came to agree). The third is none other than Charaku himself. However, the weight of the third figure, Charaku, is definitely less than the first two: he says that this man is a mixture between actor A and

actor B, sprinkled with a bit of Sanshôtei Charaku. The selection of these two young popular figures is in order with the general soft, romantic undertones of Charaku's story — it is definitely not random, for he could have chosen more mature or masculine stars instead.

Finally, the punch line contains an important lexical modification. The punch line is given by the wife's ghost who tries to excuse herself for the late return: "I waited until my hair grew back, because if I showed up as a nun, I knew you wouldn't like me any more." There are two words in Japanese which mean hair, *ke* and *kami*. *Ke* means hair in general, whereas *kami* is specifically hair that grows on the human head. While Enshô used *ke* for hair in both texts, Charaku changed *ke* to *kami*. This modification again harmonizes with Charaku's aesthetic focus on feminine beauty. As apparent in such commonly used expressions as "kami wa onna no inochi" ("hair is a woman's life"), long shiny hair is a symbol of not only feminine beauty but also womanly life force. The possibly dangerous ways in which such a force might be realized is made evident by the common association of a female ghost with her long, disordered hair, which is more readily perceived as frightening than as ugly.[19]

3. Cultural Construction of Genre:

    A Pragmatic Analysis of the Performance

Our discussion of *rakugo* subgenres has up to now focused on their formal properties. But just as much as the genres conform to the structural

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[19] This frightening image of female ghosts is clearest in many of the works of Maruyama Ôkyo, a distinguished painter of the late Edo period.

patterns unique to each one, their pragmatic dimensions delineate their functions in cultural contexts. Ben-Amos writes:

> Genres function in culture by means of sets of distinctive features which are operative on cognitive, pragmatic, and expressive levels....The performance in designated persons, in relation to, or within the frame of, sets of appropriate occasions and situations, comprise the pragmatic generic features. (Ben-Amos1982: 80)

Hence, the genres *ninjô-banashi* and *otoshi-banashi* are assigned different pragmatic situations, and the performance of the stories belonging to each genre must meet the social/cultural requirements specific to the genre.

However, an examination of the performer's conformity to such social expectations cannot and will not reveal the whole complexity of the communicative event. Being thoroughly familiar with the generic requirements, both structural and social, a performer may choose to manipulate such expectations, to go beyond the requirements and evaluate the conventional norms. The tension between the performer's creative intent and the social expectations is thus resolved through the careful *balancing* between his or her conformity with, and challenges to, tradition and social expectations. This will involve the use of polysemic expressive devices to capture dual messages — one conformist, and the other challenging — at the same time.

In the following paragraphs, we will look at the pragmatic construction of the two *rakugo* sub-genres, and examine how Charaku attempted to balance these two seemingly opposed forces, convention and innovation, to produce a unique assertion of his artistic identity.

Pragmatic Dimensions of *Rakugo* Subgenres

Ninjô-banashi and *otoshi-banashi* fit into different social contexts, just as much as they conform to different structural patterns. Although there are a large number of pragmatic dimensions thorough which *ninjô-banashi* can be distinguished from *otoshi-banashi*, I will only discuss a few of the most salient below: status, situation, and artistic attitudes.

The status of a performer is an important factor for defining who may perform *ninjô-banashi*. In the past, a *shin'uchi* was expected to master the *ninjô-banashi* presentation of his selection. Today, however, the majority of *shin'uchi* no longer perform *ninjô-banashi* (Anada 1989: 125). Moreover, it is extremely rare for a *futatsume* to perform *ninjô-banashi*: if he or she ever does, it will most likely be done outside the *yose*, in a more private setting.

Otoshi-banashi, on the other hand, can be performed by either *shin'uchi* or *futatsume*. However, these do not have equal freedom to select stories within the genre. *Shin'uchi*, of course, have the liberty to choose any story they please, but a *futatsume* should obtain permission from his mentors when planning to perform a new, more challenging story.

There is also a clear difference between *ninjô-banashi* and *otoshi-banashi* in relation to where and when they can be performed. While a *ninjô-banashi* performance is most commonly reserved for the *tori*, the final star performer of a *yose* (or *yose*-like) programme, an *otoshi-banashi*

may be performed anywhere within the programme, including the final position.

Finally, the audiences' attitudes towards the genres clearly differ. An *otoshi-banashi* is expected to be funny, and this is the case even when the story is a political satire.[20] A *ninjô-banashi*, on the contrary, requires more "serious" participation — too much laughter might interfere with the dramatic flow of the story, or create an atmosphere out of harmony with its underlying pathos. Thus we have Charaku's express preference not to "play around with the audience too much" ("kyaku o ijiranai"; Sanshotei Charaku, 1992)

Nevertheless, the degree of "seriousness" differs depending upon the choice of a *ninjô-banashi* story and the interpretation a performer chooses to give to it. Moreover, speaking from my own observation, the quality of the laughter for *ninjô-banashi* and *otoshi-banashi* may differ considerably. The kind of laughter appropriate for a *ninjô-banashi* is often much less overt and loud than that for an *otoshi-banashi*. Again, this is in order with the distinction between the two types of "comedy," farce as opposed to "classical," sense of comedy, the types to which *otoshi-banashi* and *ninjô-banashi* respectively correspond.

These distinctions are summed up in the following table:

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[20] Often an *otoshi-banashi* is a juxtaposition of short, comical skits and gags, lacking a clear dramatic sequence. In this sense, it is comparable to stand-up comedy in North America.

Genre / Dimension	*NINJO-BANASHI*	*OTOSHI-BANASHI*
Status	*shin' uchi*	*shin' uchi/futatsume*
Situation	*tori* (final position)	all
Artistic stance	serious	non-serious

Conformity and challenge: the construction of the artist's identity

When Charaku was still an apprentice, the audience seats would often remain almost empty until the *yose* programme was half over. People began showing up after the "light" performances by the younger *hanashika*, to appreciate the stories performed by their seniors. Some would only come to see the *tori*, the final performer, and hear his *ninjô-banashi*. In those days, performers who merely sold laughs to the audience were regarded as second-rate, however popular they might become. Master performers were expected to excel in *ninjô-banashi*, in addition to their repertoire of *otoshi-banashi* (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b; see also Anada 1989: 125).

Today, however, *yose* norms differ from what they were thirty years ago. While there are still regulars who form a core of experts, the majority of the spectators, perhaps two-thirds of them, are what might be termed a "television" audience — people whose primary knowledge of *rakugo* comes through television and radio broadcasts. Only the ever-thinning ranks of the expert audience are aware that telling *ninjô-banashi* is a

privilege of the *tori*, and most of the others are not even aware of the distinction between a *ninjô-banashi* and an *otoshi-banashi*. Thus, the *yose* "tradition" is no longer perceived as "conventional" by the majority of the audience.

Hence, contemporary *hanashika* face a dilemma: should they play to the experts, or to the "television" audience. The question of conformity has also become more complicated, since a *hanashika* need not conform to the traditions of *ninjô-banashi* performance, and yet can be acclaimed as a master once his or her fame has been established on television. Therefore, the majority of the performers, especially the younger ones, choose to get along with the "television" audience, and with the new norm which is evidently emerging at the *yose*.

Charaku's resolution of this artistic dilemma is interesting. By performing *ninjô-banashi* as a *tori*, Charaku takes the authoritative path. He was fully aware of the small size of the expert audience at the time of his appearance, the group which would understand the intricate rules operating at the *yose* and would appreciate the significance of his art; and it was to this audience that he geared his performance. But the problem is that this inevitably entails elements of a tradition that the "television" audience, the numerical majority, is not familiar with. By *conforming* to tradition, he *challenges* the current *yose* norm shared by the majority of the audience. But how does he deal with this dual structure of expectation in the audience and still retain an authoritative stance?

Charaku, in fact, sees his commitment to the tradition as a kind of pedagogical mission. He repeatedly said in our interview that he would be

glad if an audience, having seen his performance, discovered that there was yet another world of *rakugo* that she or he had never suspected the existence of (Sanshôtei Charaku 1992b). In this sense, Charaku's performance is an open-ended reflection on *rakugo* as an art genre. To achieve this pedagogical goal he needs to carefully frame his performance in such a way that the "television" audience would not be intimidated, but that at the same time their immediate expectations concerning *rakugo* would be called into question.[21]

This pedagogical project is disclosed most clearly by two instances of pragmatic polysemy, where the same expression encapsulates a different message for the two kinds of audiences, one general and one specific. Here, by means of apparent narrative discourse, he asserts his artistic identity as unpopular and classical. They are the entire prologue, and in the "louse skit" in the *makura* where he mentions his lineage tie with the late Sanshôtei Karaku.

As we have already mentioned, Charaku's prologue consists of an anecdote about a man who walked out on him. The following is a transcription and translation:

Kono-aida-mo yahari o-kyaku-san-de, atakushi ga agari-masita-ra, matte-mashita, taihen yorokonda-n-desu-keredo-mo

"The other day too, I had someone from the audience call out, 'Finally, here you are!' which made me very proud of myself."

