THE RULES OF HEART: NAKAYAMA SHIMPEI'S POPULAR SONGS IN
THE HISTORY OF MODERN JAPAN

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Abstract

Composer Nakayama Shimpei (1887-1952) wrote more than 300 popular songs in his lifetime. Most are still well known and recorded regularly. An entrepreneur, he found ways to create popular songs that powered Japan’s nascent recording industry in the 1920s and 1930s. An artist, his combination of Japanese and Western musical styles and tropes appealed to Japanese sentiments in a way that not only reflected the historical and social context, but anticipated and explained those historical changes to his listeners.

This dissertation seeks to use a method suggested by Pierre Bourdieu to analyze the social context of Nakayama’s work. The analytical model is didactic, seeking to compare the outcomes suggested by Bourdieu’s theory and modern analysis of popular music to the events that occurred in the context of Japan’s development of a record industry and popular music market between 1887 and 1952. The dissertation evaluates Nakayama’s positions within the Field of Musical Production and the Field of Power and compares that history to the field theory of Bourdieu.

The dissertation concludes that Bourdieu’s ideas provide an excellent framework for analysis of the social and economic meaning of popular songs, but that reality in Japan was more complex than the theoretical construction. Bourdieu built artistic capital in a society in which music was changing rapidly and Western music held a cachet, whether classical or popular. Nakayama’s uncanny ability to make listening to Western music a comfortable experience for Japanese by adding elements from Japanese musical styles allowed him to be successful financially, and to hold respect within the artistic community as well. The ultimate goal of the dissertation is to show how popular songs can be utilized as primary sources to help deepen our understanding of historical contexts.
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Chapter 1
Introduction: Nakayama Shimpei and Japanese Popular Song

In 1905, eighteen year old Nakayama Shimpei made a snap decision to move to Tokyo and become a composer. On November 28, quoting in his diary the aphorism “gakuwakashi narazunba shisutomo kaerazu” (I will die before I come home without achieving my ambition), he boarded a train for Tokyo with a school friend who had just joined the army. He spent the night in Takasaki, where he said goodbye to his friend. The marching of the soldiers in Takasaki excited him, and before boarding the train, he says in his diary, he lifted his hands, “like a child throwing an arm-full of autumn leaves into the air,” and shouted “banzai!” Continuing on through Ueda, he finally reached Ueno Station in Tokyo, where a car was waiting to take him to the home of his mentor, and the beginning of his dreams.\(^1\)

In 1912, Nakayama graduated, as he hoped, from the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō (Tokyo School of Music). His determination and his social connections led him to become one of the most celebrated composers of popular songs in Japanese history. Just before his death in 1952 he received numerous awards and recognition for his creative work from the recording industry he helped to create.\(^2\) Nakayama achieved his dreams, and in the process created the foundation for the Japanese popular music industry of today. Nakayama’s popular songs provide historians a primary source that helps to contextualize many of the changes that occurred in Japan between 1887 and 1952.

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\(^2\) Ibid., 353.
Popular music is far more than just a soundtrack to history, a kind of elevator music for the disciples of Clio. It is a part of the process of social change that historians attempt to document. Sociologist and music critic Simon Frith makes a “distinction between music conceived with no reference to a mass market and music that is inseparable from the mass market in its conception.”³ Here he differentiates between jazz, folk and classical music, which exist independent of the recording industry. The record industry can serve that market, but cannot manipulate it, as it can with popular music. This is because, as Frith says, “it is only pop music whose essence is that it is communicated by a mass medium...[the] assumption is that a pop audience can be constructed by the record industry itself.”⁴ The fact that the recording industry has tried, successfully or not, to manipulate cultural tastes suggests that popular music is more than just a commodity manufactured to suit the needs or desires of the moment. Instead, such manipulation is an attempt to create cultural needs and desires. It must use both cultural trends, and create ideas and fashions in order to move consumer demand. This makes it an active part of social change. Popular music is a primary source. Popular songs can provide information that contextualizes and deepens historians’ understanding of the events and of the larger society of Japan during the Meiji, Taishō, and Showa periods.

This is true also because, for those who listen to it, the act of consuming popular music is a form of self-expression. Popular music fans include their music choices as a part of their identities. For many, “you are what you listen to.”⁵ Since popular music is both a market

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⁴ Ibid.
⁵ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 6. According to Frith, “For fans, whose musical values don't matter so much, or, rather, matter in different ways, with different consequences, trading pop judgments is a way to "flirt and fight." As Fran Kogan suggests, this means that for the pop listener (if not for the pop player) the stability of our judgments matters less than their constant
commodity and an art, it is expressive in both capacities. Because it articulates ideas designed by its producers to appeal to a broad consumer market, it carries messages both intended and unintended. However, because the public chooses to buy, or not to buy, and invests that decision with multiple uses and meanings, the consumption of popular music is an expressive act on the part of consumers as well as producers. "The most significant political effect of a pop song,” according to sociologist and music critic Simon Frith, “is not on how people vote or organize, but on how they speak."6 The Japanese in the first half of the twentieth century expressed themselves through the ways in which they created and consumed popular music. For this reason, we can see popular music as a historical source. Used carefully, it can illuminate aspects of the historical spirit of any given era.

A narrowly defined study of the conditions under which a limited but important body of songs were produced and consumed in modern Japan has the potential to show some of the ways in which popular songs can illuminate the social context of history. Therefore, this dissertation is a study of the life of one of Japan’s most influential early twentieth-century popular song composers, Nakayama Shimpei (1887-1952). Through it, I will show that understanding popular music adds depth and dimension to our ability to understand Japan’s modern history. Fans of early twentieth-century Japanese popular music see Nakayama as a musical genius. Japanese who do not listen to his music nonetheless know his name and deployment: as pop fans we continually change our minds about what is good or bad, relevant or irrelevant, "awesome" or "trivial" our judgment is in part determined by what happens to a sound in the marketplace, how successful it becomes, what other listeners it involves), but we never cease to believe that such distinctions are necessary "social pressure points, gathering spots for a brawl over how we use our terms. If our comparisons stood still, how could we have our brawl?"

6Ibid., 231-71.
acknowledge his importance within Japan’s cultural history because of his uncanny ability to compose popular melodies that found market success.

Our story is not one of an unrecognized musical genius a talented composer who aspired to write great classical pieces. Nakayama always saw himself as a composer of popular music. He made a career creating music that communicated with fans about their common experiences. He was one of Japan's most prolific composers, creating more than 300 songs in his lifetime, many of which are ubiquitous in Japan today. His name is nearly synonymous with the beginnings of three major genres of popular music in twentieth-century Japan: enka 演歌 (performance songs), dōyō 童謡 (children’s songs), and shin min’yō 新民謡 (new folk songs). Children in kindergarten learn his songs, including the appeal for good weather in “Teru teru bōzu” テルテル坊主 (Monk’s effigy), and “Gondora no uta” ゴンドラの唄 (The Gondolier’s ’s Song) is still a regular on enka TV shows. Nakayama’s popularity, the volume of songs he created, and the existence of documentary records regarding his own experience with composing songs, as well as the experiences of those who heard, made meaning out of his songs, which provided the possibility of a study of the uses of popular songs in contextualizing the historical record.

It Takes Two to Tango

Popular music exists within two distinct “field” structures, as defined by Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. As an art, it is part of the field of cultural production. As a market commodity, it is within the field of power. Music and the composers who create it have value within each of these fields based on the importance assigned to them by the constituents of those fields. In

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music, the field of cultural production relevant to this study, Nakayama’s songs were valued according to their artistic merit. In the field of power, their value was expressed in terms of money. In Bourdieuan terms, these two are usually at odds. A high artistic value is usually accompanied by a low-money value because the market for high art in the field of power is correspondingly smaller than that market in the field of cultural production. Bourdieu makes a distinction between capital and cultural capital. Thus in the field of cultural production, high artistic value (cultural capital) can be indicated to some degree by correspondingly low monetary value. Bourdieu posits that we cannot understand the value of an artist’s work simply by evaluating his artistic brilliance or her market acumen. Our evaluation must flow from understanding the artist’s interaction with others in the fields within which he chose to operate. Therefore, to understand the impact Nakayama had on Japan, we must comprehend the positions he held within the field of musical production, and the field of power. How did others in those fields perceive him and receive his work?  

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Nakayama was culturally important in his own day. With one song, written in 1914, he created the market for modern recorded popular music. That song was “Katyusha no uta” カチューシャの唄 (Katyusha’s Song), which Nakayama wrote for a shingeki 新劇 (new drama) production of Tolstoy's The Resurrection. In 1914, its sales were higher than any other record to that point. With this song, Nakayama Shimpei launched the popular music industry, meaning both recorded songs, and the production and consumption systems that went with them, into Japanese society. Prior to this industrial manufacturing and distribution system, popular songs were the province of live performers called enkashi 演歌師 (street singers) who performed hayariuta 流行歌 (popular songs) for money at cafes and in entertainment districts. Audiences often requested that enkashi sing songs like “Katyusha no uta” that appeared in stage productions. However, no one recorded these performances. Before “Katyusha no uta,” popular songs could only be heard in a live performance setting. This limited their immediate distribution area, and meant a relatively high cost for a consumer to hear them.

“Katyusha no uta” was the first of what came to be known as ryūkōka 流行歌 (recorded popular songs). Records were relatively new in 1914. Though some records of traditional songs existed, most music was still sold as music sheets. The change in technology made a critical difference. The simple fact that “Katyusha no uta” was on a record gave it a new life through a market that was more intimately associated with industrialism and capitalism than any other form of music in Japan, popular or high-brow, had ever been before. Nakayama’s song introduced music as a form of culture for the masses, as well as a cultural artifact of industrial

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10 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 281.
scale production. As access to popular songs continually increased across Japan, so too did the degree to which listeners and critics interpreted their meaning within Japan’s changing social and cultural milieu. As Nakayama’s songs gained in popularity and in sales, they also influenced the composition, production, and marketing of songs by other composers, both distributed by Nakayama’s own company and by other record companies. “Katyusha no uta” set in motion an information revolution within one sector of Japan’s growing economy, even driving sales of phonographs to mass market levels. By recording this song, Nakayama wove music into Japan’s ongoing project of modernization.

The fact that by 1914 popular music was already imbricated within the modern structure of Japan’s economy suggests its interconnectedness with social and political change. In order to access its historical meaning, however, it is critical to understand the definition and function of popular music as it is used in this dissertation. First, of course, is the question about what exactly defines music as popular. Second, what cultural, historical, and even political meaning, exists within Nakayama’s songs? Finally, where can that meaning be located, and how can we interpret it?

A Song Is More than Its Words

Consumer tastes in music are complex and unpredictable. For all of the critical talk of popular music as formulaic (and in many ways it is), there is no way to predict whether a popular song will be a success with consumers. This is the product of both a complex market and the complexity of popular songs themselves.

Meaning in a popular song comes from both music and words. A lyric is not a poem, nor does it function as a device for communication so much as it, “[creates] the setting for
communication.”¹¹ A song’s melody is equally integral to its meaning. To analyze a song in terms of just its lyrical content, or just its musical content, is to miss half the equation. Listeners choose a song because of emotional appeal that results from the combination of sound and words: “[Lyrics] are written to be performed. They only come to life in the performance of a singer.”¹² The idea of liminal space created by individual listeners who identify with the totality of what they perceive as the meaning of the song helps to understand how a popular song can have a social life. Since listeners perceive that total meaning within themselves, they also project their response to a song onto others who also claim to like the song. Such projections create an assumption of shared experience and bonding that tends to build communities with loose ties based on popular culture preferences. This kind of community can be said to constitute a public sphere as Habermas sees it, which supports a conversation by which the ideas of the members of the community go far beyond the song to social and even political concerns.

Discovering the Meaning of a Song in Its Context
The power of the popular song lies in its appropriation by the consumers discussed above. For politicians, the ability to identify with a subculture’s music can become a special inroad to gaining support from the members of that subculture.¹³ Politically-motivated songs with explicit messages abound in all popular music genres, and often reference other popular culture in which subscribing consumer/fan groups have a stake. This is the result of the commodification of culture. But social class in industrial society is only a part of the process of analyzing the

¹¹ Frith, Performing Rites, 167-69.
¹² Storey, Cultural Studies, 106.
¹³ Ibid., 109.
meaning of a song to all of its constituents. We need to learn as much as possible about the context of producing and consuming a popular song in order to discover what it meant to whom and when. This makes the analysis of popular music an essentially historical project. It is necessary that we look into the producer(s) of the song, and understand its consumers and their historical context at the time of the song’s creation, and of its popularity (which are often two different chronological points). Among the best ways to do this is to use the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu regarding cultural fields and habitus.

Returning to Bourdieu, it is necessary to understand a cultural field, such as the field of music, is a part of a kind of platonic duality. The field exists as the material expression of its constituents and their relations. In this material existence we can say that a field is defined as a social space (Bourdieu calls it a social universe) whose rules, hierarchies, and relations are autonomous from the general social universe. It governs itself, though it exists in relation to other fields and to the general social universe (society and the state) at large. Such a field, Bourdieu theorizes, comes into existence gradually, over a long period of accretion during which its constituents emerge. However, there is a spiritual, or intellectual, aspect to this duality as well. This intellectual aspect is the idealization of the field created by the habitual opinions and actions of the field’s constituents. This is what he means by the “habitus;” the rules of the game, by which the constituents play, i.e. establish relationships, create art, and respond to the creations of others. The resulting duality is the circle within which value, and what Bourdieu calls “capital” are created and perpetuated within the field. One key to understanding how any particularly field works, what its rules and values are, is a clear understanding of the historical genesis of the duality. The material field does not spring into being fully formed, but forms over time as constituents are drawn to the field and interact with one another. Their interaction is the source
of the intellectual rules of behavior and value that create capital. The material is not the genesis of the intellectual, however, nor the intellectual the genesis of the material. Rather, each depends upon the other. Without the cultural habitus, no members would be attracted to the field, and no rules for play could be established. Without players, the existence of rules is moot. If we consider the field to be a game in which members are the players, the habitus works as the craft and virtuosity with which each player plays the game. The field and its habitus form a circle in which historical development according to the rules plays a critical part.

For that reason, this dissertation focuses on the life of Nakayama Shimpei, not as a biographical sketch, but as a contextualizing landscape. Nakayama was the market-maker for Japanese popular music in the early twentieth century; at the same time, he was also a member of just such a Bourdieueian field. The intersections of the various parts of his life illustrate for the historian the intersections of culture, society, and politics in Japan’s modern history. Nakayama the composer stood at the intersection of pure art and popular art, the nexus where the field of cultural production met the field of power, and where both intersected with economic realities. To say that Nakayama was comfortable inhabiting this position is not to say that it did not present him with conflicts of interest and belief. Instead, the jagged edge where Nakayama’s life met his work also illuminates the margins where events, ideas, and society met in Japanese history from Nakayama’s birth in 1887 to his death in 1952.

The Historical Importance of Nakayama Shimpei’s Popular Songs

Culture for the masses, or taishū bunka 大衆文化, was exactly what Nakayama Shimpei and his mentor, Shimamura Hōgetsu 島村抱月 (1871-1918), were hoping to create. The subject of Chapter Two is Nakayama’s life. His childhood as a younger son in the main family of a
village headman that had fallen on hard times shaped his sense of self and his musical leanings. Growing up in the countryside, Nakayama came to see himself and his rural friends and neighbors as participants in the ongoing creation of modern Japan. He learned to romanticize the beauty of rural Japan, and to recognize the economic contribution of farmers and workers in Japan’s modern era. Understanding this upbringing helps to recognize Nakayama’s reasons for becoming a composer. His love of music was evident from a young age, but he became first a music teacher, then a popular music composer. These choices had to do with economic need and an affection for the culture of workers and farmers, both of which led him to eschew the world of high culture and compose songs for profit. His interest in composing led him to make connections within the Literature Department of Waseda University, including the editor of the literary magazine *Waseda Bungaku* Shimamura Hogetsu. Through the Bungei Kyōkai (Drama Society), and later his own theater company, the Geijutsuza 芸術座, Shimamura introduced Western literature with Japanese elements to provide a bridge to full cultural modernity.\(^{14}\) Nakayama made contributions to the magazine that helped to draw in audiences. He gave readers modern songs that became part of mainstream culture. His goal was not revolution, but cultural edification and modernization. Like Shimamura and his literary colleagues, Nakayama hoped to create a popular culture whose goal was cultural edification and modernization.\(^{15}\) His connections at the university boosted his career in two ways. First, they

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\(^{14}\) Urō Nakayama, "Nakayama Shimpei Sakkyoku Mokuroku " in *Nakayama Shimpei Sakkyoku Mokuroku/Nenpu* (Tokyo: Mame no Kisha, 1980), 291; Nakayama, *Nakayama Nenpu*. Shimamura and Nakayama came to think of the term "modern" as relating to the degree of economic development and, in their minds, concomitant Westernization, displayed by a developing society. Like Fukuzawa Yukichi, they did not expect Japan to lose its identity to Westernization, but they saw adoption of Western industrial, political, and social norms as a mark of progress that they considered to be modern.

\(^{15}\) Nakayama, *Nakayama Nenpu*, 292. Shimamura Hōgetsu was one of a number of editors of the literary magazine *Waseda Bungaku*, which primarily served as a regular digest of literature from both Japan and abroad. During his tenure there, Nakayama was also concerned with creating a retrospective of works translated for the magazine while
provided him with a venue to showcase his talent, allowing him to produce the songs that would make him famous. Second, they gave him the literary associations that bridged the pure literary art of writers and the popular audience they wished to reach. The details of Nakayama’s life thus allow for a critical exploration of the decisions and associations that led to his success and fame.

This reality was not lost on Nakayama. He was an entrepreneur as well as an artist. Economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883-1950) defined entrepreneurial activity as “the doing of new things, or the doing of things that are already being done in a new way (innovation).” For Schumpeter, this was the essential part of what he called the “creative response” to change, which is “whenever the economy or an industry or some firms in an industry do…something that is outside of the range of existing practice,” in response to change.¹⁶ Instead, he took advantage of it. Chapter Three details the method Nakayama used to create popular songs for Modern Japan. He eventually recognized that each of the audience reactions to Katyusha outlined a different audience that would react to different songs. By the early 1920s he was writing those different songs for emerging and existing fan groups within modern Japan. As we shall see, Nakayama had a talent for identifying subcultural preferences and adapting his musical style to fit. This deliberate nature of Nakayama’s musical creations was possible because of his ability to switch back and forth through musical styles and cultures. No musical simpleton, Nakayama was an educated, skilled, and accomplished musician and composer. He was capable of composing classical music, could and did perform in formal classical piano recitals, and knew something

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about Japanese musical instruments and technique as well. During his early career after graduating from the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, Nakayama blended Western and Japanese music traditions by using and modifying the yonanuki ヨナ抜き (literally “without fourth and seventh”) scale for musical composition. In this way, Nakayama built a new music from elements familiar to Japanese but with a modern, Western twist. The famous “Sendō kouta,” 船頭小唄 (Boatman’s Song) was the first to be composed on this scale. Nakayama’s ability to blend the familiar strains of Japanese traditional music and instrumentation with Western musical notation and instrumentation to create new possibilities with old familiarities was what made his songs popular. He was so successful with this strategy that his songs became a part of the fabric of Japanese history.

Chapter Four details one of the most successful of his product categories: shin min’yō. The purpose of shin min’yō was to create among urban residents a sense of longing and sentimentality for the Japanese past and the countryside. The city-dwellers of Tokyo, Osaka, and Nagoya were mostly new residents who had come from the countryside, or were one generation removed from such migrants. Most frequently, when these individuals came to the city, they moved into districts already populated by people from their parts of Japan. These regional districts tended to preserve the music, language, and customs of the home province. This was where Nakayama got his musical ideas for the new genre.


18 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 303.

However, his songs were not the same as the songs these rural transplants had brought with them. The new songs extolled the virtues of the countryside - the native place - the furusato 故郷. They worked as marketing devices for rural hot spots; a number were used as advertising for hot spring spas. Nakayama’s target audience was the transplanted urban population, and primarily the working class, which longed for rural homes, despite being one or two generations removed from its rural origins. Where nostalgia often comes from memories of direct experience, the nostalgia felt by Nakayama’s primary audience for shin min ’yō came of longing for an idealized home town, free from the stress of modernization and industrialization. Many knew little or nothing about the countryside, but they yearned for it, and Nakayama’s shin min ’yō songs provided the working class with a way to express that yearning.

Chapter Five demonstrates the way in which Nakayama was able to bring the popularity of his shin min ’yō songs to an urban population. A point of interest here is the direction of cultural flow. Shin min ’yō, contrary to the label given them as folk music, were songs derived from urban trends and Western music that took on the outward appearance of rural songs. They came, as music critic and historian Sonobe Saburō 園部三郎 (1906-1980) has said, from the city to the countryside. Then they returned to their urban origins in the form of shin min ’yō that Nakayama wrote for schools, urban districts, and local festivals. The famous edokko 江戸っ子 (children of Edo) received recognition of their own traditional Japanese status from songs like “Tokyo ondo,” 東京音頭 which celebrated the urban districts of the capital city as tourist destinations with historical character. For Nakayama, much of this was the result of good business. He was willing to take commissions to produce songs that worked as advertisements for resorts, cities, factories

20Ibid., 261-61.
and rural locations. Shipping companies paid for his trips along the Seto Inland Sea, and in return he wrote songs for the company to use as advertisements for the locations he visited and the ship tours that took him there. When urban residents paid for songs, they received the same thorough treatment as rural locations. Nakayama captured the character of places through careful research into local music, politics, economics, and accents and folklore. He wrote new folk music for a new age of capitalism and travel, and became wealthy doing so.

Nakayama knew the power his music could have, and was able to use that to work toward his goals, whether financial, or social in nature. All of the songs he wrote give clues to the historical conditions under which he produced them. The evidence that he could sway the public was clear from, “Katyusha no uta,” which provided a financial turning point for Orient Records in 1914. The company, on its way to bankruptcy, received such an infusion of cash from record sales that it was able to recover. Nakayama used the publicity and economic power of his songs both for his own and for his community’s benefit. He wrote to sell records, but he also gave away songs for causes in which he believed. He created official school songs for his own elementary school, and for the elementary school where he taught in Tokyo upon graduating from the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō 東京音楽学校. He gave several songs to his own home village of Nakano. In the end, such songs, whether written on commission, or as gifts, dealt with issues important to the people for whom he wrote them. They are historical documents of the concerns of the day, and even the context of their performance gives clues as to how Japanese were reacting to their historical context.

Chapter Six shows that because Nakayama’s songs were a part of that context, both reacting to, and foreshadowing cultural movements and cultural responses to historical events, understanding how he intended his songs to fit within their times, and how audiences,
distributors, and critics understood them, will help to provide a richer, more complex grasp of Japan’s modern history. Nakayama did not simply write songs about place. His largest volume of work was in the genre of dōyō. His popular songs for children appeared in magazines frequently in the 1920s and 1930s, and were related to intellectual movements to reform the Japanese language to reflect modern speech patterns and improve literacy. Through these songs he advocated the musical and moral education of children, and worked against the use of educational songs as propaganda.

The fact that most of his music was not political in its aims, but had clear connections to political, social, and economic issues of the time is important. Nakayama’s goal was to provide his audience with new ways of seeing their lives. For that reason, he wrote songs with characters who represented real life challenges. For example, he often wrote about women, but not, as his predecessor Soeda Azenbō 添田啞然坊(1872-1944) had done, in a political way. Nakayama wrote about the changing lives of women as signs of modernity. Women in his songs represented the challenges of modernity as modern characters whose new lifestyles were both popular and controversial. Nakayama did not write about the morals that traditional women should follow, nor did he pontificate about how women ought to be free to play any role in society. Rather, he wrote about what he observed. He wrote in the same way about labor issues, turning workers’ songs into shin min’yō tunes on commission from textile factories, something that popularized rural locations and products. Such popularity created more work, and drew tourists to look at the sites romanticized in the songs. However, he wrote songs that lamented the poverty and difficulty experienced by regular people as well. “Sendō kouta” was a paean to the hopelessness
of poverty. His goal was to both entertain his audience, and help them find perspective on their situations within a changing society.\textsuperscript{21}

Nakayama seems to have seen the gap between wealthy industrialists and poverty-stricken workers and farmers as existing on a continuum within the same world. They were not contradictory, nor were they cause for ideological concern. They simply were, and so were subjects for his songs. It seems that his lyricists, many of whom were artists with cultural capital but little money, had hardly any difficulty with these contradictory positions either. This kind of candor provides excellent fuel for investigation. While Nakayama and his collaborators held certain, male-oriented, points of view, their willingness to write candidly about the experiences that they perceived to be those of common Japanese makes these songs useful as primary sources.

\textsuperscript{21} Nakayama, \textit{Nakayama Nenpu}. 
Nakayama’s quest to create a truly mass music correlated with the political climate in Japan during his lifetime. Japan’s genrō 元老, or elder statesmen, used their proximity to the emperor and control of the imperial seal to modernize Japan from above, creating a government, eliminating the samurai as a class, reforming the economy, and subsidizing industries that they considered critical to their project of modernizing Japan so as to put it on a par with Western nations. At the same time, there were numerous attempts by Japanese who were not a part of the political insider group to shape the so-called modernization of Japan consistent with their own needs and political ideas. Among these was a group of upper-middle-class landowning taxpayers who wanted to be a part of the government, who began, in the 1880s, to demand that the government become more democratic, and they especially lobbied the government for a constitution. This was the Jiyūminken Undō 自由民権運動 (Freedom and People's Rights Movement). One of the ways in which these activists made their political message public was through street performers known as enkashi. They would stand on street corners and sing songs that consisted of a simple, unaccompanied patter and carried a political message in support of the Jiyūminken Undō. Since the distribution of political tracts was illegal, the enkashi would sing, sell sheets on which the words to the song were printed, and subsequently melt into the crowd to avoid arrest. Japanese called these songs Jiyūminken enka 自由民権演歌 (people’s rights music).22

Nakayama’s music was not a direct descendant of this tradition, but it was related to the music played by enkashi after the end of the Jiyūminken Undō ended. The political nature of Jiyūminken enka had disappeared practically overnight with the granting by the emperor, in 1890,  

22 Yano, "Defining the Modern Nation," 249.
of Japan’s first constitution. Popular songs sung in bars and cafes by the *enkashi* and sold at street corners now became simply *enka* or, more commonly, *hayariuta.* Without the political movement, the content and style of the songs changed. The new music often functioned as advertising, and entertainment and capitalism joined forces. This combination made music in Meiji and Taishō Japan a powerful communication device. “Katyusha no uta” is again a wonderful example. *Enkashi* sang this song in bars, cafes, and on the streets. They received so many requests for the song that Orient Records of Kyoto decided to make a record of it.

This was the business pattern at the time. Record companies looked for songs that were already popular to buy and record, rather than taking the risks involved in developing their own talent or playlists. When Orient put “Katyusha no uta” on the market as a direct result of the street-singing *enkashi*, Nakayama’s position went from school music teacher to nationally famous composer in a short time. For his next two songs, which he also produced for *shingeki* and which were made famous by *enkashi* before they were recorded, he used the same musical techniques and performance method. “Sendō kouta” and “Gondora no uta” both featured primarily voice, with accompaniment by either a single violin, or no accompaniment at all. This was a strategically brilliant stroke, because it meant the songs were easy for *enkashi* to play, and easy for the rudimentary studios of the day to record. They aligned well with performance venues and the skill levels of performers, and reflected the dominant popular performance method of the day.

Nakayama Shimpei’s music, despite its deliberately planned appeal to mass audiences, also shares in the creation of cultural identity as a part of the building of the ethnic nation of Japan.

23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 251.
Through national exposure, Nakayama’s music, be it in the form of dōyō, or ryūkōka, or shin-minyo, was able to create images of Japan, and of the Japanese, through its lyrics, and through the emotional appeal of the music itself. These images became popular culture icons - part of the social identity of the Japanese with each other in the modern world. Katyusha's suffering, and the romantic horror her ex-lover feels as he sends her off to prison on a technicality, is heart-rending, and spoke to the Japanese at the time of their own conflicts between desire and duty.

Nakayama in his music, like most Japanese, accepted the modern character of society in his time, but reproduced in its musical forms as well as its words a longing for an idealized past whose substance was romanticized into the ideal Japanese – the person and society that many people imagined they all wished for. In creating this longing, this miren 未練 that is such a critical part of all of his songs, Nakayama Shimpei became part of Japan’s modern history. His songs documented social and cultural trends that were directly related to political and economic events of their time. The songs were part of public discourse, and provided a public sphere consisting of individuals whose common interest in these first popular songs did lead them to talk and to commiserate about politics, social problems, international relations, personal hopes and dreams, and economic issues. The discussion was rarely face-to-face, however. Because of the nature of popular music, it happened in a liminal space where people reached tacit agreement on these issues. It was nevertheless an important community in the formation of modern Japan as a society. Nakayama’s songs did more than reflect the public mood. In some ways, they created, or helped to create, cultural and social trends. They bridged the space between the theoretical world of pure art, folklore, and philosophy, and brought new ideas to the masses. Nakayama Shimpei was critical in the formation, and success, of this music, and so his music created a part
of the bindings of modern Japanese society, and some of the processes by which the Japanese coped with the changing times.

How This Study Fits Into Current Scholarship

There are numerous ways in which academics have looked at Japanese music over the last twenty years. Historians have become interested in Japanese popular songs as a part of a larger interest in popular culture. One of the most important scholars to have touched on Japanese popular culture in the first half of the twentieth century, and the one whose call for further, more specialized studies in part inspired this dissertation, is Miriam Silverberg. Silverberg’s book on 1920s and 1930s popular culture, Erotic, Grotesque Nonsense aims to “illuminate the modern practices of the 1920s and 1930s by focusing on their representation in mass media.” She looks to the mass media, to advertising, movies, and even music, to provide a more nuanced understanding of the way people of this period understood the context of their lives.25 In her earlier book, Changing Song, Silverberg’s subject, Nakano Shigeharu 中野重治 (1902-1979), was a writer and a communist who faced problems related to his class, and the disjuncture between his work and the manual laborers who constituted the proletarian class about which he wrote. Nakano tried to both oppose government and corporate labor policies and practices by using his poetry to support his politics. He attempted to raise the consciousness of laborers such that they could see their predicament and act to change it through participation in worker activities and activism within working class communities. Unable to see himself outside of the proletariat, yet only capable of existing and producing literature as an outsider, Nakano

exemplified the predicament of left-wing intellectuals in interwar Japan.\textsuperscript{26} In *Erotic, Grotesque Nonsense*, Silverberg goes into other areas of Japanese modern culture. She investigates the media image of the *moga* モガ (modern girl) and the reality of the lives of women in various stages of modern life. She looks into the rollicking playground of Asakusa, and the department stores of the Ginza, the *Jazu kissa* ジャズ喫茶 (Jazz Cafes) and the movie houses, and finds a complex set of cultural practices. Silverberg’s conclusion is that being modern in Japan mean a range of things, and those meanings were contingent upon each other and media representations, and therefore in constant flux. To understand cultural practices as a part of the historical context of a time, then, provides us with a more nuanced way to understand the ways in which Japanese from all areas of life understood the time in which they lived, and their place within it. Her use of a parody of Nakayama’s own famous tune, *Tokyo Kōshinkyoku* 東京行進曲 (Tokyo March) that pokes fun at 1920s party politics and makes clear that the lyricist prefers the military-guided regime that emerged in the 1930s is an excellent example of the way in which an oppositional reading can be used to take the temperature of a particular point in time.\textsuperscript{27}

That temperature, as Louise Young points out in her work on Japanese imperialism in Manchuria, was also affected by Japan’s changing place in the world. Young’s idea that Japan not only changed the history of the territories it colonized, but that the act of colonizing, and of organizing for colonization, changed Japan, is relevant to this study as well.\textsuperscript{28} A large part of the work of Nakayama Shimpei was devoted to defining Japan as an ethnic nation. While he did this


\textsuperscript{27} Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*, 24.

using songs that extolled the virtues of Japan’s rural villages and urban neighborhoods, his choices were informed by the existence and growth of colonies in Taiwan, Korea, and eventually Manchuria as well. Nakayama was interested in the contrast, as Jerrey Hanes has put it, between the center and the periphery.\(^29\) In Nakayama’s case, the concern was that the Metropole, Tokyo, be connected to the source of its population, labor, and culture as he saw it – in his mind the Japanese countryside. He communicated this concern through his popular songs.

Historian Yuri Eppstein's thesis in *The Beginnings of Western Music in Meiji Japan* is that Izawa Shūji’s 井沢修二 (1851-1917) stated goal, to create a hybrid music for modern Japan that was the best of both Western and Japanese styles, had limited success. Eppstein claims that after Izawa succeeded in making Western music the subject of school curriculum, he failed to blend Japanese music with it. Tamura Torazō, among others, worked in the mid- to late Meiji period to bring Japanese music and subjects into the school curriculum. Tamura and other composers had their own purposes which were sometimes critical of, and sometimes in opposition to, the intentions of the ministry and the goals of the Japanese political leadership.\(^30\) This conclusion is close to the ideas presented by Andrew Barshay in his history of public intellectuals. Barshay finds that public intellectuals in the early decades of the twentieth century tended to be either insiders, which he defines as employees of the bureaucracy - policy makers and enforcers, and outsiders, public intellectuals who saw the Japanese people as existing prior to the state, and therefore focus their attention on bettering the nation defined as the people, in some


cases by agreeing with, and in other cases by criticizing the state. Eppstein's analysis of the work of Tamura Torazō fits nicely into this category of the outsider public intellectual. In "School Songs Before and After the War," Eppstein takes his conclusions further, recognizing that the impact of Westernization did not diminish, but that the impetus to include more Japanese influences turned school songs not into musical hybrids, but instead encouraged overtly nationalist themes without really changing the Western sound. In other words, school songs were sites of contention over political and social doctrines. Neither officials nor composers questioned their power to influence the minds of the students who heard and sang them. The fact that they were thus incorporated into the debates of the day makes them historical texts.

However, the words to a song are not the only way to read it as a historical text. Music—the melodies, harmonies, and ways of building a song, were also historically situated, and thus can be analyzed as indicative of certain time periods. Philip Flavin has already gone some way to showing how this is the case when investigating the music of the Meiji Period. Flavin has recognized that for composers and artists, use of Western musical techniques was not an either-or proposition, but was intertwined with individual choices, economic decisions, and cultural expectations. By exploring the changes embodied in Meiji-era koto music through the adoption of Western musical ideas, Flavin shows that Japanese musicians even in so-called traditional genres were open to innovation, and frequently tried new things in order to attract new audiences.


Although Flavin finds evidence of nationalism in this new koto music, he concludes that what is really new is their populism.\footnote{Philip Flavin, "Meiji Shinkyoku: The Beginnings of Modern Music for the Koto," \textit{Japan Review}, no. 22 (2010).}


With only a few exceptions, though, Malm and Harich-Schneider do not deal with twentieth century popular music in his works. While she does not analyze popular music, Luciana Galliano's \textit{Yogaku} concentrates on the developments in Japanese music in the twentieth century. In it, Galliano has analyzed the work of a number of composers with whom Nakayama Shimpei
attended the Tokyo Ongaku Gakko.\textsuperscript{36} This makes her analysis particularly pertinent to this study, as they shared influences and often opinions on the uses and quality of music and of different national musics. Galliano's detailed description of these composers' music education and later musical tendencies was instrumental in understanding why Nakayama made many of his own choices with regard to popular music.

Linda Fujie was one of the first to update works on classical and traditional music in Japan with a treatment of twentieth century popular songs.\textsuperscript{37} Her anthropological focus is complimented by the description of the basics of Japanese music theory in scales and chords by Koizumi Fumio, whose work on this subject forms the foundation of descriptions by diverse writers on the subject. Koizumi concludes that there is no consensus among musicologists on the ways in which Japanese scales have changed over the course of the twentieth century to accommodate Western music, but there are recognizable patterns that can be shown to fit within certain musical categories.\textsuperscript{38} Fujie's work has connected the technical work of Koizumi to descriptions of songs in the context of their consumption. My own work is in part an attempt to take this one step further and place that context of consumption within the context of historical events to show that such patterns, and the music that fed them, are products of specific events and socio-historical contexts. This has necessitated investigation of the historical contexts in which Japanese music was created in the twentieth century, in particular the context of the


development of popular songs and the music industry. For that I have relied on the work of Hosokawa Shūhei 細川修平.¹

In Recōdo no bigaku レコードの美学 (The Aesthetics of Recorded Sound), Hosokawa explores the semiotics of records and recorded sound. Beginning with an overview of the invention of recording technology, he is interested in the invention of the record.² According to Hosokawa, record players were not the first system for recording sound for later playback, but their features had a revolutionary impact on the way that we listen to music. Records require no expertise in order to access the music that is on them. Moreover, they provide the possibility of nearly infinite playback of a specific musical event. The impact of this on an audience is important, because it democratizes music. The record captures a concert, for example. For most individuals living before recording became possible, the cost of attending such a concert would have been prohibitive.³⁹ But cost was not the only factor in creating a scarcity of live performances. Proximity to urban areas where such concerts most commonly occurred had a direct effect on their consumption. People living in the countryside would have even less opportunity to attend such performances than poor urban residents. Since a recording can be played back nearly an infinite number of times, each playback event reduces the cost of “attending” a concert until it approaches zero. The result is increased access to music by nearly all members of society. Thus, popular music becomes possible with the recording technology of the industrial era.

This way of thinking about recording suggested a way in which a composer of popular songs could, like Nakayama, have their cake and eat it, too. Recordings produced for the mass market on record also become inexpensive archives of the musical experiences available to

³⁹ Hosokawa, Aesthetics of Recorded Sound.
people in a particular time. Since the technological capabilities of early recording studios had to
mimic live performances, each record that Nakayama produced through the 1920s was also a
document of a unique historical event that we can understand as a part of the historical context of
its production. Yet, as Hosokawa also argues, no record is a perfectly faithful reproduction of an
actual live-music event. Technology comes between the performance and the experience of that
performance. Microphones (or in early studios audio horns), the artificial environment of a
studio, and the possibility of multiple takes means that records do not simply mimic a live event.
Technological changes over time have given records a specific aesthetic experience that is
related to, but separate from, a live music event. Nakayama and his contemporaries, given the
low-fidelity that was the state of the technology in his time, had to have been aware of this
contradictory nature of recording. Each record was a single-take archive of sounds created in a
live-performance setting. Yet each was also the product of technological mediation, and the
limits of that technology.

My own work highlights many of the same themes that Hosokawa does: the growth of a
mass audience; the use of industrial production and mass distribution to enhance audience size;
and the discovery and exploitation of market differentiation and audience targeting. In this work
on Nakayama Shimpei, I contend that these things are not limited to the postwar period in
Japan’s history. Nakayama developed composition and production methods designed specifically
for individual markets, and conceived of as recorded musical products, rather than as sheet music
for live instruments. He worked for record companies who were already using mass production
and marketing techniques, including song formulae, to ensure the market success of each
recording. I contend that Nakayama was Japan’s first popular music producer. In his later years,

40 Ibid.
when unhappiness with the strict censorship of the war years and changes in the tastes of Japanese audiences left him out of the market, he became active in efforts to protect the copyright of Japan’s composers from piracy. Nakayama understood the nature of the record industry, as opposed to the music business, and was already operating along the lines that Hosokawa describes as defining modern record production.

Nakamura Tōyō 中村東洋 (1932-2011) shows how early Japanese popular music composers like Nakayama made choices in their adoption and adaptation of Western music to the context of modernizing Japan.41 Mitsui Tōru’s 三井徹 (1940-) work makes clear the way in which the adoption and the adaptation of Western songs and music business models led to an early recognition among composers of market realities.42 Together the work of these two scholars suggests that composers understood the economic, political, and social issues of their times and used their awareness of social change as they tried to write popular songs. Songwriters were more than creative types working at solitary pianos looking for new melodies. To be successful, they connected to the wider world, and to the historical context through which they hoped to tap into the feelings of their potential listeners. Nakayama became a study in this kind of strategic thinking.

Understanding the technical and production aspects of Japanese popular music also required me to learn about the development of the music industry in the West, from which both the technology, and the labor, employment, and business models came to Japan. Instrumental to this quest was the work of Andre Millard. Millard’s America On Record: A History of Recorded


Sound was a critical resource. Millard's conclusion that much of the business of recording and selling popular songs has been driven by technological change sent me back to my sources to look for technological influences on Nakayama Shimpei. In a similar fashion, the work of James Kraft on the way in which musicians responded, as laborers, to those technological changes by trying to control their work places and public understanding of their work and its musical product helped me to think about Nakayama as an employee of record companies and as an entrepreneur himself. Technological change did not only force change in the musical workplace, it also provided opportunities for creative individuals like Nakayama to change the industry and the market by leveraging existing techniques and styles in new ways to make new musical products - popular songs - that found a market because of their relevance to a changing society. This last is perhaps most relevant to my own thesis that Japanese popular songs are documents of historical change.

While their conclusions are not quite so analytical or grounded in theory, Soeda Azembo and Sonobe Saburo corroborate this way of looking at music as a primary source, and at musicians as outsider public intellectuals, one of the interests of whom was to comment upon the social conditions within which they saw themselves and their audience living. In the case of Soeda's work, it is clear that he actually was one such social critic and composer. Sonobe's analysis from a journalistic perspective makes it clear that music was more than just historical mood music; that it had a place in the historical context of a changing Japan.


Soeda Azenbō was a historian, political activist, and music composer/performer. One of the original enkashi of the Seinen Kurabu 青年クラブ, Soeda composed some of the first and most important popular songs of the Jiyūminken Undō. He may have been a pioneer in the use of the yonanuki scale (see page 108). During the 1880s he wandered the streets of Tokyo, broadsheets in hand, singing kae-uta 替え歌 (changed songs) and his own compositions with activist lyrics. Later he wrote several books about his experiences and the historical meaning of popular music in the Meiji period. I have used Soeda’s works as primary sources for this study. Although Soeda was alive in Nakayama’s lifetime, Nakayama did not refer to him or to his songs in his own work. Nakayama grew up in an era when Soeda’s songs were popular, and so he must have heard them, but there is no evidence that he was influenced by them directly. Nakayama’s own use of the yonanuki scale probably comes from his association with the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, an institution specifically dedicated to the mixing of Western and Japanese music. Soeda’s songs, although well-known, were performed by street musicians in the major cities, quite far from the Nagano village where Nakayama got his first taste of music. Many of them were published as sheet music, but not on records. It is therefore unlikely that he would have grown up knowing much about how they sounded beyond what he might have heard in the street. The nature of Soeda’s songs was also a barrier here. Because they were created as street songs, kaeuta, they tended to carry verses that were written by the individual enkashi who sang them. There was therefore little sense of the original song. Like the Tokugawa period kouta, the essence of which Nakayama tried to capture in his folk songs, Soeda’s music changed wherever

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Azenbo Soeda, Ryūkōka No Meiji Taishō Shi (Tokyo: Tōsui Shobō, 1933; repr., 1982); Tomomichi Soeda, Nonki Bushi Monogatari (Tokyo: Kamata Shoten, 1973); Azembō Soeda and Tomomichi Soeda, Enka No Meiji Taishō Shi (Tokyo: Tōsuishobō, 1982).
it went, with verses dropped and added based on the singer and the location. It was never formal music.