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[21] This assertion is based upon my own observation and analysis, although it would be confirmed by performers.

o-kyaku-san de hanashi o hajime-tara, suutto o-tachi-ni-natte, itumade-mo kaette-konai. Yatto atakushi-no hanashi ga owatta-ra modotte-rasshai-mashita-n-de-ne,

"But the moment I began telling the story, this fellow quietly rose and left the room, and did not return until I finally finished my story."

o kyaku-san, nan-desu? Matte-mashita-tte itte doko itte-tan-desu?

"Hey, you welcomed me by saying 'here you are,' so why did you then leave?"

ya toire itte-tan-dayo. Sakki-kara omoshiroi-kara nakanaka tate-nakatta-n-da-kedo-nee, o-mae-san tsumaranai-kara matte-mashita-to sugu-icchatta-tte

"Well, the whole programme has been just so fantastic that I couldn't even stand up and go to the toilet for a moment. But when your turn came I knew I wouldn't miss anything, so that's why I greeted you with 'Finally, here you are!'"

Although the anecdote is a story in itself, it is also a multifaceted reflection on Charaku's own reputation. First and most obviously, it is a device to disclaim his popularity: a humble response to someone's welcoming his entrance. Yet his 'unpopularity' may be justified in two ways separate from his artistic capacity, by the two different types of audience, each of which would tend to highlight different semantic dimensions of the expression "omaesan tsumaranai kara" (translated above as "I knew I wouldn't miss anything").

We can demonstrate this by an examination of the semantic complexities of the adjective "tsumaranai" within the context of the

prologue. When "tsumaranai" modifies a thing, an incident, or a person, it means that that thing or person is deficient in some quality that he, she, or it would be expected to possess.[22] For example, "tsumaranai hito" means that a person (*hito*) is "boring," "uninteresting," or "unimportant" because of the absence of something the speaker deems should be present. Thus the correct interpretation of the word "tsumaranai" in the phrase under discussion would be the lack of some artistic quality the audience — in this case, the 'television' type part of the audience — will expect from a *rakugo* performance. It signals that the performance the audience will see might well be considered "boring," "unexciting," or "disappointing," deviating from the cheerful *yose* norm.

The honorific function of "tsumaranai" is also important. If a person describes his or her own conduct as "tsumaranai" (as Charaku did), it has a self-humbling effect (Shinmura 1983: 1622). The prologue thus indicate that the performer is humble, that his performance may be less exciting than those which preceded his, and that it might not meet every expectation of the audience. But at the same time Charaku is also suggesting to the audience that it should stay with him, by questioning the appropriateness of the behavior of the man who walked out on him earlier. Therefore the general message of the prologue might be re-expressed in this way: "you

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22 There appears to be a semantic link between the verb "tsumaru" and the adjective "tsumaranai." One basic meaning of "tsumaru" is "to fulfil" or "fill." "Tsumaranai" also has a basic meaning that is the opposite of "to fulfil" or "fill." The *Kôjien*, for example, cites meanings (for "tsumaranai") such as "i ni mitanai" (literally, "does not fulfil one's expectation" or a little more creatively, "does not make full sense") and "tokushin shinai" (literally, "does not come to a full understanding" (Shinmura 1983: 1622)

might walk out on me now if you only expect fun and excitement, like that fellow the other day. But if you stay, I humbly offer something else, something more subtle, to you."

However, these words convey a somewhat differing message to the expert audience (such as the young fan who called out "Here you are!"). To them, "tsumaranai" does not mean any deficiency in artistic quality, but simply a lack of the comical features characteristic of *otoshi-banashi*. Thus, "tsumaranai" means "not funny" in this context — Charaku was going to tell an "unfunny" story, a *ninjô-banashi*. Hence, to the expert the prologue carries a pragmatic message, "thanks for waiting for such an 'unpopular' *ninjô-banashi* performance."

The final touch comes with the immediately following line, "hidoi-me-ni aimashita keredomo" ("Nasty son-of-a-bitch, wasn't he!"). Having established his authority to both levels of the audience, Charaku then uses this humorous insult to unite them in laughter, and thus in disapprobation of the conduct of the *hidoi-me* who had walked out on him earlier. To lose interest, merely because Charaku may lack some of the flashier touches of the 'television'-style *rakugo* performer, now entails assuming the label of "nasty son-of-a-bitch," confirmed as appropriate by the collective response of the listeners.

Another place where Charaku creates opportunities to establish the validity of his "old-fashioned" skills and define a distinct artistic style is within the "louse skit." First, he highlights his *classical* identity by noting his association with the late Sanshôtei Karaku, a master *ninjô-banashi*

performer. His lineage tie with this distinguished *hanashika* signifies, to those in the know, something much more than just a sign of status (even though it is powerful legitimation for Charaku's position as a *tori*). It is a stylistic indicator, which again justifies Charaku's performance of *ninjô-banashi*. But to the rest of the audience, it means nothing more specific than a broad bridge to a prestigious lineage tradition which they may have felt alienated from — perhaps until the very moment when they realized that the performer in front of them is its living representative. Second, his extended digression on "lice" contains some scarcely concealed hints that the present generation might profit from paying attention to the past. "The young people today wouldn't know about lice, but these creatures are not yet extinct" is followed by a cautionary reference to a modern physician who made a public fool of himself by failing to recognize them, and the conclusion that "I don't think lice belong in the museums quite yet." The ploy here is very subtle, since no-one is likely to draw a conscious parallel between the old art of *ninjô-banashi* and "old" vermin like lice. However, the overall moral of the reference remains clear: to forget knowledge that was valued in the past, however irrelevant it might seem to the modern world, is to invite error, and thus humiliation in front of one's peers.

Conclusion

Above, we have examined a *rakugo* performance as a process of dynamic communication, during which the performer Sanshôtei Charaku attempted to synthesize his individual creativity with tradition, modulated by contemporary social trends. We studied the ways in which Charaku, based on Enshô's texts, created his own version of the story "Sannen-me."

In so doing, he makes salient the structural and thematic distinctions inherent in the genres *ninjô-banashi* and *otoshi-banashi*. We also compared the pragmatic dimensions of the two genres, and looked at how the genre itself may serve as a means for a performer to assert a particular artistic identity. Finally, we saw how the performer constructed the performance in a way that allowed him to communicate to two different kinds of audience the traditional values which remain foundational to contemporary *rakugo*.

Returning to the issue of orality and literacy, this chapter has made clear that the preservation of the expressive form, whether literary or otherwise, is nonetheless only a textual collection. For a full understanding of the semantic complexity and significance of oral tales such as those in *rakugo*, one needs to know not only the structural conventions but also the numerous social and cultural factors and rules that control how they act in a given performance context: the performer does not present a text whole, but "talks through" it, constantly modifying his original material according to his own concepts and the immediate context of his performance. It is only the contribution of human agents that enables such dynamic and dialectic processing of structural and semantic information to take place, because the act of storytelling is fundamentally *interactive*. The expressions, the plot of the story, even the manner in which the story is told, are mere tools for creative individual expressions, as well as for the larger purpose of human communication.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Further Prospects

It is traditional for students of folklore or 'oral literature' to view 'orality' — the spoken mode of communication — as inferior to 'literacy,' the written mode. This bias has been expressed in two ways. First, many have assumed that orality is technologically inferior to literacy and thus doomed to vanish in a literate society. In much of the literature, 'oral literature' have been depicted as legacies from the past, if not fossils, typical products of socially, economically and geographically marginalized, illiterate populations. Second, many scholars have also assumed that 'oral literature' is characterized by little if any structural complexity, and thus must possess an insignificant esthetic value. 'Oral literature' has been regarded as collective expression of traditional values rather than as an expression of individual, albeit anonymous, creativity.

While such views are still influential, there is a growing consensus that they are inadequate, distorted, and marginalizing. The present study has been conducted in the spirit of this more carefully considered approach to 'oral literature,' or more preferably, 'verbal arts.' It examined the coexistence and interaction between orality and literacy in a Japanese traditional narrative art known as *rakugo*.

My study demonstrates the interplay between the written text and the performance, and between the traditional narrative and the dynamics of performance. *Rakugo* is today performed for the public in various Tokyo

theaters, specialized and general; but its professionalization took place during the Edo period in the town of Edo, as one result of progressive urbanization and the economic development of the townspeople. The professional storytellers were only one part of a traditional entertainment establishment which also included popular novelists who sought motifs from *rakugo* stories; and the storytellers themselves often wrote works in the genre of popular literature known as *gesaku*. The modern *rakugo* repertoire includes *koten rakugo*, traditional tales (many from the Edo period), and *shinsaku rakugo*, more modern and innovative stories. Today, *rakugo* is not only performed on stage but also broadcast regularly nationwide, and its texts are published in large quantities, often authored by the storytellers themselves.

In this case study of *rakugo* I have examined its oral and literary aspects from both a socio-historical and a structural-esthetic perspective. *Rakugo* is rooted in the ancient Buddhist sermon tradition, but it draws on many other secular oral and literary genres which existed in traditional Japan. Contemporary *rakugo* owes many of its structural conventions and much of its thematic repertoire to these religious and secular narrative arts, both written and spoken. In the recent past, the language and expressive conventions of *rakugo* influenced the formation of the national standard for the Japanese language, as well as playing a part in the development of modern Japanese literature.