Soeda himself was a great observer of the trends of his time. Miriam Silverberg has used him as a primary source for her work *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense* because he was such a keen observer of popular trends during his lifetime. Silverberg calls him an anarchist.\(^{47}\) I see him as someone smitten by mass consciousness. Marxist or anarchist, Soeda clearly put his faith in the people. He reveled in the chaos of Asakusa, and in the mutability of popular song. Spending much of his youth singing on street corners, running from police, and entertaining for tips in cafes and bars in the Ginza and Asakusa, he reflected a street-level point of view that is hardly surprising.

Sonobe Saburō has been one of the most consistent researchers and commentators on Japanese popular songs for the last fifty years.\(^{48}\) He has traced the history of modern Japanese popular song from its origins in the Jiyūminken Undō through to the 1960s. While all of Sonobe’s work is broadly historical in scope, concentrating on the history of Meiji and Taishō era popular songs, or on post war popular songs, nevertheless his work has been invaluable. Sonobe’s premise is that popular song reflects the spirit of the age in which it was produced. He further argues that any song whose popularity survives, or revives, decades after its creation is one which speaks to threads of thought and action within Japanese culture that are more than just fads. In short, Sonobe sees popular music as a kind of high art for the masses.

Nakyama Shimpei, my own protagonist, was not like Nakano Shigeharu at all. He was not a communist. Yet he did design his art for the masses. Like Nakano, he hoped to

\(^{47}\) Silverberg, *Erotic Grotesque Nonsense*.


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communicate with, and for, Japanese who worked in factories, farms, and shops. But unlike Nakano, he did this from an insider’s perspective. Nakayama was from a farming family. He immigrated to Tokyo as a young adult. He worked as a school teacher as well as a composer for most of his career. He acted as a bridge between poets and musicians - high culture types - and the rural and working-class society from which he came. Like Miriam Silverberg, I hope to resuscitate the historical image of Nakayama. I hope to bring to light his power to shape cultural movements as well as reflect them through his songs. Through Nakayama, we can come to see the power of popular music to illuminate changes in cultural life and social relations that otherwise we illustrate only through technology and political narrative, and for which the intellectual pursuits of poetry and philosophy provide little evidence at all. Nakayama worked with poets and classically trained musicians, but he wrote for popular audiences, and his songs still resonate today.

The work of my dissertation committee chair, Dr. Mark McNally, has been critical in this study as well. Through Dr. McNally’s work on Kokugaku scholars of the eighteenth and nineteenth Centuries, I have come to see culture producers and intellectuals as existing within Bourdieuan fields of cultural production. Looking at Nakayama Shimpei in this way has allowed me to recognize his life as a contextualized set of relationships within which his ideas are defined against the ideas of others, and in relation to a “marketplace” of cultural and economic value. Defining the value of his work in such a context is the key to understanding the importance of Nakayama Shimpei in Japanese history. It makes it possible to explain how his music is much more than just a sound track to Japan’s modern development.

Chapter 2  
Gondora no Uta: The Field of Musical Production in Modern Japan, 1872-1912

…the success of the Impressionist revolution would undoubtedly have been impossible without the emergence of a public of young artists [les rapins] and writers who were shaped by an ‘overproduction’ of diplomas.

Pierre Bourdieu, The Field of Cultural Production

Changes in the educational system in the early Meiji period (1868-1912) required musical education in the new public school system. The Gakusei 学制 (Education System Order), promulgated in 1872, specified the teaching of singing in elementary schools and instruction in instrumental music in middle schools.¹ Such an ambitious goal had to be set aside as the school system got started because of a lack of qualified teachers and materials, but it never disappeared. Eventually, the requirement set in motion the creation within Japanese cultural space of a new field of activity. The creation of music officially sanctioned by educational decrees inspired debates about what purpose music served in the classroom, what kind of music would be most appropriate in an educational setting, and ultimately what kinds of music were appropriate and what kinds were undesirable. These debates defined the topography of an immensely complex field of cultural production. This chapter outlines the limits of that field, the debates that defined it, and the positions of critical players within it. The ultimate aim is place the life of Nakayama...

¹ Monbushō, Daijín Kanbō, and Chōsa Tōkeika, "Japan's Modern Educational System: The First Hundred Years," (Tokyo: Research and Statistics Division, Minister's Secretariat, Minister of Education, Science and Culture, 1980), II.5(a); Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 19. This order predated the Imperial Rescript on Education, which was signed by the Meiji Emperor in 1890. During the 1870s there was some controversy over whether the education system would be based on Confucian principles or focus on modernization. The 1872 order seems to have been an early compromise. Certainly its requirement for music education reflects both Confucian and modern ideas about the moral education of children. This may be why Izawa also included both Confucian and Western reasoning in his proposals for music education.
Shimpei in the context of his chosen career within the field of musical production in Japan between 1887 and 1952.

**Adopting and Adapting Western Music**

Nakayama Shimpei’s life as a composer was important in Japanese history because he built the template, and the market, for popular songs. His willingness to mix Western and Japanese music, and his creative methods for doing so, drew on the experiments of more “serious” composers and musicians of the Meiji period. His interest in making a living by writing songs led him to produce for the music industry rather than the musical arts. Yet his skill, his ability to express what so many Japanese were experiencing in the early twentieth century, and the interest of artists in other fields including poetry and literature in popularizing their own art through the conduit of popular songs, made him an artist as well as an entrepreneur. A popular composer, Nakayama stood at the nexus of the art world and the world of the mass market. His work provided him with a specific position in relation to other composers of all genres. At the same time, his songs communicated specific ideas to the Japanese public, and the listeners who received his messages interpreted them to suit their own experiences and social and political needs. Nakayama was aware of this and he crafted his music accordingly.
Western Music in Modern Japan

Japanese knew something about Western music well before the Meiji period. As early as the sixteenth century, European missionaries taught Western-style religious music to their converts.\(^2\) Eta Harich-Schneider, in her *History of Japanese Music*, shows evidence that Western church music was popular among Japanese Christians and non-Christians alike in villages where missionaries visited or lived. The Tokugawa Bakufu, aware of Western military music through scholars of Dutch Studies, ordered Takashima Shirōdayū 高島四郎太夫 (1798-1866) in 1839 to establish a system of Western-style military training.\(^3\) As a part of his training regime, Takashima required the use of fife and drum music, substituting the Japanese transverse flute for the Western fife.\(^4\) By the 1850s, the bakufu counted men for fife and drum corps as part of the crew on some Japanese warships commanded according to Dutch principles.\(^5\) Although notation systems did not come along with the style and sound of this Western music, Japanese put Western musical sounds to use before the Meiji period. This suggests that understanding the role of Western music in Meiji society requires that we treat it as a part of the changes that accompanied Meiji, rather than as a completely novel set of ideas. However, the question remains why Japan by 1868 had not incorporated Western music more deeply into its own musical tradition.


The answer to that question requires an understanding that music as a whole operated within Japanese society in ways quite different from its use and production in the West. Japan had a diverse but particularized musical culture at the beginning of the Meiji period. Japan’s musical styles included the court music known as gagaku 雅楽 and koto 琴 music, both evolved from instruments and styles native to Japan and imported from China before and during the 8th century; shamisen 三味線 music, also from China via Okinawa in the 17th century; and indigenous shakuhachi 尺八 music and taiko 太鼓 drumming, to name just a few.6 Judith Ann Herd has noted that these styles of music “have been acculturated to the extent that today they are often assumed to have originated in Japan.”7 In each case, whether of Japanese origin or not, the music style was adapted to a certain instrument or social situation, and gradually differentiated from its parent, such that each became the music of a specific social group. Before the Meiji period, each different style belonged to members of a particular social group, which heard it on specific occasions.8 Like those earlier musical imports, Western music neither became part of a general musical culture in Japan, nor was it forgotten or ejected from such a musical culture. Instead, it had its particular place and use, and remained within those use boundaries.

With each of these imported musical forms the notation systems, playing styles, and even instrument sizes and performance venues became so differentiated that no two could be easily combined. Each style and sub-style tended toward a hardening of technique and technical knowledge passed from master to student with little space for revolutionary change. Each

generation of students attempted through diligent study of received technique and style to perfect their own master’s work. This system did not encourage deviation from one’s specific school, or cooperation with musicians who played other instruments or in other musical contexts.\(^9\) Thus there were wide gaps in terms of performers and audiences, between the various traditional musical contexts and instruments of Japan. Instead of Japanese music, it is more accurate to discuss Japanese musics (in the plural) before the Meiji period. Music belonged to specific and well-differentiated contexts. Different music, instruments, and performance contexts even led to completely separate notation systems. Thus Japanese did not think of these different musical contexts as belonging to a unified category of musical production or performance. They could not even be called genres because of the lack of perceived connections between them.

As should be obvious from the discussion of early Western music in Japan, above, Pre-Meiji uses of Western music followed the same pattern. One among many, it had limited influence on other musics, and garnered little awareness beyond the military or religious contexts. This is not to say that whatever knowledge of Western music that did exist in Japan had no impact on Meiji music culture. For one thing, records show that in 1866 a fifteen-year-old Izawa Shūji (伊澤修二), the father of modern Japan’s music education system, was leader of a community fife and drum band.\(^10\) The question is, then, how was this pre-Meiji importation of Western music related to the development of the modern Japanese music industry after the beginning of the Meiji period.

Izawa’s interest in Western music was certainly his ticket to prominence. Practicing the \textit{risshin-shusse} 立身出世 values of bettering one’s country by bettering oneself (i.e. service to the


state as the paramount means of personal achievement) Izawa carved from The Education System Order of 1872 his own niche in the government and in Japan’s history. The establishment in 1879 of Izawa’s proposed Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari (Music Investigation Committee) by the Ministry of Education created the context in which the class- and school-based musical divisions in Japan became a single subject of study called ongaku (music). The Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari, later the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, acted as the investigation arm of the Ministry of Education in the area of musical education and the creation of a music curriculum. One of its main missions was to import Western music into Japan for educational purposes. Izawa wrote in his letters recommending the creation of a music curriculum that Western music was related to Japanese music, but represented a more perfected development of the universal musical principles that both shared. Izawa did not hope to replace Japanese music with Western music. His goal was to use Western music to enhance Japanese culture by raising awareness of the sophistication of Western music and encouraging Japanese composers and musicians to incorporate Western principles as a means of modernizing Japanese culture. He hoped that educating Japanese in Western music would encourage development of a hybrid

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11 Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 49. Although the word gakari usually indicates a single individual responsible for a task or process, Eppstein translates the term here as “committee.” This is in the context of explaining the process by which Izawa’s initial idea for a “Music Training Centre (Ongaku denshū-jo 音楽伝習所) or "Music School" had, accordingly, been replaced by the more modest "Music Investigation Committee (Ongaku torishirabe gakari 音楽取調掛) - which implied also a change of status from that of an independently functioning institute, as initially planned by Isawa...to that of a mere unit within the ministry.” I am inclined to accept this translation because the ongaku torishirabe gakari quickly began acting as a school, hiring teachers and training students, with a staff of more than one individual, and because Izawa’s own title within the government was as goyō gakari (Commissioner) in charge of music study.

12 Ibid., 51.

13 Ibid.
music that combined the best of both Western and Japanese musical styles.\textsuperscript{14} This was practical in its aim, and in line with Meiji goals of modernization.\textsuperscript{15} More importantly, for Izawa, it provided an opportunity to realize his own ambitious personal agenda. It suited the desire of modernizers to investigate the success of Western economies through a thorough study of their cultures as well as industries. It also resonated with early Meiji attempts to build a modern society that was consistent with Confucian ideas of morality and social cohesion. According to Izawa, teaching American music had multiple benefits. It provided a means to make schools modern by teaching Western culture. It was consistent with the belief among Confucian thinkers that music was an edifying art more powerful than logic or philosophy for educating the senses and instilling morality. Finally, he thought singing was a constructive outlet for the potentially disruptive energy of school children.\textsuperscript{16}

Between 1879 and 1881, Izawa achieved some limited success in blending Western and Japanese music by securing the employment of Mason, formerly the Boston Inspector of Music, to teach singing and assist in composing appropriate school songs. He demanded that Mason learn about Japanese music in order for him to begin creating a system for educating children in both Western and Japanese styles. As Eppstein shows, however, Izawa never fully realized this goal of hybridization. Together, and with the help of \textit{gagaku} musicians, Mason and Izawa published the \textit{Shōgaku shōka shū} \textit{(collection of elementary school songs)} in 1880, in which more than ninety percent of songs used on Western musical notation and theory.\textsuperscript{17} In this songbook, a practical curriculum for Japanese music teachers, most of these songs were

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Herd, “Change and Continuity,” 1-92.

\textsuperscript{16} Eppstein, \textit{Beginnings of Western Music}, 64.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 141, 47, 48; Malm, "Modern Music of Meiji," 257-300.
simply songs from the United States or Europe with Japanese words provided by Izawa. Common examples include the popular children’s song “Chōchō” 蝶々 (Butterfly), written to the tune of the American children’s song “Lightly Row,” which itself was based on the German tune “Hanschen Klein,” and the famous “Hotaru no hikari” 蟻の光 (The Light of the Fireflies), created to fit the Scottish classic “Auld Lang Syne.” Most of these imports were by coincidence already compatible with the five-note yonanuki ヨナ抜き scale, probably developed by Izawa and Mason to approximate the sounds of Japanese music within a Western tonal system. In the Japanese songs that made up the remaining ten percent, Izawa and Mason used Western musical notation, and so used a yonanuki scale to approximate the Japanese tonal structure. They catered to Japanese sensibilities in terms of the choice of school songs, and in enlisting the help of the gagaku musicians, but Izawa and Mason do not appear to have put a great deal of effort into their plan to mix the two musical styles.

From the Classroom to the Auditorium

Izawa’s view on the hybridization of Western and Japanese music no doubt inspired Nakayama Shimpei, who experienced it directly as a young elementary school student, and as a student at the Tokyo School of Music. This is hardly surprising. Nakayama was a schoolteacher, and Izawa’s views formed the core of the musical curriculum in schools. He was also a member

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18 Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 148; Herd, "Change and Continuity," 5.
19 Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 57. The yonanuki scale and its antecedents in traditional Japanese systems of musical organization are discussed in detail in Chapter 3, page 108.
20 Ibid., 141. 47-48. Ibid. Eppstein notes that in Volume 2 of the songbook, 81.25% of songs were entirely Western, and in Volume 3, 88% were entirely Western. Eventually, this concentration on Western music in school songbooks engendered criticism and the production of alternative song books with more Japanese, and Japanese-style songs.
of a group of composers attending the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō in the early twentieth century who were all heavily influenced by Izawa’s views and the practical curriculum at his school. By 1910, the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō was the chief source of music educators for the Japanese school system, and this appears to have been its greatest appeal for Nakayama. By the time he matriculated, it was also producing a generation of composers who would create the field of musical production outside of schools. These composers, both inside and outside of the educational system, developed two primary modes of thought about what modern Japanese music should be. They set up positions within the field of cultural production in relation to each other, and in relation to Western composers and styles, with each influenced by the social and political developments of the time, developments that defined the landscape of musical production in prewar Japan. Nakayama Shimpei was a part of this history of music culture in Japan, and his songs reflect the positions he took with regard to the practical uses of music, and the message it should send. To understand his position and music it is critical to look further into the development of this field of musical production.
School Songs: Modern and Japanese

The Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō produced music teachers for all of Japan. This meant that shōka 唱歌 (school songs) remained a major interest of its graduates throughout the prewar period. As Izawa’s school song books aged, a number of composers began to critique the essentially Western nature of the songs published therein. Tamura Torazō 田村虎藏 (1874-1943), a composer of school songs, took issue with the slow progress of the integration of Japanese music within the official school song books published by Izawa. He advocated changes in both musical style and, to a greater degree, lyrical content. Tamura, though a trained composer, was an advocate of the Genbun-itchi 言文一 movement that provided spirited debates over the nature of written Japanese in a modern society.

Traditionally, historians date the Genbun-itchi movement from 1866. In that year, Maejima Hisoka 前島密 (1835-1919), Japan’s first Postmaster General, petitioned the shogun to require the simplest possible script and emulation of the patterns of contemporary speech in school textbooks. The petition thus recommended the elimination of kanji and replacement of the technically difficult sōrōbun 候文 written style of official documents. Maejima’s goal was to create an efficient means of addressing and moving correspondence through the mail. Although he was not the first to recommend simplifying writing for at least some practical purposes, his effort was the first official request to simplify both writing and style.

By 1887, novelists, journalists, and other intellectuals took up the idea of simplifying writing in order to improve communication in quickly modernizing Meiji society. The need to reach the masses with news, and to disseminate their theories were their motivations, along with,

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no doubt, the profitability that might come with mass distribution. Tamura Torazō advocated this idea for school songs. His reasons were very specific. He hoped that simplifying the words in school songs would make singing them easier for school children. Tamura also made his school songs simple for children by writing them with simple melodies using yonanuki pentatonic scales, limited harmonies and single melody lines that approximated traditional Japanese melodies. He published these songs in an attractively packaged ten-volume collection called Kyōka tekiyō yōnen shōka 教科適用幼年唱歌 between 1900 and 1902.²²

Modernizing Traditional Music

Another group of musicians who reacted to modern changes included musicians of traditional Japanese musical styles. Izawa claimed that gagaku and European classical music had common origins. Beginning with simple children’s songs, Izawa argued that the tones used, and the simple melodic structures were similar. He thus concluded that they represent a universal human music. The differentiation came as the two styles of music developed in separate directions over time. While zokkyoku 俗曲 (vulgar popular songs) showed the least affinity with Western music, Izawa argued that gagaku was a refined style with some elements that could be found in Western classical music as well.²³ Here, Izawa assumed that both Western classical music and gagaku represented evolutionary developments of the basic musical ideas found in children’s songs that were positive, sophisticated, and culturally important. The corollary, reflected in the views of others in the Ministry of Education at the time, was that the evolution represented by popular music was vulgar, unsophisticated, and had morally and culturally

²² Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 141-48; Herd, "Change and Continuity," 5.
²³ Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 70.
deleterious effects.\textsuperscript{24} This view both validated the musical practice of composers for traditional Japanese instruments, and provided space for such musicians to experiment with the best (i.e., classical styles) of Western music.

Judith Ann Herd has written that despite the educational efforts of the Meiji government, Western music was largely inaccessible to the general public before the beginning of the twentieth century. Herd notes that instrument manufacturers like Yamaha quickly learned to make and sell, “Western instruments at reasonable prices to consumers who had almost no idea what to do with them.”\textsuperscript{25} Among other things, this illuminates the almost immediate nature of the effect of Japan’s industrial revolution upon music production. More important for this argument, it shows that there was a gap between the Westernizing goals of the Meiji government and the realization of those goals among the general population. We can safely assume that most Japanese had little acquaintance with the sound as well as the playing technique for the pianos that Yamaha began producing in 1887.

Traditional music makers began almost immediately, like Yamaha, to respond to Izawa’s importation of Western music by creating new songs in traditional forms, changing their traditional tuning systems, and even transcribing music for Japanese instruments into Western notation. During Nakayama’s lifetime music composed for the koto had some of the deepest roots in Japanese culture and history. Yet despite its long history, koto composition styles were not static during the Meiji period. Composers for the koto attempted to navigate the space between the need to maintain ties to received technique and sound while modernizing koto

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 64.

\textsuperscript{25} Herd, "Change and Continuity," 9.
performance and musical structure to appeal to new audiences. Some found their inspiration in modernization, and some in the profit motive, while others hoped to reinvigorate traditional styles by popularizing them. Since Western instruments were not always readily available, music teachers often used traditional Japanese instruments in their place. The Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari encouraged the study of these traditional instruments and the transcription of their music into Western notation. In 1888, the first example of such research appeared in the form of a transcription of traditional koto pieces. Although such research led to a resurgence in popularity of the koto and of nagauta (a traditional koto song style), the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō did not elevate Japanese music to major status until 1936. Musicians in such traditional genres thus did not have recognition by the state. They had to find other ways to ensure the survival of their music and their profession.

Many did this by modernizing traditional musical genres. Among the practitioners of traditional musical styles, koto artists seem to have had the most immediate success. Yamase Shōin (1845-1908), third holder of the title Yamada Kengyō of the Yamada School, experimented alongside students in the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō with alternate tunings by repositioning the bridges of the koto. Tateyama Noboru (1876-1926) also experimented with Western music, adding a steady rhythm, and using new Western-influenced scales to compose koto music. Such Westernizing steps, made to increase the popularity and continued

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27 Galliano, Yōgaku, 52; Herd, "Change and Continuity," 9; Flavin, "Meiji Shinkyoku," 103-05.
28 Galliano, Yōgaku, 52.
29 Ibid. The Yamada School was a koto school begun by Yamada Kengyō (1757-1815), and in which, according to traditional guild-style teacher-student relationships, the leading student inherits the name and position of the teacher upon his death, thus ensuring the continuity of the school and style.
viability of koto music, led to accusations among koto musicians that Tateyama was guilty of populism and “aesthetic compromise.”

Like other koto players, he made these changes to his style in order to maintain the relevance of koto music in a changing musical field.

Miyagi Michio 宮城道雄 (1894-1956), a koto player who began with no musical pedigree, may have gone the greatest distance in revolutionizing the playing of the koto in modern Japan. Miyagi was never a part of a musical family. He took up the shamisen and koto after becoming blind during childhood (a not unusual entry into the musical world in pre-Meiji times), and studied with important masters of both instruments. As a boy in 1907, he moved to Incheon, Korea with family members as a part of Japan’s colonial presence. There he heard Western music for the first time, and began to study it and incorporate Western ideas into his koto playing. Eventually, he built new versions of the koto from his own designs, including a seventeen-string bass koto, and a revolutionary koto whose eighty strings he tuned chromatically according to the Western tone system. In 1914 he received the name Kengyō 検校, highest level of achievement possible in koto circles. This along with his new professional name, Nakasuga 中須賀, signaled his leadership role in the iemoto 家元 (master-student hierarchy) structure of koto professionals.

With his new position of authority in the field of musical production, Nakasuga Kengyō (Miyagi) broke all the rules. He composed and played pieces in Western style, and collaborating with other traditional instrumentalists, created new pieces overflowing with passion. Miyagi’s compositions continued to evolve to include harmonies and other elements of Western playing.

30 Flavin, “Meiji Shinkyoku,” 105.
31 Galliano, Yōgaku, 52-53. ibid.
32 Ibid., 53.
33 Ibid.
During the 1920s and 1930s he became one of the most popular koto players in Japan, and even gained for himself an international reputation. Miyagi’s life and work show that interest in Western music came both from reformers and modernizers, and from practitioners of traditional arts. From the 1880s through the 1930s, then, traditional Tokugawa-period genres of koto composition, including sōkyoku jiuta 箏曲地歌, and tegotonono 手ごともの coexisted with transitional composition forms.

Another of these composition forms, begun by Kikutaka Kengyō 菊高検校 (1852?-1892), came to be called Meiji shinkyoku 明治新曲. Kikutaka’s great innovation was his invention of a new scale, really a modification of the miyakobushi scale 都節音階 (explained later in this chapter), that raised the pitch of the minor second intervals in the scale by a half step so that they became major second intervals. Kikutaka did this to give the music of the koto a more appealing and upbeat sound. Most of these songs are no longer played, perhaps because many have militaristic overtones. Their titles include “Tairiku kōshinkyoku” 大陸行進曲 (Continental March) and “Taiheiyō kōshinkyoku” 太平洋行進曲 (Pacific March). These innovations reveal that Meiji Shinkyoku style was an adaptation to make koto music popular among the new and growing middle class.

In an objective sense, the accusation of populism leveled at these composers is true. The modifications to koto style that Kikutaka, Miyagi, and Tateyama made had the specific purpose

34 Flavin, “Meiji Shinkyoku,” 105-06. Such titles are unlikely because traditional koto music has a rhythm that is below the surface, difficult to understand unless the listener has great experience with the koto. This is just the opposite of the Western idea of the march that these songs take their names from, which is to provide a clear 2/4 time signature to indicate where in each bar marching soldiers should place their feet on the ground in order to march in step with each other. The subtlety of the koto aesthetic is ironically betrayed by the march rhythm and the military theme.

35 Ibid., 107-08.
of appealing to a broader, and a less well-educated audience. They meant this Westernized koto music to appeal to the new bourgeoisie in Japanese society. Clearly popular music was not alone in its pursuit of a market. Further, we can see similarities between goals of these Meiji shinkyoku composers and popularizers of Western literature like Shimamura Hōgetsu. In both cases, the attempts centered on making high culture available to a growing middle class in hopes of educating them aesthetically and culturally. That Tateyama and Kikutaka chose to use Western music to enhance a primarily Japanese form, and Shimamura chose to use Japanese elements to enhance a primarily Western form, are less important than their educational goals. Both represent attempts to use the capitalist market system to increase the distribution of artistic products that were essentially non-capitalist in nature. Both hoped that their efforts would edify the public, and perhaps ease the transition to a capitalist economy in Japan for those with limited economic means by making traditional entertainments both relevant and affordable. These goals are consistent with the goals of capitalism as outlined by Harry Braverman in his Labor and Monopoly Capital. Essentially, Braverman identifies the chief problem for labor within a capitalist system as the process of deskilling. That is, workers subject to ever-greater division of labor eventually become the tools of their machines, rather than the other way around. This is, for Braverman, an essentially de-humanizing process. To help in socializing each generation of workers to this ever-greater division of labor and loss of meaning, capitalist organizations utilize culture. Further, these capitalist organizations also use this culture as a commodity, making monetary profit on top of the socialization process by selling culture products, like popular music, to the laboring class.\textsuperscript{36} Nakayama saw things differently from Braverman in this respect. He believed that culture products like his songs were capable of renewing the working class, and

\textsuperscript{36} Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital, 42-47.
helping them to see meaning in their lives and connection to each other and their society. Braverman would likely have considered this further evidence that his theories were correct. Where Braverman saw symptoms of a capitalist disease, Nakayama, an entrepreneur, saw in it the cure.

Nakayama had similar goals, many of which he shared with his mentor Shimamura. Like Shimamura, he chose to use Japanese elements to enhance a Western art form in order to reach those goals. In terms of his relationship to musicians like Kikutaka, this choice placed him in an interesting position within the field of music. With traditional musicians moving toward Westernization for popularity, Nakayama escaped much of the criticism he might otherwise have received for being too market-oriented, and benefitted from a sense within Japanese society and the field of music that there was some artistic legitimacy to all forms of song, and prestige in writing in Western style. Still, Nakayama’s songs were not related to Meiji shinkyoku in any stylistic or artistic way. They were much closer to other kinds of songs with Western elements.

This put Nakayama Shimpei in good company. Those in the traditional musical arts, who held cultural capital in the sense that their work was most appreciated by others in their field, chose to include elements of Western music both for artistic reasons, and to gain popularity. Nakayama’s choice to do the same could hardly be questioned by other pure artists in the musical field, most of whom were already involved with Western classical music themselves.

The World of Western Classical Music

If traditional musicians and composers had to work within established cultural production systems, while still adapting to modern trends, most composers who graduated from the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō went on to study Western classical music composition. They avoided Japanese
music altogether, and in the spirit of Meiji Westernization, did all they could to learn from the European masters. The first Western-style classical music compositions by Japanese musicians, all graduates of the Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari or the Tokyo Onga

ku Gakkō, appeared in 1897. Although relatively simple, the music was all the more remarkable for having been produced by students with no exposure to Western music while growing up and little practical education in music theory. Their compositions consisted of concertos for violin and piano that imitated simple Western classical forms and avoided any influence from Japanese music. The work of Yamada Kōsaku 山田耕筰 (1886-1965), the first Japanese composer to create a serious body of classical composition, exemplifies of this choice.

Yamada studied Western music at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, graduating with a firm confidence in the preeminence of Western classical music. In 1910, he went to Germany to study composition, learning through imitation the techniques of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century German masters. He returned in 1916 and immediately became director of the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra; he also collaborated with dancers and other musicians in the shingeki movement that Nakayama’s mentor Shimamura joined around the same time. Both were organizations devoted to bringing Western ideas to the Japanese through culture and performance. Yamada became in many ways an exponent of twentieth-century developments in classical composition in the West, adding dissonance, and increasingly referencing the work of Alexander Scriabin in his music. His growing confidence in his own compositional capabilities eventually led him to include elements of Japanese music within his classical compositions,

38 Ibid., 14.
including the *yonanuki* scale. Still, Herd explains that Yamada’s music remained largely derivative of Western composers and styles until his death.

That Yamada chose Western classical music reflected his belief in the musical and cultural superiority of that form. This is consistent with a Meiji practice that ascribed prestige to the pursuit of Western technology, industry, business, and culture, as Japan tried to quickly catch up to the modern West. In the field of cultural production, it is important to recognize that Nakayama’s choice to compose popular songs in Western style and market them according to Western business and manufacturing methods shares these values with Yamada. Yamada carried that faith in the superiority of Western music with him to Germany. It was not a product of his overseas experience, but rather provided his motive to study in Germany. Other Meiji composers shared Yamada’s devotion to Western music in the classical style, but distinguished themselves from him in various ways.

Fujii Kiyomi 藤井清水 (1889-1944) was less internationally oriented than Yamada, and centered his work more on attempts to blend Western and Japanese styles. Fujii graduated from the Tokyo Music School Ongaku Gakkō in 1916, the same time his predecessor returned to Japan from Germany, and two years after Nakayama graduated from the same school. They probably knew each other and Yamada. Herd suggests that Fujii’s interest in Japanese musical sources comes largely from the fact that he never went abroad for study or travel. Whatever the case, Fujii incorporated the sounds of *min’yō* into his compositions to a degree that Yamada never did. His music included vocal songs set to Japanese style melodies with limited harmonic accompaniment. Historically, Fujii is given credit for creation of the genre later known as *shin*

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39 See Chapter 3, page 116, where I discuss this scale and its implications in detail.

min’yō (new folk songs) that led the folk song movement of the 1920s. Nakayama went on to give popular life to Fujii’s idea.

The Life of a Composer

Nakayama Shimpei was born to a farming family in Hino village, Shimotakai district, in what is now Nagano prefecture, on March 22, 1887. He arrived only nineteen years after the Meiji Restoration, and two years before the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution. Izawa’s Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari’s success in creating a basic music curriculum meant that Nakayama’s elementary school class was among the earliest to be given singing lessons.

This was the world of Nakayama Shimpei. He was, like the majority of Japanese in the 1880s, of rural origins. Nakayama’s hometown was Hino village (now a part of Nakano City) in the province of Nagano, nestled in a mountainous part of the Japan Alps. Even today there is a feeling of rural space uncharacteristic of most of Japan’s largest modern cities. The Nakayama Shimpei Memorial Concert Hall sits within Shimotakai-gun in a spacious property, in the middle of what is now Nakano city, only blocks from Hino Elementary School, where Nakayama received his first musical education. Brochures and websites for visitors to Nakano rank it equal to the local onsen 温泉 (hot springs) as a tourist attraction. According to this advertising it holds great cultural and historical importance in the region.

Hino village was surrounded by hot springs and their attendant resort spas and inns. The area was noted for its cascading rivers and creeks with mountains that rise steeply from ice-cold river banks. It was a small village in 1887, and village life at that time was still largely centered on the local Buddhist temple where families had been registered during Tokugawa times. These rural realities defined Nakayama’s childhood.
He was born the fourth son of Nakayama Kannosuke中山貫之(d.中山實之助(?-1893), the family patriarch and his wife Zōぞう(?-1915). The Nakayama family held a relatively high status in their rural community, though they slid into poverty early in Shimpei’s life. His father was head of a family that was organized according to honke本家(main) and bunke分家(branch) lines, as was typical at the time. The Nakayama family could trace its occupational status and line of descent back to a residence in what is now Gunma prefecture during the mid-nineteenth century. Being transplants, the Nakayama family occupied an interesting position within Hino. Nakayama’s father Kannosuke was the second son, but became head of the honke when his older brother, a popular local comedian at the end of the Tokugawa period, decided to go to Tokyo and seek his fortune in the entertainment world. So the family had resources and more land than a single branch family could farm or administer. Since they arrived in Hino only in the mid-nineteenth century, they could not have ever held the status of myōshu名主(elite land proprietors), which was disappearing by the end of the sixteenth century anyway. Clearly, they were more than simply honbyakushō本百姓(titled peasants), however, as they had multiple family branches, each of which had land that was apparently farmed by tenants. So the Nakayama family were not farmers per se, but they were land holders while Shimpei’s father was alive. He was apparently unsuited for the stress and difficulties of his position as the patriarch of such a large family. Kannosuke died relatively young in July of 1893, only four months after Nakayama Shimpei had begun his elementary education.


42 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 287.
Nakayama Kannosuke’s death had a negative effect on the family fortunes. Unable to pay for Nakayama’s school tuition after her husband had died, his mother took him out of school at the end of his first grade year. Records also show that his mother Zō had a resilient constitution, and was a resourceful woman. She learned to manage the family alone, and to endure the physical and emotional hardship of the birth and untimely deaths of Nakayama’s younger siblings. These mortality rates within families are not surprising or particularly out of the ordinary for the late nineteenth century in Japan, but they did have an effect on the wealth and well-being of Nakayama’s family, and his future was far from assured as he began his education. Nakayama’s oldest brother, however, through family connections, took a job in the local administration of Nagano prefecture upon graduating from school. So their family status endured despite their poverty.

In 1893, when he was six years old, Nakayama’s mother enrolled him in first grade at the local elementary school, located in Kakoi-gun, a short walk from his own. Nakayama and his friends spent summers in Hino playing in the fields, having dirt fights, and eating stolen watermelons grown on local farms. Here he played music for the first time, and fell in love with the popular gunka 軍歌 (military marches) of the time. In an article written in 1935 for the magazine Chūō kōron 中央公論, he wrote:

If I remember right it was around the time I was in second grade that a baby organ was first provided to the school. It was just at the time of the Sino-Japanese war began, so we played epic, energetic military marches like “Tsushima no ikusei” 豊島の戦 (The Battle of Tōshima) and “Yūkan narui suihei” 勇敢なる水兵 (The Brave Sailor) on this baby organ and sang our young hearts out. There is no reason to say that such singing had any special effect

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43 Ibid., 288.
on me at the time, but it is a fact that *gunka* left me with a love for music that I was unaware of then.  

The place in which he grew up had a great impact on the music that Nakayama produced throughout his life. Deep in rural Japan, the area around Hino was replete with natural beauty. His interest in the work of Yanagita Kunio 柳田國男 (1875-1962) and Kitahara Hakushu 北原白秋 (1885-1942) seems to have come from a deep love of the area. In *shin min'yō* songs about hot springs hotels and rural vistas, Nakayama called upon his memories of Hino frequently. This consciousness of the charms of rural life was already present by the age of thirteen, when he was sent away to become an apprentice to the owner of a dry goods store called the Yamato-ya 大和屋 in what is now Komoro 小諸 City. This was heartbreaking for his mother Zō, but with his father gone, there was not enough money to keep him in school. He was miserable there, but his diary shows a keen eye for aesthetic detail. He mentions the beauty of the fields of flowers he passed on his way to work in indentured servitude, despite his misery as a child leaving his home.  

…after the end of my one year of school I had to go to work. We had somehow gotten into a financial pinch and my mother, brother, and other adults in the family made plans for me to go to work at a famous clothing shop called the Yamato-ya. At the time I felt not so much sad about leaving my home to go live and work in another place than that my situation was a strange one in this world. I will never forget Meiji 32, May 14, when I who was 13, went with a young neighbor man named Jiro on the train from Shimano about 3 ri. I still remember clearly the smell of the fields of flowers and the blue sky. This Yamato-ya clothing maker was run at the time by Machikawa Rihei, 街川利兵衛. It had about 20 workers who lived in ten whitewashed buildings behind the shop. The man Jiro who took me there stayed with me on the first night and went home the next day. For a usually independent me, Jiro’s leaving made me very sad, and when he said goodbye I cried.  

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A number of different styles and genres influenced Nakayama’s musical choices. Friends from his childhood note how skilled he was in playing the Japanese transverse flute at temple festivals. He says in his diary that, on his way to live in Tokyo, he stopped with a friend who was enlisting in the army and watched the soldiers march while listening to their music. Military marches, he admits, were his first musical love, and had a great influence upon his own musical tastes.\footnote{Nakayama, “Nakayama Shimpei Jiden,” 119.} He returned to school soon after that to complete his elementary education, and there he rediscovered his love of music.

As an adult and a music educator, Nakayama came to believe that music influenced a child’s understanding of the world, an idea he gained from his own early education. Yet, Nakayama also says that music education in his elementary school was, at best, only cursory, since students did not have the opportunity to learn to read music or play instruments. Instead, the teacher would play popular songs on an organ, and students would sing along.\footnote{Ibid.} Clearly, these songs had a power for him that was disproportionate to the superficial treatment they received in school.

Songs As mentioned above, songs like “Yūkan naru suihei” were already a part of the everyday life of people throughout Japan by the time Nakayama heard them as a second grader in 1894. Military marches and popular political songs reflected on the realities of the Meiji period. People in Nagano heard and sang them in school, at public festivals, and on other special occasions. These songs had musical characteristics that influenced Nakayama’s own later musical choices. In fact, it is likely that Nakayama learned here to see music as integral to the way people understand their relationships to each other and to the state.
What Nakayama called marches were similar to Western-style marches. In fact, Japanese martial music was influenced by Western martial music before the Meiji period.\(^{49}\) One difference was that most of these marches were not band pieces. Instead, singers received accompaniment from only a Japanese transverse flute and a drum. Songs like “Yūkan naru Suihei” sounded like Western marches and emphasized martial spirit during the Sino-Japanese War. Surprisingly for military songs, though, many also talked longingly of home. They mentioned the beauty of the Japanese countryside, the importance of family left behind, and the difficulties of feeling homesick. Many of these songs were both so maudlin and so popular later during the Second World War that government censors banned them as too emotional. Their content was not concerned enough with the spirit of sacrifice that, in the 1930s and 40s, was considered appropriate for motivating a fighting force.\(^{50}\) Instead, they partook of the ideas represented by the Meiji slogan \textit{wakon-yōsai} 和魂洋才 (Japanese spirit, Western knowledge). They sounded Western, but were really a bricolage built on whatever was available to create the desired effect. Most of these marches came from former Seinen Kurabu 青年会 members like Soeda Azenbō. They were looking for ways to create new music that was relevant to the times. These men were mostly street singers who had come together in the 1880s to write political songs encouraging the Jiyūminken Undō. Their earliest songs were \textit{kaeuta}: new words set to well-known old melodies. The new words in the 1880s had to do with political satire and activist ideologies that criticized the government and supported the movement for a constitution. They reinvented themselves as entertainers, singing popular and patriotic songs in the streets for pay, after the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution in 1890 ended the Jiyūminken Undō and left them

\(^{49}\) Eppstein, \textit{Beginnings of Western Music}, 10-11.

\(^{50}\) Sonobe, \textit{Enka Kara Jazu E No Nihonshi}, 129-40.
without work. During the 1894-95 Sino-Japanese War, they turned their talents to making new songs to encourage Japan’s soldiers and sailors, and to claim this role in Japan’s entertainment business. The representation of power and national pride such songs conveyed was popular in the 1890s, and was again during the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War. These songs often stressed the duty of Japanese subjects to their nation, celebrating the sacrifices made by soldiers. Just as often, they took on international relations, or discussed the personal challenges of soldiers. “Kimbu bushi” 欣舞節 (Dance of Joy) predicted war with China in 1893, showing how attuned popular songs could be to the politics of the day.

Rupturing Japan-China negotiations
The Chinese are readily overthrown
The Great Wall breached
Only a mile to the walls of Peking
Praise praise praise. . . Happiness happiness

Kimbu bushi (Dance of joy, 1893)  

That prediction was on the mark. In 1894, when Japan and China did go to war over Korea, “Kimbu bushi” reflected the pulse of the nation. The line, “Rupturing Japan-China negotiations” probably refers to a Chinese expeditionary force of more than 2,000 soldiers sent to Korea at the request of the Korean government. This technically violated a treaty negotiated in 1885 under which Japan and China agreed to inform each other whenever troops moved into Korea. Japan considered the violation a rupture and used it as a pretext to go to war with China. “Kimbu bushi” reflects a popular nationalism “in which mass incorporation into the polity was a

51 Ibid.
fundamental feature of the foreign relations of a modern state." The song illustrates the degree to which popular composers like the enkashi understood and responded to the goals of Japan’s government.

To some extent, “Kimbu bushi” also played a role in communicating those goals across large segments of the population, and from the population to the authorities. This song can be classified as an attempt to tap into what Stuart Hall has called the “dominant, or preferred reading.” In this reading of popular culture products, Hall says, the receivers’ experiences and belief systems are in alignment with the message of the encoder, leading to acceptance of the message and its paradigm. No doubt there were those who also heard “Kimbu bushi” in an oppositional mode, perhaps listening ironically to the overt nationalism of the words. In either case, “Kimbu bushi” illustrates how consuming popular music was, by the 1890s, a way for consumers of songs to express themselves on political issues. Whether members of the government heard or, if they did, listened, to popular culture as they made policy is doubtful. Still, to consume such a song, and by consuming to some degree identify with the opinions espoused by the music and words, was a way to express a political opinion in the new constitutional state. The public became, in part through popular songs, involved in the goals of the nation. Those goals included Japanese expansion on the Asian mainland at the expense of China, which Japanese were already beginning to see as a decrepit culture requiring Japanese assistance to modernize, and control of Taiwan, which Japan exploited for resources and markets.

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54 Ibid., 755.

55 Hall, "Encoding, Decoding," 89-102. Ibid. This article is an edited extract from a CCCS stencilled paper titled "Encoding and decoding in the Television Discourse" (Birmingham: Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, 1973).
after the war. Dissatisfaction among the Japanese with the treatment of their nation by others became the source of public demands for war again in 1904, this time with Russia.

Ten years before the Russo-Japanese War, the song “Roshia koi” 露西亜来い (Bring It On, Russia) became popular. It reflects the confidence that the people of Meiji Japan felt by this time. Between the war with China and the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, Japan redoubled its efforts to industrialize and strengthen its military. This was in direct response to the Triple Intervention of 1895, in which Russia, France, and Germany forced Japan to give up territories it had gained from the Sino-Japanese War, including the Liaodong Peninsula, Which Russia immediately occupied, and Shandong Province, much of which went to Germany. The Western reaction to its success provided Japan with new lessons in international diplomacy and Western chauvinism. Hence the Russo-Japanese war was, for Japan, about more than just territory.

Following the Sino-Japanese War, Russia and Japan entered negotiations over spheres of influence in northeast Asia. Russia wanted control of Port Arthur in Manchuria. Japan offered to acknowledge Russian control of Manchuria in exchange for Russian recognition of Japanese dominance in Korea. Russia’s refusal, and its bid to make Northern Korea a buffer zone between the Russian Empire and Japan led to Japan’s decision to go to war. The Japanese fleet attacked Port Arthur in a surprise move, catching and sinking most of Russia’s Pacific fleet. In the brutal war that followed, Japanese armies accepted high casualties, but fought Russia to a standstill. In the coup de grace to the war, the Battle of Tsushima Straight, Japan’s navy caught Russia’s Baltic fleet attempting to replace the destroyed Pacific fleet by sailing to Vladivostok. The Japanese fleet easily defeated the Russian. Japanese victories in this war, particularly that of Tsushima, led both Japanese and Western nations to recognize Japan’s power and modernity. Japanese soldiers and sailors who fought in the war became heroes, and their adventures fodder
for newspapers, comic books, novels and songs. The feelings about this fight were so strong within Japan that when Japan’s government signed the unpopular Treaty of Portsmouth, ending the war, people took to the streets in what became known as the Hibiya Riot.\textsuperscript{56} Japanese wanted to continue the war, and by extension amplify Japanese prestige both domestically and internationally. Japan seemed finally to have arrived as a modern nation and great power. “Roshia koi,” in 1894, captured the sentiment of this public nationalism.

The eastern peace has been disturbed
Specious pretexts have been used
Roshia koi, Roshia koi
The sharp-edged sword of Japan
Has reached the limit of endurance
Roshia koi, Roshia koi

“Roshia koi” (Bring It On, Russia, 1894)\textsuperscript{57}

Once again, Korea was the focus of the conflict. The irony in the song is the accusation that Russia’s government was using “specious pretexts” for expansion into Korea. While this may be true, and the Japanese government was defending what many saw as a part of its empire, the conflict was also a pretext for the Japanese government to test its power once again. In part, this was a war about international prestige, since Japanese leaders wanted to enhance national security by proving to the West that there were risks involved in bullying their nation. The Meiji government also hoped that the victory would bring it respect and acceptance among the Western


powers.\textsuperscript{58} “Roshia koi” was published in 1894, a full ten years before the war. This was the same year, in fact, that brought the beginning of hostilities with China. Already Russia was identified as a potential enemy, not just by Japan’s political leaders, but also by composers and consumers of popular songs.

“Yatton makase,” やっとん負かせ and “Yakkorya bushi,” やっこりゃ節 both written during the Sino-Japanese war in 1894, give a picture of the selfless ideal that ryukoka songs claimed in the name of the nation in the late Meiji period:

\begin{verbatim}
For the sake of country I'd go anywhere
We'll win in the end
Whether we go through fire or water
-We'll win in the end

“Yatton makase” (1894)\textsuperscript{59}
\end{verbatim}

\begin{verbatim}
Cutting off my coiffure, sweeping back my hair
And serving as a nurse, all in service to the nation

“Yakkorya bushi” (1894)\textsuperscript{60}
\end{verbatim}

Nakayama knew these songs, and even played them on public occasions by the time he was ten years old and ready to graduate from Hino Elementary School. Nakayama’s friend Mr. Arataki remembered one episode from 1897:

\begin{verbatim}
We still attended the third level shrine of Shinnō when we were kids, and Nakayama played the flute there every year, and was very good at it. However there were only two chairs for flute players, and one more was needed, so Nakayama said to me “Arataki, you
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{58} Iriye, "Japan's Drive to Great Power Status," 754.

\textsuperscript{59} Mita, \textit{Social Psychology of Modern Japan}, 66. The translation is Mita's.

\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
play, and even if you don’t make any sounds, just move like you’re playing. So we sat together in the flute section.61

Thus Nakayama appears to have had some natural talent with music to go along with his interest. This quote from Mr. Arataki also shows the technology available for music production and distribution in the late nineteenth century. Recording was not yet possible, and songs were distributed through sales of sheet music. Reproduction of the music meant an entirely live performance, and in most cases they were limited to the instruments and skills of the players. Most music performances did not include bands, but were comprised of small groups with singers and a piano or an organ. Bands also performed on public occasions, but their size and the skill levels of their members understandably varied. For example, in 1900, when Nakayama was thirteen, a Red Cross band played in his town. There was a coronet, a clarinet, a trombone, and drums, and the band members were wearing red trousers and uniform jackets. The way in which Nakayama relates this story shows was that he was transported by the event, and “in my child’s heart, decided to pursue music as my life’s journey.62 In his 1935 autobiographical article for *Chūō kōron* magazine, he wrote:

The impression I still have now, is of sword dancing in sports clothes, waving a sword around, but I have forgotten the title, but it was a *gunka* in which they sang “Loyal spirit beating in our chests…”As for me at that time, I had no special interest in what was called *gunka* but, it was an episode that awoke in me an interest in this unusual (to me) music. However, still very young, I could not possibly quit school, and thanks to my older brother, who would not accept less, I matriculated at Nakanomachi Elementary school…63

61 “Nakayama Shimpei Special Edition,” *Shinanokyoiku*, October 1965. The flute that Arataki referred to is most likely the Japanese transverse flute, which would have a place in shrine festivals, rather than the Western flute.
63 Nakayama, "Nakayama Shimpei Jiden," 376-77. Ibid.
Despite his family’s financial difficulties, Nakayama completed his lower elementary schooling by 1897. His grades were good enough that the school invited him to give the graduation address. He was unable to go on to upper elementary school that year because of his mother’s financial difficulties, but eventually he proceeded with his education, graduating from the upper elementary school (the rough equivalent of middle school today, but this was a terminal education in the Meiji period unless one went on to college) with honors, in 1902. By that time, with a well-developed interest, as well as talent, in music, Nakayama developed an interest in literature displaying his creative streak in other directions. While in the upper elementary school, he and several classmates published a hand-written neighborhood literary magazine titled Seika 精華 (Essence), which included their own short stories and poetry.\(^{64}\)

In 1903, after deliberating with his family about future plans, he decided to follow one of his older brothers into teaching. Nakayama took a short training course for associate teachers at the Nagano Normal School in 1903 and 1904, received his license, and was soon in front of the classroom.\(^ {65}\)

In line with the Meiji spirit of risshin-shusse, Nakayama was not satisfied with his achievements in school, nor was he with his new teaching career. In a diary entry for 1903, Nakayama announced his decision to improve his physical fitness after the heavy study for his teacher-training class led to a long and painful headache. He bought a racket and taught himself tennis.\(^ {66}\) In this sense, Nakayama was truly a man of his time. He worked hard in his career and in his personal life by seeking to improve himself physically. His work ethic, probably developed

\(^{64}\) Nakayama, *Nakayama Nenpu*, 290.

\(^{65}\) Ibid.

\(^{66}\) Ibid.
in school and at home in his early years, became legendary by the 1920s and 1930s – a period of prodigious song-writing production for him. He developed the ability to create songs at almost production-line speed, and with a consistency of success achieved only by a few song writers in Japan’s twentieth century. By 1905 he also began teaching music part time in local schools, and even lived at one school for a short time while its principal was away preparing for an examination.\textsuperscript{67}

After graduating from school at age 18, Nakayama began to worry about his future. In 1905, he decided to continue with his education and to improve his teaching credentials and music skills.\textsuperscript{68} This was a life-changing choice for him, and he felt the weight of it. It was here, in July of 1905, in the company of a friend who was on his way to begin a career in the army, that Nakayama left for Tokyo, where he hoped to matriculate at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō.\textsuperscript{69} Stopping at the military base at Takasaki 高崎 along the way, Nakayama wrote in his diary about how moved he was by their commitment to protect the nation.\textsuperscript{70} A musician at heart, Nakayama was also patriotic. He was stirred by the pomp and circumstance of the military at parade. As a youth he read young men’s magazines and discussed the exploits of real and fictional heroes with his friends. His relationship with the state and the nation was always complex. In his youth, military march music and the parade ground drills at Takasaki were clearly an inspiration to him.

\textsuperscript{67} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{68} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.
Life in Tokyo

Nakayama arrived in Tokyo in 1905. To pay the bills, he became a household servant for an important literary light of the time: Shimamura. Shimamura was a literature professor at Waseda University, a translator of European novels, mostly from Russia and England, and founder of *Waseda Bungaku*, a literary magazine. While living in Shimamura’s home, Nakayama became involved with the publication of *Waseda Bungaku*. Through this work, he benefitted from the mentoring and connections of Shimamura, who encouraged Nakayama to take the exam to enter the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō. Taking that advice, Nakayama matriculated there in 1908 as a piano major.

This was exactly what Nakayama had been hoping for, but it led to concerns about his financial situation. As a servant for the Shimamura family, he received one yen and fifty sen per month in wages. To cover his tuition, transportation, and book costs, he began to borrow two yen per month from the Shimamura family as well, despite the fact that they were providing a room and meals to him free of charge. This dependence clearly weighed on his mind, and he made frequent references to it in letters to his eldest brother, a Nagano prefectural bureaucrat and now head of the Nakayama main family line. As the fortunes of the Shimamura family began to decline in 1908, Nakayama attempted to lighten his burden upon them. He stopped eating meals with the family, and sent home for pickles and beans. This financial difficulty, which Nakayama had experienced as a looming potential disaster all of his life, meant that he was always concerned with finding income. His letters home are filled with references to his accounts and needs. Even after finding employment, he continued to give unsolicited accounts of his expenses and earnings to his brother in Nagano. Unsurprisingly, when his songs began to earn

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money, this tendency to dwell on income led him to try even harder to write songs that would sell. This is one of Nakayama’s motivations for choosing popular music over the classical styles that he was clearly qualified to compose after he graduated from the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō.

Nakayama enjoyed his conservatory education. He participated in the entire range of pursuits available for students of the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō. In 1909, when some school friends started a publication called Ongaku (music), Nakayama agreed to write a regular column that he titled “Shinshiron” 新詩論 (Discussing New Poetry) in which he analyzed Japanese poetry in terms of its suitability to be set to music. He also wrote as secondary author another column called “Teishōbigin” 低唱微吟 (Humming Softly) in the same publication. He was busy, studying piano, music appreciation, music history, violin, and voice, all while commuting across Tokyo to his school, and performing his work for the Shimamura family.

In 1912, Nakayama graduated with a degree in piano. He was giddy with excitement over this success, and wrote home to his older brother, “By some mistake, I have been given a passing grade and will successfully be graduated in a ceremony this evening. Probably on the 22nd or 23rd, I expect to come home for three or four days.” He signed the letter from “baka Daisuke” (Daisuke the fool). By early April, Nakayama was beginning to wonder about the future, and his need for a steady income. He began to write for Waseda Bungaku, and to participate in Shimamura’s Bungei Kyōkai dramatic projects. “Now that I have graduated and decided to stay

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72 Ibid. This title is a reference to Aizawa Seishisai’s “Shinron” (New Theses), and it shows the way in which Nakayama saw himself as living in a changing world. The title gives the sense that he is updating Seishisai’s philosophical work on the kokutai (national polity) and concerns about the foreign presence in Japan. Nakayama’s reference to this in his own work on music suggests his desire to serve the national interest, along with a recognition that he can do so by educating the public about Western music: a reference to the value of the foreign influence that the Tokyo Ongaku Gakko represented. This is consistent with Barshay’s definition of the public man as government outsider discussed below.

73 Ibid., 298.
in Tokyo, I still can’t find an opportunity. This is a bit too scary,” he says in his diary. “This year I began writing for *Waseda Bungaku* with about ten pages…I plan…to find an opening in the *Bungei Kyōkai,*” which was planning a four-act play, to be performed at the Kabukiza in Ginza, called *Furusato* (hometown).

Shimamura hired him to write some music for this dramatic project. Nakayama told his brother in a 1912 letter that he planned to “be a little serious” about doing this work. The production happened in 1912, with a young and quite beautiful actress named Matsui in the lead female role. Matsui had never sung before, just as Nakayama had never composed for the stage before. However, *Furusato* was a success, and Nakayama grew more serious about composition as a result.

After its first showing in Tokyo, government censors asked for some changes, including changes to one of Nakayama’s songs. He was quite angry about this censorship. According to a letter to his older brother, Nakayama explained the censor’s reasoning: the role of the heroine of the play ran counter to the spirit of filial piety that was at the time being promoted by Japan’s government. Nakayama argued that government policy was behind the times. His detailed notes about the play included the idea that he thought was the key to making the play work: that this tragic female character should cast a shadow over the entire play. He felt that government censorship of this character, and any government attempt to control creative expression, was behind the times and unnecessary. He wrote that this was the sign of a serious social problem.

This position seems on the surface to be somewhat ironic since, during the Second World War,

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74 Ibid., 299.
75 Ibid., 299-300.
76 Ibid., 300.
he became the president of the Japan Music Composer’s society, an organization devoted to
directing the creative efforts of composers in nationalist directions during the Second World War.
In fact, Nakayama was not in any way resistant to Japan’s government, nor was he anti-
nationalist. Quite the opposite. Instead, very much in the vein of the outsider public man as
defined by Andrew E. Barshay, Nakayama was a committed nationalist all of his life. 77 His
critique of government censorship must be seen in the context of his support of the overall goal
of strengthening Japan culturally and economically through Westernization and, wherever
possible, finding a way to modify Western ideas and technology to fit Japanese needs and
sensibilities. Hence his anger at censorship was more related to a sense that government rules
were standing in the way of national progress than to resistance to the political direction set by
Japanese officials. As Barshay points out, this was characteristic of an outsider, who had the
luxury of being able to critique government policy for the very reason that they were not its
creators or enforcers. This sometimes meant that these public figures, like Nakayama, were
deemed by officials to have crossed a line between loyal critique and disloyal sentiment.
Nakayama seems to be walking that line here. However, he never made public his views in this
area, and served the nation loyally when called upon in the 1930s and 1940s to help direct

77 Barshay, State and Intellectual in Imperial Japan: The Public Man in Crisis, 16-17. According to Barshay,
"Broadly speaking, all public men, whether insider or outsider, shared two features. The fist is the nationalist
mentality, perspective, and rhetoric of the entire period - from Meiji on...All felt that it was their duty to "bear the
fate of the nation on their shoulders." Nakayama certainly fits within this category, as he does with Barshay's second
shared feature, which "relates to the role of enlightener. In modern Japan this profession has entailed familiarity with
the ideals, symbols, and (less so) the actual conditions of the "West," past and contemporary. Again, Nakayama, and
Shimamura, are examples of this trait. Both, however, also fit the role of "outsider" within the category of public
man as Barshay defines it. In Nakayama's case, "[outsiders], as we saw apropos of Fukuzawa and other critics, helod
to a public ideal that took some other substrate as prior to the state. And they believed that it was necessary to
defend this substrate from state encroachment for that ideal to be realized." For Nakayama, that substrate was Japan
as an ethnic nation. For him, the Japanese people were prior to the state. This, in this early period of his career, the
ideal he defended was the need for artistic freedom from censorship so as to communicate with the public about
national goals and their effect on individual lives and social realities. For the public to progress toward modernity,
artists had to be free to make their critique. This, he thought was in the best interests of the nation.
musical production toward nationalist ends. However admirable his anti-censorship stance, it
does not indicate a unique individual standing outside nationalist public sentiment and
government policy goals, but rather the ideals of one speaking from within that perspective.

As 1912 rolled on, Nakayama’s personal success seemed to be continuing. On December 7,
1912, he landed a job at the Senzoku Elementary School 千束小学校 in Asakusa 浅草 as a
substitute teacher, replacing a friend who had been transferred. Because of his degree from the
Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, Nakayama was cleared to teach music without having to go through the
regular examination and certification process for this specialized position. To his great relief, he
also received a raise from 20 yen per month to 27 yen. This was in many ways a dream job for
Nakayama. He could continue to live and take meals at the Shimamura home, and had plenty of
time to work on composition and writing.

For various reasons the classically trained Nakayama was on a path toward popular music
even before he had composed any songs at all. His financial and family difficulties led to a
connection with Shimamura, who became his mentor and in many ways a father figure.
Shimamura’s interest in creating a popular market for drama and literature led to professional
opportunities for Nakayama to write and compose songs, but those songs had to fit within the
popularizing genre that Shimamura was trying to create. Shimamura relied on Nakayama for his
musical opinion, and for help with the management of the Bungei Kyōkai and its theater.
Nakayama’s success in carrying out these responsibilities led Shimamura to appoint him music

78 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 300.
79 Ibid. In a letter to his elder brother, Shimpei mentions that his job is a relatively comfortable one, and that he
doesn’t even have to go in to work on some days, and that he averages about 17 hours per week teaching. He
apparently continued to work as a houseboy for Shimamura, however, as he also notes that he had to seek
Shimamura’s permission to take this job, and notes that he now has an income of about 30 yen, which correlates
with his 3-4 yen income as a houseboy combined with the new teaching salary of 27 yen.
director for the theater. He now exercised the authority to make his musical opinion into the vision for the Geijutsuza. From 1913 onward, Nakayama saw music as effective if it was popular and had a social message. He was interested in modernizing Japan via shaping the cultural tastes of Japanese people. It is for these reasons that he chose to write primarily in three genres during his lifetime: *doyō* 童謡, *kayōkyoku* 歌謡曲, and *shin min’yō* 新民謡.

Nakayama made a conscious choice to compose in each of these genres. The choice to write songs for the masses came in 1913 as he tried to help the Bungei Kyōkai, and its Geijutsuza theater, in their mission to bring literature to the masses. Popular music, he came to believe, had more than market value. His tirade against government censors for the changes they required to *Furusato* shows that he was concerned that his music not only reflect the times, but help people look forward. Nakayama was a market opportunist, but he was also an artist, consciously choosing his medium so as to reach the largest possible audience in the most effective way he could.

Nakayama had clearly taken a position within what we might call the field of musical production in Japan. He was unabashedly commercial, but his commercial music was consciously for, and about, the consuming public. He wanted his music to be popular to communicate the cultural importance of music and the joy that music could bring to their lives. His music reflected his own appreciation of the place experience from which he himself had come. He was a farmer’s son, aware of the natural landscape, and of the rhythms of life in rural Japan. He felt privileged to know that listeners found value in his music and his vision, and felt a responsibility to continue making music that explained that vision. Nakayama was the embodiment of Barshay’s outsider public man. He was not only committed to the nation, but as an outsider, his commitment was to the Japanese people and their culture before the state.
Beyond that, he endeavored, along with his mentor Shimamura, and other collaborators throughout his career, to educate the Japanese people. His first songs were hybrids of Japanese sounds and Western music theory, designed to sound both Japanese, to make his audience comfortable, and modern, to help them live the changes that were going on in Japanese society, politics, and industry. At the beginning of his career he established what would be his constant pattern: to create songs that communicated in sound what the words of his collaborators communicated in words: that it was possible to be both Japanese and modern. That Western ideas and techniques were desirable, and could be adapted to fit Japanese needs and to help Japanese society move forward, as he saw it, into the future.
Chapter 3
Katyūsha’s Song: Changing the Landscape of Popular Song, 1912-1924

Modern Japan bustled to the hum of Shimpei Bushi. Nakayama’s songs were part of Japan’s social conditions, not just a soundtrack playing in the background. To listen to Nakayama’s songs in chronological order is to hear brief, harmonious moments in the cacophony of Japan’s early twentieth-century history. Any song composed by Nakayama then provokes nostalgic reactions in Japan even today. When those songs were new they sounded modern, innovative, as stimulating as the streetcars and new multistory brick buildings of Ginza and Marunouchi. They called forth a historically situated sense of modernity. Nakayama, between 1912 and 1924, was one of the leaders in developing Japan’s popular song style. His music provided a blend of new and old, Western and Japanese that seemed to his listeners to bring meaning to their lives as they celebrated and struggled to cope with the ubiquitous changes occurring around them and the realities of their own economic conditions. He accomplished this through judicious use of new music composition methods that blended Western and Japanese sounds, and he made use of an astute leveraging of new technological developments as well. By developing a specific sound that became his own brand, he gradually improved the marketability of his music which made him wealthy and a central figure in Japan’s popular music industry.

Becoming a Professional
None of the music that Nakayama wrote in 1912 for the Geijutsuza production of Furusato (discussed in the previous chapter) became popular to any great degree. At this point, his music projects helped to pay the bills and gave him a chance to travel around Japan, a passion he
pursued later in life. But Furusato’s success provided him with an opportunity to work with Shimamura in a professional capacity, rather than as a mere servant. In a very real sense, Nakayama had grown up. His professional career was now underway, and his relationship with his mentor changed, as Nakayama was caught between his own sense of right behavior and his loyalty to Shimamura. He became caught in the middle of an affair between Shimamura and actress Matsui that quite literally destroyed her life, and can quite possibly be blamed for the untimely end of Shimamura as well. After his mentor, overworked, became ill and died, Matsui fell into depression and committed suicide. The emotional effect on Nakayama was profound, and inspired songs throughout his life.

During the show’s travels, Nakayama and Matsui, whose beauty and presentation of his songs would help to make him famous, became close friends. Matsui was a complex person. Her fame stemmed in part from her role as Nora in the 1912 production of Henrik Ibsen’s play A Doll’s House. This play, with its message of female competence and the legitimacy of women’s desires to play a greater role in the home and society, took Japan by storm. By the end of 1912, Matsui was a sex symbol to men, and a political guiding light to women. She was, however, a fragile and passionate person who attached herself to Shimamura with tragic results. Nakayama records in his notebook that Shimamura and Matsui began an affair as Furusato opened in Tokyo. Their attraction grew more serious as the show toured the country. They continued to meet each other clandestinely upon their return to Tokyo on July 23. Then Shimamura’s wife Ichiko 夫子 confronted Shimamura about the affair after finding a love letter to Matsui he had carelessly left on his desk. Nakayama’s budding musical career was bound up in this love triangle. He had warned Shimamura that he should break off the affair, but his influence, as Shimamura’s student and former servant, was limited. Ichiko eventually convinced Shimamura to leave Matsui, but he
was unable to keep to his promise, and Nakayama watched the family of his mentor begin to fall apart.¹ In 1913, Shimamura left home and began living in the office of the Geijutsuza with Matsui.

Nakayama told his brother that despite the pain and emotional torment it caused him, he had to follow his mentor.² He subsequently moved into new lodgings within commuting distance of both the Geijutsuza and his day job at Senzoku Elementary school. Since Shimamura was now single, his associations with Waseda Bungaku and the Bungei Kyōkai increased, and so did those of Nakayama. As Shimamura took on the management of the theater as well as that of the Bungei Kyōkai, Nakayama’s influence on Shimamura’s decisions increased, particularly in terms of the music and the musicians hired by the theater. He was Shimamura’s right hand man, always in the background, and his opinions on music as well as his willingness to take on many of the responsibilities of managing the theater gave him a kind of soft power within the group. His influence on the musical part of the Bungei Kyōkai was also great. Although the Bungei Kyōkai hired a number of new musicians and composers in 1913, the composition style and instrumentation followed the opinions of Nakayama. In this year, also, Nakayama produced and directed the first purely musical performance of the Bungei Kyōkai.³

The year 1913 saw increasing success for the Bungei Kyōkai and the theater where it resided. In a summer letter to his older brother in Nagano, Nakayama observed, “Last night and the night before we have more than one hundred in the audience, and we are playing to a full

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¹ Ibid., 299-300.
² Ibid.
³ Ibid., 302.
Nakayama reveled in his popular success. That same year he helped the music division of the Bungei Kyōkai put together a concert at the theater. Nakayama’s Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō classmates provided new arrangements of Western popular songs, or wrote new songs based on Western melodies. One of these was an adaptation of one of Kitahara Hakushū’s poems. This performance foreshadowed a long fascination Nakayama had with the possibilities of combining popular music and the ideas of the Japanese folk movement exemplified by the work of Yanagita Kunio and poet Hakushū.\(^4\)

In 1913, Shimamura began to put together a show that combined his interests in theater and in European, especially Russian, literature. Shimamura was committed to the modernization of Japan through the popularization of Western literature. He spoke both Russian and English, and translated a number of the great nineteenth-century Russian novels, and a few English ones as well, into Japanese. After the success of *Furusato*, he decided to take this passion a step further, and began the production of *Fukkatsu*, a musical version of Tolstoy’s *Voskresenie*, *Voskreseniye* (Воскресение), *Voskreseniye* (The Resurrection). Along with other protégés, he again asked Nakayama for his help with some of the music. Nakayama was happy to oblige. He set to work on a theme song for the heroine of *Fukkatsu*, to be played by none other than Matsui Sumako.

*Voskresenie*, *Voskreseniye* was Tolstoy’s last novel, published in 1899. It is the story of a young commoner woman, “not called by the gentle Katinka, nor yet by the disdainful Katka, but Katyusha, which stands sentimentally between the two.”\(^6\) Katyusha’s opposite, the male protagonist, is a baron, Dmitry Nekhlyudov. In the story, Katyusha, though born to a woman of

\(^4\) Ibid.
\(^5\) Ibid.
\(^6\) Leo Tolstoy, *Voskresenie, Voskreseniye (the Awakening (the Resurrection))* (New York: Street and Smith, 1900).

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low status, is raised by Nekhlyudov’s wealthy aunts, and works for them as a maid. Eventually she falls in love with Dmitry, who seduces her as he leaves for war. There is a child, and Katyusha, heart-broken, must leave her home. She wanders through the countryside and the cities, becoming ever more the ruined woman. Unable to avoid unwanted male attention wherever she goes, she eventually becomes a prostitute to survive and is arrested, accused of stabbing a man. Dmitry sees her again as he is performing his aristocratic duty as a juror in court. Recognizing that his offhand seduction of her is the cause of her ruined life, he comes to sympathize with her, and falls in love with her. Although he cannot prevent her conviction and imprisonment in Siberia, he follows her there, and through sincerity and hardship, is able to prove to her that his love is sincere.

The choice of this subject, given the moment and context of Shimamura’s life in 1912, seems almost too much of a coincidence. Whether he was aware of it or not, the themes of love and betrayal, sentimentality and ruined womanhood, were already running through his and Matsui’s lives at the time. In addition, Fukkatsu must have seemed a quintessentially modern play to Shimamura, and to Nakayama and Matsui as well. The seduction by a baron of a lowly peasant girl was not particularly new. The fact that the baron recognizes that his own actions may have set the girl’s tragedy in motion, and that he crossed class lines determined to marry her, was new, and reflected some of the themes of the Meiji period. The existence within Meiji Japan of a peerage no doubt made it possible for the audience to sympathize with Katyusha, and understand the position of Dmitry. The class differences in the play also framed a commentary on utility and desirability of individualism in a modern society. Japanese considered risshin-shusse, or self-improvement through education and hard work (à la Confucius and Samuel Smiles), to work best in the service of the state, rather than as directed only toward individual
ambitions. Both Nakayama and Shimamura were in complete agreement with this view. Anyone could aspire to serve the state, even from outside of the government apparatus. To do so was the very definition of success. Such success could be achieved through hard work and a good education at the right schools. The leveling of social status and opportunity, and the idea of society as a meritocracy were themes, that Japan’s government was working hard to promote, and Nakayama subscribed to this philosophy. His own career, such as it was, had consisted of working hard to get through school, then giving back to society through teaching. After the 1912 tour of Furusato, Nakayama found employment again as a music teacher in Tokyo, continuing his ‘legitimate’ work while writing popular songs for shingeki dramas with a social message. In other words, unlike the stereotype of a popular music composer who crassly chases market trends, Nakayama believed in the ideas he espoused. He tried to live the values that the play, and his songs, put forward.

Shimamura must have been committed to the project for these reasons as well as his interest in Russian literature. Воскресение, Voskreseniye is in three parts, each with more than thirty chapters. The adaptation of such a tome must have been a challenge. He had the advantage of having seen a similar musical adaptation of the novel while studying in England. He appears to have recognized after seeing the English play that one advantage of a musical is the way in which a few bars of the right song can minimize the need for exposition by evoking the emotion of a situation through music, and telling a large part of the story in the words of a song. This was a good choice for Shimamura as he began creating his play. He assigned to Nakayama the task of creating the theme song for the heroine, Katyusha, who would be played by Matsui. Agreeing to his request, Nakayama wrote “Katyusha no uta” (Katyusha’s song). After “Katyusha no uta,” the
fledgling record industry recognized the market value of popular songs and formed a new business strategy designed to make songs as popular as possible.

The fact that Fukkatsu was so popular surprised everyone involved with the Geijutsuza. More surprising yet was that its popularity appeared to be due to Nakayama’s melody, hauntingly presented by Matsui, who was not known for her vocal skills. Nakayama became famous overnight. His song became the first popular song, in a market sense, in Japanese history, selling 20,000 records and another 10,000 copies in sheet music form. It was so popular that patrons bought expensive record players just so that they could hear the recording. Fukkatsu was staged 400 times in 1914, and was if anything even more popular in rural theaters than it was in the cities.7 “Katyusha no uta” is still well known today. In 1935, writing the story of his life in an article for the social issue magazine Chūō kōron, Nakayama related that of his many songs, “Katyusha no uta” was still the best known, and most recorded.8

In 1915, returning to Tokyo after a visit to his mother’s deathbed, Nakayama’s longing for Nagano found an outlet in the nostalgic strains of “Gondora no uta.” Although he did not record it until 1923, “Gondora no uta” sold nearly as many records as “Katyusha no uta.” Its use of the yonanuki9 scale was widely imitated after its 1923 release on record, and more than “Katyusha no uta,” “Gondora no uta” became the model for the kayōkyoku of the 1920s. With this song, its innovations and style, supported by the great body of work that followed it, Nakayama established himself among the great popular music composers of Japan’s modern age. Along

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8 Nakayama, “Nakayama Shimpei Jiden,” 119.
9 See page 116.
with Soeda Azenbō and Koga Masao 古賀政男 (1904-1978), Nakayama’s music established a pattern within which popular songs developed in Japan throughout the twentieth century.

To listen to “Gondora no uta” on one’s phonograph in 1923 was to accept Japan’s new place in an interconnected, modern world. Shimamura commissioned the song from Nakayama in 1914, as part of the fifth season for his Geijutsuza company, whose tour was set to begin in the summer of 1915. It was to be the centerpiece song for a shingeki to be called Sono zen’ya その前夜 (The Night Before) based on a Turgenev novel of the same title. His lyricist collaborator for this song was poet Yoshii Isamu 吉井勇 (1886-1960), a literary contact of Shimamura through Waseda University.10 Yoshii was a member, along with Kitahara Hakushū and Ueda Bin 上田敏 (1874-1916), of the New Poetry Society founded by Yosano Tekkan 与謝野鉄幹 (1873-1935).

Before he could finish the song, Nakayama received a telegram that his mother Zō was ill, and likely to pass away. He hurried home to Nakano, despite the fact that his deadline for the song was near. Zō passed away on April 19, and the deadline loomed on the 26th of the same month.11 So he wrote the music for “Gondora no uta” on his way home from Nagano after burying his mother. The result, below, was a thoroughly modern song in that it broke with traditional ways of understanding youth, women, and romance.

\[
\text{Inochi mijikashi koiseyo otome} \\
\text{akaki kuchibiru asenumani} \\
\text{atsuki chishio hienumani} \\
\text{asu to iu hi ha naimono wo}
\]

\[
\text{Inochi mijikashi koiseyo otome} \\
\text{iza te wo torite ka no fune ne}
\]

Life is short, so fall in love young woman
red lips that never fade
hot blood that never cools
As if there is no tomorrow

Life is short, so fall in love young woman
take my hand we’ll go in that boat

10 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 305.
11 Ibid., 135.


Given the cultural cues common in 1915 Japan, the song is unequivocally Western. On the surface it reads innocuously. The singer is giving advice to a young woman (or all young women), suggesting that they enjoy the feeling of falling in love. Look a bit deeper, though, and the advice seems modern indeed. A majority of the words seem to be coming from a male perspective, describing the woman whom the singer is advising to go ahead and fall in love. The pattern of women singers voicing lyrics written by men is a long tradition in modern Japan. In a sense, women give voice to male fantasies about them. Such a double voice in popular songs can easily be seen in Nakayama’s first popular song, “Katyusha no uta,” in 1914. This is a result of the fact that the vast majority of Japan’s composers and lyricists were male. It is also related to the reality that the first popular singer, again for “Katyusha no uta,” Matsui Sumako, was an early female sex symbol: Women appreciated and revered her beauty and saw in her success the


possibility of a female public persona, while men desired her and saw in her beauty, her willingness to perform on stage, and her torrid affair with literary modernist Shimamura, a public performance of transgressive female sexuality that social and government strictures on proper female behavior repressed in everyday life. Nakayama’s composition accents this modern, romantic idea of an independent, sexually liberated woman. It was based on a yonanuki minor scale. When writing the music, he had in mind images of Venice, with gondoliers singing romantically as they poled along the canals. His musical vision matched the lyrical ideas expressed by Yoshii perfectly.  

With this song Nakayama and Yoshii did much more than just give voice to male projections of desire. They provided a bridge between pre-Meiji and modern conceptions of love and the female place within romantic relationships. In his first line Yoshii tore asunder a set of customs regarding the place of love within marriage that Japanese at the time took as “tradition.” At the same time he subtly referenced a kind of sexual tension that had been a part of Japanese literature from its very beginnings. The advice Yoshii and Nakayama give to a young woman – to allow herself to fall in love and by so doing enjoy her youth, was taboo, but not unheard of in Japanese literary tradition. What separates the references in “Gondora no uta” from those in earlier literature is its attempt to bring them to a mass audience through shingeki and eventually recording technology. In his lyric, Yoshii lists the things about her that are appealing to her lover, the person for whom the song speaks. Japanese literature commonly gives a bifurcated image of women as symbols of purity, beauty, and morality, and as temptresses whose carnal desires hide beneath the smooth silken surface of a kimono, tempting men to their doom. Much of the literature of the Meiji period sought to emphasize the first image, in response to a social context.

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in which the adoption of Western ideas on monogamy and the sinfulness of sex was a part of a larger attempt at modernization.

The customs surrounding what Japanese saw as proper female behavior in the company of men were a complex mixture of old and new. In Murasaki Shikibu’s 紫式部 (c. 948-c. 1014) The Tale of Genji, for example, even married couples rarely meet each other face to face, in order to maintain both the appearance and reality of probity. When they do meet beyond dividing screens, however, it is commonly a prelude to sexual encounters. Genji’s attitude is much like that which Nakayama and Yoshii espouse in the words to “Gondora no uta,” throwing caution to the wind in the belief that the momentary passion of love is worth the risk of a ruined reputation if publicly exposed. Given that The Tale of Genji is an eleventh century story of elites, we can certainly imagine that commoners in earlier periods saw each other, and had sexual encounters, according to different standards. Ihara Saikaku’s 井原西鶴 (1642-1693) The Life of An Amorous Woman looks at the fall of a noble woman from her high station to street-walking prostitute. In the process, Saikaku blames her inability to control her passions, especially for men, as the primary cause in her sad decline. Historically, the idea of a woman allowing emotions like love to get in the way of appropriate behavior was both condemned and recognized as natural behavior. Saikaku’s novel is a comedy with a moral, but the moral is ambiguous at best.

Compared to Natsume Sōseki’s 夏目漱石 (1867-1916) Kokoro こころ(1914), Saikaku is baudy. Natsume’s protagonist agonizes over the only available woman in the story, and the love triangle that ensues is chaste, though it leads to the central conflict in the book. Natsume’s protagonist is looking for a monogamous relationship, and eschews all other relationships in order to achieve that. Although he finds the results a bitter reward, this fact does not in the least suggest that the pursuit of multiple women for sexual encounters might have been a better choice.
Such an alternative is never even presented in the novel. Concerned with discussing the challenges of living in a modern, crowded urban landscape, Natsume’s protagonist is fully modern in his conception of the rules of male-female relationships. Like Natsume’s novel, Yoshii’s song in 1915 was not tongue-in-cheek, but unlike Natsume, it suggested that some personal satisfaction might accrue from impetuous romantic behavior. As a Taishō era song, “Gondora no uta” was modern in contrast with the ‘tradition’ of Meiji in that it encouraged young women to pursue their romantic passions and the men that were their objects.

This aligned with new conceptions of women. In the 1920s the culture of the modaan gaaru モダーンガール, or moga モガ (modern girl) came to dominate commentaries on urban life in newspapers and magazines. In 1911, only four years before the appearance of “Gondora no uta,” Hiratsuka Raichō 平塚らいてう (1886-1971) published the first edition of her magazine Seitō 青鞜 (Bluestocking), in which she advocated greater rights for women. Yosano Akiko 与謝野晶子 (1878-1942) wrote for Seitō and published poetry that advocated feminist goals. In 1920, Katō Shidzue 加藤加藤 シヅエ (1897-2001) met American birth control activist, Margaret Sanger while acting as her guide and interpreter during a 1922 visit to Japan. Afterward, Katō became Japan’s most outspoken advocate of birth control and women’s reproductive rights, taking her program from that advocated by Sanger in the United States. “Gondora no uta” debuted right into the middle of these controversies about the role of women in Japanese society.

It also objectified the women to whom it was talking. As noted earlier, large portions of the words focus on the way men might view a woman. The focus on individual body parts – lips, hair, and cheeks - objectifies females in the male gaze by substituting physical parts for the whole: “red lips that never fade,” “black hair that never fades,” “hot blood that never cools.”
Such lines describe the media phenomenon known as moga (modern girl) in her prime. When they penned “Gondora no uta” in 1915, Nakayama and Yoshii probably had no idea how prescient their song would be. They were simply describing a stereotypical modern young woman from their observations on the street and perhaps their own personal understanding of what was fashionable and desirable at the time.

By 1923, when “Gondora no uta” made it to record, the image it drew of a moga was uncanny. For Nakayama and Yoshii, “red lips” probably referred only to the flush of youth, but by 1923 it could easily have referred to the gaudy reds available in Western cosmetics. Lipsticks and rouges, Western clothing and haircuts changed the way that the public looked at women.15 Among many pre-Meiji social symbols, women wore kimono with furisode (long extensions to the kimono sleeve) to indicate their unmarried and presumably youthful status. In certain social situations where make-up was the norm, women whitened their faces and necks, and married women blackened their teeth. By contrast, the moga in “Gondora no uta,” is wearing red lipstick and is aware of her passions (“hot blood that never cools”). Kobayakawa Kiyoshi’s 1930 painting Tipsy captures a representative image of a moga, a Japanese analog of the character Daisy in The Great Gatsby. In Kobayakawa’s painting, a young woman with short, bobbed hair, secured with a long comb, red lips, a pearl necklace, and a polka dot sleeveless dress sits at a bar with a martini in front of her, staring unabashedly at the artist.16 Although the painting was a 1930 work, and Nakayama published “Gondora no uta” in 1915, the modern girls to which both song and painting referred were visible during the entire time span.

15 Silverberg, Erotic Grotesque Nonsense, 51-72.
In fact, if we can say that the _moga_ had “arrived” when Kobayakawa celebrated them in his painting, it is also true that such modern girls were in the making during the creation of Shimamura’s _Sono zen’ya_. In some ways, that was the point of the play as well as the song. Yoshii and Nakayama described elements of a new cultural ethos to which younger people found it easier to adjust than their parents and grandparents.

We can also read these descriptive lines as celebrating youth and the city. The impetuousness of “hot blood,” the desirability of “red lips,” and the beauty of “black hair,” are attractive to the male gaze that informs the words. The idea that such things never fade relates to the idea of their fading as a sign of aging, and the consequent decline in the power of passion to rule the heart. A young woman in the city is “like a boat adrift on the waves,” moving according to chance rather than choice. She is ruled by her passions, “as if there is no one else around.” The anonymity of a modern metropolis is here a part of its appeal. It is possible to imagine no one else around, lovers touching “hot cheek” to cheek in a city so full of people that one rarely encounters acquaintances. In such a situation, no one seems to be watching, and since performances of morality are socially meaningful only when there is an audience. In such a crowd, behaving in ways that are socially questionable is unlikely to be censured, or even noticed. In this song, Japan’s urbanization trumps the close relations of the countryside, where a couple cannot escape the gaze of others. When the people are a crowd their approbation has no impact and the performance of appropriate behavior becomes an issue of internal rather than external choice.

Such an idea of anonymity within a crowd appeared in the literature of the time. Natsume Sōseki’s novel _Sore kara_ (And Then), for example, ends with the protagonist riding a street car among a crowd of people he doesn’t know. His recognition that none of the riders has any
personal connection with the others is an attempt to show the problem of being an individual in a modern city. Natsume spoke about this directly in an address to Gakushūin University students in November of 1914. He called his talk “Watakushi no kojinshugi” 私の個人主義 (My Individualism). In it, he described his own journey from lost college graduate to man with a purpose. His aim was to encourage students to think of their own individual lives according to a three-fold definition of the individual. First, one must struggle to define one’s own path, avoiding the easy route of following the instructions and opinions of others. In this, Natsume specifically denounced older practices of attaching oneself to a group or school and blindly following the ideas espoused by that group. In other words, individualism comes from a refusal to subordinate oneself to others. Second, Sōseki explained that individuals must respect the right of others to find their own individuality by taking care not to impose their own opinions or desires upon them through the overbearing use of power or money. He seems to be saying that individualism is not about being selfish. Instead, individualism can only exist in the acceptance of all as self-actuated persons, none subordinated to any other. This is not about taking what one wants, but about being true to oneself. Third, on the subject of nationalism and the individual, Natsume explains that in times of crisis and war, individualism needs to be subordinated to the nation, and in times of peace, nationalism should give way to individual development. According to Natsume, individualism, if not taken too far, was a good thing. Nakayama and Yoshii’s song celebrated that individualism in the context of the adventure of getting lost in a city and lost in love.

However, Natsume’s comments shed light on the fact that the meaning of individualism, and how it should best be expressed, were common subjects of debate in the Taishō era. To

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many, the urban, modern environment seemed to encourage the development of a rampant form of individualism that subordinated all things at all times to the needs of the individual. Such an extreme, many, including Natsume, feared, could lead to a fracturing of society. Whether or not this fear was justified, by the 1920s most Japanese already lived in cities, and many felt that such huge populations without local support groups and family ties would lead to an ego-centeredness that would be expressed in a loss of respect for society, nation, family, and propriety.

The fact that Natsume’s speech occurred in front of a college students’ club is also relevant. There was a general fear that younger generations, who had limited experience with the cultural traditions and social relations that the modern world had torn asunder, were more susceptible to this disease of individualism as selfishness and many feared that such selfishness would be the downfall of Japan as a nation. The fact of the urban crow, mentioned in ways that both celebrate a new ability for the individual to act with limited social consequences, and critique of the lack of social support offered to individuals in the new urban environment, is a common theme in Taishō and Shōwa popular songs. In Nakayama’s 1929 song “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” 東京行進曲 (Tokyo March) lyricist Saijō Yaso’s 西條八十 (1892-1970) words celebrate the diversity of Tokyo geography and the way in which the possibilities for fun and romance also lead to sadness and despair. In his original, uncensored version of the song, Saijō even mentioned a “long haired Marxist boy,” as a reference to the variety of political and social choices available in Japan’s modern cities.18 Fetishizing youth in popular culture was a part of the modern urban society where modernity was centered in Taishō Japan. The new choices available to young people in a modern city provided both excitement and controversy. “Gondora no uta” captured that modern

disruption well in its evocation of a modern young woman looking for immediate gratification in an increasingly materialist society.