When composing a *rakugo* story, contemporary performers commonly use both oral and literary resources. In a case which we examined in detail, the contemporary *rakugo* master Sanshotei Charaku used two texts of the

same story by another performer, one written and one televised, to create his own version. Yet however useful these texts may be, perfecting a *rakugo* story requires a live audience. We thus examined the esthetic dynamics of oral storytelling — the interaction between the performer's creativity, the accepted tradition, and the social norms of the theater, as they shape the emergent structure and messages of the performance. We pointed out that the structural complexity and esthetic value of an oral performance cannot be captured by any text or recording, but must be experienced in person. This is why rakugo, as an art genre, has been enjoyed by people in Japan in both the past and the present, regardless of whether they were literate or not.

This study demonstrated one culturally specific way in which literacy and orality can profitably interact, and showed the continuing significance of verbal arts to a highly industrialized, literate society. My findings are thus another nail in the coffin of the steadily more discredited claim that oral traditions are doomed to disappear with the emergence of a literary tradition, and that such traditions are at a hopeless disadvantage when competing with literary arts. We cannot presume to deduce a *universal* pattern from the fact that most oral traditions have died out or been drastically weakened by the publication explosion in Western societies. This study thus underlines the necessity for students of the oral and the literary to look deeper into the interaction of those two modes in societies where these have been relatively less studied, such as those in Asia.

Some work of this kind has indeed been done, and its findings tend to support my conclusions here. In her recent book on ritual, Catherine Bell

(1992: 138) has pointed out that "there is little evidence that the emergence of literacy and the textualization of ritual practices moves through history with an inexorable logic and definitive set of effects." Drawing on a variety of studies concerning mixed oral and literary ritual and religious traditions in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, and southwestern India, she concludes that

> ...textualization is not an inevitable linear process of social evolution, as Weber's model of rationalization may seem to imply. The dynamic interaction of texts and rites, reading and chanting, the word fixed and the word preached are practices, not social developments of a fixed nature and significance. As practices, they continually play off against each other to renegotiate tradition, authority, and the hegemonic order (Bell 1992: 140).

Traditional religious ritual and the performance art of *rakugo* are not strictly comparable, of course; but they are both examples of a single phenomenon: the fertile interaction of the literary and the oral, in which neither member of the pair suppresses the other.

The studies Bell cites are all of relatively "traditional" societies, though some of them have at the same time become rich and "modern," as in Taiwan, which raises another question. Does the classical view of the oral and the literary derive from modes of thinking characteristic of modern minds in general, or of modern *Western* minds? Some recent literature has discussed the culturally informed orientations underlying ideas of social transformation, which have been expressed in Western culture through such terms as "progress," "evolution," and "revolution." Lakoff and Johnson, for example, have pointed out that the concept of "progress" has been founded on a particular culture-specific metaphorical understanding

of the human experience, that associates change and the future with good. A few decades prior to this, Nisbet (1969: 7-9) made a similar analysis of the metaphor of "growth." This metaphor indicates that the Western mind tends to see social change as a purposeful development, which moves from one point in time to another. Such ideas of progress and growth can shape the way that people approach the world, predisposing them to see history as a linear succession of non-repeatable events, leading towards a unique future state. In this scheme, the emergent event is by definition imperfect, since it will be succeeded by later events which will, by definition, have at least the potential to surpass it in quality.

These attitudes in turn draw our attention to another important area of investigation, the politics of literary enterprise. The creations of human beings neither "evolve" nor "replace" each other by virtue of intrinsic forces, but are rather created, promoted, and discarded by people acting on decisions made consciously, or far more often, at least partially unconsciously. Written words, whatever else they may be, are undoubtedly a commodity. If we turn our attention to why they sell better in some cultures than others, this in turn may reveal fundamental factors that would otherwise remain hidden.

This study does not attempt an explanation, either abstract or culture-specific, for the appreciation of oral storytelling. Here, the nature of Japanese society may provide food for thought. *Rakugo* is, after all, an art form that is best appreciated by audiences which already know the stories thoroughly. One recalls Bloch's cynical explanation of song and dance as producing an effect of joyful creativity by *impoverishing* reality —

reducing the number of possible choices from uncomfortably large to a manageable two or three.[1] *Rakugo* may well have a similar charm: the basic structure is known, and being known, comforts the audience and reassures them, giving them the security and freedom to relax and notice the individual refinements essayed by particular artists. This in turn relies on the relatively greater degree of cultural uniformity in Japan as compared with most Western countries: such refinements become possible and appreciated when a shared foundation of basic knowledge can be assumed.

Another possible approach may lie in the concept of *ichigo ichie*, which was briefly introduced in Chapter Three. Sanshôtei Charaku particularly cherishes this concept, but on many occasions I too have observed that performance artists, traditional and contemporary, often refer to *ichigo ichie* as the spiritual core or quintessential summation of their esthetic philosophy. This being the opinion of those most directly involved in such practices, it would be remiss if we were to close without a brief consideration of the meaning and significance of *ichigo ichie* to *rakugo*.

Ichigo ichie is a concept which has become canonized as the esthetic foundation of the tea ceremony. As Okakura Tenshin, a Meiji art critic, remarked, the tea ceremony is "an improvised drama" with tea, flowers, and painting as its props, a Zen-influenced art that lays particular emphasis on the emergent and non-repeatable nature of each performance (Narukawa

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[1] "...when nearly all this generative potential of language (or bodily movement) has been forbidden, removed, the remaining choices left are so simple that they can suddenly be apprehended consciously. Creativity has suddenly become controllable, hence enjoyable" (Bloch 1974: 73).

1983: 86, 210-212; Ienaga 1987: 92-97). *Ichigo ichie* was first formulated by the tea masters of the Warring States (1477-1573). According to Narukawa (1983: 89), it was advocated by Senno Rikyû, who had been taught it by his master Takeno Jyoou; and its significance was fully elaborated by Ii Naosuke, a tea master in the late Edo period. In his book *Chanoyu Ichie shû*, Ii explains that the meeting that takes place during a tea ceremony is called *ichigo ichie* ("one occasion, one meeting") because even though the same participants may meet any number of times, the actual experience of each meeting is entirely unrepeatable and unique. Thus, each meeting is and can never be anything other than the only meeting in one's entire life (Narukawa 1983: 89-90).

It is at once apparent that the concept of *ichigo ichie* defined above is essentially a philosophy of hospitality, and hence is highly applicable to performance arts — it requires the mutual participation of the audience and the performers. However, it is more than this. It is also an assertion of timelessness that fundamentally questions the Western idea of linear temporal progress we spoke of above, while simultaneously subverting the superiority of the written, and thus fixed, over the spoken and fluidly changeable. It would thus seem no accident that so many performance artists in Japan, including Charaku, rate it so highly.

Ichigo ichie questions linear progress in two ways. First, since each meeting is the only one, every meeting has to be the best. There is no room for lesser rankings when the groupings needed for comparisons have been dissolved. Second, since each meeting is thus the best, the concept of time is deposed from its position of dominance and factored right out of the

equation. It can have nothing further to do with "progress," even potentially; since there is no further progress, it can be entirely disregarded. Thus, "the later, the better" yields to a timeless and non-pre-judgmental attitude of "neither earlier nor later, all best and none worst."[2]

Now, if perfect appropriateness to the unique moment is the only best that there is, the very nature of writing disqualifies it from consideration. The written word is fixed, and thus an essentially inadequate medium for representing and transmitting an infinitely and unendingly fluid reality. "Fixing" inevitably entails "falsification," if not immediately, then in the next instant, when the situation will have changed. Thus the emphasis in Chinese Daoism and Japanese Zen on the assertion that the most profound truths are formally untransmittable by the written word, or for that matter even by speech, as seen in the following Daoist parable:

> Duke Huan was reading a book at the top of the hall, wheel-wright Pien was chipping a wheel at the bottom of the hall. He put aside his mallet and chisel and went up to ask Duke Huan,

> "May I ask what words my lord is reading?"

> "The words of a sage."

> "Is the sage alive?"

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2   Narukawa (1983: 91) focuses on the Zen conception of time as the core of the spirit of *ichigo ichie*: the *present* is "the continuous flow of time that is constantly formed into a *future* which does not yet exist, and which fades into a *past* that no longer exists." Only the "totally subjective (reflexive), existential understanding of time...enables one to grasp the present, the manifestation of perpetual non-existence, as an eternal moment."

"He's dead."

"In that case, what my lord is reading is the dregs of the men of old, isn't it?"

"What business is it of a wheelwright to criticize what I read? If you can explain yourself, well and good; if not, you die."