Of course a song is not a song without music. The music for “Gondora no uta” was as modern as Yoshii’s words. Music commentator and former lead vocalist for the 1950s group Dark Ducks (ダークダックス) Kisō Tetsu (喜早哲) wrote about the importance of Nakayama’s music in his 1983 book Uta no furusato shinkan うたのふるさと新刊 (New treatise on the origins of songs):

Even overlooking the fact that recording technology was in its infancy when Matsui Sumako recorded her songs,” he says, “we cannot think of her as a good singer. Her intervals were poor. However, we have to give credit to Nakayama Shimpei’s composition for making them such hits. Nakayama’s compositional skill under a broad umbrella from classical music to children’s songs captured the spirit of the short, romantic Taisho era with a precise grasp of the human heart.19

To start, the scale upon which Nakayama constructed “Gondora no uta” was a five-note yonanuki major scale. This was a thoroughly modern choice. It reflects Nakayama’s education at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, which was at the forefront of attempting to combine Japanese and Western musical systems in order to come up with a blend that reflected modern Japanese culture.20 Although Ury Eppstein’s work shows the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō was more successful in promoting Western musical knowledge than in creating a hybrid music, Nakayama appears to have imbibed the principle of blending and used it in his compositions. The yonanuki major scale retained a Western feeling and would have sounded to Japanese at the time very modern. The fact that he composed the song on a piano, and that recordings of it often included piano or guitar accompaniment, also lent the song a modern air. Bright, rhythmical, played on Western

19 Kisō Tetsu, Uta no furusato shinkan, quoted in ”Nichiroku 20 Seiki 1915,” 8.
20 Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 35.
instruments, sung according to Western principles, and in 1915, published on sheet music in Western musical notation that allowed for easier musical literacy, “Gondora no uta” was accessible to a large group of people not differentiated by membership in specific schools or instrumental/musical categories. It was, and sounded like, modern music for a modern mass society.21

Nakayama was intimately aware of the construction of Western and Japanese songs. Though artists such as Kikutaka Kengyō, and educators like Izawa Shūji invented the scales and musical structures he used for blending them, he was an innovator in the use of these musical elements to create popular songs. He recognized that music differs from culture to culture. He also recognized the dependence of the music on the words, and vice-versa, in a popular song. For a song to have meaning, and create a sense of nostalgia, the words alone were insufficient. Music was necessary to set an emotional tone. Nakayama made himself a master of how that music should sound, and how it should work technically.

The Development of New Popular Music Scales

Nakayama’s version of popular music for modern Japan involved building Japanese sounds on a Western technical structure. This was a vision consistent with the ideas of the founder of Nakayama’s alma mater, Izawa Shūji. Nakayama was not the first to try this, nor did it begin only with the shōka created by Izawa and Luther Whiting Mason. Art musicians, traditionally on the opposite end of the field of musical production from popular music composers such as Nakayama, were trying similar things in the Meiji period, before Nakayama wrote “Katyusha no uta” or even ventured to Tokyo. Art musicians, recognizing a need to appeal to a new middle class market or risk the destruction of their careers and perhaps their art, began to Westernize as early as the 1880s. To understand how this experimentation changed Japanese music as a whole, a slightly technical discussion of the structure of modern Japanese music is necessary.

According to Japanese musicologist Koizumi Fumio 古泉文夫 (1927-1983), “[a] standardized theory of a tonal system throughout Japanese traditional music has never quite been established.” Koizumi went on to say that Japanese traditional music can be explained by an expanded definition of a tetrachord. In its original Greek usage, a tetrachord “referred to an intervallic succession of four pitches in descending order.” In order to describe traditional Japanese tonal structures, Koizumi expanded this definition to encompass a three tone structure in which there are two kakuon 各音 (nuclear tones) that can be seen as tonic. In Japanese music, there are frequently two tonic notes, rather than the single tonic most common in Western tonal structures. These kakuon are a perfect fourth apart, and they bracket an intermediate tone “which

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23 Ibid., 74.
takes various positions from a minor second to a major third over the lower *kakuon*.”24 This intermediate tone can include any pitch between those half-steps, and varies depending upon the style, or school, of music. Thus, as Koizumi puts it, “it is lower than the minor second in some schools of *sōkyoku* and *shamisen*, while it is higher than the minor second in *gidayū* (a Tokugawa period style of Shamisen music indigenous to the Osaka area) and some folk songs, all to varying degrees.”25 This varying tonal structure is actually what gives each school of Japanese traditional music a somewhat distinctive sound, and what distinguishes it from other forms of music. According to Koizumi, this expanded definition of tetrachord tonal structures can be used to describe other non-Western music tonal systems, including Indian and Arabic music, as well as Japanese. So although, according to Linda Fujie, traditional Japanese music uses as its foundation a chromatic scale of twelve half-step tones similar to the tonal structure of Western music, its method of organizing those tones has been different.26

Traditionally, Western music makes ordered sense out of this natural tonal structure by placing seven notes in an ascending order of full and half tonal steps known as a scale. In a “major scale,” these notes are each located a full tonal step from each other except in the cases of the interval between the third and fourth, and seventh and eighth tones, which are a half step apart. A major scale starting with C would include the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, B, then C to make an octave. More simply, this is the result of pressing every ivory key on the piano in ascending order, from middle C to the C an octave above. It is also frequently approximated in singing with the familiar do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do pattern. Sousa marches are famous for their major scale

24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
sound. In an especially common Western “minor” scale, known as the “natural” minor scale, the pitch of both the third and sixth notes is lowered by one-half step, or one semi-tone. The C natural minor scale would include the notes C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb, C. The dropping of the pitch for these notes creates a different feel that often sounds melancholy in Western cultural contexts.

By contrast, most traditional Japanese musicians began their compositions with scales of five notes rather than seven, built with the tetrachordal structures discussed above. As Koizumi noted, combining two disjuncted tetrachords of the same kind together made an octave. This system accurately described the five-note miyakobushi onkai 都節音階 (urban song scale), and organizational system named by music theoretician and shakuhachi master Uehara Rokushirō 上原六四郎 (1848-1913). The miyakobushi onkai combined two three-note tetrachords, each with an intermediate tone located a minor second above the lower kakuon, in ascending order to make an octave. This made the upper kakuon in the first tetrachord lose its function, with the lower kakuon of the second tetrachord becoming the center of the bracket. So a miyakobushi onkai starting with C includes the notes C, Db, F, G, Ab, and then C. In koto tuning, the primary tonal structure was this miyakobushi onkai, also frequently called the in onkai 陰音階 (yin scale).

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28 In is the Japanese pronunciation of the Chinese character for yin, the half of yin/yang associated with darkness, and gendered female. Likewise Yo is the Japanese pronunciation of the character for yang, associated with lightness and gendered male. The characters for these two scales are almost always written and spoken about in a pair, as opposites. In is the character for "moon" or “in shadow” and yo means to be in the sunshine. As is often the case in Japanese, the meaning of these characters represents the sounds of the scales, rather than their technical musical characteristics. The in scale sounds much darker, forlorn, as if in shadows. The yō scale is much brighter because of its major scale traits. This is similar to Western cultural perceptions of of minor scales, which correspond to sadness and darkness, and major scales which sound bright. Of course, in either case these perceptions are culturally driven. Minor scales and In scales are not sad in an absolute sense, for example. What is important here is the correspondence in perceptions. To manufacture a five-tone In scale from tetrachords typical of Japanese folk songs based on tones that match those in a minor scale on a Western piano is to combine combine the foundations of
The popular rural version of this scale was what Uehara called the five-note *inakabushi onkai* 田舎節音階, or *yō onkai* 阳音階 (country, or yang scale). The *inakabushi onkai*, was characterized by a combination of two tetrachords whose intermediate tone is a minor third above the initial *kakuon*, thus giving a scale, starting with C, that includes C, E♭, F, G, B♭, and C, where the defining interval is the perfect fourth separating C and F. This scale coincides with tetrachord constructs identified by Koizumi as *minyō* 民謡 (folk) style, and so the *inakabushi onkai* is also known as the *minyō* scale.²⁹ It is therefore possible to approximate the sounds of traditional styles of musical organization in Japan by using scales based on these theoretical constructs.

In practice, the tones Japanese music used were slightly different from their Western counterparts. Kikutaka Kengyō, discussed in Chapter 2, altered the *miyakobushi onkai* to sound more Westernized by changing the pitches of his koto tuning by one half step for each note in order to approximate Western pitch. As noted earlier, he did this to increase the popularity of his genre and, by attracting bigger audiences, also attract more students. According to Phillip Flavin, Kikutaka was an Osaka musician and a member of the *Tōdōshiki Yashiki* 当道職屋敷, a self-governing organization of blind musicians supported during the Tokugawa period by the Shōgunate. After the Meiji Restoration the new leaders of Japan promulgated an edict known as the *Mōkan haishirei* 盲官廃止令 in 1871 that dissolved this organization. Kikutaka was one of many musicians in the Osaka area who suddenly lost their stipends. Kikutaka and his group of Osaka musicians were in a unique situation in the sense that, far from Tokyo, they did not feel as bound by the traditions of the elite members of the guild who lived in the capital. Osaka, a large musical structure that in both Japanese and Western culture are perceived as evoking sadness and a dark feeling. This correspondence is in part why Nakayama's songs worked as hybrids of Western and Japanese music.

city with a history of trade, was both capable of supporting them through commerce, and far enough from the capital that they could experiment without fear. This combination of a need for income and distance from the center of the musical universe encouraged Kikutaka and his cohort to experiment with koto music by changing the scale for the specific purpose of appealing to the public of Osaka.\(^{30}\) This is consistent with the preferences that Sonobe Saburō ascribes to the “masses” in Japan during the first three decades of the twentieth century:

> In the Meiji Period imported European culture was expensive. The masses could only afford to purchase inexpensive entertainment and ornament. This meant that they only bought what they could comfortably buy, but their tastes gravitated toward Western things.\(^{31}\)

So for musicians like Kikutaka, to attract larger audiences meant to some degree associating their music with Western things. Making it sound more Western was a natural first step, and one that Nakayama took as well.

Thus Nakayama’s use of the \textit{yonanuki} scale allowed him to communicate emotional messages within his melodies with which Japanese were culturally familiar, while using Western musical tones, notation, and composition techniques. His music was a hybrid of Japanese and Western systems. This is clear in the use of the terms \textit{in} and \textit{yō} for traditional scales, which became the foundation of Westernized \textit{yonanuki} concepts in Nakayama’s melodies. \textit{In} and \textit{yo} correspond to the division of all things into opposites, \textit{yin} and \textit{yang}, common in Chinese philosophy. \textit{Yang}, the character that corresponds to \textit{yō} in Japanese, is associated with light, the sun, spring, south, and maleness, while \textit{in (yin)} is associated with the moon, autumn, north, and femaleness. The names of the scales are in a way descriptive of the sound patterns they produce. The \textit{in} scale with its two half steps gives a dark, sensual texture, while the \textit{yō} scale is brighter,

\(^{30}\) Flavin, “Meiji Shinkyoku,” 106.

\(^{31}\) Sonobe, \textit{Enka Kara Jazu E No Nihonshi}, 78.
more straightforward sounding. To an ear used to hearing them in a Japanese cultural context, these scales signified emotions that correspond with Western cultural reactions to minor and major scales.

Nakayama was thus a part of a general trend in the evolution of Japanese music. He found ways to reach a broader audience than the art musicians could by universalizing Japanese music – making it Western, but in a Japanese style that appealed to popular tastes. Nakayama’s method of melding the two musical systems relied on simple songs, simple structures, and basic, familiar sound patterns. This made his songs easy to remember and sing. They reflected general social trends of his time, and even indicated the direction in which things might change, leading his audience toward new ways of thinking about their lives and society. His songs were formulaic, but not shallow. The formulaic nature of his songs was in part what gave them their appeal. It became his brand.

*Shimpei Bushi: A Hybrid Popular Music*

Japanese popular music of the early twentieth century was Western music that sounded something like certain traditional Japanese songs. Composers including Nakayama, despite their training in Western music theory, recognized the importance of familiarity with traditional Japanese styles among their audiences. As discussed above, in order to accommodate this, they wrote modified Western songs. First, they removed two notes (the fourth and the seventh) from the Western seven-note scale. This created a five-note scale with a “Japanese” feel. This type of hybrid scale, developed by Meiji-era music education leader, Izawa Shūji, came to be known as the *yonanuki* scale (scale with the fourth and seventh tones removed). The *yonanuki* scale uses Western musical tones and notation, but Izawa developed it from the *miyako miyakobushi* and
gagaku scales, discussed above, that musicians used in older Japanese music traditions.\textsuperscript{32} It carries the melancholy sound of both of the Japanese scales and the Western minor scale, yet, in a major mode, it can sound bright and promising as well.\textsuperscript{33}

Modifying Western scales to fit Japanese preferences, Nakayama also used a Western bar system and five-line music staff notation for his compositions. The staff notation system provided a universal musical notation. He could thus write music for all instruments, and in any genre, Japanese or Western. Because of its foreign origin, the staff notation system was easier for musicians to accept than any result of attempts to use indigenous notation systems of the various Japanese styles. The addition of the bar system on the musical staff made rhythm in these new songs regular and predictable, making the rhythmic structure much more Western.

The first tune for which Nakayama successfully combined Western and Japanese musical styles was “Katyusha no uta,” published in 1914. Matsui Sumako’s voice is the only sound on the record. The song uses Western musical organization, but overlays it with Japanese visual, poetic, and musical aesthetics.\textsuperscript{34} The key is F major. While Japanese music obviously has methods of categorizing tonal organization groups, it does not include the method of identifying those groups through key signatures as they appear on Western style staff notation. Nakayama’s use of the key signature and the staff notation system, including time signatures, clef marks, bars, and an eight-bar melodic theme is evidence that he organized the song according to Western musical principles. “Katyusha no uta” also uses a slightly altered version of the yonanuki scale

\textsuperscript{32} Galliano, Yōgaku, 36, 106.

\textsuperscript{33} It is important to note here that a five-note scale of this type is very common in rock and country music in the West, and in the music of many other cultures, as well. The yonanuki scale is not in any way uniquely Japanese. The key to its success is that it organized a Western tonal system in such a way that Nakayama’s songs could approximate the way that older Japanese music sounded in certain contexts. This made the use of the Western scale convenient for Nakayama, and easy for Japanese to accept as an innovation.

\textsuperscript{34} Shimpei Nakayama, Katyusha No Uta (Katyusha’s Song) (Kyoto: Orient Records, 1914), A757.
that helps it to fit more easily within Western musical rules.\textsuperscript{35} Nakayama wrote all of his songs in this Western staff notation system, but he tried hard to overlay the Western structure with a Japanese sound to give his listeners something familiar along with the new sounds.\textsuperscript{36} He was successful with this practice.

"Gondola no uta" symbolized Japan's modern coming of age. The red lips and hot heart of the song's subject were signs of maturity and independence for young women. In much the same way, the spirit of Taisho was defined in part by a feeling of separation from the modern tutelage of the West that defined Fukuzawa Yukichi's Meiji, the young woman in the song was ready to step out in the world and find her own way. Nakayama's popular tune explained the new social reality in a way that newspaper articles and essays could not. Sales of sheet music and records suggest that he struck a nerve.

He also became financially independent. In letters home, Nakayama wrote for the first time about a cash surplus and the possibility of repaying his brother for years of financial support.\textsuperscript{37} He had enough money to self-publish songs, and to assist with family expenses as well. In May of 1915 Nakayama sent cash to help with expenses for his mother Zō's shijūkunichi 四十九日 (forty-ninth day) ceremony at a Nakano Buddhist temple marking the progress of her spirit toward Buddhahood.

In a coincidental way, Nakayama's career paralleled the trajectory of Japan's modernization. Beginning with the Meiji period, The Japanese state went from an acceptance of Western

\textsuperscript{35} Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku," 29. My analysis of the musical content of Katyusha and most of the other Shimpei songs used the information available in this catalog of songs.

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 29-279. Of the 1,718 songs I analyzed in my research, none were written in Japanese notation sytems. Some included a shamisen or koto notation in the sheet music, usually on the back page.

\textsuperscript{37} Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 305-07.
technology and ideas through a process of adaptation to an attempt, before the Second World War, to recover a sense of Japanese identity. By the 1920s, Japanese struggled with the problem of whether to be modern necessarily meant also to be Western; or whether they could create a Japanese modernity. Nakayama’s musical development followed this course as well. In his education and early work, Nakayama adopted Western music. For the rest of his professional life he worked to adapt it to suit the changing needs of Japanese culture. The songs he created between 1912 and 1952 became the songs of a new industrial society. He chronicled the struggles of factory workers, of rural residents struggling in a newly urban-centered economy. He wrote about nostalgia for the culture of the past and the countryside. He created odes to the past and melodies that welcomed the future. The songs of Nakayama Shimpei helped to put in context the changes that his mass of middle- and working-class consumers witnessed in their daily lives. From 1912 to 1924, he created the pattern for popular songs that would last into the post-war period.

Market-leading Practices

During Nakayama’s professional lifetime, perhaps the change that had the biggest impact on popular music was the new industrial society. Meiji changes in economics, law, and social status disrupted the lives of musicians, and musicians reacted to that change in creative ways. As with many musicians and composers of his time, capitalism and methods of mass production technologies increasingly influenced his music. Nakayama was an innovator, using ideas and techniques already in existence to create something new, both as art, and as business. He not only combined Western and Japanese ways of organizing music to make a hybrid style of popular song, he also married that to recording technology to make those songs easily available
to a large and growing audience. Because of the nature of record-making, Nakayama also maintained an ever-greater degree of control over the way his songs sounded. By doing this, he created a brand: Nakayama’s records sounded the way his audience expected them to sound. His success is still apparent. It seems few could read the music market or predict its future direction more exactly than Nakayama Shimpei. 38 For Joseph A. Schumpeter, this was the essential part of what he called the “creative response” to change, which is “whenever the economy or an industry or some firms in an industry do…something that is outside of the range of existing practice,” in response to change. Nakayama fits this description precisely. By using innovative recording technology and ideas effectively, Nakayama established and led the market for popular music in Japan. We could say that he had his finger on the pulse of consumers of Japanese popular songs. He rarely failed to deliver a product that they loved. He did this by paying attention to the conditions in which his audience lived. He had a subtle understanding of the changes going on in Japanese society. Through shrewd manipulation of sound and words his music shepherded, rather than reflected, those social transformations.

The Composer and the Audience

Most historical studies of popular music concentrate on the words to songs. They use methods related to literary and historical research, analyzing the poem vocalized along the melody line in order to understand the meaning of the entire song. This method is logical. Words are accessible, and our society has a long tradition of analyzing texts. However, analysis of a song must account for both the lyrics and the music; the music is dependent upon its means of production and distribution. This makes such an analysis a historical project. A song is a

gestalt, rather than a series of discreet pieces connected by a thin membrane of rhythm and melody. It is more than the sum of all of its pieces, especially in the period after the 1878 invention of sound-recording technology. Significantly, no one knew this better than Nakayama Shimpei. Nakayama understood the unity of music and words by the time he arrived at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō to learn piano and composition. There, in 1910, he began writing a regular column, “Shinshiron,” for Ongaku (Music), the school newspaper:

Shinshiron was characteristically a critical opinion piece on songs starting with writing about their art. He would begin by discussing a song first in terms of the merits and constraints of its form, then discuss the constraints of its lyrics, then tie these two into existing songs to discuss whether it could sing about real emotions.³⁹

Nakayama recognized early in his professional life that a song tells a story through its music as much as its words. Many of his listeners recognized this as well. A young assistant cook, Yoshikawa Sanekatsu 吉川志勝 (1924-?), on board a Hokkaido crab boat that plied the waters off Northwestern Kamchatka, told the Asahi Shimbun of his memories of popular songs during the 1930s. Joining the crew at age fifteen, Yoshikawa was terribly homesick and had to deal with abuse from his shipmates, who were never pleased with his cooking.

At times when this happened what helped me was a man nicknamed “the Baron”. I do not know if it is true, but I later heard this person was the illegitimate child of a real baron. “The Baron” used to walk along with me, and under the 20-meter-long fishnets, would play “Kokyō no machi” [on his harmonica] for me. The sound of the harmonica over the ocean on a clear night, calmly flowing past the boat - not just once or twice -it was always comforting. (Even with) a gray sky, or snow coming: hearing that melody brought warm memories every time.⁴⁰

Yoshikawa responded with nostalgia to the music, even with no words. This makes it plain that songs can have meaning without direct reference to the accompanying lyrics.

³⁹Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 295-300.
Music is a flexible expressive medium. By itself a tune can signify whatever meaning the listener desires. However, when a lyric is set to music, the two parts of the song anchor each other. Music gives emotional depth and immediacy to the words, while the words give a specific context to the music. In Yoshikawa’s case, the melody of the song brought back personal memories linked both to the song’s words and to events experienced while listening to it. Contextualized readings of songs can help make our understanding of the way in which songs influenced experiences much more profound. Testimony from people like Yoshikawa, who heard popular songs when they were new, is particularly interesting. Nearly all of them remember where they were, and most remember a combination of personal history and current events that provided the context in which they heard the song for the first time. In another account, Umematsu Kōzō 梅松公三 (1919-?) talks about listening repeatedly to a popular song called “Namiki no ame” 並木の雨 (Rain in a Roadside Grove) on a wind-up portable phonograph while on Sumatra at the end of the Second World War.

As the war ended, our unit was stuck for the time in the suburbs of a quiet town called Rahat in a rubber tree grove on Sumatra.

Immediately at the end of the war we soldiers were feeling depressed. We received no information and had no idea what would happen to us, rumors were flying and some soldiers ran away while a few committed suicide.

Around the beginning of September, we received some vague information that it was unclear when we would return to Japan, but at the least it would be three years, and at the most five years, during which time we would have to stay on Sumatra. Of course, supplying us with food was unthinkable, so we would have to start our own garden and with our own hands grow our food, according to instructions from our commanding officer.

Even though it was called military service, the war was over, our army life became very different from what it had been before. We just worked in the garden so we could eat, wondering when we could return to our country, worrying about our families and thinking of home.

Then one day, one of my friends brought back a record player that he said he’d gotten from a civilian trading company employee who was going to Palembang because he’d been called up to Japan.
It was a thin square-shaped portable record player with its own case, and when we opened the lid there was a small tin can with a record stylus inside, and one record.

That one record had “Namiki no ame” on the A side, and on the B side, “Ippai no kōhii kara” [After one coffee]. Everyone knew them, and we quickly played the record. A quiet sōkyoku, then Miss Columbia’s beautiful voice flowed from the speaker. Everyone has their ears open, listening. Everyone is remembering their peaceful furusato, reflecting on their lives before becoming soldiers. We listened over and over again.

Right at that time, Sumatra’s rainy season had begun. Day after day the rain fell in sheets. On many days we could not go out to the garden. On those do-nothing days we would spend the whole day in our little barracks made of Nipa palm fronds.

We patched our uniforms and, though I don’t know where they found them, some people read magazines and some played shōgi among other things. During that time, someone played “Namiki no ame” on the record player over and over, but now one said, “stop that noise.” The shōgi players and those fixing their uniforms all sang quietly along with the record. The song got into our heads, and before we knew it we had learned it all.

After that, we were repatriated much earlier than we expected. One year after the end of the war, in August of 1946 we boarded a ship in Palembang’s harbor and soon returned to Japan. But we left the record player and that one record with another unit in Palembang who did not yet know when they would be leaving for home.

There’s no reason that I should know what happened to that one record player and the “Namiki no ame” record but I will never forget that scratchy sound, those words and that tune, on that old record player in our barracks in a rubber tree grove during a rain shower.41

“Miss Columbia” was a stage name for Futaba Akiko 二葉 あき子 (1915-2011). She received her stage name because she was Nippon Columbia’s premier singer in the 1940s.

Umematsu writes that though it was repetitive, they never got tired of listening to the song. For him, rainy days always brought back memories of that song, and of the hope for a new world that he and his fellow soldiers embraced on Sumatra in 1945. The detail in this memory is extraordinary. As with Yoshikawa, it was the music and the voice of Futaba Akiko, not just the lyric that held the listeners in its spell. From Yoshikawa and Futaba’s memories, the importance of understanding the connection between musical sound and historical context is plain.

Since Nakayama did not write his own lyrics, he collaborated with poets and lyricists from various places, most of whom had successful careers outside of the music industry. For Nakayama, the lyric was a part of the song, and the song had to reflect the meaning in the words, but the opposite was also true. He did not have a standard way of working with song lyrics. In some cases, as in the famous case, discussed below, of “Sendō Kouta” (1921), he wrote the song to fit a lyric that he had received fully formed. In others, he wrote a song and a lyricist wrote words to fit. In most cases, he wrote his songs in a fully collaborative way, simultaneously writing music while his lyricist wrote the words. In all cases in which Nakayama travelled to find material for songs, he brought with him either Noguchi Ujō 野口雨情 (1882-1945) or Saijō Yaso, his two most frequent partners, and a singer, most often either Satō Chiyako 佐藤千夜子 (1897-1968) or Fujiwara Yoshie 藤原義江 (1898-1976). They worked out most of the songs together as they travelled, and often debuted them while on the road.\footnote{Nakayama, *Nakayama Nenpu*, 333-40.} The Nakayama sound: the instruments he favored and his compositional style always became the defining part of every song. It is for this reason that his songs reached a level of ubiquity so great that they merited their own genre classification, over and above the genres of ryūkōka, shin min’yō, or shōka for which he wrote them.

Western Music with Japanese Characteristics: Instrumentation

As mentioned earlier, the use of the *yonanuki* scale was a practical change that allowed for a universal notation system, and provided the opportunity to write music for various instruments, Western and Japanese alike. Nakayama adopted it for use in his songs for similarly practical
reasons. He originally wrote his songs for Shimamura’s plays. As part of a project to popularize
European literature, they had to reflect a Western aesthetic, but be palatable to Japanese cultural
tastes. To do this for his plays, Shimamura carefully embellished Western art with Japanese
aesthetics. He was aware of the fact that he was introducing foreign ideas, and did not wish to
waste his opportunity to give Japanese the great value that he perceived in European literature by
forcing it on them all at once. Likewise, Shimamura frequently charged Nakayama to keep a
Japanese element in his songs.

One of the best examples of this adding of Japanese instrumentation was Nakayama’s
second major success. “Gondora no uta” is another excellent example of this trend. He wrote the
song soon after his success with “Katyusha no uta,” finishing it in 1915. “Gondora no uta” was a
sad sounding melody. Matsui Sumako started the song by talking rather than singing. A
shamisen and a kokyū 鼓弓 provide accompaniment. Nakayama built the song on a yonanuki
scale. However, he made it sound Japanese with the instrumentation and singing style. The song
became his second big seller, and this time it became the foundation for a movie based
specifically on the song: This was perhaps the first instance in Japan of a joint marketing
program in which distribution companies used movie and song each to amplify the sales of each
other.43

For Nakayama, one of the most important tools in composition was instrumentation. The
choice of instruments indicated to the audience whether the song was to be interpreted as
traditional or modern, Japanese or Western. He applied this tool carefully, and with specific
goals in mind. As noted above, he created “Gondora no uta” on a Western musical foundation,
but intended it to sound like a Japanese folk song. He did this by adding Japanese

instrumentation and vocal styles. All Shimpei Bushi involved this kind of combination, regardless of genre. This placed him in a specific position vis-à-vis other musicians of his time. He made music that was modern, which sounded Japanese, and was accessible to non-expert listeners. He chose words for his songs that referenced issues about which Japanese of his time were concerned. Although Nakayama’s songs were apolitical, they addressed the concerns of common people by talking about specific (albeit fictional) cases of individuals caught up in events and common situations of their time. He used instruments to convey much of this message, connecting Japanese to their own past as they struggled with a present that they could not always understand, the burden of which they could not easily bear.

Recorded Sound: The Heart of Popular Music

To understand Nakayama’s sound, music theory and instrumentation are not enough. It is also important to discuss the technology of recording and the influence it had on musical choices and sounds. Nakayama was composing in a changing technological context throughout his life. The technology of recording sounds was itself developing quickly. Its increasing complexity was a part of an ever-greater set of impacts and implications for the use and meaning of the sound recorded as well. So Nakayama wrote according to the opportunities and constraints created by the changing context of his times and by the changing context of sound-recording and distribution technology.

For historians, the terms “record” and “recording” refer to documents that to one degree or another capture events as they happened. Thinking in these terms can lead one to believe that musical recordings give us a picture of how music sounded at the time of the recording. In fact, this is not an accurate assumption. Since the technology for recording sound in the early
twentieth century could not be used in a live situation, and included other constraints that made recording difficult, artists, who often become more creative when there are limits or barriers to the realization of their artistic vision, had to come up with novel solutions to the recording problem. In other words, because of the technological constraints placed upon artists in early recording studios, the simple act of recording a song required a creative recreation of musical organization and sound. This means that music recording in the twentieth century, far from giving us an indication of what music sounded like at the time, is really the beginning of experiments in new forms of composition.44

After 1877, Thomas Edison’s phonograph superseded sheet music as an effective distribution method. This invention changed the meaning of popular music, and the method for distribution music, entirely. No longer was music dependent upon musicians and musical instruments for its performance. Even player pianos were instruments. A piano roll was useless without the piano to give it sound. If one had a phonograph, though, no musical expertise was required at all to reproduce a song.45 Recorded songs quickly became the most important way to get music (particularly performances) into the hands of large numbers of people.

This trend reached Japan almost as soon as it began in the United States. In 1878, reading about Edison’s invention, an English physics professor working in Japan built a phonograph himself.46 Just as in the United States, this changed music in Japan forever. Like much of what occurred in the Meiji era, music became a part of Japan’s industrialization, and the music

44 Millard, America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound, 115-35. Millard gives wonderful examples of the use of horns for recording, explaining that, because of the development of the record player for business purposes, it was better at recording the human voice than musical instruments, so singers and whistlers were popular recording subjects in the first couple of decades of recorded sound.

45 Hosokawa, Aesthetics of Recorded Sound.

industry became oriented toward a mass-market. During the period after 1878, the recording of music gradually became an accepted medium for the archiving of musical material, and then, after 1905, for its distribution. Each phase in the development of music dissemination changed the processes of creation and consumption in important ways.

The first chikuonki (gramophones) arrived in Japanese stores in the 1890s, and the first rokuonki (record players) in about 1905. Orient Records made the first recordings of “Katyusha no uta” to suit this kind of record player. By 1920, electronic recording technology became the standard. The difference between the first mechanical record players and electronic recording technology was a broad gulf in terms of sound quality and texture, though the terminology itself is closely related. The mechanical record players had to be hand cranked. This was the case with both the recording systems, and the playback systems. This meant that recording and playback were subject to the variations in rotational speed produced both by changes in the crank speed of the individual doing the recording, and the difference between the speed(s) at which a record had been made, and at which it was cranked by the listener. The use of a spring system to wind up and store energy removed some of the variation in speed, making recording and playback more consistent on a machine-to-machine basis, but that still left differences in the speed created by the spring systems in different machines. In addition, the hand crank had a tendency to be fast when fully cranked up, and then slow down as the spring lost tension. In 1925, phonograph makers applied electric motors to recording systems, though until 1930 these did not become a feature of most home phonographs. Electric motors finally

47 Sonobe, Enka Kara Jazu E No Nihonshi, 57.
48 Millard, America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound, 139-47.
49 Ibid., 47.
removed most of this differential in recording speed. Electric motors also standardized rotation speeds between recording and playback machines. That made songs much easier to listen to because it replaced the old hand-crank system with an automated process.\textsuperscript{50}

Recording studios originally depended on horns to collect sound. Recording studios placed a number of horns in the wall at various locations inside the room. Since there was no electronic mixing technology, all the members of a musical group had to be present at the time of recording, and each take was essentially a live performance.\textsuperscript{51} The recording technology complicated matters for musicians and producers because of the need to place instruments within the studio in relation to each other and the sound intake horns such that loud brass instruments and drums did not overpower the voices and quieter instruments. This changed the instrumentation from live performances, required musicians to modulate volume in a way that suited the studio, and forced engineers to mix sound through spatial management of the players. Since this rarely was the same as the band’s usual stage arrangement, the music sounded differently from rehearsals and live performances.

For these “live” recordings, studios rarely made multiple takes. If they did so, they made only a few. Because of the mechanical nature of the technology, wax (and later acetate), discs or cylinders had to be cut directly during the recording process. Particularly with the 78-RPM technology, a single disc had enough space to hold only about three-and-a-half minutes of sound. Each take required its own live performance, and its own disc. Styli used to scratch the vibrations

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{51} Kraft, \textit{Stage to Studio: Musicians and the Sound Revolution 1890-1950}, 61-62.; Rick Kennedy and Randy McNutt, \textit{Little Labels, Big Sound: Small Record Companies and the Rise of American Music} (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999), 2-19. Although Kennedy and McNutt are talking about the nascent recording industry in the United States (particularly in this case Gennett Records), the limits of recording technology was universal. In fact, Japan's earliest records were frequently recorded in New York at Victor's studios because of a lack of adequate studio space in Japan.
into the discs wore out quickly. Recording during the mechanical period was a expensive proposition, and produced low-fidelity recordings both in terms of sound quality, and in terms of getting an accurate representation of what the musicians would create if they were in a live setting. The copying of the wax discs onto metal masters was also expensive, prone to error, and reduced sound fidelity.\textsuperscript{52}

Nakayama used this mechanical process to record his earliest songs, as it was the only method available in Japan or elsewhere until the 1920s. This explains to some degree the limited instrumentation and solo voices of “Katyusha no uta” and “Gondora no uta.” These limitations seem to have made a deep impression with Nakayama. Even after the advent of electronic recording in the 1920s, his compositions remained sonically simple, and had the quality of a first-take recording.

Electronic recording technology developed over time. Alexander Graham Bell, by 1916 built electronic microphones that improved recordings, reduced the physical limitations of studios, and changed music again.\textsuperscript{53} Studios now put microphones on most instruments in the studio, along with the singer. This eliminated or at least modulated the ability of some instruments to dominate others because engineers could control the volume of each microphone independently. Musicians could then position themselves according to their usual performance positions. In these positions, they could hear the music in the way they normally did in performance. This microphone technology made possible new vocal styles that could not work in

\textsuperscript{52} Millard, \textit{America on Record: A History of Recorded Sound}, 45-48. The key problem, as Millard describes it, in finding a way to mass produce recordings was to find a way to make metal copies of the original recording that also retained high fidelity. The techniques varied, but eventually both the Edison and Berliner methods settled on variations of recording on a wax cylinder, then coating the cylinder with fine metallic dust, to which more metal could be electroplated, creating a negative copy of the grooves. This metal negative copy of the master recording was then used to “press” wax and later shellac and vinyl records in large numbers.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 139-44.
either live or recorded performances prior to electronic microphones. Crooners, such as Bing Crosby, developed their style because they were able to sing softly, close to the microphone, and amplify what would otherwise have been inaudible sounds with this technology. With multiple microphones came the ability to adjust volume for each microphone by the use of early sound mixing boards.

This uneven development of recording and playback technology had important implications for Nakayama’s compositions. Regardless of the better sound quality provided by microphones and eventually by the consistency of recording and playback speed made possible with electric turntable motors, his recordings were still limited by the need for all musicians to be in the studio together. The ability to record individual performances and mix them after recording was not possible until the 1940s, and not practical until after the Second World War.

The advent of audio tape made possible separate recording and electronic mixing of multiple audio tracks, the first use of which in the 1940s involved the development of two-track recordings for stereophonic sound. Using multiple microphones and audio tape at live events allowed recording engineers to take recordings of bands in their live configurations as well, although it also allowed producers to re-mix the tracks from each microphone to enhance certain parts of the performance. The kind of recording technology that made this possible, though, did not arrive on the music scene until after Nakayama’s death in 1952.

Nakayama, constrained by technology, turned its limitations into strengths by using them to inspire creativity and popular success. He learned to write for recordings, and worked within the limits of studio performance that the technology available to him required. One example of this is the roughly three-minute capacity of a ten inch record recorded for the 78-RPM record players of the time. This time constraint dictated length, and so content, of Nakayama’s songs. By
creating songs made for this time limitation, Nakayama’s songs were marketable because they fit within production capabilities. Such songs were meant for records, rather than sheet music or stage productions. He wrote short popular songs because he chose to sell his songs on record. Since they were available on record, they were also popular among people who could not play an instrument, or go to live performances.

The importance of these technological developments cannot be overstated. They are also at the root of the industrialization of music. With them, producers divided the labor of the recording process and increased control over the final product. They are at the heart of the manufacturing process for popular music. This implicates recording technologies in the politics of encoding and decoding. They are not simply a method of reproduction and mass marketing. As a production process, we must understand sound recording as a method of manufacturing both the product and the message. This means, of course, that a high degree of audio fidelity does not mean that a recording is true to the actual experience of any live performance: Just the opposite, it means that the reproduction of performance has become an intensely mediated phenomenon. To the degree that the term ‘fidelity’ means “true to the original,” in recorded music, it only means that the process has removed extraneous noise from the recording. Beyond that, the recording process is the creation and packaging of a new product for the mass market. The better the technology, the greater the potential to encode specific messages into mass-market products.

Because popular music is music distributed on a mass scale to an audience of mostly inexpert listeners, we can define it as a kind of music that depends for its existence on this manufacturing process. Whether we think of Meiji shinkyoku for the koto, or a famous classical piece, or a jazz standard, it is possible to recognize that all three of these genres existed before
recording technology, and continue to exist in the age of digital recording technology independently of this new system of distribution.

Popular music, on the other hand, depends upon the manufacturing and distribution process for both its existence and popularity. In this way, popular music and its production industry are always referents to each other. They have a kind of chicken-and-egg relationship. Neither could exist without the other, and which came first is really an open question. Popular songs in early twentieth century Japan already operated as a mass-manufactured product in search of a technology of mass distribution. Recording technology enabled Nakayama’s goal of writing music for the masses. Nakayama provided the bridge from “popular” music as commonly sung ditties to popular music as an industrial-era method of communication.

Nakayama lived through a transition from traditional live performance methods of producing and distributing music to mass-market distribution methods. In the popular music of his childhood, music traditionally passed from teacher to student through direct lessons and hand-written notation systems that were different for each instrument, and sometimes even differed for the same instrument according to style or region. During his professional career, Nakayama became a master at creating recorded music. The recorded sound, he understood, was much more than notations on a manuscript. With records, the actual song could be distributed to listeners without the mediation of musicians interpreting pen scratches on paper. The fact that mediation did occur through the use of the recording technology gave Nakayama the opportunity

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54 Hosokawa, *Aesthetics of Recorded Sound*, 48-55. It is true, as Hosokawa notes, that there have been methods of recording sound before the creation of the phonograph. These include, of course, manuscript and sheet music, as well as player-piano and orchestrion paper rolls, and music boxes with their repeating metal cylinders. The key differences with sound recording, however, are that in all of the above cases, the instrument must be present to reproduce the music. This is then a kind of live event, as much as it is a recorded event. The paper or metal rolls, or the sheet music, really are incapable of reproducing the sound without the instrument. A phonograph, on the other hand, required no instrument. This meant that sound could be easily reproduced for low cost and requiring no expertise. The record was the sound, whereas the paper roll made the piano play the sound. This is a critical difference.
to exercise control over how that mediation affected the sound of the songs. That control came from the development of recording technology that appeared just before Nakayama’s birth, but only made its market impact when artists like Nakayama caught up with the potential of the technology.

Nakayama lived through this period of drastic change in the music industry. That change had a tremendous effect on the way he composed his songs. He was born in 1887, just at the beginning of the changes brought by the phonograph. He arrived one generation after Soeda Azenbō, one of the earliest composers of popular music in Japan to make a living from his music alone. He benefitted from, and had to learn to deal with, a new technology and a new market reality.\(^5\) Since he created music for the masses, the industrial production and distribution system afforded by records became an integral part of his music. Nakayama’s early songs were popular even before they became records. However, as he began to write songs specifically for records, recording became necessary for his music to exist at all. In this sense, Nakayama’s role as a producer was integral to his existence as a composer.

This new technology in production and distribution of popular music was the primary means by which Nakayama came to have such a large impact on Japan’s modern culture. To a great degree, this was due to the success of his records, not his sheet music. As Japan transitioned

\(^5\) American composer Stephen Foster (1826-1864) is one of the best examples of a similar change in American musical culture. Foster's birth came almost exactly sixty years before Nakayama. At that time, a group of professional music publishing houses known as "tin pan alley," printed and distributed nearly all popular songs in the United States. One of the skills that Foster had to learn was how to negotiate contracts with these firms, and how to keep them from using his music without paying him. Because of a lack of copyright laws, he had great difficulty in doing this. The problems involved in monitoring a new market distribution system with pre-modern technology were legion. Foster never had a means by which he could independently verify the number of sheets of a particular song a publisher had sold, and so had no way to verify that he was being fairly paid. Nevertheless, he became the first American to be a full time composer of popular songs. The music publishing and distribution system of the United States’ growing economy played a large role in this, making his songs available in sufficient quantities and at sufficiently low cost that Foster could survive for fourteen years without a separate “day job” as it were.
away from sheet music as the most common means of music distribution, record companies
found ways to control the production and distribution systems they utilized. Nakayama was
lucky enough to become a part of those systems through association with record companies,
primarily because of the popularity of his songs.

The effect of recording was industrial, in the sense that it made performances easy to
reproduce in mass quantities. The cost of live music performances was large because of the fact
that each performance was a unique event. Recording made it possible to take not only the song
in its universal form, but the performance itself and reproduce it. Creating a master recording and
reproducing it in large numbers reduced the cost of attending a performance to near free. This
made music affordable for audiences who might not be able to afford attendance at a live event.

The effect of recording for Nakayama was similar to that for many artists during the
recording era. Increasingly as technology improved, he wrote for the record, rather than for the
music. When he wrote his first truly popular song, “Katyusha no uta,” he knew he was writing
for the voice of Matsui Sumako, who was not an excellent singer. To write a song specifically
for the character she would play was somewhat of a risk, because of her vocal limitations.
Nakayama was able to carry it off by creating a relatively simple song in a limited range.

After “Katyusha no uta,” Nakayama began to write for specific voices. Nearly every song
that he wrote in the 1920s and 1930s featured the voice of either Satō Chiyako or Fujiwara
Yoshie on its original recording. Both voices inspired him. Among his mementos was a postcard
that Satō sent to him in 1931, unable to accompany him in his work because of her own trip to
New York to record. Nakayama seems always to have had one of these two singers in mind
when composing, and when he could would do his composition in their presence. They tried on

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56 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 330.
his tunes as he wrote them. For this reason, when they were available, Nakayama kept Noguchi, Satō, and Fujiwara near him, and even travelled throughout Japan with them so that he could perform and record any new song immediately. The voices of these two were integral to Nakayama’s idea of how his music should sound.

One of the elements that marked Nakayama as a modern composer was that he went beyond imagining a melody and writing it down. He wrote with an ear for exactly what the song would sound like on a record. After 1924, Nakayama’s sounds went to the market fully formed. This was not possible with sheet music. Composers who wrote before recording technology was available could not expect the songs to sound as imagined. Nakayama, on the other hand, was behaving like a modern producer after 1924. He was trying to capture a specific sound. When he was satisfied with his composition he recorded it immediately. “Suzaka kouta” 須坂小唄 was an example of this. He, Noguchi, and Satō debuted the song on stage in Suzaka in 1924, then recorded it before they left town. This was the reason for travelling with his singer and lyricist, and often a piano.