"Speaking for myself, I see it in terms of my own work. If I chip at a wheel too slowly, the chisel slides and does not grip; if too fast, it jams and catches in the wood. Not too slow, not too fast; I feel it in the hand and respond from the heart, the mouth cannot put it into words, there is a knack in it somewhere which I cannot convey to my son and which my son cannot learn from me. This is how through my seventy years I have grown old chipping at wheels. The men-of-old and their untransmittable message are dead. Then what my lord is reading is the dregs of the men of old, isn't it?" (Graham 1981: 139-140)

Wheelwright Pien puts the case a bit strongly to underline his philosophical point: in fact, by words flexibly adapted to the situation, he has managed to convey his message to the duke. Thus, if there is to be any chance at all for communication, it lies with personal presence and spoken word, rather than a dead and deadening text — though even with words, as we see above, something will still always escape.

Therefore, the concept of *ichigo ichie* shares a general theoretical ground with one current trend in the study of narratives: the significance of the interactive, collaborative nature of the act of storytelling, as discussed by Duranti and Goodwin (1992). *Ichigo ichie* captures the essence of the phenomenology of an oral performance as something that must be experienced and lived through if one is to fully appreciate its meanings and its transformative force. It is a justification for the structural and thematic

variability of oral narration: the structure of the story, and its general and pragmatic messages are instantiated as the performer and the audience engage themselves in the spoken and unspoken dimensions of a live narrative event.[3]

The principle of *ichigo ichie* thus captures the fundamental mutability of oral performance arts. Each occasion of live oral narration has its own life, or is unique in its own way, for it enhances the instantaneous, interactive narrative construction by the narrator and the audience. Hence from the perspective of *ichigo ichie*, any text, be it written or electronically recorded, is no more than the "dregs" of a live performance. To those who truly appreciate *rakugo*, the orality of *rakugo* not only makes it esthetically superior to its literary counterpart, but also transforms it into an embodiment of cultural values that consider face-to-face human encounters the ultimate form of knowledge production and transmission, and of understanding and sharing the meaning of life.

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[3] Another modern theoretical departure which shows a distinct similarity with *ichigo ichie* is the concept of liminality or the liminal state developed by V. Turner and elaborated by C. Turnbull. In particular, both are experientialist attempts to capture the synthesis of objective and subjective experience, the "total participation, total sacrifice of the academic as well as the individual self" so that "subjectivity and emotional involvement are no longer incompatible with objectivity and reason" (Turnbull 1990: 76)

Appendix One

"Sannen-me":
Transcription and Translation

Sanshotei Charaku, chief performer (*tori*)

Yoshiike Doyou *Yose*
Yoshiike Hall, Okachimachi, Tokyo
August 29 1992,4:10 to 4: 30 p.m.
The last programme of the matinee

[*Mukaede* — the audience's clapping to welcome the performer. A *jôren* (*yose* regular) calls out "*matte-mashita*" ("here you are!") The performer sits on the futon-mat at the center of the stage, and bows quite politely.]

o-hakobi arigato gozai-masu.

(1)　　Thank you very much for coming.

atakushi ga agari-mashita-ra matte-mashita nan-te-iu koe o itadaki-mashite

(2)　　Someone just greeted me with a "Here you are!"

kono-aida mo yahari o-kyaku-san de atakushi ga agari-masita-ra matte-mashita taihen yorokonda-n-desu keredomo

(3)　　The other day, I also had someone from the audience call out, "Finally, here you are!", which made me very proud of myself.

o-kyaku-san de hanashi o hajimeta-ra suutto o-tachi-ni-natte itumade-mo kaette-konai yatto atakushi no hanashi ga owatta-ra

modotte-rasshai-mashita-n-de-ne

(4) But the moment I began telling the story, this fellow quietly rose and left the room, and did not return until I eventually finished my story.

o-kyaku-san nan-desu matte-mashita-tte itte doko itteta-n-desu

(5) Hey, you welcomed me with "here you are" so why did you then leave?

iya toire itteta-n-da-yo sakki-kara omoshiroi-kara nakanaka tatenakatta-n-da-kedo-nee o-mae-san tumannai-kara mattemashita-to sugu-icchatta-tte

(6) (He said,) "Well, the whole programme has been just so fantastic that I couldn't even stand up and go to the toilet for a moment. But when your turn came I knew I wouldn't miss anything, so that's why I greeted you with 'Finally, here you are!'"

(7) *hidoi-me-ni aimashita keredomo*
Nasty son-of-a-bitch, wasn't he!

e maa hiru no bu wa ato is-seki de gozaimasu ma yoru no bu mo mochiron goran-itadakimashite kekko-de gozaimasu-no-de o-tsukiai no hodo o o-negai-moshi-agemasu keredomo

(8) Anyway, there's only one more performance left for today's matinee. Of course there'll be the evening programme as well, and you are most welcome to stay and enjoy it, so please do so.

is-sun no mushi ni mo go-bu no tamashii nan-te-koto o moshi-masu-
ga-na maa is-sun ni mo mitanai-youna chiisana mushi demo amari
kou jaken-ni atsukau to ato-de ada-suru nan-te-koto ga aru-n-da-
sou-de na

(9) There's a Japanese proverb which goes, "Even a one-inch insect has half an inch of spirit." It means that if you are cruel to the tiniest of creatures, even it will get its revenge on you."

e kore wa atashi ga zenza no koro ni shishou no karaku kara
kikimashita hanashi desu keredomo na

(10) When I was still a young apprentice I heard from my master, the late Sanshoutei Karaku, about one unfortunate entertainer.

ano kou mukashi ware-ware dosa-mawari no geinin ga maa inaka-
mawari chihou-mawari no geinin ne ee orimashite kore ga shigoto
ga owatta ato yado de kutsuroide

(11) In those days professional entertainers often went on the road, travelling around the local provinces, and after the day's work they used to rest at an inn.

yado to iimashite mo na ee kichin-yado ni chito keno haeta youna
mono nano-desu keredomo

(12) I say an "inn" though they were really no better than pigpens.

ee shokuji ga owatte kutsuroide-iruto eri-moto ga nanka kou

muzumuzu suru-n-de choito kou totte-miru to shirami to iu yatsude

(13) And, after supper, this performer made himself comfortable. He then felt something moving on his neck. He picked it up and looked at it — and it was a louse.

ima no o-wakaikata shirami nan-te-no mou go-zonji-nai-deshou

keredomo demo mattaku nakunatta to iun-de wa nai-n-da-soude

(14) I'm afraid that the young people nowadays wouldn't know about lice, but these creatures are not yet extinct.

e kono-aida nanika shinbun de mimashita keredomo nanika o-

ishasan ga mite wakaranai henna hifu-byou datte sawaide-itara nan-

no koto wa nai kore wa shirami datte koto ga madamada aru-n-da

soude

(15) Ah, a while ago I saw in a newspaper, that there was some kind of skin disease a physician couldn't figure out, and he made such a fuss about this "unusual" disease, and it turned out to be lice-infestation.

desu-kara mada mattaku kako no doubutsu de-wa nai to omou-n-

desu-keredomo

(16) Some have similar stories, so I don't think lice belong in the museums quite yet.

de kono eri-moto no o mita-ra shirami ga marumaru to futotte imashite ne

(17) Anyhow, when this fellow looked at the louse he got from his neck, it was quite plump.

kono yarou ore no chi o sutte konna-ni natte yagaru hara ga tatsu naa tsubushite yarou ka to omotta keredomo

(18) "What a scoundrel! Look at how damn fat you got sucking my blood! Well, I'm gonna crush you," he thought.

tsubusu no wa nao kuyashii kara kore o ne motto ijimete-yarou nan-te chito kou mimasu to hashira ga atte koko no kou uro to moushi-masu ka chiisana ana ga atte ne

(19) Then again, it's no fun just to kill it, he thought: "I'll torture it!" He looked around, and saw a pillar with a little hole in it.

koitsu e kou shirami o oshi-kon-de e waki ni aru kami de choito kou marumete ana o fusaide sorede sutto akuru-hi tacchimau

(20) Into this hole he pressed the louse, plugged the hole with a piece of paper, and quietly left the inn the next morning.

de jyuk-ka-getsu tachi-mashite mata kou zuut-to hito kougyou mawatte-kite onaji yado ni tomatte yahari shokuji no ato ni kutsuroide-ite

(21) Well, ten months passed before he came back to the same inn after a provincial tour. As before, he was relaxing after supper.

a souda sou iya kono-aida kita-toki tashika kono hashira no uro no naka ni shirami o oshikon-doita kedo arya dou-natteru-n-darou

(22) He had almost forgotten about the louse, when the memory suddenly came back to him. "Oh, yes, I remember, the last time I was here, I squashed a louse into the little hole in this pillar. I wonder how it is?"

nan-te ee de eri-moto ni are o kou tsuma-youji o mukashi no geinin nanka wa sashite orimashita-n-de ne

(23) So he took a toothpick from his neckband — in those days the entertainers used to carry toothpicks inside their kimono-neckbands."

soitsu o kou dashite kou kami o hojikuri-dashite naka o chito kou mi-masu to

(24) With it he removed the crumpled piece of paper blocking the hole, and took a look inside.