The example of “Sendō kouta” shows that Nakayama was aware that the way his songs sounded made all the difference to their commercial success. This first song with Noguchi, did not become popular for nearly two years after its creation. Noguchi had written the tune as a poem during a particularly stressful time in his own life. Its words were plaintive, longing, and in some cases, downright depressing. He apparently got the idea of asking Nakayama to set them to music after hearing “Katyusha no uta.” Nakayama refused Noguchi’s requests often, and over a long period of time, but after a visit from Noguchi in 1921, consented to take on the project. Nakayama completed the song the same year. They published it in sheet music form, and the two played concerts and hawked sheet music for two years before a record company showed interest.
That recording changed history, selling so many copies that record companies clamored for more songs like it. This clamor led to the creation of “Kimi Koishi” by Sasa Kōka (1886-1961).

In other words, Noguchi and Nakayama learned that a recorded song could outsell sheet music. The popular music market consisted of non-expert consumers who wanted to hear the songs, but did not have the skills, time, or money to learn to play them on instruments at home. After “Sendō Kouta,” Nakayama focused on how his songs should sound on record. Again “Suzaka Kouta” is a case in point. The song took shape when Nakayama was on one of his many composition/performance tours with Noguchi. As the two were staying in the silk-reeling town of Suzaka, in Nagano, Noguchi happened to hear, and write down the words to, the song that many of the silk-reeling mill girls sang as they walked to work. He rewrote them entirely and then presented them to Nakayama. When Nakayama read the lyrics, he immediately set them to music with Satō in mind. Since she was travelling with him, they recorded the song without delay, with Nakayama playing accompaniment on the record. The song was a market success almost instantly, and creative control was in Nakayama’s hands the entire time.

This new way of producing popular songs was in line with the ideas of Benjamin Gardener, the American who presided over Nippon Victor at the time. Gardener reacted in 1928 to the frequent phenomenon of multiple simultaneous copies of songs distributed by competing record companies by creating a kind of stable system. He wanted Victor to control talent and the production of songs so that it held control of its inventory. His primary goal was to prevent other record companies from profiting from alternative recordings of songs in which Victor had invested money and talent in order to bring to market. To do this, Gardener designed a system that was similar to the one pioneered by Victor in the United States. He hired composers on
contract, and the first of these in Japan was Nakayama. He also hired musicians on exclusive contract to Victor. Thus, Nakayama, Noguchi, and singers, Satō and Fujiwara, became a popular song production team. They performed Nakayama’s songs, and Nakayama had creative control. With this control, Nakayama created fully-formed popular songs that were suited to mass distribution by record. He ensured their popularity by sculpting their sound according to his principles of mixing Western and Japanese musical elements.
Reflecting the Times

Below are specific examples of Shimpei Bushi that show how he put together the Western musical foundation with lyrical texts and a vocal and instrumental style that helped the songs to sound Japanese, and they demonstrate how recording technology shaped his sound to make it possible for any Japanese to hear, and relate to his music.

Classifying “Katyusha no uta,” the tune that set Nakayama on the road to fame in 1914 simply as a sentimental song does a disservice to the impact it had on later songs by Nakayama and other popular music composers. The sentimentality of “Katyusha no uta” was born of a specific set of choices regarding who would perform it, and how its audience would hear it. It revolutionized popular songs because it employed a Western theoretical foundation upon which a structure of Japanese sounds rested in an undeniably novel yet modern relationship. Part of its popularity was the fact that this had never been done before. He wrote it according to Western musical principles with absolute pitch that did not adjust to the voice of the singer. Because of this and the a capella performance required (Nakayama wrote “Katyusha no uta” to be performed with no instrumental accompaniment), he personally had to teach Matsui Sumako how to sing it. In addition, although it was common for Japanese songs to have nonsense words within their lyrics, Nakayama’s substitution of “la-la” to keep the rhythm between phrases sounded Western and added to the song’s freshness. 57

In fact, Nakayama did not know that Matsui recorded “Katyusha no uta” until after the fact. Orient Records asked her to do the recording while the Geijutsuza was in Kyoto giving a series of sold-out performances of Fukkatsu. Orient wanted the recording because of the song’s popularity with theater goers and in bars where enkashi performed it, often by request. Fukkatsu

57 Ibid., 302.
ran for 440 performances in 1914. On tour outside of Tokyo, it played to sold-out audiences in Osaka, and filled a three-thousand seat auditorium for three nights running in Kyoto. The popularity of “Katyusha no uta” even inspired the creation of a silent film out of Shimamura’s play, which Nikkatsu released in 1914. By today’s standards, the recording of the song was plain. It featured Matsui Sumako reprising the song in her role as Katyusha in *Fukkatsu*.

Tolstoy’s (and Shimamura’s) Katyusha was a scullery maid whose low social standing made the love she shared with her noble-born employer an impossibility. For Katyusha to sing within the play was a part of Shimamura’s method for appealing to a popular audience. He was looking for a sentimental song to deepen the appeal of an underdog character whose terrible fate he hoped would evoke deep sadness in his audience. He used the character Katyusha to appeal to a growing interest in the idea of a strong modern woman. Nakayama’s greatest challenge was to induce in that Japanese audience empathy for a foreign and female character whose life was difficult, in part, because she defied social norms. The mixing of Japanese sounds and Western music met this need for a new and complex song to describe, in a culturally relevant way, a character who conjured up visions of Japan’s new membership in a modern, interconnected world. Nakayama wrote the song in an F major key using a yonanuki scale. This proved difficult for Matsui and the cast of the play to understand. Nakayama had to train her in individual lessons to sing the song according to the Western scale and in an a capella style. On stage, and on the first recording, Matsui sang unaccompanied.

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58 Ibid., 303. Shimpei earned 10 yen from the performances in Kyoto and the immediate income from the record. In addition, his sheet music for Katyusha's Song sold another 30,000 copies. By August he had earned another 30 yen from the sheet music sales. In total, this was more than his annual salary as a music teacher.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.
Katyusha, kawaii ya
Wakare no tsurasa
Semete awayuki tokenu ma ni
Kami ni negai la la kakemashō ka

Katyusha, kawaii ya
Wakare no tsurasa
Koyoi hito ban yo furu yuki yo
Asu ha noyama no la la michi kakuse

Katyusha, kawaii ya
Wakare no tsurasa
Semete mata au sore made ha
Onaji sugata de la la ite tamore

Katyusha, kawaii ya
Wakare no tsurasa
Tsurai wakare no namida no himani
kaze ha no wo fuku la la hi ha kureru

Katyusha, kawaii ya
Wakare no tsurasa
Hiroi sōgen wo tobo tobo to
Hitori dete yuku la la asu no tabi

“Katyusha no uta”

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61 Showa Ryūkōkashi, 24-25.
The perspective of “Katyusha no uta” is fascinating. Nakayama’s music was Western and modern in its style and composition. It sounded new. The use of Matsui’s voice with no instrumental background helped to make the song’s melody comfortable for Japanese audiences unused to hearing harmony from singers, but the music itself was novel. The words to the song hold together well as a poem about a lover leaving his (or her) beloved. Contextually, the song sung by Matsui, playing the character Katyusha, who was on the receiving end of the breakup, does not sound as if she were singing about her own pain. She is singing the song from the perspective of the man who is leaving her. To some degree, this also reflects the viewpoint of the audience, who can see Katyusha as “so pretty” and experience her pain from a third-person perspective. In this way, “Katyusha no uta” is the quintessential show tune: it is showing, not telling, what is happening to her from a third party perspective, but elucidated by the victim of circumstance. Enka, a late twentieth century musical style that has its roots in Nakayama’s music as well as that of the Jiyūminken Undō activists like Azembō, has a clearly gendered production system in which the majority of performers are women, but the majority of composers are men.64 These women often sing enka songs about breakups and loss, and much of what they sing is from the same perspective as that of “Katyusha no uta” – an audience viewpoint in which the suffering

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63 Ibid.
64 Yano, Tears of Longing, 57.
is displayed as much as felt. That such a perspective appears in this first recorded popular song, and that the subject matter, if not performance style, is so similar, allows for a strong probability that Nakayama’s choices here have influenced composers of Japanese popular music since his first successful record. In other words, Nakayama’s song was at the cutting edge: a modern song for a new world.

Nakayama made the song for the Matsui, who was herself something of a scandalous figure, if not a feminist, and very much a modern woman. Her love suicide in 1919 after a long and public affair with the married Shimamura (who died two months before her during the 1919 influenza epidemic) cemented her reputation. This makes it even more interesting that the lyric to the song sounds as if it should come from the male protagonist. Ironically, by appropriating his words, the right to choose within the relationship could be construed as belonging to the female as much as the male. With this song, we can say that the male domination of the performance of Japanese femaleness in Japanese popular music (particularly the genre today known as enka) began with Nakayama Shimpei. 65

Nakayama made little money from “Katyusha no uta.” His royalties in 1912 topped ten yen, which was a significant amount for 1912-1914 (about half of his annual salary as a Middle School music teacher), but he spent nearly 30 yen on self-publishing the sheet music, and by the end of 1914, despite good sales, had not yet broken even on that investment. 66

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65 Ibid., 149. In her analysis of enka, Yano notes that today men dominate the writing of enka songs, but there are more women than men who perform them in both live and recorded settings. “As a result,” she says, “the discourse and performance of femaleness are determined by the men who control the genre rather than by the women who people it.” Although the hunt for origins is not a logical function of history, because antecedents can always be found, it seems clear that the issues Yano is discussing here are all present in the writing, performing, and recording of Katyusha’s song. Since this is the first record to have such wide success, and since Japanese popular music is, as Yano says, recognizable by patterns within its structure and performance, it seems reasonable to recognize the first iteration of that pattern here.

66 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 303.
financial boost came from perhaps the most successful of Nakayama’s early hybrid songs, his second popular song, “Sendō Kouta” (The Boatman’s Song) provides another excellent example of Shimpei Bushi.

Sendō Kouta: Creative Anachronism

Nakayama’s first collaboration with lyricist Noguchi Ujō, “Sendō Kouta” (The Boatman’s Song), was revolutionary. Nakayama was already becoming famous when he met Noguchi in 1918. Noguchi was at the time a poet and journalist who had moved to Tokyo from a small fishing village on the Izu Peninsula. Once divorced, he left Tokyo for his hometown, remarried, then returned to Tokyo before he wrote the poem that eventually would become the lyric for “Sendō Kouta.” His life was difficult, and he was a melancholy character. The poem he sent to Nakayama spoke of the way life pushed people around, using a metaphor of withered grass on the riverbank, blown by the wind. The story goes that Noguchi, who had been hoping to get Nakayama to put one of his poems to music, eventually took the verses of “Sendō Kouta” to Nakayama in person. Initially, Nakayama was not interested. However, Noguchi went to a great effort, writing letters and coaxing Nakayama until finally he provided a melody. Nakayama wrote the melody with a minor yonanuki scale, a revolutionary step that gave the song a dark sound to go with Noguchi’s dark lyric. He used the solo voice of Satō on the recording, and accompanied her with a single mandolin, which he meant to evoke Venice, the location that inspired the song.

67 Nakamura and Dolan, “Early Pop Song Writers,” 266.
The result was a song called “Karesusuki” 枯れすすき (Withered Grass), published in sheet music form in 1921. Because of dismal sheet music sales, Nakayama learned the critical role of records in selling his music with this song. Nakayama and Noguchi relentlessly peddled the song with live performances for two years before it got the attention of a recording company. When Victor Records finally recorded it in 1928, the song proved so popular that it became the model for popular music in the 1920s. Its minor yonanuki scale, its rhythm, and simple piano and mandolin instrumentation all provided a template for composers, and the manufacture and distribution of the song in a form that any listener could access, regardless of musical knowledge, meant the key to a larger market.

Record companies paid composers to create songs in a minor yonanuki scale, but with a slightly faster rhythm, and brighter lyrics, to remove some of the misery that saturated “Sendō Kouta.” This allowed them to keep the sound, but appeal to audiences with more upbeat lyrics and tempo. The mournful love song genre that is still a staple of Japanese popular music is directly descended from this song. The key lesson that Nakayama learned from this was the fact that records sold better than sheet music. Part of this success was, of course, Noguchi’s words:

\begin{quote}
Ore ha kawara no karesusuki
Onaji omae mo karesusuki
Dōse futari ha kono yo de ha
Hana no sakanai karesusuki

Shinu mo ikeru mo ne, omae
Mizu no nagare ni nani kawaro
Oremo omae to Tonegawa no
Fune no sendō de kurasō yo
\end{quote}

I am withered grass on the
You, too are withered grass on the
We are, in this world, both of us
Withered grass that never blooms

Whether we live or die
Or taken by the current
Why don’t we both go live
As boatmen on the Tone River

68 Ibid., 265. Shimpei told the Yomiuri Shimbun in 1929 that the first sales of the song were in 1919 but experts believe it was 1921.

69 Sonobe, Yazawa, and Shigeshita, Nihon No Ryūkōka, 49.

70 Nakamura and Dolan, “Early Pop Song Writers,” 265.
Kareta makomo ni terashiteru
Like the moon of Itako Dejima
Itako Dejima no otsukisama
Shining on wilted rice plants
Watashiya kore kara Tonegawa no
We will live as boatmen on a boat
Fune no sendō de kurasu no yo
In the Tone

Naze ni tsunetai fuku kaze ga
Why does this cold wind
Kareta susuki no futari yue
Blow the wilted grass that is us?
Atsui namida no deta toki ha
When hot tears flow
Kunde okure yo otsuki san
The moon drink them up oh moon

Dōse futari ha kono yo de ha
We are both, in this world,
Hana no sakanaikaresusuki
Withered grass that does not bloom
Mizu wo makura ni Tone gawa no
With water as our pillow
Fune no sendō de kurasō yo
Let’s live as boatmen on a boat in the
Tone River 71

“Sendō Kouta” (The Boatman’s Song)

Figure 2: Sendō Kouta first eight bars72

The Harbor of Habu: Japanese Aesthetics on a Western Foundation

Arguably Nakayama’s most famous tune, “Habu no minato” 波浮の港 (The Harbor of
Habu), was just such a hybrid tune. It achieved this with a combination of the four elements
discussed above: Japanese lyrical subjects, Japanese and Western instrumentation, and
Nakayama’s unique production values. I will examine each of these elements within “Habu no

71 Showa Ryūkōkashi, 29.
72 Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku," 34.
minato,” then show how they were part of the patterns that shaped most of Nakayama’s songs. Nakayama based “Habu no minato” on a minor *yonanuki* scale. The song is made in a D-minor scale, with the fourth and seventh notes removed (D,E,F,A,B♭). The song is in 2/4 time, and is written specifically for piano on a Western music staff. However, “Habu no minato” sounded both modern and familial to its Japanese listeners.

In saying this, I am aware of the risk of reifying a Western cultural trope that dismisses Japanese culture as inscrutable and exotic. I am not attempting here to romanticize Japanese culture. Just the opposite, I wish to show that there are specific textual and aural characteristics of Japanese music to which this song, and most other of Nakayama’s popular songs, adhere. My purpose is to emphasize the familiar in Nakayama’s music by highlighting its musical components. This will open the way to describing how this song appealed to a broad Japanese audience. “Habu no minato” works as an example for this purpose. The original recording features Nakayama on piano accompanying his favorite female vocalist, Satō Chiyako on the same melody line. It was a popular tune written in Western notation for Western instrumentation and recorded immediately for commercial distribution. One of the components of its appeal was this particular nod to traditional musical styles. These were familiar sounds that people had heard before, only slightly rearranged to fit into a modern musical system. Japanese music has traditionally been monophonic in this way. Of course, it is misleading to suggest that no Japanese music uses harmonies, but in general, all parts have followed the melodic line much

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73 Mita, *Social Psychology of Modern Japan*; Yano, *Tears of Longing*. Both Mita and Yano emphasize the patterned nature of Japanese popular music. It is these patterns, or *kata* that define musical genre for a song.


75 Nakayama, *Habu No Minato*. 

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more closely than is common in Western music. Rather than multiple synchronic sounds, Japanese songs have concentrated primarily on the “unfolding of a single melody through time.” This has meant that all voices and instruments played the melody in unison or close to unison. Nakayama’s earliest tunes follow this style quite closely.

The absence of harmony encourages a listener to focus on a simple melody. This is like the difference between an *ukiyo-e* print by Tōshūsai Sharaku 東洲斎写楽 (active 1794-1795) and a Renaissance-era Italian painting by Pietro Perugino (1448-1523). Sharaku was famous for his paintings of kabuki actors in which the primary subject of the painting was the actor and any foreground props necessary to communicate the scene. The background was present only to the minimal degree necessary to set the scene for the viewer. Perugino, on the other hand, concentrated on perspective and detail and so the subject of the painting became only a part of the overall work. In Japanese music, concentration on the development of the melody was paramount, and the silences and lack of complex harmonic structure behind that melody served to emphasize its importance and beauty.

By this standard, “Habu no minato” sounded Japanese. The lack of harmonic accompaniment to the piano and voice meant that the melody stood out in contrast to the silence behind it, and the pregnant pauses between its parts. It maintained a feeling of emptiness closely related to the sense of pause and contrast that Tanizaki Jun’ichiro 谷崎潤一郎 (1886-1965) referred to when he complained that recording technology as developed in the West was unable to capture the spaces and silences of Japanese music. This quality of emptiness gave “Habu no

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76 Hosokawa and Yano, “Popular Music in Modern Japan,” 6.2.
77 Ibid.
“Habu no minato” a kind of haunting feeling that the tonal structure of the song accentuated. It maintained a kind of sadness throughout, which Nakayama achieved by writing the song according to the five-note *yonanuki scale* that defines “Habu no minato” (figure) 3 below. Although it sounded different from Western blues, it had an emotional effect similar to that of the blues within the Japanese cultural context. It sounded sad, and was thus, like other such songs, referred to as “blues.” This sadness gave weight to Noguchi’s lyric:

*Iso no u no tori ya higure ni kaeru*  
Pelicans on the rocky shore go home at sunset

*Habu no minato nya Yūyake koyake*  
In the Harbor of Habu the sun sets red in the distance

*asu no hiyori ha*  
Tomorrow will be a beautiful day

*yare honnisa nagiru yara*  
Ah, so calm

*fune no se karasunya*  
The boats are in a hurry Whenever boats go out

*debune no shitaku*  
The island girls live with a restless fire

*shima no musumetachya*  
Never getting used to it

*gojinka gurashi*  
Ah, so calm

*naiya na kokoro de*  
Living on an island means poverty

*yare honnisa irunoyara*  
We depend on the post from Ito in Izu

*shi no u no tori ya higure ni kaeru*  
Tomorrow will be a beautiful day

*Habu no minato nya Yūyake koyake*  
Ah, so calm

*fune mo se karasunya*  
The boats are in a hurry

*debune no shitaku*  
Whenever boats go out

*shima no musumetachya*  
The island girls

*gojinka gurashi*  
Live with a restless fire

*naiya na kokoro de*  
Never getting used to it

*yare honnisa irunoyara*  
Ah, so calm

*shima de kurasu nya toshōte naranu*  
Living on an island means poverty

*izu no Itō to ha ōbin dayori*  
We depend on the post from Ito in Izu

*Shimoda minato ha*  
The harbor of Shimoda

*Yare honnisa kaze dayori*  
Ah, we really depend on the wind

*Kaze ha shiokaze*  
The wind is a pleasant breeze

*gojinka oroshi*  
brought from the restless fire

*shima no musumetachya*  
The island girls

*debune no tokiya*  
when the boats go out

*fune no tomo tsuna*  
Are taken with them

*yare honnisa naite toku*  
Ah, really undone with tears

“Habu no minato” (The Harbor of Habu) 1928

79 *Showa Ryūkōkashi*, 45.
Noguchi’s *uta* 詩 (poem), like Nakayama’s *uta* 歌 (song) for “Habu no minato” are soaked with the feeling of longing, or *miren*. Nakayama achieved this by writing the song based on the d minor *yonanuki* scale. This scale is based on the Western D natural minor scale, whose notes are D, E, F, G, A, B♭, and C, but because it is a *yonanuki* scale, it leaves out the fourth and seventh tones; in this case, G and C. An analysis of the song’s sheet music shows that this is indeed the case. Throughout the music, G appears only 5 times, and then only as decorative parts of short eighth note combinations. C never appears at all in the song. Such a construct led to a sound that approximated the sounds of village songs closely, making the “Habu no Minato” sound old and new at the same time. It sounded old, like Japanese folk songs (it also approximated what, as

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80 Ibid., 46.

81 Japanese often refer to poems as *uta*, or songs. This term can be used to mean a poem, the lyric to a song, or a melody, or all three at once. Hence, Ujō’s poem is the lyric for Shimpei’s song.

82 Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku," 39; *Showa Ryūkōkashi*, 46.
mentioned above, some Japanese music analysts refer to as the *inakabushi*, or rural song scale). This made a minor *yonanuki* scale attractive to Japanese listeners, especially those with rural roots. The combination of modern music with a nostalgic, country sound, helped to make urban listeners feel the loss of the Japanese countryside. Listening to this song was one way to get it back, even if only momentarily. Nakayama took advantage of the fact that this scale matched well with a prevalent aesthetic that involves *miren* within Japanese culture, which sanctions songs like “Habu no minato.” This is a sense of attachment to a person or context that lingers long after the dissolution of any connection with the object of affection. In “Sendō Kouta,” “Katyusha no uta,” and many other songs between 1914 and 1939, lyricists used tropes like departing fishing boats and the sea shore to communicate with the audience about irretrievable loss and romantic experiences. Noguchi’s own upbringing in a coastal town gave him an almost infinite capacity to imagine such images. These kinds of tropes involving references to nature, seasons and weather are common in traditional forms of Japanese poetry, and, not surprisingly, in popular songs of the period. “Defune” (Departing Ship), “Defune no Minato” (The Harbor of Departing Ships), and many other tunes used these same images to mobilize nostalgia for turning points in lives and history. All were in a minor key, and so sounded sad. Subtly suggesting that events could have been different, these songs draw attention to the way things are by sharing the singer’s supposed emotional pain in the process of passage to the song’s present.

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In the words of “Habu no minato,” Noguchi reflected the miren in the song with a picture of anticipated of loneliness: a quiet evening at the seaside, the sun sinking into a night that anticipated a beautiful day to follow. The second verse indicated the emotional pain that the women of Habu had to suppress as they watched their men go to sea. Nakayama’s music accomplished the same goal: to evoke longing and loss in listeners. He achieved this by using the F-minor yonanuki scale.

Of course, the role of recording technology in the sound of this and other Nakayama songs cannot be overstated. The recording of “Habu no minato” was clearly not a mix of multiple recorded tracks, which is the standard system in recording today. Nakayama and Satô recorded together in the same studio, and so the recording sounds like the live performance that it was. Since Nakayama’s music was, up until 1924, performed live first, then published in sheet music form later, and only then recorded later still, this live sound on a recording makes the song legitimate in the mind of a listener.85

Thus “Habu no minato” is an effective combination of Western and Japanese musical scales with a lyric about a rural location in Japan, performed in the traditional monophonic style, and recorded to sound live. In all of these ways, “Habu no minato” is representative of Nakayama’s songs in the 1920s. His other work from before and after “Habu no minato” shows just how typical of his style it is.

85 Sonobe, Enka Kara Jazu E No Nihonshi.
“Kimi Koishi”: The Effect of Shimpei Bushi on Record Sales and Music Sounds

Shimpei bushi had a direct and immediate impact on the record industry. The impact of “Sendō kouta” and “Habu no minato” is a case in point. There is some disagreement about whether “Sendō kouta” was written in 1919 or 1920. However, it appeared first as sheet music, and popularity among enkashi led record companies to record it after its market value was clear. In 1922 several recording companies picked up the song, and each made multiple recordings of it with different artists. At the time, at least eight recordings were on the market at the same time. This heavy competition is what led Benjamin Gardener of Nippon Victor, after the success of Nakayama’s “Habu no minato” in 1928, to look for new ways to control his product and secure market share. Like “Sendō kouta,” Nakayama published “Habu no minato” as sheet music. Nippon Victor recorded it, and it became so popular that despite the tremendous number of copies available, record production could not keep up with sales. Gardener, hoping to secure this market for his company, decided to follow the example of the parent company American Victor and design songs specifically for distribution by record: to manufacture popular songs. Innovative as this idea was, Gardener’s Nippon Victor was not the first record company to do it.

Interested in repeating the market success of “Sendō kouta” and “Habu no minato,” Nippon Polydor executives created the first popular song to be produced from the beginning as a recording. Nippon Polydor intended “Kimi Koishi” (Longing for you), with lyrics by Otowa Shigure 音羽時雨 (1899-1980) and melody by Sasa Kōka, to be innocuous, less depressing, less directly reflective of the times, than earlier songs. A love song, it hit the market with a splash, and the market never looked back.

87 Nakamura, 267-268.
Yoityami semareba nayami ha
hatenashi midaruru kokoroni utsuru
ha ta ka kage
kimi koishi kuchibiru asenudo
Namida ha afurete
koyoi mo fuke yuku

As twilight falls, my suffering is boundless
your shadow falls upon my frenzied heart
I long for you, though we cannot kiss
Tears overflow as the night goes by

Utagoe sugiyuki ashioto hibikedo
izuko ni tazunen kokoro no omokage
kimi koishi omoi ha midarete
kurushiki ikuyo wo
ha ta ka kage shinoban

A singing voice passes by, footsteps
the face in my mind does not pay a visit
I long for you, my thoughts are confused
I cannot hide all my painful nights
because of you

Sariyuku ano kage kieyuku ano kage
taga tame sasaen
tsukaereshi kokoro yo
kimi koishi tomoshihi usurete
enji no kurenai obi
yurumu mo sabishiya

The shadow departs, the shadow vanishes
I cannot comfort my weary heart
because of you
I long for you as the light fades away
Even my loose red sash feels lonely

“Kimi koishi” (Longing for you) 88

Sasa wrote this song, as Nakayama wrote “Sendō kouta,” in a minor yonanuki scale. It sounds melancholy, but compared to the despondent air of “Sendō kouta,” it seems almost upbeat. Sasa created the song to mimic the successful parts of Nakayama’s earlier tune, but he also wanted to ensure its success, and so together with Otowa, wrote a melancholy love song rather than a miserable dirge. The rhythm of the song was a bit faster than that of “Sendō kouta.” The words were more concerned with a kind of infatuation from afar than the deep personal anguish that Noguchi had expressed in the earlier tune. Sasa and Nippon Polydor designed “Kimi koishi” as a popular melody for distribution on record. It was more innocuous, less depressing, but possessed of all the elements that had made “Sendō kouta” so popular. Its imagery was vague enough that most people could relate to it in some way, yet not dangerously (in a market sense) depressing. With “Kimi Koishi” and both Nippon Columbia and Nippon Victor implementing a

song production system that included the development of formulaic elements for market success, popular songs became mass market commodities.

Conclusion

When Nakayama Shimpei began school in 1895, he experienced many currents of musical tradition and change in Japan. He grew up in a rural town where music was an integral part of the annual festivals that he attended. He experienced the Meiji education system, which operated under a mandate to teach Western music in school. His education at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, and his mentor, Shimamura, taught him to popularize Western literature and music by making them culturally accessible to Japanese. As Nakayama became a professional, the sound that resulted from his particular method of combining these two elements was so popular and unique, it became his brand.

Nakayama’s first success, “Katyusha no uta,” sold 20,000 records. It was so popular that many Japanese bought their first record player just so that they could buy the record, and Nikkatsu saw the potential market for a movie based on the play after noting the song’s market success. Most scholars of Japanese popular music name this song as the first modern popular song in Japanese history. Nakayama composed the popular “Gondora no uta” in 1915. With this song, Nakayama once again changed the popular music game. In 1921, Nakayama’s collaboration with Noguchi Ujō created the seminal song titled “Sendō Kouta.” Using a minor yonanuki scale and slow rhythm, he succeeded in creating music that evoked misery and sadness with sounds that mimicked Japanese traditional music played on koto and shamisen. The voice he employed, that of Satō, was far more skilled, deep, and resonant than had been the recorded
voice of Matsui. The form of the song imitated the popular Tokugawa period geisha tunes known as kouta.

Nakayama’s use of these traditional Japanese musical tropes in “Sendō Kouta” allowed it to spread, as its musical structure was easy to understand and replicate for individuals who could play Western or Japanese instruments. Its melancholy musical themes and lyrical ideas recalled themes from earlier popular songs and dramas. The song became the model for other popular songs produced by the four major record labels in Japan in the 1920s.

Shimamura’s formula had worked. Nakayama’s songs spoke to the masses, as Nakayama intended, about their own experiences. They were tunes about life, work, and love among ordinary people negotiating the new world of modern Japan. They were successful because of the four major elements that were part of any of Nakayama’s songs: the yonanuki scale, the overlay of Japanese musical sounds on top of a Western musical structure, the adept use of instruments to make best use of the simplicity of the musical structure while helping the song to sound Japanese via voice and ornamentation with traditional instruments, and a careful attention to the composition of the song for purposes of recording. Nakayama wrote for records and in this way made his songs into a recognizable pattern that was so ubiquitous it received the moniker “Shimpei Bushi.”

Much of this was also a product of the success of “Sendō kouta.” This song changed the form of popular music in Japan. Its large sales numbers for nearly every record company that recorded it encouraged them all to change the process by which they chose songs for recording. They learned to use a system developed by American Victor and brought to Japan by the president of its Japan subsidiary, Benjamin Gardener, in which a company hired composers and musicians on exclusive contracts to create songs specifically for recording by that company.
They then asked their composers to design songs for the market, and write for records, rather than for sheet music. Here we can see the beginning of the jimusho 事務所 system of today, in which producers create contract relationships giving them control of the musical product and the musicians and composers who produce it.

Nakayama worked with specific lyricists, such as Noguchi, and singers, notably Satō and Fujiwara. This meant that when consumers bought a Shimpei Bushi record, they knew to some degree what they were getting before they even heard it for the first time. This kind of team approach to making and marketing music preceded the approach taken today by Yasushi Akimoto 秋元康 (1958- ), producer of the girl group phenomenon AKB48, or Johnnie’s Jimushō ジャニーズ事務所, creators and promoters of Arashi, SMAP, and Kinki Kids. It is also the system still used to train and promote enka singers.

In this way, Nakayama was the father of modern Japanese popular music. His formulas, from the musical theory on which he based them to the instrumentation and quality of voice he chose, to his methods of production and distribution, and even the gendered nature of the songs themselves, provided the blueprint by which generations of Japanese came to categorize popular songs. These patterns helped him relate his music to the experiences and musical sensibilities of his mass audience more successfully than anyone before him. He was so successful at understanding the kind of sounds that common Japanese of the time liked, and at matching his songs to lyrics that spoke to the experiences of his listeners, that his songs made him rich, and turned him into a cultural icon. The sound of Shimpei Bushi comprised a kind of theme music for his time. People responded because he wrote songs that resonated with their experiences, both historical and emotional. His songs sounded to them both essentially Japanese and quintessentially modern.
Nakayama Shimpei’s career reached a turning point in 1919. It was in this year that he began writing chihō min’yō 地方民謡 (regional folk songs), and started up his long collaboration with Noguchi Ujō. These events moved Nakayama into an association with a group of leading poets and literary figures who were interested in promoting a kind of ethnic nationalism in the popular culture of Taishō Japan. His associations with literary figures lent an air of seriousness to Nakayama’s work and at the same time provided market access for his scholarly collaborators. The combination was the genesis of a new popular song genre, shin min’yō 新民謡 (new folk songs), which sold nostalgia for invented Japanese traditions to the new urban masses.

These traditions became the basis for an ethnic nationalism in literature, poetry, popular songs, and movies in the 1920s and 1930s that has been well documented in studies by Carol Gluck, Miriam Silverberg, Donald Keene, Andrew Barshay, and Kevin Doak among others. Nakayama Shimpei’s songs were an important and often overlooked part of the way in which these invented traditions were used by intellectuals and the Japanese public to understand modernity in Japanese terms. In an important sense, Nakayama’s creation of shin min’yō contributed to the domestication of modernity in Japan.

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1 I have borrowed this term from Benedict Anderson, who in Imagined Communities makes a distinction between state nationalism, which he defines as the kind of nationalism, prominent in the 19th century, promoted from the center with the goal of making the state more powerful and effective through mobilization of the citizenry, and ethnic nationalism, which can exist without the state and is built on common culture and popular perception of belonging to a cultural unit. The latter is much harder for the state to control, and is perpetuated primarily through cultural products.
Why Write Folk Songs?

In the earliest days of January, 1919 the tragic suicide of Matsui Sumako forced him to begin writing songs unrelated to Geijutsuza productions. Matsui, who was playing the lead in Kawamura Hanabishi’s 川村花菱 (1884-1954) production of *Carmen*, took her own life on the night of January 4, exactly two months after Shimamura’s death due to illness. She was 34 years old. Nakayama, whose scores for three of Kitahara Hakushu’s songs were a central part of the opera and of Matsui’s role, heard about her death in the early morning of January 5. He was devastated, and joined a number of poets associated with the Geijutsuza and with Waseda University in writing a joint eulogy to be published in the culture magazine *Chūō kōron*. In it he admitted that Shimamura’s affair with Matsui was a watershed moment in his adult life, where he came to see his mentor as human. The deaths of his mentor and of Matsui seem to have been a transitional experience for him as well. He began in 1919 to move away from musical theater and into new genres of music. The first of these, and possibly the most important in terms of his cultural reputation, was to begin composing *chihō min’yō* with Noguchi.²

The choice to compose *chihō min’yō*, which were the foundations of the *shin min’yō* genre, came as a direct result of a trip Nakayama took to visit Noguchi’s birthplace in Isohara 磯原. Noguchi began corresponding with Nakayama in 1918 after hearing the recording of Kitahara and Nakayama’s “Sasurai no uta” さすらいの唄 (The Song of the Wanderer) as recorded by Morigaki Jirō 森垣二郎 (1884-?). He invited Nakayama to visit Isohara on a “folk song investigation tour” that same year. During the tour, at a beach town called Ōarai 大洗, he heard a performance of the local song “Isobushi” 磯節 (seaside song). Nakayama was so impressed that

² Nakayama, *Nakayama Nenpu*, 312.
he agreed during the trip to write *chihō min’yō* songs with Noguchi. Their first effort was the classic “Sendō kouta” (the boatman’s song), the lyrics for which Noguchi had already prepared. Their collaboration continued until Noguchi died in 1945.

Although Nakayama frequently made this kind of impetuous decision, it remains important to try to tease out the reasons that Nakayama saw this particular move as a profitable direction in which to go after leaving the Geijutsuza behind. In part, the answer has to do with those with whom he collaborated. The scholars and poets he knew through his Waseda connections chose him to write for the theater, and they came back to him to set their poetry to music. Their reasons for this were complex, but can be illuminated with the story of how “Sendō kouta” got its name. In 1921, Nakayama and Noguchi had an argument over the title of the song. The protagonist in Noguchi’s lyrics describes the emptiness of life on the margins of society by comparing himself to dry grass on a riverbank. Noguchi wanted to title the song by that theme and called it “Karesusuki” (dry grass). Nakayama argued that such a title evoked too much loneliness. In the end they published the song as “Sendō kouta” after another line in the lyrics. Ultimately, “Sendō kouta” sold more copies than “Katyusha no uta” and is now a standard for *enka* singers. Nakayama knew better than Noguchi how to capture the public’s interest and generate sales. This is the reason why poets like Noguchi sought him out to put their poems to music. They learned that he could popularize their works, earning them broader fame, and some fortune as well.

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3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 315.

5 Nakayama, "Nakayama Shimpei Jiden," 315.
Nakayama was a conduit between the world of artists and the mass audience that they wanted to reach. In a cooperative relationship with his poet-lyricists, he provided access to the mass market by composing popular songs. His collaborators provided lyrics that set the mood for the new folk songs he wrote. This relationship provided benefits for the parties on both sides. Nakayama gained collaborators with serious literary credentials; his partners gained access to the mass market. Through their cooperative relationship, this group of artists invented the tradition of *shin min’yō*.

Their invention of a musical tradition was not historically unique. In his introduction to the volume, *The Invention of Tradition*, Terrence Ranger notes that invented traditions are common.

> ‘Invented tradition’ is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past.⁶

In the case of *shin min’yō*, the value that these poets sought to teach was respect for Japanese culture as embodied in the traditions and songs of rural villagers and farmers. Ranger says that the appearance of invented traditions often indicates a break in historical continuity.

The purveyors of the invented tradition attempt to establish historical connections in the absence of true traditions. This was the case in Wales during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, according to Prys Morgan, “[one] is struck by a paradox; on the one hand the decay or demise of an ancient way of life, and on the other hand an unprecedented outburst of interest in

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things Welsh and highly self-conscious activity to preserve or develop them.” 7 The upshot of this was that while the Welsh modernized, Welsh intellectuals decried the loss of a sense of Welsh history and cultural differentiation from England. The invention of Welsh traditions, according to Morgan, was a kind of resistance to assimilation by modern English culture. 8

The poets who became Nakayama’s collaborators were active in the same way with regard to Japanese history. They chose to collaborate with Nakayama because he could provide them with music for their poems that sounded authentically Japanese and rural, and because they perceived that music as a way to access the mass market. David W. Hughes has noted the growth of this New Folk Song Movement: “Japan’s Romantic poets,” he says, “began to write new “folk songs,” intended not merely to be artistic but to serve what the poets perceived to be the needs of the people.” 9 They hoped both to popularize their ideas, and to make money.

Inventors of Tradition

Kitahara Hakushū, Noguchi Ujō, and Saijō Yaso came from a group of young poets who were already changing Japanese literary directions. Their goal was to explore their passions. They shared an interest in Japan during the Tokugawa period, but they were also enamored of (an idealized image of) modern Paris. They were all modernizers, but their interest in folk music came from an attempt to resist the assimilation of Western culture by the Japanese. They hoped to preserve Japanese traditions, art forms, and belief systems. Their struggle was against the

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8 Ibid.
anomie generated by industrialization and increasing participation in a global community. They believed in a Japanese national essence even as they revered modern Western art and literature. The break in Japanese tradition represented by the Meiji period left them nostalgic for a Japanese past that never existed.

This direction was not unique to this particular group of poets. The Taishō period, from 1912-1926, was also the time of the greatest development of the *shishōsetsu* 私小説 ("I" novel). *Shishōsetsu* authors were interested in relating their own individual experiences to the wider world. Shiga Naoya 志賀直哉 (1883-1971), one of the most important *shishōsetsu* novelists, bared his soul to the world in his works. Novelists not a part of the *shishōsetsu* group also wrestled with the problem of tradition and modernity. Natsume Sōseki explored the late Meiji and early Taishō periods through fictional first-person accounts of personal experiences in the context of wider events. His novels place the feelings and impressions of the primary characters in the forefront, and the historical events against which they are set give a feeling to the reader as if they are occurring in a background fog.\(^\text{10}\) Nagai Kafu 永井荷風 (1879-1959), influenced by his visit to France, where the thriving artistic culture paid homage to French tradition, was perhaps more than any other interested in examining traditional Japan as represented by the culture of the city of Edo. Nagai felt that getting in touch with Japanese tradition would provide a corrective to overwhelming Westernization.\(^\text{11}\)

There is an example of this connection between literary scholars, novelists, poets, and Nakayama’s world of musicians and composers in a letter that Nakayama received in September 1922 from Sōma Gyofū 相馬御風 (1883-1950). According to the letter, Gyofū was creating

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11 Ibid.
popular children’s songs with Nakayama, while at the same time working hard to understand the culture of the past. The letter came in response to a description by Nakayama, of the success of a school song the two had written together for Shimono elementary and middle schools in Niigata prefecture. Gyofū wrote, “I look forward to future prospects (for collaborating on songs) with high hopes.” The conversation took place via correspondence because Gyofū was in Itoigawa, Niigata prefecture, doing research on a nineteenth century Buddhist monk and poet named Ryōkan (1790-1831). Gyofū, a Waseda University professor, literary translator, and novelist, as well as song lyricist, was clearly simultaneously engaged in writing songs and investigating the poetry of the Tokugawa period. In short, he is an exemplar of the literary and cultural trend described above.

The attempts of poets to exhume and revitalize Japanese rural music led to an invention of a folk music tradition. The roots of these new folk songs sprang from older Japanese poetic and musical styles. In terms of content and musical organization though, they were thoroughly modern. On the one hand, Nakayama and his collaborators must have been aware that they were creating something new. None of their songs were covers of actual village songs from any part of Japan. On the other hand they claimed that these songs were essentially “Japanese.” Their conviction about this was so complete that they called the new genre “chihō min’yō,” or simply min’yō. In short, they claimed that these new folk songs were “authentic.” As mentioned above, this was in line with various cultural movements of the Taishō period. For many of the members of such movements, the grandfather of folk ethnography, and the arbiter of authenticity, was

12 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 317.
Yanagita Kunio.

_Yanagita Kunio: Reinventing the Folk_

Yanagita Kunio 柳田国男 (1875-1962) was born in Fukusaki 福崎, Hyōgo prefecture. He was the son of a physician. After finishing college at the University of Tokyo in 1900, he joined the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce 農商務省. Frustrated at his inability to affect positive change for Japan’s farmers, he retired early and began to study rural life on his own. He published his best-known work, _Tōno Monogatari_ 遠野物語 (Tales of Tōno), in 1910.¹⁴

Yanagita was smart, inquisitive, and well-educated. Most of his life experience seems to have pointed him toward sympathy with rural farmers and villagers. His father encouraged him to read the works of Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776-1843) and Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801).¹⁵ He also read French and English literature, and probably read Grimm’s *Fairy Tales*. As a bureaucrat, he was a passionate problem solver. He looked for innovative ways to improve the lives of farmers. Stymied by the bureaucracy of the Ministry of Agriculture he left his post in frustration.¹⁶

Freedom from his government post increased Yanagita’s interest in the welfare of farmers. Using his own money, he toured extensively through Japan’s rural regions. During this time, he came to see farmers as the soul of Japan. He recognized in them a lingering trace of cultural purity uncorrupted by foreign influences. In interviews with Ronald Morse in the 1970s,

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¹⁴ Kunio Yanagita, ed. _The Legends of Tōno_, Japan Foundation Translation Series (Tokyo: Japan Foundation, 1975), II.

¹⁵ Ibid., 5.

¹⁶ Ibid., 6.
Yanagita said that his interest was in recovering Japanese native religious beliefs and practices: “This was the target and the method of his school: historical reconstruction of the old animistic religious system, the *minkan shinko*, from which external accretions imposed by outside cultures must be peeled away.”\(^{17}\) In other words, the essence of Japanese religion would reveal itself once foreign influences were removed. This idea has much in common with the views of Hirata Atsutane; both Atsutane and Yanagita linked this Japanese essence with Japan’s rural culture.