sukkari kou ne hikarabi-chatta kou shirami ga dete mairi-masu nani-shiro kou hoho wa koke-chatte me wa ochi-kon-de-te ne taihen mou hikarabi-chatte zamamiro-tte koto ni nari-yagatte

(25) The louse was there but it was all dried up. As you might guess, its cheeks were fallen, its eyes were sunken deep into its head. "Well," he thought, "look at you! It serves you right, doesn't it?"

shibaraku kou zuutto mite-iru to nanika ki-no-sei-da-ka ugoita-youna ki ga itashi-mashite ne,

(26) He watched it for a while. Well, to his surprise, it began to move.

ara sonna-koto ga aru-no-ka to mite-iru to te no nukumori ga kou tsutawatta-seide dandan kou ugoki-dashite taishita mon-da nee kou ikite-irun-da-you

(27) He couldn't believe what he saw, but as the louse felt the warmth of his hand, it slowly but steadily regained its life. "Amazing! It's still alive!"

te-iru-uchini kou chikut-to kimashite ne

(28) His fascination, however, ended abruptly when the louse took a bite at him.

o o o kami-tsuki-yagatta ne shibaraku-buri de hara ga hetteru-n-da-rou sukoshi-gurai hodokoshite-yarou

(29) "Argh! Back to the survival game! Ah, but I understand your hunger too. Well, all right, I can practice a little charity for you."

nan-te nonki-na yatsu ga atta-n-de

(30) What a bloody fool he was!

ee nani-ka katte-ni suwashite-iruto dandandandan kono shirami ga niku e kui-kon-de mairi-mashite ne

(31) He let the louse suck on his blood, and as it suck, it gradually bored its way into his flesh.

o ikenee to omotte awatete kou tori-dasou to omotta-ra fukaku haicchi-matte mou toridasu koto ga deki-nai

(32) "Ouch!" So, when he lent it a hand, it took his arm as well. He tried to get rid of it, but it was too late.

sono-uchi kore ga guut-to karada o mawatte toutou inochi o otoshite hotoke ni natta

(33) This louse entered deep into him, going around in his body until finally he died a sudden death.

shirami ga hotoke nan-te iu hanashi ga gozai-masu ga

(34) There is a saying, "Ignorance is bliss," but in this case we might term it, "Ignorance is *blice.*"

amari hanashi-ka no hanashi wa anmari mani-ukenai-de itadaki-tain-desu keredomo

(35) Ech, what a *lousy* pun! Well, so much for that; please don't take story-tellers too seriously.

maa nan-ni-shite-mo ki ga nokoru nan-te koto wa ne kore wa mushi
dake ja nakute mochiron ningen ni-mo aru-soudesu keredomo

(36)   Anyway, it is often said that the spirit outlives the body, be that that of an insect or a human.

dou shitai e kyou wa guai ga iikai

(37)   "How are you feeling today, feeling any better?"

iyaiyaiyaiya nanika ne ki no sei da ga kao-iro ga chito ii-youda
kedo ano souda o-kusuri ga ano un sensei mo osshattteta yo kawatta
kara ikura-ka nomi-yasui-tte

(38)   "Well, your complexion is better today, I think. Oh yes, that reminds me, the medication. The doctor said it's a new prescription, easier to take."

sou itta kara ima no uchi ni atatamete ageru kara nomi-nasai yo

(39)   "I'll take his word for it. I'll warm it up for you now."

e ato-de ii-tte omae hanashi ni kiku-to ne watashi ga inai to kusuri o
sute-chimau sou-janai ka

(40)   "What? You don't want it? And I heard that when I'm not here, you throw away your medication."

byou-nin ga kusuri o noma-nai-you-ja ikemasen yo isshoukenmei

kusuri o nonde ne hayaku naotte kure-na-kya watashi wa omae ni

wazurawareta-ra ichiban kokoro-bosoi-n-da yo do doushita-n-da

oki-agatte daijoubu kai

(41)   "A sick person has to take her medication. You must try to get better, because I feel so sad when you are sick. Oh, what are you doing? Trying to get up? Are you all right?"

mou okusuri wa kekkou de gozai-masu

(42)   "Thank you for the medication but I do not need it."

kusuri wa kekkou de gozai-masu-ttatte ne byou-nin ga kusuri wa noma-naku-cha ikemasen yo

(43)   "You don't know what you are saying! You are sick and you must take your medication."

aa omae ne sou yake o okoshi-cha ikenai un

(44)   "You shouldn't give up that easily."

anata kakushite irasshai-masu

(45)   "I know you are keeping something secret from me."

watashi ga omae ni kakushi-goto nanzaa nai-yo e sou-da-yo nan-no

koto-datte minna omae ni hanashite-iruja-nai-ka nani-goto to iwazu

ni sugu omae ni soudan-shite-imasu

(46) "What secret? Me? From you? No way, I swear, never! I tell you
everything, I always consult with you before I talk to anyone else,
you know that."

ya arekore kou-iu-koto ga atte atashi wa kou omou ga omae wa ittai

dou omou nande-mo soudan-shite-iru kakushi-goto nan-za nai-yo

fuufu no aida-gara-de

(47) "I always tell you about what happens to me, and how I feel about it,
and ask for your opinions. You must trust me! There are no secrets
between us, we're a husband and wife."

o-isha-sama ga o-kaeri-ni naru-toki ni anata o yonde hisohiso

banashi tachi-giki nado shite wa ikenai to omoi-mashita ga yousu o

ukagatte-itara ano byounin wa mou nagai-koto wa nai ima no aida

ni miseru o-isha-san ga atta-ra miseta-ra yokarou kusuri dake wa

nenno-tame ni oite-iku-to

(48) "When the doctor was leaving, he called you and whispered some
thing into your ear. I hesitated to be an eavesdropper but couldn't
help it. I overheard him saying, 'That patient is hopeless. If you
know other good doctors, let them see her as soon as possible. I'll
leave you some medication just in case.'"

sou osshai-mashita mou ano o-isha-san-de roku-nin-me desu yo go-

nin mo roku-nin mo-no sensei ga saji o nageta-n-desu-kara mou

atakushi wa akiramete orimasu tada hitotsu-dake ki-gakarina koto

ga gozaimashite shinde-mo shini-kire-masen

(49) "That's what he said. You know, that doctor was the sixth one. Five, six of the best doctors have given up on me, I shouldn't have any false hopes. But, but there's one thing I'm really worried about and I cannot rest in peace until I'm reassured about it."

nani itte-n-da yo e so sorya ne omae ni kakushita wake ja nai-n-da

yo o-isha-sama mo narubeku nara byounin no mimi ni ire-nai hou ga

ii to iu-kara iwa-nakatta dake-de

(50) "What are you talking about! I, I never intended to keep it secret from you, it's just that the doctor suggested not to mention it to you now."

ii-ja-nai ka ma ano sensei wa sou osshatta kedo ne yo-no-naka ni wa

mei-i to iwareru-kata ato takusan irassharu-n-da yo atashi wa

happou te o tukushite ne sou-iu kata o sagashite omae-san o mite-

moratte kitto naoshite miseru yo

(51) "Anyway, why should we worry just because that doctor said that? There are many, many great doctors in the world, and I'll do every thing I can to find the very best of them, to bring them to you, to have them heal you. This I promise you."

ee shinpai shicha ike-masen henna ki o okoshi-chaa sore ni

tsuketemo nanika ima henna koto o itta ne ki-gakari de shini-kire-nai

(52) "Worrying doesn't help, you know, don't give up. What are you worried about? What did you mean by 'cannot rest in peace until you are reassured?'"

o-mae-san nanika ano henna koto o kangaete e kininatte iru-n-ja-nai-kai sore ga ichiban yamai-ni-wa ikenai-n-da yo

(53) "You are not thinking anything silly, are you?. That would do the worst harm to your health."

un ano ne nani-ka shinpai-goto ga aru-nara watashi ni soudan shinasai yo ii-ja-naika ano omaesan ga iu-koto-nara nan-demo watashi wa yaru yo

(54) "O.K., tell me what's bothering you. I'll do anything for you."

dekiru koto-nara deki-nai koto wa ikenai yo me-de senbei o kame toka sou-iu koto wa ikemasen-kedo ne dekiru koto-nara nan-de-mo dekiru

(55) "Anything I will do, I swear, but only the things I can do, like, don't ask me to make Kanemaru tell the truth."

e ii-ja-nai no fuufu no aida-gara da yo dare-mo kii-cha inai-n-da-kara itte-goran e nan-dai ki-gakari-datte-no

(56) "Well, no secret can survive us, so tell me what's on your mind. There's no one around, just the two of us here."

sore-jaa moushi-masu atakushi ga kochira ni mairi-mashite mou ni-nen tatsu ya tatazu atakushi no youna mono-demo taihen ni kaaigatte-itadaite arigatai-to omotte-ori-masu

(57) "All right, then. It has been almost two years since I came to this household. I thank you very much for caring for me, though I'm not sure if I really deserved it."

mashite toko e tsuite-kara wa kata-toki mo makura-moto o hanarezu ni kanbyou-shite kudasai-mashite mottainai-kurai ni omotte-ori-masu atakushi ga shinda ato-de wakai o-yome-san o moratte anata ga onaji-you-ni kaai-garu-ka-to omou-to atakushi wa ki-gakari-de ki-gakari-de shinde-mo shini-kire-masen

(58) "After I became ill, you always stayed by my bedside and looked after me, and I've often thought you were too good for me. I'll be jealous of you if, after I'm gone, you take yourself another young wife and love her just the same way. I cannot stand the thought of it, and I know I cannot die in peace unless you promise me never to marry again."

bakana koto iccha-ike-masen nanda ne e nani-ka-to omotta-ra sonna-koto sou-iu-koto o kangaeru-kara ne nakanaka byouki mo naora-nai-n-da you

(59) "What a foolish thought! My goodness, is that what you're worried about? No wonder you don't get better!"

ee sono ne omae-san ga iya chigau man-ga-ichi no hanashi man-ga-ichi no koto ga omae-san ni atta-to shitatte-da yo atashi wa sonna nochizoe nanzo morai-masen yo shougai hitori de iru-kara daijyoubu da yo

(60) "You know, I tell you, if by one chance in a million it happens, well, it's only hypothetical, OK? If, and only if, such a thing happens to you, then I will never, ever get married again, I will remain un-attached for the rest of my life. There now, don't trouble yourself with such silly thoughts."

sou osshai-masu ga anata wa amari yoru wa nakanaka o-hitori-de wa sugose-nai o-kata-desu-kara

(61) "You are only saying that. I know very well how difficult it is for you to spend a night alone."

oi henna-koto iccha-ikemasen yo ne ya daijyoubu-da yo omae ga shinda-ra mesu-neko i-ppiki hiza-no-ue ni nose-ya shi-nai-kara

(62) "Hey, why do you say that! Uh, anyway, don't worry! If you die, I swear I'll never put on my lap even a tiny pussycat."

anata ga sou osshatte-mo go-ryoushin no katagata ga yamanaka shouchi o itashi-masen

(63) "Even if you say so, your parents will not agree with you."

shouchi o suru-mo shinai-mo atashi ga kotoware-ba sore-de sumu-n-ja-nai-ka

(64) "Agree or disagree, I'll simply refuse any proposal to remarry."

ee ee ya ma ikura iwaretatte atasha wake ga atte nochizoe o omae kotowarya ii-darou kotowarya kotowarya sumu-n-ja-nai-ka

(65) "You see, uh, no matter how much they insist, I'll tell them that for certain reasons I cannot remarry. That will do."

nakanaka kotowari-kire

(66) "I doubt you will be able to refuse all the proposals."

ee iya kotowari-kire-nakya sono-toki wa sono-toki-de shiyou ga nai yo nochizoe o morai-masu

(67) "Well, if I can no longer refuse, then, what can I do? All right, I shall take another wife."

iyaiyaiya morai-masu ga hanashi wa ma ato-made kiki-nasai yo ne sa tashika ni nochizoe wa morau keredomo ii-kai sou-da kou-shimasho

(68) "But that's not the end of the story. Now listen. I'll take another wife, indeed, but I've got an excellent plan."

*omae-san ga ne atashi-no-koto o sonna-ni omotte-kureru-nara-ba ne
sono-nochizoe o moratta konrei no ban ni ne yuurei ni natte dete
oide yo*

(69) "I ask you this:If you feel so deeply towards me, why don't you
come back on the wedding night, as a ghost."

*un omae-san ga yuurei ni natte dete-kurya ne atashi kowai-to wa
osoroshii-to wa omoi wa shinai ureshii yo un atashi wa ureshii-to
omou keredo*

(70) "Oh yes! If you come back as a ghost, I'll never be scared or
frightened, I'll be delighted to meet your ghost."

*sorya kita yome ni shite-goran me o mawashi-chau yo me o mawasa-
nai-made-mo akuru-hi-n-nattara awatete sato-gata e nige-kaeru yo*

(71) "But as for the new bride, she'll be scared as hell! Even if she
doesn't faint, she'll run back to her home the next day for sure!"

*un asoko no ie de wa sensai no yuurei ga deru sonna hanashi ga
houbou ni shire-watatte goran dare mo sewa-suru-n-nanza inaishi
yome ni kuru aite datte iya-shinai sore-ja atashi wa iya-ga ou demo
is-shou hitori-mi-de iru-ja-nai ka*

(72) "Do you see what happens then? If a rumor goes around that the
dead wife's ghost is wandering about in my house, no one will dare

try arranging a marriage with me, nor will there be anyone wanting to come to me. This way, you see, I must remain unattached."

sore-hodo ki-ni-naru-n-nara yuurei ni nari-nasai konrei no ban ni

(73) "So, come back to me as a ghost on my wedding night."

dewa anata atakushi ga yuurei ni

(74) "Really? Could I come back as a ghost?"

ee matteru-kara

(75) "Yes! I'll be waiting for you."

dewa yatsu no kane o aizu ni yuurei ni demasu yo kitto-desu yo anata

(76) "Well then, I'll come back when the temple bell rings the midnight to 2 o'clock bell. You mustn't forget it."

henna yakusoku o shita-mon-de ne yuurei ni deru yakusoku o shita kore o maa kiite iru-to o-kami-san no hou mo anshin-shita sei-desu-ka nanika kou haritsumete-ita-mono ga ippon kireta youni youdai ga kyuuhen o itashi-masu

(77) What a strange promise they made! To meet a ghost-wife! However, the wife seemed to be relieved that this promise was made, and her condition worsened as if she no longer had even the slightest wish to live.

awateta katagata ga o-isha-san o yonda-ri happoo te o tsukushi-
mashita ga nai jumyou to miete o-nakunari ni nari-mashita

(78) In a great rush, the people around her called the doctor and tried
their best, but she gasped her life away, the life that was destined to
be so short.

nakunatte nobe no okuri sho-nanoka ga sugite san-juu-go nichi shi-
juu-ku nichi mo sugiru hya-kka-nichi ga sugiru-atari

(79) They buried her remains in the fields. The seventh memorial day
after her death passed; the thirty-fifth, and forty-ninth memorial days
both passed; and it was about one hundred days since her death.

shinseki no katagata-kara ne doumo itsumade-mo nee wakai-mono o
nukimi no mama-de oichaa nee korya ikemasen yo hayai-toko ne ano
osamaru-saya ga atta-ra osameta-ra dou-desu mina-san

(80) The man's relatives began talking about arranging a marriage for
him: a young fellow like that shouldn't be left as a "bare sword," we
should find him a suitable sheath right away, right?

to koukou ma saisho no uchi wa ie atakushi wa wake ga ari-mashite
nochizoe wa motanai-koto ni shite-ori-masu to kotowatte ori-mashi-
ta ga sousou wa kotowari kire-nai to iu-yatsu de ne

(81)   So they approached him. He refused them at first, saying, "For certain reasons, I have decided not to remarry." But he couldn't, of course, keep himself apart forever.

jaa shiyou ga nai ja sore-nara motou to iu-koto ni naru

(82)   "Well, if you people insist so strongly, then I'll take a new wife."

ma chou-nai de-mo hyouban no koudanshi-de gozaimasu-kara-na kase taishuu ni ikeda nan-toka o kake-awase-tari nan-ka shite sanshoutei charaku o parapara-tto maita-youna ii-otoko de gozai-masu-kara-na

(83)   You see, he was one of the best-looking men in the town, like a mix of Kase Taishu and Ikeda what's-his-name, topped off with a touch of Sanshôtei Charaku.

sorya naka-ni wa chou-nai no sosokkashii onna-no-ko ga asoko-jya hontou ni o-kami-san ga shinde ii-koto o shita aso asoko-no ie ni atashi ga hitokurou-shite-mitai nan-te sosokkashii no ga itari nan-ka suru

(84)   And there happened to be a young girl, a bit scatterbrained, in the neighbourhood, who was seeking an opportunity to marry him. "Oh, it was good that she died! How I wish to be his companion!"

isogi no hanashi ga atte kore-mata (words not clear) *to iu-no ga hanashi ga matomatte konrei to iu koto ni*

(85) There was a quick match-making arrangement, and they agreed to be partners. Soon the wedding took place.

sansan kudo no sakazuki mo sunde nemaki ni kigaete danna no hou wa mou futon no hou e suwatta-n desu-ga-na nak naka ne-tsuke-masen-de

(86) They performed the ceremony of *san-san-kudo*, the three-times-three exchange of nuptial cups, and retreated to the bedroom. They slipped into their nightcloths, but the husband could not go to sleep, sitting on his bed.

kon-ya yatsu no kane o aizu ni sensai no yuurei ga detekuru to omoeba ne koryaa nerare-nai

(87) He was thinking of his late wife's ghost, that was to appear at the ring of the midnight to 2 o'clock bell.

ii-kara saki-ni oyasumi-nasai

(88) "Don't worry about me, you go to sleep."

anata oyasumi-ni-natta-ra

(89) "Why don't you?"

ieieieie ii-n-da yo mada choito nerare-nai-n-da yo ima nan-ji dai

(90) "Well, it's just that, uh, I've got things to do. What time is it now?"

yotsu de gosai-masu

(91) "It's ten, my dear."

yotsu ka madamadada

(92) "Ten? Well, a long way to go."

ano nani ga madamada nan-te-koto

(93) "A 'long way to go' to what?"

iyaiya iya kocchi-no koto-dakara sa e nenasai yo un asshi wa mada nemuku-nai-n-da

(94) "Never mind, it doesn't concern you. Go to sleep. What, me? I'm not sleepy yet."

atakushi-mo mada nemuku wa gozai-masen

(95) "I'm not sleepy either."

mane o shicha ikenai yo dakara-ne ima nan-doki dai

(96) "Don't repeat after me like that. Uh, what time is it anyway?"

ima yotsu-han de gozai-masu

(97) "It's about eleven now."