The idea of romanticizing a set of cultural essentials flowed in part from the words of eighteenth-century German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder (1744-1803), and it was not unique to Yanagita or Japan. Kevin Doak’s study of the Japan Romantic School shows that romanticizing a cultural past and relating it to the folk in the vein of Herder’s romantic nationalism was common throughout the Japanese literary world.\(^{18}\) Romantic nationalists in Europe, most clearly represented by the work of Herder, believed that language shapes thought and therefore the most adroit users of any language, its poets, can best access the essential emotional thought of its speakers. Herder theorized that non-rational thought makes up the core of culture, and so an understanding of the emotional expressions of a culture are the key to understanding the culture itself. Further, Herder speculated that science and the process of industrialization valued rational thought, which overshadowed the emotional essence of modern culture, thus effacing culture itself. Therefore the true representatives of a national culture were those who lived within that culture before industrialization. Herder believed that their emotions could be found most readily in the stories, songs, and traditions that survived among rural commoners. Since poets could access this language, Herder believed that they should use these

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\(^{17}\) Ibid., 15.

rural commoners as their source and inspiration. Their work was to (re)create German culture in the face of modern industrial life. Herder assumed that this pre-industrial culture was a culture shared equally as the heritage of all Germans, regardless of social class. This led to a rejection of politics among romantic nationalists in favor of culture. While there might be economic and social hierarchies, in fact the German nation was all one people, or volk.  

Ōgai brought romantic nationalist ideas home to Japan upon his return from Germany in 1888. The term volk was directly translated from German into Japanese as tami 民, meaning people or folk. In terms of the nation-building project discussed above, this was a useful idea. Japanese readily adopted this concept of the spirit of the nation residing in the language of common peasants and city-dwellers. The revolutionary nature of this idea was its capacity to unify all those who spoke one language, and shared one common “culture.” Nevertheless, the volk was itself an invented tradition.  

Yanagita identified major urban centers such as Tokyo and Osaka as the locations of both modernization and foreign influence. In the twentieth century, this was because of their connections with the Western world. Rural farmlands, because they were less modern, had the advantage of retaining more of Japanese culture. There were, in effect, fewer layers to peel away. This was why Yanagita wrote about the folk stories of the Tōno region; there he found examples of what he thought were religious and cultural purity. He supposed that this was because rural Japan was less Westernized than the nation’s cities. Yanagita believed that a separation of foreign influences from Japanese social and cultural practices should therefore

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20 Ibid.

21 Yanagita, *Legends of Tono*.
begin in the countryside. The way forward into the modern world, for Yanagita, had to involve modernizing the countryside without also Westernizing it.

Like Herder, Yanagita believed that Japanese culture was both unique, and found in its purest form in the areas of Japan that were still pre-industrial. Yanagita also recognized Japanese theories on cultural uniqueness, and as Mark McNally has said, believed that Hirata Atsutane was right to recognize the rural folk as a location of truths about Japanese identity through their traditions. 22  Tōno Monogatarī relates stories of the “concealed” world without commentary, for Yanagita felt that there was a kind of knowledge within them that could not be written. 23 This was the reason for their position as the illiterate but unerringly accurate archive of Japanese culture. He hoped to rediscover this unique Japanese culture.

The reason why we pay attention to what was preserved among old people, women and children, aside from the explanation in books and reports from scholars, is that we search for traces of old customs and unconscious tradition. Such unwritten, fragmental materials have been rapidly vanishing through the spread of common school education. 24

Such a rediscovery was critical to modern Japan’s cultural integrity. For Yanagita the key to understanding Japanese culture was Japan’s farmers. 25

Kokugaku 国学 scholars before Atsutane, including Motoori Norinaga, were also looking for the essence of Japanese culture. Yanagita, though, criticized their exclusive reliance on textual sources. He saw this as a kind of cultural elitism from which no real knowledge of

22 McNally, Proving the Way, 258.
25 Ivy, Discourses of the Vanishing, 50.
Japanese culture could come. Cultural and political elites, he thought, left clues only to their own identities. Guessing at how all Japanese experienced life from reading elite poetry, literature, and history was little better than fabrication.

Yanagita claimed that the best source for understanding Japanese culture was the “folk” of the countryside because their life ways were directly linked to the ancient past. “[They] were fortunately protected from outside disturbance because they looked so trivial and rustic,” he says of the oldest customs present in rural Bon 盆 (ceremonies honoring the spirits of the dead) festivals. “People born in villages think that theirs are odd customs belonging only to their region. When they are compared with examples from other places, we realize for the first time that they should not be looked upon as casual happenings in our cultural history.”

He believed that their lack of literacy only improved their ability to preserve ancient customs without corruption. Yanagita would not be any more satisfied with a Japanese culture based on traditional elite life ways than he would be with a process of modernization based solely on Western ideas. For him, as for Herder in Germany, cultural identity had to be true for all classes of Japanese as much as it had to be unique to Japan.

The region called Tōno provided a rich contrast with Tokyo when he published Tōno Monogatari in 1910. Yanagita believed he had found the nexus where Westernized modernity met traditional Japanese culture. Tōno was near the modern cities of Japan, and yet isolated from that industrialized, Westernized world. Tōno provided a little haven of traditional Japanese culture whose differences with the cities provided rich potential for study. He believed that he could find what Japan had lost right in his own back yard.

Therefore, Yanagita’s ethnography of the Tōno region was a project to recover Japanese

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26 Yanagita, About Our Ancestors, 133.
tradition. He hoped to use this tradition to domesticate the process of modernization. One of the key trends that he and others identified with modernization was the movement away from rural areas and into cities.

In the past, many people would set out for somewhere and after they had attained success, they would eventually return to live among their relatives and old surroundings, but recently the feeling of people has changed, and they put their roots down at their destination and try to set up a new family…

His interest in folk tales was linked to the possibility of maintaining ties to past culture and social organization. “Continuance of the family,” he said, “is a big problem now.” He was referring to the break-up of large rural family groups, like that of Nakayama, when one member or branch moved to an urban area for economic reasons. However, “people starting life in a new environment did not wish to lose their identity immediately in their new natural surroundings. Because it was a small, lonely group of people at first, they must have relied upon ties of lineage.” Lineage, and home village, or furusato, and the culture thereof helped, immigrants to the modern maze of Japan’s Taishō urban centers to maintain balance through connections to home and family. But Yanagita did not imagine that modernity was reversible, or even wholly undesirable. Marilyn Ivy has said of Tōno Monogatari that,

It names a place where voice and place, narrative and “tradition” should cohere, against all the disruptions of modernity. Yet, by virtue of that “should,” Tōno stands for modernity’s virtual disappointments. Those disappointments textually constitute Tōno monogatari; Tōno subsists as a national-cultural sign of modernity’s losses, and a site for coming to terms with those losses.

He was willing even to admit that the process of change and the method of maintaining ties

27 Ibid., 178.
28 Ibid.
29 Ivy, Discourses of the Vanishing, 100. Original emphasis.
was unclear. He says of these new urban residents that, “[i]t is impossible for us to know what they did.” But that only made the ties created through folklore studies more critical to the balance with modernity. He noted that, “conditions in society were changing and people began to feel disappointed in some of its phases. In order to lessen their grief over it, we have not only to anticipate that society will change but to put as much energy as possible into setting its direction toward what we think is the right way at present.”\(^{30}\) In other words, creating links to the past through folklore was critical to help society overcome its grief at the loss of past life ways. This could help to make modernity a more balanced and culturally sensitive experience.

Yanagita’s purpose was to define an authentic Japan; he did not hope to reverse modernization or to close Japan off from Western influences. Instead, he hoped that a stable Japanese identity would aid in the process of modernization. The adoption of Western ideas and practices, such as capitalism, industrialism, and urbanization, could then be re-conceived as nothing more than layers of economic and social practices laid on top of Japanese tradition. Japanese identity would therefore not be fundamentally changed by modernization, only augmented. Yanagita thus saw folklore studies as a potential corrective to the relentless drive to Westernize that had characterized the Meiji period. To reclaim the Japanese essence through the study of village practice was to draw out the knowledge of rural people, the unconscious archivists of Japanese culture. This would make modern life more bearable for all Japanese.

These goals resonated with the goals and life experiences of Nakayama. Like Yanagita, Nakayama lived between the modern urban environment of Tokyo, and the rural culture of his home village in Nagano. Both saw themselves as messengers of authentic Japanese culture. Though their professions differed, each believed that he had the tools to communicate that

authenticity to the urban masses. Ironically, both men used Western intellectual tools to make this communication possible. Yanagita borrowed his ethnographic methods from Western thinkers, including Herder. Nakayama used Western musical notation and basic ideas of musical structure to communicate with Japanese sonic sensibilities.

Yanagita’s ideas were part of an intellectual context for Nakayama’s tryst with tradition; however, works like the *Tōno Monogatari* do not lend themselves to popular song. Poetry on the other hand, with its long history and identification with truth and beauty in Japan, could be set to music.

*Kuroiwa Ruikō: A Rectification of Names*

One of the most important popularizers of *dōyō* and *min’yō* was Kuroiwa Ruikō 黒岩涙香 (1862-1920). Kuroiwa was born in Kōchi 高知 prefecture. His father was a low-ranking samurai in the Tosa domain 土佐藩. Kuroiwa was a translator and writer of detective fiction, and founded the *Yorozu Chōhō* 萬朝報 newspaper in 1892. He made the newspaper popular by publishing his own serialized detective novels and focusing on social and cultural issues. This created a niche that other newspapers did not cover. Using this distinctive editorial direction, Kuroiwa set out on his own project of inventing traditional rural culture. His invented rural poetry was in harmony with the *kouta* form of Kitahara. It also made the connection between poetry and popular music possible. This invention occurred through a bid to broaden his market niche and appeal to a larger national audience. Kuroiwa, in characteristic style, appealed directly to the masses through poetry.

In 1904, *Yorozu Chōhō* started a long-running poetry contest for amateur works of what Kuroiwa called *riyō seichō* 里謡正調 (authentic folk songs). Like Kitahara did with his *kouta,*
contest participants created tradition through mimicry. Their poems drew their authenticity from their similarity to, rather than actual identity with, rural folk music.\textsuperscript{31} Kuroiwa’s plan was to have amateur Japanese poets add to the traditions of Japanese poetry by writing in a traditional folk poetic style. He distinguished this folk poetry from the heavily-studied traditional poetic genres by designating it as \textit{shi}. Even while claiming that this pattern was a style rooted in the past, Kuroiwa felt free to make up his own rules to govern its form. According to the contest rules, \textit{riyō seichō} were to use the same 26-syllable form used by Kitahara. The poems were broken into 3 lines of 7-syllables each, and one line of 5 syllables.\textsuperscript{32} The 7-7-7-5 form of poetry that Kuroiwa was calling \textit{riyō seichō} was, he said, the basis of songs sung by peasants. This made it the “authentic” folk styé in Japan.

Some readers sent in actual lines from songs they knew or encountered in rural areas. On the other hand, the rules encouraged readers to create new poems following this syllabic pattern; therefore most readers felt free to create their own verse. Although he did stipulate that the poems should be authentic, Kuroiwa never communicated clearly what he meant by that term. As long as the songs fit the syllabic form of \textit{shi} that he had defined, and were sincere expressions of Japanese cultural essence, Kuroiwa considered them authentic. They need not be recorded versions of actual rural poems, nor even have historical connections. He regularly gave recognition to songs that were unrelated to any actual village songs or even specific local traditions. By 1905, the majority of poems appearing in the newspaper related to current events rather than village traditions.\textsuperscript{33} Kuroiwa, like Yanagita and Kitahara, was inventing a tradition.\textsuperscript{34}

\textsuperscript{31} Nakamura and Dolan, “Early Pop Song Writers,” 272.

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 281.

\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
The themes that appeared in most of the poems in the contest venerated rural scenes and rural life, and identified them with nationalism and patriotism. The true Japan, according to this view, was the Japan of the rural people. The riyō seichō contest made a claim to recovering that authentic rural culture through the rediscovery and reinvention, or modernization, of farmer poetry.

As patriotism over the Russo-Japanese war added to the popularity of expressions of the uniqueness of Japanese culture, the Yorozu Chōhō poetry competition became heated. It eventually spilled over into many other publications in Japan. Rural residents and urbanites alike sent in thousands of poems. In letters and editorials they engaged in criticism of the poems in the pages of the Yorozu Chōhō and the Asahi Shimbun. These critiques often centered upon the authenticity of a poem, and the degree to which it reflected authentic rural culture. Eventually, as 1905 wore on, many poems became little more than expressions of patriotic ardor. The idea of a “folk” that represented Japanese tradition and uniqueness caught on and became immensely popular. Kuroiwa’s contest succeeded: his readers and writers came to identify with the folk traditions they reified in their poems.

Eventually authors began to set their poems to music, and to make that clear in their submissions to the newspaper. Of course the melodies had to sound like traditional rural songs to suit the words. Like early popular songs during the Jiyūminken era, many of the poems made use of melodies already in existence to accomplish this. However, to make new melodies that also sounded traditional, songwriters such as Nakayama became crucial. They found ways to

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34 Hobsbawm and Ranger, Invention of Tradition, 6.
36 Ibid., 272-75.
replicate the sounds of instruments traditionally used in Japan’s rural areas using Western musical notation and often Western instruments. The use of Western instruments could make a song sound modern, while mimicking the sounds and techniques of Japanese instruments could create a sense that the song was not too far removed from what a Japanese listener was accustomed to. Thus the song could sound both modern and Japanese. Nakayama added elements of popular music that urban audiences were used to, including what he called hanashi kotoba 話し言葉 (colloquial phrases). He covered over the Western techniques for poems that claimed a traditional Japanese lineage by making melodies sound Japanese.

These songs followed both function and form. Through the use of Western musical notation, they could be recorded on sheet music and played by anyone with a piano or guitar. By writing them according the yonanuki scale, and including Japanese instruments in the melody on recordings, they could match the music with the words so that the song described “authentic” Japan from the point of view of an outside observer. This made these songs accessible to city folk, and encouraged them to think of all of rural Japan as their furusato.

The riyō seichō contest functioned in a way that resonates with both Atsutane’s and Herder’s ideas. Kuroiwa claimed that shi was the rural version of classical poetry.

From ancient times, there have been three forms of short poems in Japan. First there is the waka of thirty-one syllables, in verses of 5-7-5-7-7. Next is the haiku of seventeen, in verses of 7-7-7-5. This last is called dodoitsu in one part of the country, and yoshikono in another. There is no common name for this form, but it is particular to Japan, and almost all the folk songs in this country are based on it.

Of these three forms, the first two, waka and haiku, are held in great esteem and discussed in the literary magazines; but the twenty-six syllable form, when not ignored, has been disdained by the more “intelligent” people. Why, when among those songs are so many lyrics of such quality…”

Among Japanese the *waka* and *haiku* are called *uta* (song). This is of course a word derived from the verb ‘to sing’. That notwithstanding, *waka* and *haiku* are today songs to be read only, not sung. And yet everyone knows many melodies from folk songs using the twenty-six syllable form; and these are easily sung. In that regard, it is this form, not *waka* and *haiku*, that maintains the essence of the *uta* (song).

Accordingly, from today, the *Yorozu Chôhô* invites its readers to send in their own twenty-six syllable ‘*uta*’. These we will call ‘*riyô seichô*’. The best of those works sent in by our readers, those that most embody the spirit of the ‘authentic folk song’, will then be chosen for publication, and prizes sent to the authors.38

The contest allowed him to assert an ancient pedigree that authenticated rural culture in opposition to elite culture. This staked out a position for the masses of Japanese as all members of an ancient nation. They were not simply the inheritors of elite culture. Kuroiwa’s formulation of *shi* allowed for them to see themselves as always a part of Japanese history. He valorized the “folk” as a repository of pre-industrial Japanese cultural traits that existed across class boundaries. The number of participants in his contest attests to the fact that this idea was popular.

Interest in the *riyô seichô* movement petered out after the end of the Russo-Japanese war. At about the same time, in 1905, Kuroiwa retired from his editing position at the *Yorozu Chôhô*. His legacy included the invention of an authentic rural poetry tradition. Those poems were more than just an archaeology of rural practice. They were new creations on a series of themes and forms that Kuroiwa had invented out of whole cloth. The *Yōrozu Chocho* contest showed that these poems naturally lent themselves to song; all it took was a poet whose work resonated with this goal of rehabilitating Japanese tradition to remake Japanese modernity. Just such a poet emerged in the first decade of the twentieth century.

*Kitahara Hakushū: A Song by Any Other Name*

Like Nakayama Shimpei, Kitahara Hakushū was a country boy who moved to Tokyo and revolutionized an established art form. He was born Kitahara Ryūkichi 北原 隆吉 in the city of Yanagawa 柳川市, Fukuoka 福岡県 prefecture. His father, a sake brewer, hoped that he would take over the family business. Instead, Kitahara wanted to be a poet. He was a talented writer and published regularly in nationally circulated poetry magazines before he was fifteen. He found literary success almost immediately when he moved to Tokyo in 1904, writing for Yosano Tekkan’s New Poetry Society journal *Morning Star*. By 1909 he turned his talent to reviving the poetic traditions of rural commoners. In doing so, he invented a poetic tradition that he claimed was a modern continuation of village poetry and songs. Like Kuroiwa, he called this poetry *shi* 詞. His purpose was twofold: he hoped to reach a mass audience with his poetry, and he wanted to encourage nostalgia for Japanese national cultural traditions. That he and his contemporaries in the literary field in fact invented these traditions he seems for the most part to have been only vaguely aware. His poems and ideas resonated with the folklore studies of Yanagita Kunio, and with a growing national spirit that characterized the Taisho period. The distribution method he chose for his folk poems was popular song. Along with Nakayama Shimpei, Noguchi Ujō, Kuroiwa Ruikō, and Saijō Yaso, Kitahara joined in the creation of a new genre of popular song, *shin min’yo*, to fit the needs of this new folk poetry.

Kitahara was a modernizer. Like the other poets of the New Poetry Society his aim was to break down the formalized poetry styles of *tanka* 短歌, and *haiku* 俳句, and make them relevant to modern Japanese cultural experience. *Morning Star*, the society’s journal, included poetic styles that ranged from those traditional forms to new poetry based on French Symbolist style. Poems and translations by Kanbara Ariake 藤原有明 (1876-1952) and Ueda Bin broke new
ground and inspired Kitahara in a direct way.\textsuperscript{39} Hence Kitahara’s innovations began with Symbolist style. He wanted to evoke sensation in his readers through the use of imagery of the senses.

The function of symbols consists in borrowing their help to create in the reader an emotional state similar to that in the poet’s mind; they do not necessarily attempt to communicate the same conception to everyone. The reader who quietly savors symbolist poetry may thus, in accordance with his own taste, sense an indescribable beauty which the poet himself has not explicitly stated. The explanation of a given poem may vary from person to person; the essential thing is that it arouse a similar emotional state.\textsuperscript{40}

Although the idea of using sensory symbols to evoke a reader’s emotion is not greatly different from the use of nature imagery in classical Japanese poetry, the symbolist style was modern to Kitahara. It required no syllable count or symbols at predetermined points in the poem that corresponded to traditional Japanese forms. It was a wholly imported verse system, so different from Japanese poetry that their grasp of its theory is questionable.\textsuperscript{41} For Kitahara this experimentation went in directions he had not considered before. It was a quintessentially modern act.

Despite his success in this area, Kitahara soon moved back to traditional Japanese forms, including \emph{tanka}. His return to writing \emph{tanka} after publishing the symbolist collection, \emph{Heretical Faith}, also demonstrated the volatile nature of his experimentation. Kitahara never tied himself to one style or one interest. In fact, the often narrowly defined limitations on style and purpose were the most important reason why he never settled into a single poetry society or school of practice. In 1908 he resigned from the New Poetry Society because he wanted more freedom to innovate than Yosano Tekkan allowed. He took six other young poets with him and over the next

\textsuperscript{39} Fukasawa, \textit{Kitahara Hakushū}, 3-19.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 30.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
year they formed, and then left, a series of new journals and poetry groups. Kitahara moved on in every case because he found intolerable the constraints on innovation that inevitably grew up as the groups defined their differences from others. This eclectic approach to poetic expression is what eventually led him to folk poetry and to Nakayama, Noguchi, and Saijō Yaso (1892-1970). Moreover, he infused these traditional poetic forms with new language that reflected both his fascination with modernity and his nostalgia for Tokugawa period culture. His tanka evolved in two directions: he modernized tanka form, and he altered the use of language to fit the subject. In the use of modern language and diction, the experiments with symbolist style seem to have borne fruit, however he tempered his desire to innovate through conscious use of the constraints of traditional Japanese poetic forms. In other words, he wrote in ancient style about modern problems and events. Thanks to his innovative approach to these classical poetic forms, Kitahara is still regarded as one of Japan’s most accomplished modern poets.

Eventually he helped found a more open group that encouraged his eclectic tastes. The Pan no Kai (Pan Society) began meeting in December 1908. Named after the ancient Greek demigod Pan, the Pan no Kai was a literary club cum salon. Starting with only half a dozen like-minded poets, the Pan no Kai grew quickly. During meetings in 1910, Kitahara held court over a monthly dinner gathering of poets, novelists, musicians, and artists, usually at a fashionable restaurant in Asakusa. The Pan no Kai promoted a kind of nostalgic modernity. The society’s founder, Kinoshita Mokutarō (1885-1945) saw it as “the product of our

42 Ibid., 34.
43 Ibid.
44 Ibid., 35. Here “Pan” is a Japanese transliteration of the name of the Greek god of the wild, shepherds, and nature, rather than the term for “bread.”

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longing for the atmosphere of both Edo and Paris.” Kitahara embodied this nostalgia in his behavior as well as his membership in the group. In the same year the Pan no kai started meeting, he took to visiting parts of Tokyo that for him represented the life of old Edo. He came to believe that pure art could connect the world of the future with the culture of the past. The Pan no Kai provided him with a company of poets who all felt this attraction. Caught between nostalgia and modernity, members published poems in the society’s literary magazine, *Subaru (Pleiades)*.

In summary, Kitahara was a pure artist. He dedicated himself to the art of poetry and worked tirelessly for little financial reward to promote and extend its message. He created poetry that merged classical Japanese *tanka* forms with modern life. His words and diction were of a high caliber, complex, and best understood by other poets. His cultural capital was high and he became a sought-after mentor leading several literary societies in succession. He helped edit and manage the publication of a number of literary journals. Nevertheless, he lived most of his life in extreme poverty. His motives for creating a new genre of poetry that mimicked rural songs and lionized rural culture were related both to his literary motives, and to his need to lift himself out of poverty.

This state of penury was the result of a string of bad luck and bad decisions. These intersected with Kitahara’s public persona as a respected literary figure. The harm to his reputation probably also reduced his income. In late 1909 the Kitahara family lost their Yanagawa sake business and their home. Kitahara went from prodigal son to primary breadwinner for the entire family. He moved his father, mother, and sister to Tokyo to live with him. Without his allowance from the family business, for the first time he had to depend solely upon his own writing to support all of them. An unseemly series of events that began with

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45 Ibid.
innocent conversation with the wife of a neighbor and ended in a false accusation of adultery, led to jail time and sullied his public reputation, making publication difficult. To settle a lawsuit brought against him by his lover’s husband, he paid a significant sum of money. He also married the woman once her divorce was final. This added not only another person whom he had to support but it also caused significant family strife. His parents never accepted her and after alienating family and friends, he eventually divorced her. In 1909, during this time of difficulty, he began writing poems influenced by the culture of rural society. He did so in part to win a popular audience and the income that might ensue.46

Kitahara also hoped his min’yō poems would give Japanese a view of their culture from the outside, so that they could see the value in what he identified as their tradition. Ueda Bin’s influence on Kitahara in the early years of his professional career is undeniable. Now a Pan no Kai member, Ueda publicly called for composers to collect the songs of the countryside “for creation of a new national music.”47 Rather than just collect songs, Kitahara imitated the rural song forms, trying to create in the vein of that tradition. His words had no melodies, but he hoped that some of his songs might be set to this new traditional music.

During the period that he was in the Pan no Kai, Kitahara wrote poems about his own nostalgia. He began composing in two forms that lent themselves to Nakayama’s music. These forms were called shi (poems), and kouta 小唄, which are poems based on the short songs sung in the Tokugawa period by geisha and other entertainers. They had a specific form, and were usually accompanied by a shamisen. These poems followed a two-beat rhythm that fit the geisha style of performance dancing. They usually told a story and were the “popular songs” of the

46Ibid., 38.
47 David W. Hughes, Traditional Folk Song in Modern Japan: Sources, Sentiment, and Society (Kent, England: Global Oriental, Ltd., 2008), Ethnomusicology/ Music History., 112.

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Tokugawa Period. The “Echigo jishi” is an example. This song about the Echigo region was popular throughout Japan. In Hakodate at the end of the Tokugawa period it was the most requested song for geisha and street performers and it often brought patrons to tears. This is true even though it was a kaeuta (changed song). The verses to the song evolved with singers and patrons adding verses, changing words, and changing the order of verses over time and distance. The “Echigo jishi” of Echigo, by the 1860s, was not the same song as the “Echigo jishi” of Hakodate.48

Kitahara embraced kouta beginning around 1909. He often included ‘kouta’ in his titles, however as a group he referred to these poems as min’yō.49 This was a term used only by scholars at the time, and heavily influenced by German Romantic nationalism; therefore, Kitahara’s use of it to categorize an artistic project exemplifies the degree of currency the idea had in artistic and cultural circles. The use of kouta and min’yō to describe this new style was as deliberate as his choice to write in the colloquial mode and to make use of folk images.50

Kitahara’s kouta provided one of the foundation stones of shin min’yō songs in terms of their form as well as content, however they were not set to music. Accordingly, to understand their relationship to Nakayama’s innovations, a definition is critical. For Kitahara, the term kouta specifically meant a short four-line poem based on the Tokugawa-era poetic style known as riyō.51 Most of these songs were short stories in verse form. They ranged in their subject matter

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48 Ibid., 112.
49 Fukasawa, Kitahara Hakushū, 84.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
from stories of love and loss to ditties about travelers and outcasts. “Sasurai no uta,” a poem by Kitahara that Nakayama set to music in 1918, is an excellent example.

Let’s go, let’s go back beneath the Aurora
Russia is a northern land, limitless
Sun set in the West, sunrise in the East
The sound of bells carries in the empty sky\(^{52}\)

**Sasurai no uta (Song of the Wanderer) (1918)**\(^{53}\)

As is clear with this first verse, Kitahara built the song out of four-line stanzas that carefully followed his own rules. *Kouta* verse style, like that of *riyō*, was twenty-six syllables combined in lines of alternating length.\(^{54}\) The most common pattern incorporated three lines of seven syllables each, followed by one line of five syllables, just like the riyō seichō of Kuroiwa Ruikō, discussed above. Kitahara wrote over 500 of these poems using colloquial language. He constructed them with rural folk songs in mind. In them, he used words from various rural dialects, and described various local traditions and rural scenery.\(^{55}\) He hoped to make a link between the countryside and traditional Japanese culture by associating his verse with traditional forms, as he had with *tanka* in his more intellectual work.

Kitahara thought of his *kouta* as having more legitimacy than show tunes. He claimed that songs like “Ikeru” and “Carmen,” which appeared in his *Hakushū kouta shū*, were extensions of mountain songs, and so came from a folk tradition. In contrast, songs written new for musical

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\(^{52}\) *Showa Ryūkōkashi*, 28.

\(^{53}\) Ibid.

\(^{54}\) Riyō was another term used by popularizers of folk songs as a title for the genre. According to Nakamura Tōyō, and from the usage of Nakayama’s diary, riyō was used by intellectuals and journalists to designate authentic village folk songs in the same way that shi was used to designate authentic rural poetry. In the villages the term people used to designate the songs/poems that they actually sang in their daily lives was *uta* (song).

plays had no connection to tradition. Their authors aimed at a much lower-class audience and the songs were parts of larger dramatic works; they were not really kouta because they were composed in the wrong context.\(^{56}\) Evidently, he believed his own kouta to be a part of a living tradition. He based his claims on the syllabic and content rules that he claimed to have identified in actual village songs.\(^{57}\) The irony here is that villagers never used “kouta” to designate their own songs, nor did those songs always follow the syllabic and content rules that Hakushū believed he had derived.\(^{58}\) Consequently, Hakushū’s creations were not new only in the sense that they had this tenuous connection to an apparition of Japan’s musical past. The fact is that Kitahara’s kouta and min’yō were not actual folk songs from the countryside at all. They were poems of his creation. As a creative artist, rather than an anthropologist or folklorist, he could not simply report and record; he had to create. So it was that his folk poems were created based on the idea that such a thing as Japanese “folk” existed. The construction that he used to define the tradition he was inventing was the idea of the volk brought back from Germany by Mori Ōgai 森鴎外 (1862-1922).

Overlaying Japanese rural culture with definitions from German Romantic nationalism allowed Kitahara to create poems within a tradition that he could define himself. He defined it as building upon the elements of existing folk “poetry” or shi. This term shi was also mutable. In the Tokugawa period it had referred primarily to poems in Chinese. The Tokugawa period term for Japanese poetry was uta (songs). But the villagers already called their poetry and songs

\(^{56}\) Nakayama, *Nakayama Nenpu*, 312.


Kitahara acknowledged the musicality of rural poems, and did not reject the idea that they were *uta* rather than *shi*. He used rhythm and meter in what he identified as a traditional syllabic pattern, and language to approximate music in his own *shi*. But the term *shi* allowed him to create, rather than record, what already existed.

Kitahara called his non-*tanka* poetry *shi* in order to distinguish it stylistically and linguistically from the hidebound traditions of *tanka*. For the same reasons, he called his folk poems *kouta*. He had heard *kouta* countless times. As one popular song form of the Tokugawa period, *kouta* were pervasive in the repertoires of street singers, geisha, and coffee-shop entertainers during the Meiji period. Their history of mutability lent to the titles a certain copyright-free quality. To be a creator in this tradition was not to destroy what already existed, but to honor it through mimicry and mutation. The *kouta* were meme containers. Accordingly, Kitahara wrote new songs on specific memes that he found within the *kouta* he knew. Similarly, Yanagita Kunio took stories he heard from a resident of Tōno and changed them to suit his urban, intellectual audience. Kitahara’s *kouta* were analogous to Yanagita’s folk tales. The memes that Kitahara chose to use had to do with rural culture as the seat of Japanese tradition. Like Yanagita, he assumed that rural villagers, illiterate as they may have been, were unconscious repositories of a national cultural essence. By creating in the *kouta* style, he connected himself with a musical tradition, and linked that with the rural “folk” by calling his *kouta min’yō*. Kitahara was not capturing tradition. Rather, he was mimicking the songs of village people; re-creating an image of the countryside for the consumption of those who did not live a rural, farming existence.

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59 Ibid., 11.


61 Fukasawa, *Kitahara Hakushū*, 83-84.
songs used patterns he identified in actual village songs, but he removed the music, added his own strict rhythmic sense, and created words that described village life from the outside. Kitahara romanticized the countryside and remade it in the image of his romantic notions of old Edo.

Kitahara’s creations were much like those of Yanagita Kunio. He used his own experience growing up in the countryside and he wrote from observations made while traveling through villages and farming communities. Indeed, he described the countryside for urban readers who didn’t know it, or who did not live there. These poems depict a bucolic rural life, and romanticize the rustic customs of village people. Their illiteracy was part of the attraction. Kitahara wrote as though these people were part of the scenery. His poetry toured the aesthetics of a Japan that only existed in his imagination. He hoped to evoke a kind of culturally shared memory through his descriptions. Kitahara seemed to have believed that his poems would awaken the Japanese to their cultural past in a direct way. This reflects closely the goals of Yanagita in writing *Tales of Tōno* as described above.

Kitahara was also a favorite collaborator of Nakayama. From 1910 to 1942, they collaborated on show tunes for Shimamura’s Geijutsuza, and for the closely associated dramatic company known as the Yūrakuza 有楽座. They worked together on children’s songs and *shin min’yō* tunes. Kitahara supplied the words and Nakayama provided the melodies. All of these songs were popular, and added to the considerable success that Nakayama was still having with “Katyusha no uta.” However, Kitahara was famous, and had his hand in many enterprises. His lyrics were brilliant, but he was not able to work with Nakayama consistently. He certainly would not have been able to travel with him. Fortunately, Kitahara’s experiment with nostalgia, 

music, and national culture left an impression on Noguchi Ujō, another nostalgic poet who would become Nakayama’s closest collaborator in the 1920s. Noguchi was already an admirer of Kitahara. In 1918, inspired by Nakayama and Kitahara’s Sasurai no uta, Noguchi decided to solicit Nakayama’s talent for his own work.
Noguchi Ujō: The Wanderer’s Life

Noguchi Ujō was born Noguchi Eikichi 野口英吉 in Isohara, Ibaraki prefecture 茨城県 in 1882. His family operated a successful shipping business at the time of his birth. In 1901, after attending school in Ibaraki, he entered Waseda University. He studied at Waseda for only a year; however he took away with him associations with other major poets and intellectuals who were Waseda alumni. They included Saijō Yaso and Kitahara Hakushū. In particular, Noguchi shared an interest in folk poetry, folk music, and children’s songs with Saijō and Kitahara. The three wrote in the same genres at roughly the same time, and therefore are now known as the three shining stars of Japanese folk literature.

Noguchi was a blend of the experiences and artistic directions of poets such as Kitahara and intellectuals like Yanagita. He combined the approach of the pure artist with the populism of Kuroiwa Ruikō. His interest in folk songs ran nearly as deep as his love of poetry. A day job as a newspaper reporter in the far north, including Hokkaido and the remote Karafuto (Sakhalin Island) gave him greater sympathy with the lives of rural people. He began collecting folk songs as early as 1905, and publishing his collection in 1907. By 1920 he was editor for a children’s poetry contest in the magazine Kin no Fune 金の船 (Ship of Gold), and a regular and respected contributor to the magazine.63 Noguchi shared an intellectual interest in rural culture with Yanagita. He demonstrated a desire to find and recreate tradition through rural poetry that resonated with the min’yō of Kitahara, and even shared the same name. His orientation towards popular song and popular poetry reflected the same values that Kuroiwa was trying to promote. In Noguchi all of these factors came together.

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Noguchi was a precocious teenager, and after moving to Tokyo in 1897, he started writing novels. His talent gained the notice of Tsubouchi Shōyō 坪内逍遙 (1859-1935), a novelist and professor of literature at Waseda University, and thus a colleague of Nakayama’s mentor Shimamura. But Noguchi became interested in the New Poetry movement in his first year at Waseda, and his college connections allowed him to publish. So he left school and put his efforts full time into poetry.

Like Kitahara Hakushū, Noguchi lived an itinerant life, often in great poverty. Many of the same ideas about the importance to Japanese tradition of rural life and folk songs seem to have occurred to both men. Noguchi moved home in 1904 when his father’s business failed, and that same year he married. Like Kitahara however, Noguchi was never comfortable staying in one place for long. In an ill-fated business venture he went to Karafuto (Sakhalin Island) where his partner absconded with his investment. After a short time he wound up in Otaru, Hokkaido, as a reporter for the Otaru Nippō 小樽日報 newspaper. Eventually fired from that job, he then worked as a reporter in Sapporo before returning to Tokyo to restart his literary career. During this time he became a father three times over. His second child, Midori, died before she was two weeks old, inspiring both a poem and an interest in children’s songs. Like Kitahara, family difficulties provided both inspiration and interruption to his literary career.\(^{64}\)

Part of the reason that these poets turned to folk music was that their scholarly poetry did not pay the bills. To do that, they looked to popular music composers to help them market their work to a large group of paying customers. In short, they wanted to create art of historical and cultural depth, but they wanted to make money while doing so. This is the root of Nakayama

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 7-28.
Shimpei’s relationship to these poets and cultural commentators. His music combined with their poetry to shape the popular shin min’yō song genre in the Taishō period.

Connecting Worlds: High Art and Rural Tradition

Nakayama’s songs bridged a culture gap between poets and the people. The high-flying language of modern poets was inaccessible to much of Japan’s population. Poems by members of the New Poetry Society in the Meiji period were moving toward a synthesis of the ancient tanka style and French symbolist poetry. Kitahara Hakushū’s “Jashūmon Hikyoku” (Secret Song of the Heretics) is an example.

I believe in the heretical teachings of a degenerate age,
the witchcraft of the Christian God,
The captains of the black ships, the marvelous land of the Red Hairs
The scarlet glass, the sharp-scented carnation
The calico, arrack, and vinho tinto of the Southern Barbarians:

The blue-eyed Dominicans chanting the liturgy who tell me even in dreams
Of the God of the forbidden faith, or of the blood-stained Cross,
The cunning device that makes a mustard seed as big as an apple,
The strange collapsible spyglass that looks even at Paradise.65

Here the references to Christianity and the West are symbols of exotic foreignness unfamiliar to ‘orthodox’ participants in Japanese culture. Of course Japanese literacy rates in the Meiji period were high, however Japan’s compulsory education system ended at graduation from the fifth grade. For this reason, the language skills necessary to understand this poem would have been well beyond the abilities of most people. Accordingly, Kitahara’s real audience consisted of those who went on to university, which was a small minority of the population. To communicate

65Fukasawa, Kitahara Hakushū, 31.
with the great masses of people, Kitahara and other poets needed to use language that was more accessible. They also required a method of distribution that would catch the interest of the masses. That vehicle was popular music provided by composers such as Nakayama Shimpei. The distribution system was the modern medium of records.

Beginning in 1921, Nakayama worked with these poets, particularly Kitahara and Noguchi. They modeled their songs on the rapidly disappearing songs customarily sung by rural villagers, but in both substance and musical composition, they were completely new. They called them variously, kouta, shin min’yō, min’yō, and chihō min’yō. They designed shin min’yō to be a conduit for transposing intellectual theories about Japanese national identity and modernity into common-sense notions for the Japanese people.

The motivations for the participants in this movement to create new traditional songs were complex. First of all, most of them, like Sōma, had connections to each other through Waseda University. Second, poets like Kitahara and Noguchi had accrued a great deal of cultural capital through their poetry. Their status as pure artists at the top of their profession meant that they attracted attention from other artists. This attention translated into prestige and power within the literary world. For example in 1911, Kitahara won the Bunshō Sekai 文章世界 magazine top ten Meiji Masters award as best contemporary poet of shi.\(^{66}\) This gave him the status necessary to begin his first of many literary magazines, the short-lived Zanboa 朱欒 (Shaddock).\(^{67}\)

Noguchi Ujō was likewise successful as a poet. His status was secured by his position as a regular contributor to the children’s magazines Akai tori 赤い鳥 (Red Bird) and Kin no Fune.\(^{68}\)

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\(^{66}\) Ibid., 50.

\(^{67}\) Ibid.

\(^{68}\) Higashi, Noguchi Ujō, 38.
In the same year, he published his own book of min’yō poems. Like Kitahara, he could count on his reputation to attract an audience of other like-minded poets and intellectuals. Both Kitahara and Noguchi held tremendous prestige within their own respective fields. They wished to translate this into having an impact in the world of Japanese consumers. This came from ideological and financial goals that they were unable to realize in their world of high art.

It is a verity that both were immensely poor. Although Kitahara started at least three literary magazines, none that he edited succeeded for longer than two years. He also had the immense burden of supporting his parents on a writer’s income after their sake brewery went bankrupt in 1909. Noguchi was a victim of a similar fate when his family shipping business failed and he lost his job as editor of a Hokkaido newspaper. Both poets had need of the income that could come with a popular song that sold well. Through the music of Nakayama, these poets found a way to reach Japan’s working class and urban residents.

In addition, both poets were interested in creating a sense of tradition in modern Japan. This idea related to the speed of modernization during the Meiji period. Japan’s industrial revolution took thirty-seven years, from 1868 to 1905. In contrast, the English process of industrializing took nearly one hundred and fifty years. The pace of modernization required adoption of Western cultural, industrial, and financial ideas. Like many Japanese, Kitahara, Noguchi, and Nakayama, felt that in their eagerness to modernize, the Japanese had forgotten their identity. Members of the Pan no Kai, of which Kitahara was one, dedicated themselves to a “belief in supremacy of art for its own sake, a fascination with the exotic and foreign, and a yearning for old Edo culture.” These poets were involved in a profound enterprise. They neither rejected

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69 Ibid., 7-28.

70 Fukasawa, Kitahara Hakushū, 5-36. “Pan” here refers not to the Japanese word for bread, but to the ancient Greek demigod Pan.
foreign influences nor modernity. Instead, like Tanizaki Jun’ichiro in his short book, *In’ei raisan* 陰影礼賛 (In Praise of Shadows), they looked for a Japanese modernity. Their hope was to combine the new and foreign with familiar cultural furniture. They hoped to domesticate the modern. So they had two primary objectives in ‘going pop.’ They wanted to make money, and they hoped to popularize their own ideas of what a modern Japanese state should look like.

It is not coincidental that the members of the Pan no Kai, meeting during this time, romanticized the Edo period. The defeat of a Western power, Russia, in 1905, provided an opportunity to think about Japanese advantages over Western culture. Since both Russia and Japan used Western weapons systems and Western-style armies during their brief war, and both states manufactured their weapons in a Western-style industrial system, theoretically, the bigger, richer state (Russia) should have won. The question was what could explain the Japanese success against Russia. One attractive answer had to do with Japanese culture. In order to mobilize Japanese culture in the service of national power, in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Meiji leaders and intellectual elites made plans to establish a sense of national essence (*kokusui* 国粹) among the Japanese. Meiji political leaders had already successfully centralized government, but they recognized a need to use ideology to mobilize nationalism among the Japanese masses.

The idea of a Japanese national essence came from many different sources, and took many different forms. The mobilization of culture in the service of nationalism required that the state attempt to control the sense of national belonging among the general population – what Benedict Anderson has called “ethnic nationalism.”\(^{71}\) This control did not come easily. According to Anderson, ethnic nationalism exists prior to, and independently of, civic nationalism. For a

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centralized state to control the sense of nation that belongs to its people requires that those people accept the state version of culture and history. The state needs to be able to direct spontaneous cultural creation through its own filters without overplaying its hand. Such subtle central control of culture is not easy to achieve. In Japan, Carol Gluck points out, the perceived division between kan 官 (elites) and min 民 (the people) did not extend to the desire to establish a central government. Although bureaucrats, genrō 元老 (elder statesmen), and critics of the government alike favored a nation-state based on Japanese culture, the state never achieved complete legitimacy as an arbiter of cultural value. The discussion was over not just the form of the government, but also the degree to which it had a right to instruct Japanese on moral and cultural values.\(^{72}\)

Even Nakayama, whose interest in ethnic nationalism is audible in his songs, was critical of government censorship of artistic and cultural artifacts, particularly after his first experience with censorship, during the Tokyo run of his first musical, Furusato, in 1912.\(^{73}\) In his journal, Nakayama wrote that he saw this as abuse of power. Artists, he thought, should be free to create. By requiring small changes to larger works, censors accomplished nothing in terms of changing the general message, but destabilized the consistency of the artist’s vision. To do this just because a censor did not like what he saw, Nakayama believed, was a travesty.\(^{74}\) He was livid. This anti-censorship sentiment led him eventually to distrust the government in general, and to use what influence he could even during the Second World War to protect the integrity of his fellow artists’ work.


\(^{73}\) Nakayama, *Nakayama Nenpu*, 298.