*yotsu-han ka ee yotsu-han ne oyasumi-nasai oyasumi hayaku nenai-
to kowai yo*

(98) "Ah, eleven now. Please go to sleep, otherwise, something scary
might happen."

nani-ka kowai

(99) "Something scary?"

*ieieie kocchi no koto dakara sa dakara hontou-ni ii-kara hayaku nete
ima nan-doki-dai*

(100) "No no no, it didn't mean anything. Anyway, go to sleep, don't
worry about me. Ah, what time is it now?"

toki-bakkari kiiteru

(101) "Why are you worried about time?"

*e ja atashi mo yoko ni narimashou itsumademo ne o-kami-san o
okoshi-toku wake-ni wa ikanai un atashi mo yoko ni naru-kara
tokorode ima nan-ji*

(102) "Well, I shall lie down; I shouldn't keep my wife awake for no
reason. I'll go to sleep. But what time is it?"

sakki kokonotsu o uchi-mashita

(103) "The bell rang twelve times a while ago."

oo kokonotsu ne sorosoro oide-nasaru-kana

(104) "Oh, yeah, twelve times? Won't be too long till she comes."

donataka oide-ni

(105) "Are you expecting someone?"

ii-ya sou-ja nai-n-da yo tada tsumaranai yakusoku o ne

(106) "No, it's not that. I've got a small promise to keep."

nani-ka o-yakusoku

(107) "What promise?"

ii-kara oyasumi-nasai oyasumi-nasai

(108) "Never mind, sleep, sleep now."

shibaraku jit-to shite-iru sono-uchi yomesan-no hou no neiki ga kikoete-kite na

(109) He remained calm for a while. Meanwhile his wife finally fell asleep.

sa sorosoro yatsu ni naru gooon okashii ne tashika ima ga yatsu no kane nanoni ne toki o machigaeta no kana are wa sosokkashikatta kara ne

(110) "Here goes the eighth-hour bell. [Gong!] Where is she? That was surely the 2 o'clock bell. Well, she was always a bit confused. She might have mistaken the time."

masaka tonari no ie e deta wake ja nai-darou ne tonari no ie e deta-ra odoroku-darou nee

(111) "Uh, do you suppose that she's gone to our next-door neighbour? If that's the case, the neighbours will be scared to hell."

dakedo doushita-n-da

(112) "I wonder what happened to her?"

denai denai to kou matteiru-uchi ni itsu-no-ma-ni-ka omote ga kou akaruku-nacchimatte karasu ga naite yoru ga akechimau

(113) He waited for her eagerly: "She'll come any time now, any time now." But the day was dawning, the crows cawed to break the morning calm."

konrei no ban ni detekuru-ttatte deteko-nee na mottomo sou ka juuman-okudo-tte toui-n-da-kara shonichi ni wa ma-ni awa-nakatta-n-darou-na-tte-n-de ne futsuka-me mo dete-konai

(114) "She promised to show up on the wedding night, but she didn't. Well, it may be that, she's coming back from a place far away from Earth, and couldn't make it for the first day," he thought. But she didn't show up on the second night either.

aa naa futsuka mo tsuzukete suppokashi-kai ee kon-ya atari wa dete-
kuru-n-darou-to mikka-me wa kaeri-jonichi dakara ne
detekurudarou dete-kuru-darou to omotta-ra mikka-me mo dete-
konai itsuka tachi touka tachi to

(115) "My goodness, she stood me up two days in a row! Wait a minute,
they say, the third night is the 'returning first night' so she'll come
tonight." He waited but she did not come, and five days, ten days
passed by."

nan-da naa dete-kiya-shinai-n-ja-nai-ka urameshii-to-ka nan-ka ee
iroiro iu-kedo arya ikiteru-aida no koto na-n-da yo ee shin-jyae-ba
doutte koto wa nai to nan-da bakabakashii-to

(116) "What should I make of this? It may be that we humans have worried
feelings only when we are alive; once dead, our feelings are all gone,
it's all merely an illusion. What a waste of time!"

moto-yori kashikoi kata desu-kara satori-mashite ne ma sou nari-
masu-to motomoto iya-de moratta-wake-ja gozai-masen nochizoe no
houdatte ne ee dandan dandan naka ga mutsumajiku-natte-kuru
hodo-naku oigo no hou ga go-kainin to

(117) He was a clever man, quick to realize his foolishness. As for the
second wife, he did not dislike her to begin with, so they naturally
became intimate, and soon the wife became pregnant.

*shite ne totsuki o sugite kou tama no youna otoko-no-ko taitei
hanashi-ka ga iu-to tama-no-youna otoko-no-ko hanashi-ka no
tokoro-niwa yoku tadon no youna otoko-no-ko ga umarete-kuru-koto
ga aru-n-desu keredo ne*

(118) And after ten months or so, a diamond-like, beautiful boy was born.
"A diamond-like boy" is a storytellers' favourite cliché, but a
storyteller's son often looks more like a lump of coal.

ee sono toshi ga sugite tsugi no toshi mo sugiru sannenme

(119) Well that year went by and so did the next. Finally, *sannenme*, or the
third year arrived.

*sensai no houji o shiyou-to iuyatsu-de moto-yori shini-ato ni kita-n-
desu-kara nochizoe no houmo izon wa gozai-masen kinjo ni kubari-
mono nanzo-shite ee haka-mairi nazo o shite kaeri-ni asakusa no
kannon-sama-de kodomo o asobase-te kaeru to iu*

(120) They held a Buddhist memorial service for the late wife, as the
second wife had no objection. They provided gifts to their
neighbours, paid a visit to her grave, and took their child to the
temple of the Goddess of Mercy in Asakusa to play.

ee tsukareta to miete mou gussuri to nechima-tte

(121) They came home, exhausted; and husband, wife, and child all fell
fast asleep in bed.

*yonaka ni danna no hou ga hyoi-to me o samashite ne e e dou-da
kono haizuri komochi no nemuta-gari to iu ga mattaku-da ne onna
mo ne kodomo ga dekiru to kou mo kawaru mono ka ee aa kodomo
no hou ga shikkari shiteru yo ee jibun de moguri-kon-de chibusa ni
burasagatteru yo*

(122) At midnight the husband suddenly woke up. "Oh look at that! The
way the child crawls! They say, 'a woman with her baby always
sleeps' and it's very well put. I can't believe how she changed after
the baby was born. My goodness, the baby has more energy than his
mother; he sneaks into his mother's breast by himself!"

*aa demo kyou wa ii-koto o shita nee haka-mairi o shita ato-tte no wa
ii kokoro-mochi no mon-da ne joroukai no asa-gaeri to wa erai
chigai- desu yo ne*

(123) "Well, I did a good thing today. I felt so good after paying a visit to
her grave; it's even better than coming home after a night in the red-
light district."

(not clear) *wa ne haka no mae-de kangaeta-n-da ga ano onna ni wa
kikaserare-nai ga are ga ima-made joubu de konna kodomo-demo
itara-ba sazokashi yorokobu darou naa*

(124) "I cannot say it to this woman, but if my first wife were alive and
well, and if she had a baby like him, I could have made her so
happy."

*ano-koro wa mono-ni narenai-kara iroiro fujiyuu-na omoi o sasete
haya-jini sasechatte shinu-mono binbou to wa mattaku-da kawaisou-
na koto o shita-mono-da to omoidasu no mo ii kimochi ga itashi-
masen-de ne*

(125) "As I recall it now, she went through many hardships, having so
many unfamiliar things in this household. It's true when they say,
'one who dies early knows hardships.'" He felt bad as he thought of
his late wife.

*sono-uchi engawa no to o akeppanashi ni shite neta-to miete nama-
atatakai-youna kaze ga suu-tto fuki-konde-kuru-you shouji ni kami-
no-ke ga kasureru youna oto ga sarasara sarasara to itashi-mashite*

(126) In the meantime, without a sound a warm but eerie breeze swept in
through the porch — they had apparently left the porch door open.
Something rustled, as if a woman's long hair was brushing against a
sliding door.

*hiyamizu-de mo kou erimoto-kara kakerareta you-ni zoootto shite
arya nan-da ee kon-ya wa henna ban da-naa*

(127) He felt a chill creep over his neck, and shuddered. "What was that?
It's a very weird night tonight."

*kiseru no gan-kubi de makura-byoubu no heri kou hikkakete hyu-tto
taguri-yosete hyo-tto mae o mite odoroita*

(128) He caught the edge of the bedside screen with the head of his pipe, pulled it closer, and looked straight forward.

midori no kuro-kami o odoro-ni midashita sensai no yuurei ga makura-moto ni pitari to suwatte urameshi-yaa

(129) To his astonishment, the ghost of his first wife sat right beside his pillow, with her long, shiny black hair all rumpled up.

uwaa nan-de ima jibun dete-kuru-n-da yo hiruma no houji no reigi nanza dou de-mo ii-n-desu-yo yuurei no (not clear) *dai nan-te*

(130) "Waah! Wh, why did you come back now? You, you didn't have to thank me for the memorial service I did today. No sweat!"

ukande okure nanmaida nanmaida

(131) "May your soul rest in peace! Save Me Merciful Buddha! Nammaida, nammaida."

anata wa urameshii okata desu are-hodo yakusoku shita-no-ni atakushi ga shinde hyakka-nichi mo tatanai noni sonna kireina o-yome-san o moratte aka-chan made o-tsukuri-ni-natte sore de wa o-yaku-soku ga chigai-masu

(132) "To hell with you for betraying me! Within one hundred days of my death, you quickly remarried a pretty woman, and even had a child. You've forgotten our promise!"

oi joudan ja-nai yo kou natta-ra atashi yuurei ni kake-ai masu yo e

nani o itten-dai omae wa ne ikiteru aida wa tashika-ni mono-wakari-

no-ii onna datta ga ne shinde-miru-to sonna-ni mono ga wakara-

naku naru no kai

(133) "Hey, don't get me wrong! Dead or alive, I'll argue with you. When you were still alive, you were a reasonable person, but once dead, why did you become so bullheaded?"

omae ga yakusoku-chigai omae datte yakusoku ga chigau-n-ja-nai-

ka ee konrei no ban ni detekuru-tte-tta-kara atasha matte-mashita yo

dete-konai-ja nai-ka

(134) "You cheated on me too, don't you remember? I longed for you, waited for you as we promised on that wedding night. But you never showed up!"

a mottomo jyuuman-okudo-ttene tooi tokoro kara kuru-to omou-kara

ne uun futsuka-me ni wa deru mikka-me ni wa deru atasha ne

mainichi koumori ja-nai keredomo hiruma ne nete yoru okite omae o

matte-ta-n-da yo ee

(135) "Well, I realized that you were coming from so far away, people say ten million miles away, so I waited for two days, three days, hoping for your return, sleeping when the sun is up, waking when the moon is above, just like the bats."

dete-kya-shinai-ja-nai ka ano ne sore o ima jibun-dete sonna koto
iwareta-tte ki-no-kiita bakemono-nara tokku-ni hikkomu jibun-da yo
ee

(136) "You, you never showed up, until now, when it's too late! You reproach me, but if you were a wise ghost, you wouldn't have come in the first place!'"

omaedatte ne yuurei ni dete-kuru (not clear) *watashi ga nochizoe o moratta-kurai no koto wa wakatteta-n-darou*

(137) "Didn't you hear the news in the other world that I took a second wife?"

soryaa watakushi mo ki ga nokotte orimashita-kara donata no osewa itsu o-yome-san o moratte o-ko-san ga ikutsu-ni natta kurai-no koto wa zonjite ori-masu

(138) "Of course, I knew who arranged your second marriage, who you married, when your son was born and so on. And I worried so much about you."

shitteru-nara naze motto hayaku-ni dete-konain-da yo

(139) "Why didn't you show up sooner then?"

anata go-muri ja arimasen ka

(140) "You know I couldn't, even if I had wanted to."

nani ga ittai muri nan-da yo

(141) "No I don't. Why couldn't you?"

atashi ga shinda toki mina-san de atashi no atama o marumete
bousan ni nasaimashita

(142) "When I died they shaved my head like a nun."

sorya ne omae shinseki ichi-dou ga ne hito kamisori zutsu omae-san
no atama e atete ama-san ni shite kan e osameta yo

(143) "Yes, of course, all the relatives performed the funeral ritual of shaving your head, each one of them taking a turn holding the razor. When we finally made a nun out of you, we placed you in the coffin."

desu-kara bousan no mama-de dete-kite wa anata ni aiso-zukare o
saremasu-node kami ga nobiru made matte-orimashita.

(144) "That's why I couldn't come back. I waited until my hair grew back, because if I showed up as a nun, I knew you wouldn't like me any more."

Appendix Two
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Glossary of Terms

Romanization, Sino-Japanese characters, and English equivalents with explanations of the rakugo-jargon and related terms introduced in the paper.

futatsume　二つ目,　literally, "the second (one)" ; hanshika's rank after zenza and before shin'uchi.

Geijyutsusai 芸術祭 , the Fall Art Festival.

Hôru-rakugo　ホール落語, rakugo performed at various large halls and theaters other than the jôseki.

hanashi　噺, literally, "story"; the main story-part of a rakugo narration.

hanshika　噺家, literally, "expert-story-teller"; rakugo performers.

hashigakari　橋がかり, an entrance path used in traditional Japanese theatrical arts; also used in Chinese theater (guen-dao 鬼道)

ichigo-ichie　一期一会, literally, "first encounter is the last encounter"; a principle of art cherished by Ze'ami and later
　　　　　by Senno Rikyuu.

iemoto　家元, the head of a traditional Japanese art school.

iromono　色物, "variety entertainment, variety show"; especially the variety programme offered at a yose between
　　　　　narrative arts.

jôren　常連 , literally "habitual members"; regular yose-goers.

jôseki　定席, literally, "habitual seat"; regular performance theater of yose arts.

kaidan-banashi　怪談ばなし, ghost stories.

kamiseki　上席, litarally, "the upper seat";the first ten days of a month at the yose.

koten rakugo　古典落語, literally, "classic rakugo"; rakugo stories broadly considered traditional.

kôza　高座, literally, "the upper position"; rakugo stage.

makura　まくら, literally, "pillow";the first part of rakugo narration.

nakaseki　中席, literally,"the middle seat"; the second ten days of a month at the yose.

ninjô-banashi　人情ばなし, literally, "human-feeling-story"; one of the rakugo subgenres;stories not primarily aimed at farcical effects.

ochi　落ち, the ending of the story; a punch-line.

ochiken　落研, rakugo reasearch clubs and fan clubs.

otoshi-banashi　落としばなし, literally, "stories with a punch-line"; the term used to designate rakugo before Meiji; one of the rakugo story genres, emphasizing comedy efffects.

Pia　ビア, a monthly and weekly event magazine in Tokyo.

shibai-banashi　芝居ばなし, literally, "theatrical story"; rakugo stories with theater-like motions and presentation.

shimoseki　下席, literally, "the lower seat"; the final ten days of a month at the yose.

shinsaku rakugo　新作落語, literally, "newly-created rakugo"; modern rakugo as opposed to classic rakugo.

shin'uchi　真打ち, the mature status of the rakugo performers.

shitamachi　下町, the residencial areas of Edo townspeople.

Tokyo Kawaraban　東京かわら版, The monthly yose-art magazine.

Zenza　前座, a curtain raiser;the lowest of the hanashika ranks.

yose　寄席, the theaters for traditional narative and other entertaintment arts.

Names of Rakugo Theaters

the Asakusa Engei Hall　浅草演芸ホール, joseki in Asakusa.

the Kokuritsu Engei Jô　国立演芸場, the National Entertainment Theater; the only public jôseki, located in Nagata-chô.

the Kokuritsu Gekijô　　国立劇場, the National Theater.

the Shinjuku Suehirotei　新宿末広亭, jôseki in Shinjyuku.

the Suzumoto Engei Jô　鈴本演芸場, jôseki in Ueno.

the Yoshiike Hall　吉池ホール, jôseki-like theater in Okachimachi.

Personal Names

Katsura Yonemaru　桂　米丸, the head of the Rakugo Geijyutsu Kyôkai.

Kokontei Imasuke　古今亭　今輔, the formaer chairman of the Rakugo Geijyutsu Kyôkai.

Kokontei Shinshô V　五代目　古今亭　志ん生, one of the most distinguished hanashika of the post-war period.

Sanshôtei Karaku VIII　八代目　三笑亭　可楽, one of the most distinguished hanashika of the post-war period.

Sanyuutei Enraku　三遊亭　円楽, the head of the Enraku Faction.

Sen'no Rikyu　千　利休, an infamous tea master of Edo period.

Tatekawa Danshi　立川　談志, the head of the Tatekawa School.

Yanagiya Kosan　柳家　小さん, the chairman of the Rakugo Kyôkai.

Names of Rakugo Associations

the Rakugo Enraku-tô　落語円楽党, the Enraku Faction.

the Rakugo Geijutsu Kyôkai　落語芸術協会, the Rakugo Art Society.

the Rakugo Kyôkai　落語協会, the Rakugo Society.

the Tatekawa-ryû　立川流, the Tatekawa School.