\(^{74}\) Ibid.
Those *enkashi* who created political songs during the Jiyūminken Undō also supported ethnic nationalism in their work as well as their politics. They helped to promote it by acting as conduits for ideas about what it meant to be Japanese. Popular song became a distribution system for these ideas. Through popular song common people, particularly workers in the urban areas, found their identity as Japanese. One of the primary genres of popular song that successfully built this Japanese identity was *shin min’yō*. Nakayama Shimpei turned to composing *shin min’yō* in 1918, at a particularly difficult, and important, juncture of his life. His mentor, Shimamura, was only just dead, and his inspiration, the actress Matsui Sumako, killed herself at the beginning of the year. He was cut adrift from the theater and from show tunes. He fell back on his network of writers and performers, all of whom had been connected in some way with Shimamura and Waseda University. Through that network, he met Noguchi Ujō, and following a trip with him to his home town, began a collaboration in creating songs about disappearing rural life.\(^75\)

*Nakayama Shimpei as a Folk Music Composer*

Most of the poets in the group to which Kitahara and Noguchi belonged attended Waseda University. Nakayama was a natural partner because he circulated in their social circles. Nakayama’s mentor was Shimamura, a Waseda literature professor and editor of the literary magazine, *Waseda Bungaku*.\(^76\) Kitahara attended the preparatory school for Waseda’s Department of English Literature for a year before leaving to publish poetry.\(^77\) Mori Ōgai

\(^75\) Ibid., 315.
\(^76\) Ibid., 292.
\(^77\) Fukasawa, *Kitahara Hakushū*, 11.
taught literature at Waseda University. Noguchi Ujō, Nakayama’s most frequent collaborator, attended Waseda as well, as did lyricist and poet Saijō Yaso.\textsuperscript{78} Nakayama served as a domestic servant for Shimamura from 1905 to 1912. After graduating from the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, he became a part-time contributor to Shimamura’s \textit{Waseda Bungaku}. In both capacities, he would have become acquainted with the ideas and the names of these people. He may even have attended meetings of groups like the Pan no Kai. There he would have become acquainted with a number of writers. He also got to know writers through the 1920s revolution in children’s music, which spawned many popular magazines that combined poetry and music.\textsuperscript{79} In October of 1919, for example, Nakayama published his first children’s song in the magazine \textit{Shōgakkō josei 小学校女性}, which was published by a Waseda classmate of Shimamura, Shibusawa Seika 渋沢青化 (1889-1983).\textsuperscript{80} As a composer for the poet-contributors, Nakayama got to know Kitahara and a number of other future associates, including Noguchi. Thus when Kitahara and Noguchi needed to set songs to music, they found a popular composer already in their midst.

In 1919, after his trip to Isohara with Noguchi, Nakayama agreed to collaborate with Noguchi to create songs in the vein of “Isobushi” about local places, which they called \textit{chihō shin min’yō}.\textsuperscript{81} In 1923, he published a recording of Saijō’s “Ai wa sei yo” (Love is Life), in which for the first time he employed shamisen in one of his compositions. Shamisen later came to be used frequently in \textit{shin min’yō} songs. By 1928, when he composed the march “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” 東京行進曲 to Saijō’s lyrics, the genre was fully developed. “Tokyo kōshinkyoku”

\textsuperscript{79}Nakayama, \textit{Nakayama Nenpu}, 312.
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81}Ibid.
was about Tokyo as hometown. It sang of different districts of the capital in the same way other songs talked about rural locations. The words celebrated Marunouchi, Asakusa, and the famous *Ginza no yanagi* (the willow tree of Ginza), which no longer existed in 1928, but because of the popularity of the song, was replanted in 1929.82 Songs about the rural culture of Japan had become songs about the essence of Japanese culture, and about what it meant to be Japanese. That could be celebrated as a part of the capital city as much as it could for rural areas. But *shin min’yō* began as a way to rethink modernity by locating cultural authenticity in rural Japan. To preserve Japanese culture amid the discontinuity that came with modernization and closer relations with Western culture, Nakayama sought in his music the same cultural continuity as the poets with whom he collaborated.

*Shin min’yō: Traditional Music for a Modern Age*

The music that Nakayama and Noguchi made together, *shin min’yō*, was new music in the guise of old music. It filled a need in Japan’s post-Meiji modernity. As a sub-genre of Japanese *ryūkōka*, the style had two foundational elements: It claimed musical roots in Japanese regional folk traditions, and it asserted that the traditions of all rural regions belonged to all Japanese. The corollary of this assertion was that all Japanese belonged to all rural traditions, and this was its ultimate implication. This group of Taishō era poets, novelists, cultural critics, and composers invented a folk song tradition to carry their message. They came together in a creative community during this period to redefine Japanese tradition in relation to their modern present. Their influences came from both Japanese and European intellectual currents of the previous

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century. They used songs to popularize their ideas and shin min’yō was the public face of this movement.

Although this was a cultural movement among a select group of poets, novelists, and popular song composers, it resonated with a number of issues and government policies of the 1920s and 1930s. Kerry Smith, in his study of Japan during the Great Depression, shows how local village organization, developed over the course of the Meiji and Taishō periods, concentrated on rural Japan as the heart of Japanese culture. The local institutions, supported by central government policy, encouraged villages to create a rural modernity that was more rooted in Japanese tradition than that in the cities.  

The Japan Romantic School of novelists, according to Kevin Doak, had a similar feeling of ambivalence toward modernity, but located the conflict in a space between Japanese tradition and modernity. Such a space could only be overcome through wrestling with Western culture: “[to] repossess their own cultural legacy, they agreed it was first necessary to begin with the classics of Western culture (and modernity) and thereby free themselves from the chains of modernity and similitude.”

Carol Gluck notes that Meiji ideologues had to confront the way in which modernity tended to break down rural traditions and customs on which Japanese society was built. To combat this, “the ideologues turned to the verities of the past – the village and the family, social harmony and communal custom – to cure civilization of its fevers so that society as they envisioned it might yet survive.”

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84 Doak, *Dreams of Difference*, xxxiii.

85 Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 177-78.
The creators of *shin min’yō* likewise wanted to put the Japanese back in touch with their agrarian past. They hoped to reform the Japanese experience of modernity. *Shin min’yō* songs of Nakayama, Kitahara, and Noguchi defined the alienated, homesick, urban resident as a part of the modern experience. They fused a sentimental longing for the Tokugawa period with a longing for modernity and an interest in Western ideas. They did this by recovering methods of expression used by people in rural Japan during the Tokugawa period. Their poetry romanticized scenes of an idealized country life. Their point of view was that of urban producers of modern art. In fact, this building of a modern identity constructed of traditional cultural elements was not a creation unique to Japan. European ideas about the nature of culture and nation that was devised during the nineteenth century influenced the *shin min’yō* project. Japanese intellectual currents of the Tokugawa period that resonated with them allowed for domestication of those European ideas.

Nakayama was the critical link between the intellectuals and the people to whom they were selling their ideas. He was not an intellectual, although he lived his life surrounded by them. He was a popular music composer and producer. Because of his access to the market, his position was much closer to journalists such as Kuroiwa Ruikō than to poets like Kitahara Hakushū or intellectuals like Yanagita Kunio. Japanese purchased his songs in droves.

The “pure” artists and intellectuals with whom Nakayama worked wanted to popularize their works. They were looking for both fame and fortune. Nakayama could deliver that popularity through his music; therefore they looked to him to provide a vehicle for popular success. Nakayama most certainly lived up to his potential. His first collaboration with Kitahara, “Sasurai no uta” (quoted above) became nearly as famous as “Katyusha no uta.” It is still frequently covered by popular artists, even those outside of its nominal *enka* genre. Although this
song is considered to be *kayōkyoku* rather than a part of the *shin min’yō* genre, it does have many of the elements that are identified as characteristic of those songs. We can therefore count it as Nakayama’s first step in the *shin min’yō* direction.  

It seems to have occurred to both the poets and to music and magazine publishers that collaborations between them and Nakayama might create a profitable market. First, Nakayama’s *shin min’yō* songs had the sound of “tradition” that the poets sought to enhance. He started composing songs about local places. All had titles that included the terms “ondo” (dance) or “kouta” at the end. Almost all were intended to publicize various rural areas to people in the cities who might come touring. A wonderful example of this trend was Nakayama’s “Misasa kouta” 三朝小唄 written for the Misasa Onsen in 1928.

\[
\begin{align*}
Naite wakarerya saishō \\
Sora made e yoito yoito \\
sanosā kumoru
\end{align*}
\]
I cried when we parted in the beginning
up to the sky, yoito yoito
sanosa its cloudy  

The song features a shamisen, rare in popular songs until that time. Its rhythm is also based on a rhythm common in village songs. However most of the folk song feel comes from the voice. The key technique that identifies it as a folk song is the *yuri* 拽り – the moving of the melodic theme (the voice) to pitches above and below the main pitch being sung. According to Sonobe Saburo, *yuri* was what made *shin min’yo* distinctive, and the first master of its use was Nakayama. The usage of the Japanese language itself also does much to efface the Western rules that organize the song. There is only a single voice, and no harmonies, which is also

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86 Sonobe, Yazawa, and Shigeshita, *Nihon No Ryūkōka*, 43.
consistent with Japanese peasant songs from earlier periods. The words refer to nature scenes from the area around Misasa Onsen. This nature referent was common in Japanese poetry for centuries past, and the nature referred to is that of Japan’s countryside. In all these ways, this song is typical of the new genre in its structure and sound.

As discussed in Chapter 3, Nakayama’s genius was to create catchy songs for an unsophisticated audience. He wrote them according to Western musical rules. However, he overlaid them with Japanese instruments, Japanese sounding rhythms, and instrumental and vocal decorations that made them sound Japanese. He was skilled at finding appropriate melodic and instrumental techniques that emphasized certain rural characteristics. In songs like “Misasa kouta” and “Sasurai no uta,” Nakayama used the minor yonanuki musical scale as a foundation. When this scale starts on its fourth tone, it mimics the Tokugawa period miyako bushi scale closely. This led to a nostalgic reaction among listeners. Therefore his music was the perfect accompaniment to the kouta or min’yō poetry that Noguchi and Kitahara were producing. It echoed the meaning the poets were trying to create through their language.

This sound would have been important to the poets. They were looking for aesthetic resonance with their work. Their interest in reviving Japanese culture demanded that the music sound like traditional music. They also needed music that was understandable to the audience they wanted to reach. Nakayama could deliver this. He proved his formula for making songs accessible to the untrained with “Katyusha no uta” in 1914. The songs he wrote afterwards underscored the success of his approach. For these reasons Nakayama brought with him a ready-made audience. By the time he published Sasurai no uta with Kitahara, consumers knew his name and his musical style.
Poets including Kitahara and Noguchi sought out Nakayama because of these factors. Kitahara and Nakayama worked together for productions of the Geijutsuza, including a production of “Carmen” in 1919 in which Kitahara provided the words and Nakayama the music for the song “Tabako Nomenome” (smoke that cigarette). Most of the poets he worked with knew each other through connections with Waseda University. They were students of Shimazaki Tōson (1872-1943), former contributors to Shimamura’s Waseda Bungaku, or both. Since Nakayama had been a protégé of Shimamura, and written for Waseda Bungaku, it is likely that he came to mind when they considered looking for a composer. Most likely they also knew him from their work with children’s and housewives’ magazines such as Kin no Fune and Shufu no Tomo in which they all published children’s songs and min’yō. Since 1920, Nakayama was a regular contributor of music for songs that these poets wrote published in such magazines. In the January 1920 issue of Kin no Fune, for example, he wrote a melody for a Noguchi poem called “Nezumi no Yomeiri” 鼠の嫁入り (the mouse wedding), based on a Japanese folk tale of the same name. These associations rapidly blossomed into collaborative relationships through which the poets realized they could get the market exposure that came with Nakayama’s popular songs. The songs in children’s magazines brought Kitahara relief from poverty by providing him with a regular income. Noguchi also wrote regularly for Kin no Fune in the early 1920s. These poets found that they could make money without compromising their poetic ideals. Both Kitahara and Noguchi, along with other lyricists such as Otowa Shigure

89 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 315.
90 Ibid.
91 Fukasawa, Kitahara Hakushū, 82.
92 Higashi, Noguchi Ujō, 34-38.
音羽時雨, were happy to collaborate with Nakayama in the pages of *Kin no Fune* and other magazines. This led to their asking for compositions for songs not published in these magazines as well. Since these poets shared the goals of Kitahara and Noguchi, namely to disseminate their ideas of Japanese culture and a rural modernity through the use of new folk songs, Nakayama was the perfect choice.

**Conclusion**

In the 1920s and 1930s, Nakayama Shimpei became a conduit through which the ideas of elite poets and novelists moved into the realm of the masses. The power of media companies and popular entertainment to communicate ideas and to make money was by this time clear. Nakayama’s “Katyusha’s no uta” led to the filming of Shimamura’s play in 1915. The popularity of “Sendō Kouta” spawned a big screen story in 1922. In 1928, the song “Tokyō Kōshinkyoku” became the object of a dual marketing campaign, creating the kind of market synergy that increased the sales of both. *Kingu* (King) magazine commissioned Nikkatsu Studios to make a film of a novel, *Tokyō Kōshinkyoku*, that was serialized in the magazine that year. *Kingu* editors asked Nakayama and Saijō Yaso to write the theme song for the movie. When the record company, Victor Japan, got wind of the project, they offered a contract for the recording and had Nakayama’s favorite female vocalist, the popular Satō Chiyakō record the song. The musical combination alone would have been enough to sell tremendous amounts of records. But Nikkatsu showed the movie on more than half of Tokyo’s movie screens, and combined with the jaunty song, its celebration of Tokyo neighborhoods, and unabashedly modern language, both movie and song were tremendously popular.
The link between popular culture and the distribution of ideas could not be more plain. Saijō, like Noguchi, was able to share the royalties with Nakayama and support a continuing literary career. There are many more examples of poets crossing over to write for the popular music market. Their greatest need was for someone to put music to their verses so that the songs could sell. As with Tokyo Kōshinkyoku, these poets did not choose the pure artists in the musical field for collaboration. They opted for popular music composers like Nakayama Shimpei. When in 1929 Kingu asked Saijō to tour the lower part of the Izu Peninsula, they asked Nakayama to go along with him. Nakayama’s career in the chihō min’yō genre came from such tours, beginning with the 1920 tour with Noguchi discussed earlier. He had experience bringing the spirit of rural Japan to popular music. The success of this pair with “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” meant that they were likely to produce more popular songs. Kingu’s financial exposure decreased when Tokyo

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93 Showa Ryūkōkashi, 28.
Steamship Navigation Company agreed to underwrite transportation. A number of songs came out of this journey, including the “Kurofune kouta” 黒船小唄 (Song of the Black Ships), which Kingu published in its August edition. The title of the song relates to Japan’s modern experience through a reference to the Restoration-era term for the American steamships, the kurofune 黒船 (black ships), that sailed into Uraga Bay in 1853 under the command of Commodore Matthew Perry (1754-1898). This was also the first song for which Nakayama wrote a shamisen part. Shamisen and descriptions of rural scenes became an integral part of the shin min’yō genre. For Nakayama, the income from the song was a part of his ever-growing royalty receipts. For Saijō the poet, this was another step on an entirely new career path that would help to pay for his literary work.

In many ideological ways, this was also an easy choice, because Nakayama shared their goals. He wanted to write music that reached the common people. He wanted to write songs that were modern, but also spoke to Japanese about their own world. This dovetailed perfectly with the goals given by Kitahara, who wrote kouta in the hope that he could speak to common Japanese, who did not read poetry, about the beauty of their country and culture.

Noguchi, a poet and journalist, was a populist, just as was Kuroiwa Ruikō. For these men, the purpose of poetry was the edification of the minds of the modern masses. Music could reach the people of the nation in a way that poetry could not. Nakayama shared that sentiment. As I will discuss in chapter six, Nakayama was committed to writing “realistic” music. By that he meant music that common people could sing and enjoy. This meant words that they could read and pronounce, and whose meaning was clear. It meant simple melodies that followed cultural patterns with which they were familiar. It also meant talking to them using modern language and

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94 Nakayama, Nenpu, 312.
modern music. He built his songs on a Western musical structure for simplicity. Western-style songs were versatile and accessible even for those with no training in music. This took Japanese music out of the hands of cultural elites and put it into the ears of the masses. But the songs had to sound Japanese. Too much foreign influence might literally alienate listeners.

Nakayama’s style of mixing Western and Japanese elements fit together nicely with the philosophy of poets like Kitahara and Noguchi. They were looking for ways to express their nostalgia for Japanese life in the Tokugawa period while at the same time celebrating modernity. In Nakayama’s hands, their poems became a modern tradition. Together, they invented a tradition of folk music in a way that it had not existed before in Japanese history. Real peasant songs were locally contextualized. This was true for the performance context as well as the songs themselves. Peasants sang work songs while they were working, but rarely when they were not. They sang specific songs about experiences in their own villages during festivals and feasts. To bring folk traditions to the national stage, Nakayama and his collaborators had to reinvent them. In doing this they went far beyond just the mixing of Western and Japanese traditions. They began by blending two different Japanese traditions: those songs describing local villages, and those of entertainment music, primarily found in entertainment districts and sung by geisha and travelling entertainers.

These kouta, which had legs (i.e. they traveled), were the popular music of the Tokugawa period. By combining the two traditions, Nakayama and his friends created a way for peasant songs to be re-imagined as songs that could be sung in any part of Japan, yet not be foreign. Kouta talked of generalized experiences, that is to say, feelings of love, adventures of heroes and anti-heroes, and the experiences of travelers. Shin min’yō generalized peasant experiences by doing so in the same way. Local mountains lost their names in shin min’yō songs and became
“that mountain” unless they were already nationally famous. Lyricists wrote in a more standard (and therefore naturally understandable) Japanese. Shimpei provided local accent and color using his hanashi kotoba in meaningless phrases that were equally nonsensical everywhere.

All of this made it possible for the real buyers of these songs, the urban transplants from a rural countryside to modern industrial Tokyo and Osaka, to imagine nostalgia for a countryside with which they had lost touch. Local songs made no sense to these urban listeners. Nakayama’s shin min’yō, written from the position of an outside observer, made sense and also allowed these urban outsiders to imagine themselves as local insiders, sharing knowledge with the villagers
about Japanese practices that the people from outside of Japan could not share. Japanese lyrics, in a Japanese-sounding song, written according to Japanese principles of poetic style, created an insider club. Nakayama Shimpei’s music – popular, inventive, and simple – made this possible. It gave complex ideas about Japanese essence provided by poets an avenue to reach mass audiences.
Critical essays from the 1920s and 1930s specifically about Nakayama’s work are rare. Although some listeners and fans left written documents about their connections to his music, this kind of source is also difficult to find. But Nakayama’s songs did match the cultural context of his time, and changed with it. Nakayama did not work in a vacuum. Beyond being an ambitious artist and entrepreneur, he created his works within a field of musical production that included other composers, singers, and instrumentalists. He was influenced by their work, as we have seen in previous chapters. He also influenced their work. The field operated as a social and artistic space where the work of each affected the work of all. Each artist produced work in relation to all others within the field. As noted in the introduction, the members within the field are like players in a game, and the feel that those players have for the game and its rules is known in the work of Pierre Bourdieu as the habitus. In order to understand Nakayama’s choices within this field, Chapter Two attempted to place him in the context of other composers of his time. Much of the analysis in this chapter relies upon placing Nakayama’s songs within the cultural context that produced them, and relating Nakayama’s choices to the positions of intellectuals, cultural critics, and musicians who existed within Bourdeiuian fields where his work was recognized. For this reason, it is important to consider the importance of Nakayama’s intent, and the degree to which that intent intersected with, and was overcome by, the cultural currents of his time. His songs came to have meaning within the complex interactions of historical events and cultural changes in the times for which they were created. As times changed,
the meaning ascribed to his music changed as well. *Shin min'yō* and *kayōkyoku* subjects merged by the end of the 1920s.

Nakayama Shimpei’s “Gondora no uta” is coded today in Japan as a traditional Japanese tune. This coding comes from the country-boy-makes-good-in-the-city identities of the lyricist and the composer, the song’s reliance on images from Japan’s pre-Meiji rural past (what Marilynn Ivy has called “phantasm”), and its own historical position within what might be thought of as the deep past of modern Japan, 1915. These codes all suggest that “Gondora no uta” is within an evolutionary time line that connects it in a qualitative way more to the cultural past that we call Japanese tradition than to the contemporary present. We see it as a message from history because of its position within history.

In a 1915 post-Meiji reality that imagined Japan in relation to the modern West, the pre-Meiji past became a potential source of culture and history by which to deal with the sense of alienation that many Japanese felt in a rapidly modernizing society. During Nakayama’s lifetime, Japanese imagined the Tokugawa period as a golden era epitomized by an idealized and romanticized rural life. This, however, was a fantasy borrowing from Hirata Atsutane and others, a vision of society that placed peasants in the position of a repository of Japanese tradition. This was important in 1915 because of the social and economic stress under which many Japanese found themselves. The Meiji period saw rapid and wrenching social and economic change as the economic center of Japan moved from the countryside to the city, and political power became even more concentrated in Tokyo. Rural Japan became accordingly less important economically, and citizens moved to the cities to find work. To many it seemed that the countryside produced the food and paid the taxes to support the growing wealth and Westernization of the cities. The borrowing of Atsutane’s ideas helped to soften the blow of the new industrial reality, and
advanced a claim to the right of rural people to participate in the economic success within Japan’s society and economy. Popular shin min’yō songs provided a sense of tradition and intimacy in an increasingly urban-dominated society characterized by anonymous anxiety. This anxiety, and the fantasy that soothed it, were Nakayama’s targets in his shin min’yō songs.

Shin min’yō songs are about much more than simple play. Making and listening to music is a way by which we make history. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu has argued that any analysis of art or aesthetic experience that ignores history or historical development in the creation of that aesthetic experience is creating an illusion.¹ Music contextualizes our experience of the world, and our experience of the world gives meaning to the music we make and hear. In this reflexive feedback process our understanding of the world undergoes constant revision as we participate in the music production cycle and engage with the world. Music does provide a soundtrack to our lives by which we identify ourselves within a particular historical context.

If we were to fill in the historical context of the early twentieth century, when Nakayama Shimpei was creating his music, the kayōkyoku represented by “Gondora no uta,” and “Sendō kouta,” sounded modern, urban, and Western.

Nakayama saw himself at this point as a successful professional, and believed that his career was taking off. He wrote home to his brother in 1915 in an attempt to step up to his family responsibilities as a successful adult. In his letter, he emphasized the fact that he was able to help pay for his mother’s funeral expenses and explains that his ability to do some comes from some commercial success.

Having official word of the shijūkunichi ceremony, I have sent ten yen [from my Geijutsuza earnings], a small gift that I hope is a befitting way to send her [Zo] off with my prayers. My “Gondora no uta,” and “Katyusha no uta” have caught up with fashion and along with

¹ Bourdieu, Field of Cultural Production, 256-57.
that I have earned a small measure of notoriety. Recently the name of the latter song has appeared in a Lion Toothpaste advertisement. Yesterday I continued recording with Miss Matsui Sumako, and am planning publication of a compilation of shin kouta. I will probably publish this one myself through a company in Niigata.²

Like him, the modern music industry found its feet in the second decade of the twentieth century. With recording technology, an increasingly efficient manufacturing capability, and, thanks to composers like Nakayama who found markets for its products, increasing sales. The mass production of music became part of the still emerging capitalist mode of production.

A Record For Modern Times

The production and distribution of music in Japan from 1914 through the 1920s underwent a series of realignments whose effect was to make music an industrial commodity. Like any other such commodities, the new music had to be both mass-produced and marketed to consumers. To be a financially successful composer in this environment was to be a producer who could identify new, large audiences and satisfy them with new musical products.

Nakayama proved adept at such work. “Katyusha no uta,” and “Gondora no uta,” were part of the first successful mass-marketing formula for music. Cultural critic Sonobe Saburō argues that such songs became popular because of their attachment to the shingeki produced by Shimamura’s Geijutsuza and its competitor, the Yūrakuza. The movie/music tie-in allowed the songs to take their usually tragic context from the play, and the plays benefitted from the popularity of the songs. This was especially true after the ad-hoc recording of “Katyusha no uta” in Kyōto in 1914 saved Orient Records financially. Nakayama refers to this fact in his own diary

² Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 305-06.
and autobiographical sketch for the 1935 edition of Chūō kōron, suggesting that the market power of the record made a deep impression.³

That market power came because of industrial manufacturing techniques, which made records less expensive than live performances, and easier to use than published sheet music. The organization of the music industry by record companies worked in upstream and downstream directions. It created new products that satisfied the desires of Japanese (many of which were encouraged if not outright created by the marketing activities of the record companies themselves). It also created opportunities for composers and performers, like Nakayama, to put their work before the public in an unprecedented way. Records certainly made possible higher sales numbers. “Katyusha no uta” sold thousands of copies in its first year as a record. Although Nakayama did not expect it to match the sales of “Katyusha no uta,” “Gondora no uta” sold more, in part because it received good reviews, and in part because of its use in a Lion toothpaste advertisement.⁴ “Sendō kouta” did not get picked up by record companies right away, and so, like “Gondora no uta,” sat for years as self-published sheet music. When in 1923 Nakayama released it as a record, just after the Great Kantō Earthquake, it sold fifty-thousand copies. These sales figures were only possible because of new recording, manufacturing, and distribution technologies.

Production capacity grew along with the market. Although Matsui recorded “Katyusha no uta” in 1914 while in Kyōto for a week of sold-out performances of Fukkatsu, most Japanese performers recorded in New York City prior to 1928. Record companies at the time imported already-pressed records to Japan. Very little record manufacturing took place domestically until

³ Nakayama, “Nakayama Shimpei Jiden,” 379.
⁴ Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 135.
1928. In that year, Nippon Columbia, then Nippon Polydor, and finally Nippon Victor, all opened Japanese subsidiaries. All three quickly invested in state of the art recording studios and pressing plants. Domestic recording and pressing facilities made records less expensive. Local production allowed for the grooming of a larger pool of musical talent. Composers had the opportunity to be present when their music became immortalized.\(^5\) They could shape it for the market in ways that were impossible before recording technology existed.

Nakayama took this opportunity seriously. He wrote his early popular songs, like “Gondora no uta,” for the stage. Orient, and then Nippon Victor, published and recorded them after their popularity with audiences was already established. Nakayama took to recording easily. His method of composition anticipated the new technological developments by five years: By 1923, after recording “Katyusha no uta,” “Gondora no uta” and “Sendō kouta,” he was already hearing the song in his head as he wanted it recorded. He left detailed notes in his manuscripts about everything from instrumentation to the way he wanted the voice to sound, although he also encouraged singers to “sing with their own feeling,” adjusting their phrasing of the words to deepen the melody.\(^6\) He worked only with singers that he knew. Matsui was Shimamura’s lover, and he had no choice but to use her in the stage productions, but after 1919, he worked almost exclusively with Satō and Fujiwara. Both artists recorded for various record companies at first, but their relationship with Nakayama seems to have been close. Satō sent him postcards when she was in New York making recordings.\(^7\) Both Satō and Fujiwara travelled with him regularly throughout Japan as he composed, and performed songs with him on stage and for recordings.

\(^5\) Hosokawa, *Aesthetics of Recorded Sound*, 58.
\(^7\) Ibid., 330.
When he wrote songs, he wrote them with these singers and a specific sound in mind. The idea that his songs would be set down on record, permanently fixed, seems to have appealed to Nakayama. He was perfect for the new world of *kayōkyoku*. He wanted to reach large audiences, and recorded music was more capable of that than live performances or sheet music sales. He was willing to travel in order to write more songs to publicize himself and his work. By the 1920s Nakayama was probably the most famous musician in Japan. His songs outsold other popular sheet music collections, and his record sales dominated the market. He loved popular music, and did not feel hemmed in by its lack of sophistication or its identification with low culture. He was not at all put off by the idea of using Western musical instruments and rules to write songs that appealed to the large audiences he desired.

*Shin Min’yō* As the Voice of Japan

Chapter Four introduced *shin min’yō* and the artists and writers who created this genre of nostalgic music. Nakayama’s *kayōkyoku* tune “Gondora no uta” was the epitome of a modern song. In contrast, his *shin min’yō* sounded old and rural. The irony was that despite differences between *shin min’yō* and *kayōkyoku*, including musical organization, market orientation, instrumentation and lyrical focus, Nakayama’s *shin min’yō* songs were as much a part of Japan’s modernity as his *kayōkyoku*. He put into practice Izawa’s notion that the combination of Western and Japanese music would create a new hybrid that suited both Japan and modernity. In his 1935 autobiographical sketch for *Chūō kōron* he said as much:

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8 Ibid., 319.

In Tanizaki Jun’ichiro’s *The Makioka Sisters* there is a phrase that goes: “on the day the Ōgai department store becomes a limited liability company, the head clerk is promoted to executive and changes from wearing a *hakama* to a suit, his dockside language changes to standard Japanese, but it seems his disposition does not match the lofty corporate position, it matches the life of a shelf stocker [From Chūō Kōron].”

This phrase applies to the culture of an Osaka department store around Showa 10 (1935) but, still today, in certain places you can still see this kind of culture. In other words, it is possible to say we can see in what we might call modernized Japan the remains of feudalism.

As for me, one of the important things that remains to preserve this kind of “shop servant” mentality is, I think, Japanese popular songs.  

He appears to have recognized that there was no such thing as music for the masses. Thus he combined Japanese and Western music in different ways, for resulting song genres that served the needs of different, though overlapping audiences. “*Gondora no uta,*” provided music that exemplified the ideas behind the early Meiji slogan *bunmei kaika* (civilization and enlightenment), which assumed that modernization was both progressive and necessarily Western in content and direction. Listening to it meant embracing the ideals of modernization, global interconnectedness, capitalism, and industrialization. It meant the tacit acceptance of Japan’s new position in the modern world. However, Nakayama’s own view of popular song was more likely in line with another Meiji era slogan popularized after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05): *wakon-yōsai* (Japanese Spirit, Western Technology). Nakayama’s goals appear to have resonated with the call by poet Ueda Bin to create a new national music for Japan, and to do so he employed the philosophy of Izawa Shūji. “*Gondora no uta*” was certainly Western. *Shin min’yō* was Western, but pretended to be Japanese.

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11 This idea was a Meiji era abbreviation for an idea proposed by the late Tokugawa period *rangaku* (Dutch Studies) scholar Sakuma Shōzan’s (1811-1864) prescription for modernization, "*tōyō dōtoku seiyō gakugei*” (Eastern ethics, Western technical learning).
The question is this: Was such pretense visible during Nakayama’s lifetime? That is, though he must have understood that he was writing songs according to Western music theory, did he and others see the implications of writing Japanese music in Western form? Were the music industry, critics, and listeners aware of the powerful change that Nakayama made in the name of the Japanese folk? They developed an active interest in shin min’yō as a genre. Nakayama, his collaborators, and the record companies built a partnership in which all actively worked to identify, serve, and develop a group of consumers to which such songs could be sold.

Even while he was creating modern songs for modern, urban Japan, Nakayama made numerous serious efforts to revive Japanese “traditional” music and the importance of rural Japan to the modern nation by writing popular songs that evoked nostalgia for a disappearing past. He had a specific method for creating shin min’yō songs.

While staying at an old guest house called the Tsuki Atami, he wrote “Atami bushi” (Atami melody) with Saijō Yaso, along with “Hyōgo minyō” (Hyōgo folk song), “Takamatsu kouta” (Takamatsu tune), and “Okayama kouta” (Okayama tune). When writing these types of songs, he would often meet with the local newspaper to find out what local community and business plans had the paper’s enthusiastic support, then write the song based on that meeting. When it was finished, he would announce it to local leaders, meeting with them locally at least twice. He paid close attention to local traditional songs, and to the music that people in the area liked, and tried to understand local culture, problems, and lifestyles to see what kind of new song might be necessary.¹²

He made, as we saw in the last chapter, numerous tours of rural Japan to uncover village songs, and use them to write new village songs that could be popular in a modern national sense, rather than as local. The other part of his method meant that travel to rural areas was even more necessary in the creation of shin min’yō songs. Nakayama Urō says that “when Shimpei created

¹² Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 328.
*chihō shin min’yō*, he always used the traditional songs of that region as a reference. There’s no doubt Shimpei heard “Ohara bushi” 小原節 (Ohara tune) and “Hanya bushi” ハンヤ節 (Hanyang tune) from local geisha.” He tried to use Japan’s diverse musical heritage by collecting songs from wide-ranging contexts in villages all over Japan, and bringing them together using Western music to create a unified tradition. To do this, he had to travel frequently. He made tours of Japan at least once every year, bestowing songs on rural communities and performing groups. His tours also took him to Korea and to Taiwan in 1927. Just as Miriam Silverberg has said about the *moga* phenomenon mentioned earlier in this dissertation, Nakayama’s songs sounded and looked Western, but they did not follow a Western trajectory. In a way, it appears that Nakayama was trying to act as a kind of musical curator, preserving what he could of local traditional songs by encasing them in a more or less Western framework that could be preserved because of its marketability, but also froze the preserved “folk” elements in time. The problem with this interpretation of Nakayama’s motives in creating *shin min’yō* songs is within the market itself. Nakayama’s songs were not simply recorded versions of rural folk music. They were much more than that, and aimed at selling products, be they the songs or the attractions of the rustic rural areas that the songs lionized.

The creation of “Suzaka kouta” discussed in the last chapter, turns out to have been one for the record books. “Suzaka kouta,” sponsored by local thread mills in Suzaka, a town near Nakayama’s own *furusato*, romanticized life as a woman mill worker in rural Japan. After this, whenever he toured Japan, civic groups, from local governments to booster clubs and local folk music organizations engaged Nakayama to write songs memorializing local geography and

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13 Ibid., 333. “Hanya bushi” was a song inspired by Hanyang University in Korea.

14 Ibid., 323.
economic activities. Immediately following “Suzaka kouta,” for example, Nakayama penned “Iizaka kouta” 飯坂小唄 (Iizaka tune) on commission from an Iizaka (Nagano prefecture) hot spring resort. In exchange for this the hot springs resort in Iizaka, invited Nakayama and his family to come and enjoy the hot springs. During that stay, he unveiled the new song in a live concert. He did not create either “Suzaka kouta,” nor “Iizaka kouta” for the consumption of local folk music fans. Rather, he wrote them as advertisements to a new class of urban residents who worked in factories and businesses in major cities such as Tokyo, Osaka, and even in regional metropolitan hubs. The tie-up between business and popular music became an important marketing tool even during the early development of the record industry. These songs rarely referred to specific geographical features in any detail, but instead referred to them in vague, general terms like, “that mountain.” This imprecision indicates that he meant them for consumption by listeners not familiar with specific features of any one area, but rather emotionally attached to the idea of rural Japan.

The writing of “Habu no minato” provides specific evidence of the reality that urban markets were in fact the target of shin min'yō songs. When he wrote the words to “Habu no minato,” poet and frequent Nakayama collaborator Noguchi Ujō had never visited the fishing village of Habu. He wrote the lyrics with a vague awareness of the location of the island on which Habu is located, and a picture postcard in view. Thus it came to be that one of the most famous shin min’yō songs describes the sunset over the harbor of a coastal town viewed from a postcard. Noguchi did not know that the real harbor of Habu faced east, so the sun never set there. The romance was lost unless a listener choses to imagine it as Noguchi’s romantic fiction described it: “Pelicans on the rocky shore go home at sunset/ In the Harbor of Habu the sun sets/ red in the distance /Tomorrow will be a beautiful day.” Noguchi said he was embarrassed by this
error when he went to visit the island after the release of the record. However, there was no outcry from listeners about the inaccuracy of the words. The people who bought the record had perhaps even less idea than Noguchi about the geography of the island and the location of the village. They were interested because of the romance of the unfamiliar as familiar.

They wanted a taste of Japanese tradition, and they found it in a song whose origins were as inauthentic as it was possible to be. Most shin min’yō were this kind of audio postcard. Their lyricists talked about rural places to which the majority of listeners were foreign. They described bucolic rural fantasies to busy urban residents who longed for space and history, who wanted an escape from the modern city. Composers and lyricists who wrote these songs, like Nakayama and Ujō, were not usually residents of the places about which they wrote. The songs often came from local tunes that the composer heard during a brief visit, with melodies modified to fit the Western musical notation and instrumentation that was comprehensible to urban residents. The words to the local songs, often baudy or boring, and too specific about local conditions and people to interest any outsider, had to be changed to fit market needs. Such songs were foreign to Japanese urban residents in the same way that kayōkyoku were foreign. They came from an exotic culture that their listeners could only experience vicariously through the music. They were interesting because they were about rural Japan. To listeners these songs seemed to partake of the essence of Japanese culture.

Such assumptions came from a kind of archaeology of folk music in which producers, heavily influenced by the German “volk” movement, first created the idea of folk music as a universal truth of human cultural behavior. They then exhumed the shards of redefined local songs, rebuilding them on a scaffolding of modern music, in order to create a semblance of ‘tradition,’ that they then claimed to be real. The cherry on the top of the cake came in the fact
that many of these songs were given as gifts to rural locales or groups claiming to represent cultural truth in rural locations – a presentation of a new traditional song to represent the long history of a local area, and connect it to the Japanese nation through standardization.

Today the genre called *enka* reigns in the position of the most essentially Japanese popular song style. It was not always so. In Nakayama’s time, *shin min’yō* occupied the same cultural position that *enka* does today. The themes of *enka* today are tears, melancholy, unrequited love, painful duty to family, culture, and nation, and lonely nights drinking in small back-alley bars. These are stand-ins for the cultural nostalgia indicated in *shin min’yō* songs by images of mountains, hot springs, fields of flowers, and fishing ports. Contemporary *enka* has adopted *shin min’yō* and expanded to fit these old songs within the new paradigm of nostalgia. The signifiers are different, but the signifieds remains the same – a longing for an old Japan that is little more than an invention of tradition to suit the nostalgic tastes of listeners and composers. Just as 1930s composer Kōga Masao borrowed stylistic ideas from Korean, Chinese and Western music to create his essential Japanese sound, so, too, did Nakayama Shimpei borrow from foreign cultures in Japan’s rural areas to create *shin min’yō*. Today, Nakayama’s name attached to music, the artificial genre known as Shimpei Bushi, has become a signifier for a kind of Japanese old time music that is seen as real, traditional, and completely indigenous.

In 1952, the year of his death, Nakayama received a lifetime achievement award for services to Japanese folk music from the Japan Folk Music Society, despite the fact that none of the songs he composed was ever more than superficially related to any local music in any part of Japan.\(^{15}\) For his touring of the countryside to hear the traditional songs of various localities, he was celebrated in the same way as Yanagita Kunio. There is no evidence that he ever cataloged the

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 353.
local songs that he heard, and the songs he wrote on his rural tours were all either for market purposes, or to provide advertising for local industries and businesses, but he is seen as a collector of the Japanese folk tradition like Atsutane and Yanagita. Audiences, both rural and urban, appreciated his songs and accepted the subterfuge that there was something essentially Japanese inscribed into the music and the words of his shin min’yō songs.

The idea that such songs would be popular could not have been a great leap for Nakayama and his record company, Nippon Victor. Record sales in the early Meiji and Taishō periods clearly favored recordings of “traditional” style songs in general. Until 1914, when Orient released “Katyusha no uta,” popular songs (hayariuta) were rarely recorded. This is consistent with early record markets worldwide. In the United States, for example, the first and largest record market, early recordings were not of contemporary popular songs but music deemed worthy of preservation, especially classical music, and opera. Both Victor and RCA sent recording technicians to various parts of the world to record traditional music for posterity.16 In Japan, of 625 individual records produced in the Meiji Period, 205 were recordings of Gidayu Bushi. Another 74 were of kouta performances and 61 were Naniwa Bushi.17 These recordings of music styles from the Edo period and earlier dominated record manufacturing and sales until “Katyusha no uta.” The market for older Japanese music was strong from the beginning of the recording industry.

With shin min’yō, Nakayama and Nippon Victor were simply hitching themselves to this popularity, and to the modern music market that “Katyusha no uta” created in 1914. By combining the two to create shin min’yō, they found a formula that suited many of their needs.

Shin min’yō reached a new and growing group of consumers. It was modern, relatively easy to record, and new songs were easy to generate, leading to an ever-growing revenue stream. It spoke to common people about their lives, one of Nakayama’s personal goals, and it provided him with a solid income. Shin min’yō was both a cultural and a business success. Because of this success, today, Japanese see Nakayama as a purveyor of Japanese essence on a par with such American musical icons as Stephen Foster (1826-1854) and Cole Porter (1891-1964). The comparison with Foster is particularly apt. Although they lived a century and an ocean apart and dealt with a different technological landscape and business model, Nakayama faced many challenges that echo those with which Foster dealt.18

Just as was the case in Stephen Foster’s United States, Japan in Nakayama’s time was experiencing an industrial revolution and related demographic changes. Industrialism required more factory workers and tended over time to concentrate industry in or near the cities. Workers moved from the countryside into cities such as Osaka, Tokyo, Fukushima, and Sendai. Like the United States, Japan’s urban society became more diverse, including a greater percentage of people from the periphery of society who migrated into cities looking for employment, or whose

18 Ken Emerson, *Doo-Dah! : Stephen Foster and the Rise of American Popular Culture* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 183. One of Foster's greatest contributions to American music was his use of African American styles. William W. Austin notes that, like Beethoven’s use of the waltz, Foster’s incorporation of African rhythms and melodies into his music was the “adoption of a new, foreign rhythm” that created a new fashion. Nakayama, likewise, was one of the small group of modern musicians in Japan who were incorporating Western music into their compositions. The result of his hybridization was songs like “Katyusha no uta,” and “Gondora no uta” that, like Foster’s “Ethiopian Songs,” created a new kind of popular song in Japan. Similar to Foster’s American-sounding songs in the United States, Nakayama’s songs were easy to sing, sounded Japanese, and talked about the experiences of regular people. Just as Stephen Foster held a day job as a desk clerk in a shipping business, Nakayama held a day job as a music teacher. For both, experiences in the world of business and education shaped their understanding of the people for whom they wrote music. Neither ever showed the slightest interest in becoming classical music composers, or indeed, doing any music except popular songs. Both frequently used as their subjects those members of their society who existed on the margins, mired in poverty, having the most difficulty adjusting to modernity. For Foster, those subjects were slaves and former slaves. For Nakayama, they were farmers and rural workers in the transportation or textile industries.
family positions made it impossible for them to succeed in village society. More and more, cities included society’s bureaucratic class and the educated and business elites and expanding numbers of middle and working class people. Most of the latter were new arrivals in the cities. As migrants they brought with them culture and habits from their rural origins. They tended to settle in neighborhoods that were made up of others from the same village or town. In their attempts to maintain their own cultural traditions they performed local folk songs and participated in traditional events from their places of origin, bringing rural culture to the cities.

Like Foster in the United States, Nakayama wrote songs for these people. His shin min’yō audience particularly was composed of urban transplants two or three generations removed from their rural ancestors. They consequently had little knowledge of what the furusato was like. He gave them songs that fed their sense of belonging to the country, but did so from the point of view of city residents with little experience in any specific rural context.

The advent of recorded music in Nakayama’s Japan made him wealthy and famous. The new technology in the industry in Nakayama’s lifetime was the record player, but music publishing as an industry was not much better organized than it had been in Foster’s United States. Sheet music publishers and record companies regularly distributed the same songs,

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19 Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 159. Tokyo's population rose by between 40,000 and 60,000 individuals each year between 1898 and 1907. In Osaka over the same period, growth averaged between 20,000 and 40,000 individuals per year. In 1908 nearly 5% of the population of Japan lived in Tokyo.


21 Emerson, 175-183. Foster and Nakayama also shared the experience of working as full time composers within a modernizing distribution system. In Stephen Foster’s time, music was printed and distributed by a growing group of professional music publishing houses. Such companies created and fed a new market for published popular songs. In the beginning, as with Nakayama roughly a century later, music publishers found their product in the public domain. They transcribed and published popular songs that already existed. As new songs became necessary, they purchased songs from amateur composers or performers, usually for a one-time fee. One of the skills that Foster had to learn was how to negotiate contracts with these firms, and how to prevent them from using his music without paying him. In Foster’s life time the United States lacked copyright laws. He had to learn to monitor a new music.
often without paying royalties to composers. Records of the same songs, even with the same singers, but distributed simultaneously by multiple record companies, commonly appeared on Japanese shelves in the 1920s. To control the copyright of his songs, and corral the revenues from them, Nakayama learned to deal with an evolving contract system that record companies set up to provide them with exclusive access to artists and their products. He signed with Nippon Victor. This created for him a mechanism for control of his music (exclusive rights to publish and distribute) and to manage the income from the music in the form of royalties from Victor. In return, Nakayama agreed to record only for Victor, and to act as a mentor for new composers, singers, and instrumentalists. In short, although the system was instituted by Benjamin Gardener, the American president of Nippon Victor at its founding, it operated much like the older Japanese iemoto system in which a master acts as mentor for his students, helping them learn the profession and establish professional careers themselves. Nakayama also became active in the advocacy and protection of copyright for composers, eventually founding and directing an association of composers dedicated to the protection of music copyright both domestically and internationally.22

Here, again like Foster, Nakayama found it possible to leave teaching and devote all of his time to music composition with a new sense of security. As a composer for a company dedicated primarily to the production of recorded music rather than music scores, Nakayama was moving in new directions for the industry. It was his job to imagine the way his songs should sound, and

distribution system with pre-modern technology in order to claim royalties. Foster, for example, never had a means by which he could independently verify the number of sheets of a particular song a publisher had sold, and so had no way to verify that he was being fairly paid. Despite this, he was the first American to become a full time composer of popular songs.21 The United States’ growing music publishing and distribution system made his songs available in sufficient quantities and at sufficiently low cost that Foster could survive for fourteen years without a separate “day job.” **

22 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 317.
to orchestrate that sound in the studio. His son Urō wrote of how carefully Nakayama gave instructions on his music scores for proper singing style, pronunciation, and instrumental technique. This is likely because he heard them in his own head as he wanted the recording to sound. Urō noted two songs produced in February 1923 for which Nakayama went so far as to instruct those who purchased his sheet music to listen to the record in order to learn to sing it correctly.

He published both “Tabibito no uta” (The Traveller’s Song) and “Koi ha inochi yo” (Love is Life) but notes in the sheet music for the latter encouraged people to “not trust only the sheet music, but like a sparrow, reference the record as well.” The record was released at the same time as the sheet music by Nittō Chikuonki Shōkai. 23

“Koi ha inochi yo” 恋は命よ was also the first record in which Nakayama used a shamisen. Like a record producer who expects to retain control over the sound of his final product, rather than a music publisher, who has no control over the way artists perform the songs on sheet music, Nakayama was a dictator. His production talent combined with Gardener’s business model made Nippon Victor one of the top three record companies in Japan before the Second World War.

Songs were manufactured for a large market, and composers and lyricists became part of the production process. Record companies, rather than simply distributors of products created by others, gained more control of their raw materials (composers and their songs). Composers and lyricists gained marketing and distribution machines that helped to identify the downstream markets and encouraged them to write songs for groups of people not yet buying records. 24 As with Foster, new technology in production and distribution of popular music was the primary

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23Ibid., 319.

24Ibid., 317. Nippon Polydor, along with Nippon Victor, were formed in 1927 to capitalize on increasing music sales in Japan. The parent company of Nippon Polydor was Deutsche Polydor, which fully owned its Japanese subsidiary. Nakamura and Dolan, “Early Pop Song Writers,” 266-67.
means by which Nakayama came to have such a large impact on Japan’s modern culture. The fact that Nakayama became a producer, and joined Benjamin Gardener’s stable system indicates the degree to which his interests ran parallel with those of Nippon Victor. By joining with the record company, Nakayama insinuated himself into the production process in part to control the sound of his music, but also to exploit Victor’s marketing and distribution capability.

Touring for Treasure

Beginning in 1923, Nakayama began his celebrated tours of rural Japan. He went to hear the music of the villages. His tours were really a combination of a search for inspiration for new songs, and marketing junkets meant to sell songs or country tours to city dwellers. Local shipping companies, for instance, would pay for a tour of the Inland Sea with the express desire that the trip would inspire a song that they could use for marketing purposes.\(^\text{25}\) During these tours, Nakayama listened to local songs and sounds, and used them to create new shin min’yō tunes. Often the new songs came to him on the spot. At other times, he required significant periods to gestate new songs. Often, during his visits to villages he promised to write a song in honor of the village and its surrounding area. He would then present the song to the village, or the local school, on his next tour through the area. Such songs became authentic village songs because of the fact that Nakayama dedicated them to the local area. In most cases, their musical and lyrical content had no historical connection to music or poetry of the village itself. The simple dedication did the trick. In other words, Nakayama used local sounds and sights as inspiration, and raw material, for creating his shin min’yō. Such mimetic compositions added weight to the double identity of Japan as both modern and traditional. *Shin min’yō*

complemented kayōkyoku. By opposing the urban modern kayōkyoku songs with songs that pretended to be rural and traditional, shin min’yō provided a sense that Japan was not simply Westernizing, but that it was modernizing according to Japanese cultural preferences. For this, new songs were necessary. Songs such as Nakayama’s shin min’yō tune “Sunayama” 砂山 (Sand Dune) of 1924, written with Noguchi Ujō, give a clear sense of the local atmosphere created for the urban gaze.

Umi ha araumi The sea is a stormy sea
Mukō ha Sadō yo Over there is Sado
Suzume nake nake Sparrows call, call
mō hi ha kureta The day is already done
Minna yobe yobe Call, call everyone,
o hoshisama deta zo The stars have come out!

Kurerya sunayama At sunset, a sand dune
Shionari bakari Like Mt. Shionari
Suzume chirijiri The sparrows are restless,
mata kaze areru The wind is stormy again
Minna chirijiri Everyone is restless,
Mō daremo mienu Already no one can see

Kaero Let’s go home,
kaero yo Let’s all go home now
Kumatabara wakete Through a field of kumata
Suzume sayōnara Goodbye, sparrows!
sayōnara ashita Goodbye…see you tomorrow
umiyosayōnara Goodbye, sea.
sayōnara ashita Goodbye, see you tomorrow.

Sunayama (Sand Dune), 1924

26 Showa Ryūkōkashi, 36.
In contrast to “Gondora no uta,” this song uses scenes of nature rather than modernity. The image of the Japan sea coast, and Sado Island, came with a number of connotations that people heard as evocative of tradition and Japanese cultural essentials. The Japan Sea coast was one of the most isolated parts of the empire in 1924, and certainly one of the coldest in winter. The loneliness of the sparrow’s call, and the setting of the song at sunset conjure the feeling of an ending. The birds and the people referred to in the song all feel restless. The sparrows, the stormy sea, and the sunset are indicators that it is time to go home. On its surface, “Sunayama” is all about a specific rural geographical location. A little scrutiny shows that the song has no grounding in a specific location. The reference to Sado island could be made from almost any point on the central part of the west coast of Honshu. The sparrows and stars give no information on specific location, and the sand dune itself is like Mt. Shionari, but not necessarily located near it. The vague references to the Japan Sea coast and the end of any given day were enough to evoke nostalgia for a natural setting without limiting the market for this nostalgia to any specific group of rural immigrants to the city. Anyone could listen to this song and pine for nearly any beach in Japan. The song is modern, but unlike “Gondora no uta,” its modernity is revealed in nostalgia for images coded as rustic and old.

The song that might be classified as the first shin min'yō tune was “Sasurai no uta,” with lyrics provided by Kitahara Hakushū. Like “Sunayama,” in this song Kitahara and Nakayama made nature, rather than the modern city, their subject. If love and the modern girl were the foundational images in “Gondora no uta,” nature and open space characterized the imagery in “Sasurai no uta.” Curiously, although the song was classified as shin min’yō, it references not the premodern Japanese countryside, but romanticizes the continental emptiness of Manchuria and
the Eastern part of the Russian empire. Although the images themselves are as non-specific as those of most later shin min 'yō songs, the general geographical reference is obvious.

Ikō ka modoru ka ōrora no shita de
Roshiya ha kita no kuni hateshirazu
Nishi ha yūyake higashi ha yōake
Let’s go, let’s go back beneath the Aurora
Russia is a northern land, limitless
While the sun sets in the West, the East sees
sunrise

Suzu ga narimasu nakazora ni
Naku nya akarushi isogeba kurashi
Tōi tōka mo chira chira to
The sound of bells carries in the empty sky
It’s too bright to cry, too dark to hurry
a faraway light flickers
stop the wagon,
take a rest, black horse

Tomare horobasha
yasumeyo kuroba yo
It’s not as if there will be no road to travel
tomorrow

Ashita no tabiji ga naijanashi
Moyuru omoi wo kōya ni sarashi
burning memories bleached by the vast
snowy wasteland

Uma ha shyohōki no ue wo fumu
the horse walks through crusted snow

Hito ha tsunetashi wagami ha itoshi
People are cold I am in a pitiable state

Machi no sakaba ha mada tōishi
a town with a bar is still a long way off
Watashya mizukusa
kaze fuku mama ni
Nagare nagarete hateshirazu
Hiru ha tabi shite
yoru ha yoru de odori
Ura ha izuku de hateruyara

I am like marsh grass
blown in the wind
drifting, carried by the current endlessly
in the daytime we travel,
at night we dance
In the end we will die there exhausted

Sasurai no uta (The Wanderer’s Song), 1917

Images of northern places, desolate landscapes, loneliness, a journey that never ends were common in shin min’yō. “Sasurai no uta” uses these images to create a sense that culture and history have been lost. These images are not the images in Nakayama’s kayōkyoku songs. This is no modern fantasy. Against the red lips of the moga in “Gondora no uta,” Nakayama and Kitahara juxtaposed a wagon and a tired black horse to pull it. Against love, there is loneliness and an unimaginably large, desolate landscape, from which the only escape, a town bar, is so far away that it requires a journey through the snow. If the object of desire in “Gondora no uta” was the modern young woman, in “Sasurai no uta,” it was the feeble light flickering in the distance. No song could have achieved a greater opposition to the attitudes of the modern urban culture of the big cities than “Sasurai no uta.” Even the location, foreign though it was, did not carry the connotations of the modern industrial West, but the feeling of the vast, desolate daichi (great land) of the Russian and Manchurian steppes. This song is consistent with the battles that Kitahara Hakushū conducted with modernity in his own life. It reflects Nakayama’s desire to speak to the people about their situation. “Sasurai no uta” is a modern escapist dream, valorizing the rural, the traditional, the old, and the natural in juxtaposition with the modernizing culture of Japan in the Taishō era.

27 Ibid., 28.
Why, in a song accessing longing for the Japanese past and the Japanese countryside did references to the Russian steppe fit the bill? Historically, there are some important connections that may provide access to the meaning signified in “Sasurai no uta.” The first of these is the Russo-Japanese War. In this war, Russia and Japan fought over control of Korea and access to Manchuria’s rich natural resources. Historians argue over whether Japan’s victory in this war indicates the end of the Meiji period in a cultural sense. Attitudes of Japanese toward the nation, their government, the economy, and leisure seem to have undergone a tectonic shift beginning during or just after 1905. Japanese were rethinking their ideas about the status of government jobs as opposed to employment in business, experimenting with new leisure activities, experiencing economic shifts, and evincing a growing interest in democratic politics. Historians identify these changes as the social context that characterized the Taisho period (1912-1926). I will not argue a case either way in this chapter. However, there does seem to be an importance to the image of Russia and the great northern steppe in “Sasurai no uta.” There is also no argument that the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on culture and the economy was large. In 1905, for example, when the Treaty of Portsmouth ended the war officially, people in major cities across Japan rioted angrily in the streets, destroying police boxes, vandalizing buildings and public parks, in anger. It seems, according to historian Okamoto Shūhei, that they wished to continue the war.

Victory in the war validated Japan’s status as a modernizing state in ways that shocked the world. Russia, considered one of the world’s most powerful states, had been expected to defeat Japan handily. Instead, Japanese soldiers performed surprisingly well from the point of view of the Western powers. They showed discipline, courage, fighting skill, and an uncanny ability to take heavy losses and continue the fight. Their equipment was exceptionally good, and their
naval tactics and gunnery proved to be on a par with the best navies of the Western world. The defeat of Russia in 1905 was in a sense Japan’s global coming-of-age party. Japanese subjects hoped to press their advantage further. In the international vernacular of the day, conquest of territory meant the creation of empire. To create an empire on the continent at the expense of a European Great Power meant tremendous gains in Japan’s international prestige. It also meant access to raw materials, farmland, a source of labor, taxes, and new markets – in short, all of the accoutrements of empire. When the government announced the end of the war, therefore, Japanese, not recognizing that Japan’s treasury was empty and the war thus no longer a viable option, expressed their opinion publicly through riots.  

Shin Min’yō and Edokko: Linking the City to the Countryside  
Perhaps the most conspicuous modern overtone in Nakayama’s music came with the film Tokyo kōshinkyoku. This is also the clearest link between Nakayama’s kayōkyoku and his shin min’yō songs. Nakayama wrote the song “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” as the theme song for a 1929 film by Nikkatsu based on a novel serialized in the popular magazine Kingu. Nikkatsu asked Saijō Yaso to create the lyrics, and Nakayama to write the music. Mizoguchi Kenji directed.  

The film starred Natsukawa Shizue 夏川静江 as Michiyo, a working-class girl living with her uncle in the slums of Tokyo. Returning from work one evening, Michiyo discovers that her uncle is considering selling her to a geisha house in order to clear his debts. In a dream sequence, her long-dead mother warns her not to become a geisha because the hearts of men are treacherous. The mother’s ghost worries that Michiyo will be used and cast aside as she was.

28 Okamoto, "The Emperor and the Crowd," 258.
The next day a pair of wealthy friends playing tennis in a park above Michiyo’s slum accidentally see her as she contemplates her situation. Fujimoto Yoshiki, son of a banker and business owner, falls in love with Michiyo. After some years have passed, we discover that Michiyo has in fact become a geisha named Orie, and works at a place called the Flower Garden, which is owned by Yoshiki’s father. The father makes advances toward Orie/Michyo, and offers her a diamond ring, which she refuses as she runs away from him. Later, Yoshiki, at a company party at the Flower Garden, sees Orie/Michyo, and remembers her. He eventually proposes to her. Yoshiki’s father tells him the marriage is impossible. Then he calls Orie/Michyo and tells her the marriage cannot happen, revealing that he had an affair with a geisha in his own youth, and that Orie/Michiyo is the child of that union.

Revealed as Yoshiki’s sister, Orie/Michyo recognizes the impossibility of their marriage, and both she and Yoshiki are distraught. Yoshiki’s best friend, and fellow banker Sakuma Yukichi proposes marriage instead. Yoshiki, tortured by the union of Orie/Michyo and Sakuma, decides to leave on a world tour. As Sakuma and Orie/Michyo come to the ship to see him off, it is clear that she is still in love with Yoshiki as well. However, she will do her duty as a wife, never again admitting to any such feelings.

The plot is a classic tale of a love triangle complicated by duty and hidden family relationships. It can easily be classified as melodrama, though it was also groundbreaking in terms of its story and cinematography. The contrasts between the existence of Michiyo, Tokyo factory girl, and Orie, geisha, are almost too numerous to name. In Michiyo’s world, home is an inner city slum. Orie exists in a world of parties and social gatherings held by the cream of society. Michiyo works in a factory, while Orie works as a geisha in a nice establishment frequented by the rich. Michiyo is a modern girl. Like the café waitresses in the movie, she is
poor, but somewhat free to choose her future. Orie is a traditional geisha, beautiful and pampered, but owned by the Flower Garden, obliged to go where she is told, and dress in pre-modern clothing and hairstyles. The contrast is not accidental. In the scene in which Yoshiki’s father is brooding over Orie’s rejection of his advances and his gift, actor Takagi Eiji 高木英二 (1896-1942?) is shown sitting below a pair of antlers on the wall, then the frame centers on his shadow on the floor, which looks uncannily like the silhouette of a samurai with antlers on his helmet. In these and more ways, *Tokyo Kōshinkyoku* is a study in the contrasts of the modern city: businessmen as samurai, factory workers as peasants who owe even their daughters to the upper class in return for benevolent payment. Mizoguchi’s statement had to do with the ambiguity of modernity, and the idea that while the names and titles of individuals change, the story of class difference, abuse of power by the wealthy, and an ironic love triangle remains the same.

Nakayama and Saijō’s song was also groundbreaking, but, on the surface at least, a celebration of the modern city, with little ambiguity. Saijō, a Tokyo native, was urban, modern, and interested in class, industrial society, and business. He had been writing song lyrics as a sideline for some time when he received the offer from Nikkatsu. After accepting, he decided that as his earlier lyrics had not earned much popularity, he would stop following the rules and conventions of poetic language. In his own admission, he made the words as vulgar as possible when writing “‘Tokyo Kōshinkyoku.”’ The themes of the song are different from those of the movie. The song is jaunty, and the verses provide a kind of tour of Tokyo.

*Mukashi koishii  Ginza no yanagi*  
*Once upon a time, darling at the Ginza willow tree*

*Adana toshima wo dare ka shiro*  
*A mean old woman that nobody knows*

*Jazu de odotte rikyuru de fukete*  
*Danced to jazz and sat up all night with liquor*

*Akerya dansa no namidaame*  
*And at dawn saw the dancer’s rain of tears*
At the romantic Marunouchi Building, somewhere near that window
There’s a man who’s writing while he’s crying
The rose he found during rush hour
At least reminds him of that girl

Wide Tokyo made narrow by love
In busy Asakusa a secret tryst
You on the subway, me on the bus
Love never stops

Should we go to the movies?
Should we go for tea?
Or rather, escape on the Odakyū line
to strange Shinjuku
that Musashino
department store where we can view the moon?

Modern Tokyo is the main character in this song. Starting with the famous willow of Ginza, the center of Jazu kissa ジャズ喫茶 (Jazz coffee shops) where moga from the wrong side of the tracks gained a reputation as loose women waiting tables for tips or dancing with men for money in dance halls.

Categorization of popular music emphasized the differentiation between urban culture and rural culture. Sonobe Saburō has said that “[a]t the end of Taishō, city culture and rural culture were divided from each other…” The late Taishō and early Shōwa Japanese tended to think of Japanese cultural geography in terms of three distinct categories. There was

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29 Showa Ryūkōkashi, 48.
30 Sonobe, Nihon Minshū Kayō Shiron, 96.
metropolitan culture, the culture of the small rural cities, and farm village culture. These styles also dictated categorization of popular songs as belonging to one or the other particular geographical categories. Such categories quickly hardened into nationally used terminology that defined musical genre by geographical classification. Such a system probably helped record companies to define target markets for various songs. However, the categories were themselves quite arbitrary. Sonobe points out that, “shin min ’yō did not come from the countryside to the city, but was a phenomenon that came from the city to the country.” The popularity vector was from the urban areas to the rural, and Sonobe links this to the way in which new markets for popular culture products spread in Japan. The evidence he gives is the fact that shin min ’yō songs were frequently based on riyō created in the cities. The popularity of riyō seichō in urban newspapers such as the Yorozu Chōhō attests at least to the reality that such newly invented poems about the countryside were being created in the cities, as discussed in the last chapter. In fact, Sonobe goes so far as to connect this with an overall trend in which rural Japan was infected with capitalist culture, and that in turn undermined the traditional culture of villages and sped the decline of rural society.

Ironically, the creation of a new form of music (folk music) that lionized rural life provided a vector for the destruction of the rural villages it claimed to support. Such a divided cultural situation, and the rural blight that it entailed, are not just after-the-fact observations by cultural critics. In its compilation of Showa era popular songs, the Asahi Shimbun published accounts of popular song-related memories from readers who lived in the 1920s and 1930s. One of these

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid., 100.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
accounts, titled “Chigomage no shōjo to ‘Tokyo kōshinkyoku’” (稚児髷の少女と「東京行進曲’ (“Tokyo kōshinkyoku” and the girl with the chigomage hairstyle) reveals that Sonobe’s critique has some basis in reality. Written around 1976 by a 53-year-old industrial designer from Tokyo named Hashimoto Kanjurō (1923-?), the account begins with some of the words to the first verse of Nakayama’s “Tokyo Kōshinkyoku:”

“Mukashi koishi Ginza no yanagi…” When I was in fifth grade, I heard a girl’s voice that I did not know. It was forty years ago now, just after the beginning of summer vacation on a hot afternoon. We lived just outside of Tokyo, but our station was so small that the number of cars per train was very few, and there were fields, small groves and trees to the northwest. Many homes out of the twenty in our village stood empty. The house just behind mine was one of those empty ones. I had recently heard a voice from one of the houses recently rented out. But the people renting that house were only an old man sick with pulmonary Tuberculosis and a middle-aged woman who took care of him. The sick man’s condition had already progressed quite far. From that house of adversity I heard an incongruous voice singing, “Ikina – to shima wodare ga shiro…” So what child was this? That’s what popped into my head. At this time, in this place that should be called a farm village, I did not expect to hear what was definitely a child’s voice singing such an adult popular song. From that moment, from a room beyond my back fence I could hear a girl’s singing voice. The song was always “mukashi koi shi, Ginza no yanagi…” (Tokyo kōshinkyoku). That girl became such a topic of conversation in the neighborhood that it reached my ears. What I heard was that the owner of the voice was the child of the sick man and his young mistress.

It was an afternoon well into summer vacation. The girl was singing the song. It was not coming from beyond the back fence, but much closer, outside my door. I threw open the front door and bolted outside. To the right, in front of my very nose, I saw the profile of a seven- or eight-year-old girl pumping water from the well and singing. It was an innocent and charming girl I had never seen before wearing a Japanese hairstyle, dressed a flower-patterned kimono and narrow, tightly wound obi tied in an unusual way. Suddenly she stopped singing. Then she silently turned to face me. “Ah,” I thought to myself. I was hit by a face that floated in the summer sun on a body that was sickly white and bore no trace of innocence. I never saw her again, but I will never forget the chigomage girl.35

In this recollection, the words and music of Nakayama’s “Tokyo Kōshinkyoku” are bound to the memory of a young girl with a traditional haircut and kimono – the kind of willowy visage

35 Showa Ryūkōkashi, 71. Since Hashimoto was born in 1923, and he was in fifth grade at the time he met the girl in the story, the event would have to have happened in 1932-1934.
that might appear in a Shūraku print. This nostalgic image combined with a memory of a hot summer in a rural village depopulated by migration to the factory districts of cities like Tokyo are juxtaposed in such a way that we can see how the author identified the song with the city, and divided the city from his rural home.

Tokyo Kōshinkyoku’s popularity led to a whole genre of songs celebrating city life. These songs were different from touring songs, which sang the praises of the city from the point of view of outsiders looking in at Tokyo for the first time. City songs were songs of local pride, extolling the virtues of living and doing business in one or another district of the city. In many ways, these were the urban equivalents of the shin min’yō songs of the countryside. With both the song and the movie, Tokyo Kōshinkyoku, made it fashionable to live in the modern urban jungle, and replaced the romanticized idea of edokko.

Let’s reject the simple analysis of popular songs as having to do with a single point of view espoused by the composer and/or lyricist. Instead, we need to use our methodology of understanding popular music as an evolving product of a cultural feedback loop. If we look at “Marunouchi Ondo” 丸の内音頭 (Marunouchi dance) in these terms, we have to analyze what the song meant to its composer and lyricist, its singer, the record company and distributors that brought the song to market, and the people who bought and listened to it.

Nakayama Shimpei wrote “Marunouchi Ondo” in response to a request from a Mr. Tomikawa 富川, owner of the Hana Tea Shop and Yūrakuchō booster, in 1932. Tomikawa wanted to do a bon odori 盆踊り (Bon festival dance) because it would be good for local business. Nakayama describes the commission as coming from a commerce perspective. “Around Shōwa 7 (1932), I was soaking in a morning bath with the head of the Tomikawa family, a Marunouchi Yūrakuchō booster and the owner of the Hana Tea Shop; he said to me that for the sake of
prosperity, once this summer we should do a **bon odori**, and from that conversation I created the “Marunouchi Ondo.”36 Tomikawa heard Nakayama’s “Tokyō kōshinkyoku,” and asked Nakayama for a song. Nakayama produced the song in order to draw customers to the Yūrakuchō area. It therefore began its life as a kind of **hayariuta**: a locally popular tune produced for performance at a specific kind of event (and in this case a specific time and place). In writing it, Nakayama did not invent a new genre. On a purely business level, he was fulfilling a contract. At the cultural level, he was writing for an urban crowd. At the level of popular music, he was writing within a tradition of songs celebrating specific places. Since the song is also a **shin min’yō**, we must also acknowledge its stylistic and lyrical debt to that genre, and to the recent history of urban **shin min’yō** created by Nakayama. This seems the full extent of the producers’ intentions. Nakayama did not mention any intention to record the song, although he did record it after a successful first performance.

The composing and success of “Marunouchi Ondo” provides a case in point for understanding the complexity of Nakayama’s professional activities at their nexus with his private beliefs. This means that it is also an example of a song whose existence is evidence of historic change. In the tense atmosphere of 1932, Nakayama, whose career was now built on lionizing the essential Japaneseess of the countryside, wrote a dance tune to entertain city folk, and used subterfuge to get around laws against public gathering in order to present that song. None of this changes the fact that he intended the song as a celebration of Japanese spirit. Despite its light-hearted nature, it was in many ways a nationalist tune. Public performance meant that the song intersected with the interests of government. In a relatively tense 1932 Tokyo, the song took on a political dimension that it was never meant to have. 1932 opened with

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the Shanghai Incident. In what amounted to attempts by the Japanese army to create an opportunity to extend Japanese control in Shanghai, pitched fighting between the Chinese 19th Route Army and the Japanese army rocked the city from January to May. Although the ceasefire brokered by the League of Nations resulted in a demilitarized zone, the end of fighting was largely due to China’s unilateral decision to stop fighting. Ultimately, the incident ended with a Japanese advantage. This, along with the fact that the commander of the Japanese expeditionary force, Yoshinori Shirakawa 白川義則 (1869-1932), lost his life to an assassin likely stoked the growing nationalism in Japan. In the international arena, 1932 also saw the founding of Manchukuo as a puppet state under Japan’s control. In Tokyo, a Keiō University student, and the daughter of a wealthy family died in a double suicide because her parents refused to give her permission to marry the man she loved. This came to be known, infamously, as the Sakadayama Shinjū 坂田山心中. Charlie Chaplin arrived to great fanfare only six days later, on May 14, even as the Shanghai incident was entering its final phase. An assassin fired the bullet that would kill Prime Minister Inukai Tsuyoshi (1855-1932) on the following day in what is known as the “May 15 Incident.” Japan was plunging into the “Valley of Darkness.”

In that same year, a great fire destroyed the Shirokiya 白木屋 Department Store in Nihonbashi, a tragedy in which fourteen customers of the store died. Many of the deaths were women who were afraid to jump to safety from the fourth floor window because they had no undergarments beneath their kimono (this calamity led to the use of new underclothing for women, later to be promoted by producers as a modern garment for a modern age of tall buildings).

The first half of 1932 was a busy, and on balance a tragic period in Japan; and yet, people wanted to dance. In such a climate, though, Nakayama and Tomikawa found that the Tokyo
police were reluctant to give permits for large public gatherings, with one exception for events in which all participants wore yukata 浴衣. This was presumably not only for the nostalgic effect (which may have played a role) but because of the difficulty in hiding weapons and protest signs inside the light cotton garments, and the near impossibility of running while wearing them.

Because of its context, then, politics became a new layer of meaning for “Marunouchi Ondo” that went beyond the intent of producers. To overcome this problem, the Hana Tea Shop began selling yukata for the bon dance. Police thus allowed the bon dance, which occurred in Tokyo’s Hibiya Park 日比谷公園 in July of 1932. It was a great success. Residents and visitors to Ginza alike became caught up in the song and the dancing. “The circle of dancers,” Nakayama Urō comments, “quickly encompassed other districts within and outside of Marunouchi, where a bon dance fever took hold,” in July of 1932.37

In this way consumers claimed the song and gave it new meaning and new popularity. The huge turnout at Hibiya Park caused record companies to take notice. In October of 1932 the city of Tokyo became the second largest city in the world by annexing adjacent rural areas, adding 20 new districts to make a total of 35. Record companies quickly capitalized on this “bon odori fever,” and the residents of Tokyo found themselves “pulled into an ondō maelstrom” by 1933.38 The popular culture feedback loop was already on its second go-a-round, and in the summer of 1933 Nippon Victor closed the loop with consumers again by offering a recording of the song retitled “Tokyo ondo” (Tokyo Dance) for sale. It was a market success, selling half a million copies in that year alone.39

37 Ibid.
38 Ibid.
39 Ibid.
In sum, “Gondora no uta,” and other Nakayama songs like it that can be categorized as *kayōkyoku*, created the market for popular music in modern Japan, but were in many ways foreign. Their foreignness appealed to the modernizing culture of the cities, where new things appeared almost daily. To be sure, it is important to recognize that modernization and industrialization in Japan, and in the music industry, were to a large degree a matter of choice. Japan was not colonized, although it did experience great pressure from outside its borders to become a part of the modern world. Still, the idea that foreign music was also Japan’s new popular music began to run into some trouble by the early 1920s. Western music was still the common denominator for popular song composers and producers in the Taishō period. To reach a large audience with a diminishing degree of understanding of any of Japan’s traditional musical styles, the common, and foreign, thread of Western musical notation and tonal structure remained essential. Still, increasingly cultural trends were toward a recovery of things Japanese, and popular songs were not immune. If anything, given the need for popular music to follow (or better, lead) the interests of its market, these songs had to find new markets, new interests, and so in many ways composers like Nakayama moved toward adding Japanese elements to their music. Nakayama included shamisen on his recording of “Sendō kouta,” for example. While he never abandoned the writing of *kayōkyoku*, he did begin to write songs that sounded more Japanese in tone and texture, and he teamed up, as we saw in the last chapter, with lyricists who were themselves searching for a modern voice that was also authentically Japanese.

That authentically Japanese voice located its origins in the *minyō* of the countryside. Rural migrants to the cities found comfort in popular songs that spoke to their longing for home. For these people, like those unhappy with modernity, the rural, agrarian nature of Tokugawa society provided a counterpoint to the modernism of Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa. That Nakayama and
other composers and lyricists would look to the countryside is not surprising given the historical context of the period from 1919 through the Great Depression. Japan’s population in this period participated in a large-scale migration from the countryside to the cities. In 1885, seventy percent of Japanese labored on farms. In 1935, only 40% still worked the land.\(^40\) Certainly many of those who stopped farming did not leave their villages, but began, as Nakayama Shimpei did, to work in the local economy at other jobs, including teaching. But, as Nakayama also did, many, perhaps even most, moved to the cities to participate in the growing industrial economy there. As young men and women left villages for jobs, those left behind found their future economic and marriage prospects limited. As for those who did migrate, the cities were exciting centers of modernization, but not all chose to go there for that reason. Many, upon arrival, or after some time, wished to go back. \textit{Shin min} ’yō played to that market.

However, we cannot so easily draw a line between city music and country music. City dwellers of all stripes, not only rural transplants, consumed this music about, and ostensibly from, the countryside. \textit{Shin min} ’yō also played to the market of urban dwellers, and metamorphosed into an urban music itself for people like the \textit{edokko} (children of Edo: people born and raised in Tokyo in families with long histories of residence there). For these people, the cities were the \textit{furusato}. They had as much pride in the history and culture of their urban neighborhoods and villagers had in their rural origins. Songs like “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” and “Tokyō ondō,” both written by Nakayama, which appealed to this urban market for local tradition were both \textit{kayōkyoku} and \textit{shin min} ’yō. \textit{Shin min} ’yō was thus not limited by geography.

With a relative decline in the importance and income of the agricultural sector, the increased economic power and population in urban areas made them powerful centers of cultural, social, and political trends. Ironically, this tended to lead to a nostalgia for a less complicated and less crowded time and place. The overpopulation of the cities, great income disparity visible everywhere, and lack of deep personal and family connections meant that urban residents increasingly felt that they had lost connection to tradition, family, and support networks.

Farmers, on the other hand, felt overburdened and abandoned. Their relative economic importance was in decline. Hayami has shown that on average the cost of providing food for a Japanese family declined from sixty percent of the household budget to just over thirty percent between 1885, when government statistics first became available, and 1930. Farmers may have been producing more food with less labor, but their economic power was not increasing along with their efficiency. Villages saw young people drain away in large numbers. After the Russo-Japanese war, the Army sent veterans back to their home villages to start boys’ clubs that operated as recruitment centers, and successfully provided as many new soldiers from the countryside as the army needed.

What the Critics Said

There is unfortunately little record of popular music criticism as a profession during the period before the Second World War. There are records from magazine and newspaper articles, journalists’ polls of people on the street, and a few analyses by observers such as Kon Wajiro 今和次郎 (1888-1973) and music professionals like the anarchist and enkashi Soeda Azenbō, who were involved with the music industry at the time. Much like literary circles, music criticism from within the field largely had to do with position taking: critic/musicians using their critiques
to place themselves, their music, and historical importance in the field in relation to other musicians through the development of narratives of musical development and worth. Of these narratives, the one provided by Soeda Azenbō is the most compelling, since it purports to be the authentic story written from an insider’s perspective.

Soeda was a believer in the idea that popular songs changed with society. He was a late member of the Seinen Kurabu of composers who wrote enka tunes during the Jiyūminken Undō of the 1880s. A political activist all of his life, his commentaries on society and music were undergirded with a firm belief that the purpose of popular song in modern Japan was to provide an ongoing critique of politics and economics from the perspective of the masses. The difference between Soeda’s music, and that of Nakayama, was in the degree to which political commentary was overt. Nakayama subordinated politics to music and to commercial success. Soeda’s days in the Seinen Kurabu appear to have formed his view of the purpose of entertainment permanently. Even while working as a street performer with a violin, singing hayariuta in the first decade of the twentieth century, he felt songs should have a political message. He was not finished when Nakayama’s first popular tune, “Katyusha no uta,” found its market. In 1923, he composed the song of the decade: “Dai shinsai no uta” 大震災の唄 (The Great Earthquake Song) which captured the immediate shock and the aftermath of the Great Kanto Earthquake and Fire so well it has become a chronological marker in popular culture in the same way that the earthquake set a mark in political, economic, and material history. Japan before the quake was a different nation from Japan after the September 1, 1923 earthquake.

Popular music before and after “Dai shinsai no uta” differed as well. The song is important in popular music circles. Even the music of Nakayama changed after the Great Kanto Earthquake. Soeda’s son, Tomomichi, elucidated his father’s views on the relationship of popular
music to history in his book *Nonki bushi monogatari* ノンキ節物語 (*The Story of The Nonsense Song*). Nonki Bushi ノンキ節 (*Nonsense song*) was an *enka*-style *kaeuta* with many verses created by Soeda. In *Nonki bushi monogatari*, Soeda Tomomichi put each verse into the historical context of the Meiji era to explicate the meaning his father attached to it. For example, in the chapter headed “Onjōshugi ni ha genkai ga atta” (the limits of paternalism), he discussed the following verse.
In his analysis, Soeda says that this verse refers specifically to labor relations in the Meiji period:

The first thing to understand is the awfulness of labor conditions: so awful that there was an expression to describe the situation. It wasn’t something that employers could not understand. To leave things not right and not peaceful as they did meant that an explosion was inevitable. There was evidence available, including many labor strikes recorded in the Meiji period, and more unrecorded small strikes and labor actions. There were constant complaints and conflicts.

So, ultimately, in order to avoid sparking such situations, things had to be taken in hand. In other words, a way had to be found to return to the status quo that had existed before problems arose. The technique used was called “paternalism.” Humans are emotionally fragile. In other words, moved by kindness. This human frailty made paternalism effective. Indeed considering this, there was very early an idiom about “emotion machines.” Depending on the way in which it is used, if human negotiations go well, things can still go badly. If it goes well, because communication of warm feeling works, it can bring any number of flowers to bloom but, using it ideologically, for purposes of control, that is a brilliant plan for ‘using people.’ This kind of worldly wisdom has no doubt appeared in books and other places but we must understand that it was intentionally used as a technique for making one’s way in the world.

This is where a warm idea with cold connotations became the mechanical word ‘paternalism.’ It was a way to show the bloom of a single flower in a system that mechanically used people up. If you allow yourself to be fascinated by that flower, then you could get your arms or legs caught in the machine, so you can’t be absent minded. It is work that combines blood and neighborliness.

41 Soeda, Nonki Bushi Monogatari, 100.
42 Ibid., 100-01.
If there is bleeding, that is where you apply the salve. The salve was very cheap and “gorin,” was a term used by children in the shitamachi (lower city) in the middle of the Taishō period this to mean the smallest denomination of pocket money (one half of one sen, a cast copper coin valued at one half sen). Accordingly, this was not just “adding color” by talking about child’s play, in fact it seems it was no more than a deceptive “ideology” according to the viewpoint of this song.

Actually, if you listen you understand immediately but, the advocate of this ‘paternalism’ was Shibusawa Eiichi. With a pleasant warm face when he smiled, it goes without saying that Shibusawa was the father of the Meiji financial sector. He wasn’t simply a monster of the financial world, he was also an important mover and shaker in the world of culture. But it was much more than the single word culture can convey. To analyze Shibusawa culture gives us a key to understanding Japan, so I’ll ask the reader to follow me through the story of his life.43

Soeda goes on to discuss the details of the life of Shibusawa Eiichi’s 渋沢栄一 (1840-1931) life, and to explain that Shibusawa saw himself and other industrialists as the engine of Meiji progress. In Confucian terms, Shibusawa thought of himself as a father figure to his workers much like the emperor of Japan was considered a father to the kokka 国家 (“state,” literally, “the national family”) of Japan. His autobiography was titled Shibusawa Eiichi: Rongo to Soroban 渋沢栄一論語と算盤 (The Analects and the Abacus). Such an idea was not new or unique in Japanese business.44 The joke in the song is related to the double entendre that Soeda does not explain directly. The term gorin 五厘 is a homophone. The characters Soeda Azenbō wrote referred to a denomination of coin, but by pronunciation, the word could also refer to the five essential human relationships in Confucianism (gorin 五倫). Listeners in the Taishō period would also understand that Shibusawa rongō 渋沢論語 in the second to last line refers to Shibusawa’s own book, but also points out his arrogance with its reference to the Japanese title for the Analects of Confucius, and belittles it by discussing it in terms of the least valuable coin

43 Ibid., 100-02.
in Japan’s currency at the time. This ironically compares Shibusawa’s paternalism to the entire body of Confucian thought, a comparison in which Shibusawa, a profit-seeker, inevitably comes up wanting.

The importance of quoting Soeda Tomomichi at length here is twofold. First, Tomomichi, who probably co-wrote this book with his father, shows that Soeda Azenbō’s songs were direct references to the social and political problems of his lifetime. In fact, they were not just reactions, but as Soeda’s analysis of this verse on “Paternalism” demonstrates, they created ideological viewpoints for those who listened to and sang them. Soeda Azenbō wrote much more explicit references to immediate events than did Nakayama in most cases. Soeda Azenbō saw his directness as providing a kind of gravity to his music that placed his songs in a more important position than those of Nakayama.

But Nakayama addressed social and political concerns in his songs, as well, and gave voice to the thoughts of the people who listened to his music. Second, Soeda’s analysis of the lyrical meaning of songs is not far different from my own, which shows that there is precedent for analyzing popular music in Japan as a social phenomenon.

Soeda himself acknowledged Nakayama in his own history of popular music in Japan. Discussing the Taishō cultural climate, he claims that Nakayama’s first work, “Katyusha no uta,” was representative of the bifurcated nature of popular culture between 1912 and 1926.

Superficially bright, but in essence a dark year, the success of “Makkuro bushi” (Song of darkness) was wrapped up in the self-mocking laughter of the masses.\(^{45}\) Movements to force the government to reduce prices for trains began in local areas, and while there were some fires, these mostly ended with resentment, and no firm political position presented itself. The reason for this was because, after all, it was difficult to cut through to the low class masses, who had long been trained to be politically indifferent and had only what might be called “low political consciousness.” So it was only spontaneous riots that occurred here and there (Although, those

\(^{45}\) Soeda, \textit{Nonki Bushi Monogatari}, 100.
who were tamed were shocked and horrified. The large majority of the masses followed a blind sense of fate. That is why their power was checked).

The lower classes needed a political party. To create one was a labor of love - a road that only a few social and labor movement people followed. However, this was a new wind blowing around the world. In March of Taishō 3, Shimamura Hōgetsu’s Geijutsuza staged *Fukkatsu*, making Matsui Sumako famous as Katyusha, singing the central song of the play, and the song became a hit, taking the whole country by storm. The song was “Katyusha no uta” by lyricists Hōgetsu and Sōma Gyošū, and composer Nakayama Shimpei’s debut. Even before this, in Meiji 44, Tsubouchi Shōyō’s Bungei Kyōkai (literature association) presented Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* with Matsui Sumako playing Nora, which may be one reason for her popularity. However, the connecting theme, “women awakening,” was a powerful stimulus in upper and middle class households.46

In Soeda’s narrative, Nakayama received only small recognition about a fellow composer that seems almost a dismissal. Soeda was concerned only with putting the popular “Katyusha no uta” in historical context. He went on to demonstrate the bright smile and dark inner life of the Taishō period with his own song, “Makkuro bushi,” 真っ黒節 (Darkness song) which he also mentioned in the quoted passage. Soeda’s book in fact only gives lyrics and specific histories of Soeda’s own songs. These songs are important, and the historical context which he gives them informative. But reading carefully, it is possible to see that Soeda was writing himself into the position of arbiter of authenticity. From this position, for Soeda, Nakayama’s debut success was important only in the sense that it rode the wave of legitimate social commentary created and maintained by Soeda’s songs.

This brings us back to the Great Kanto Earthquake. That event, more than any other, according to Soeda and other commentators, cemented Japan’s ambiguous modernity. That ambiguity was most clearly seen in modern popular culture. Cultural hot spots like the proliferating Jazz kissa and café waitresses, were modern, but not everyone saw modernity as progress. Café waitresses worked only for tips. To appeal to customers, many went beyond just

giving good service. They sat with customers, chatting them up. They dressed fashionably, not only for customers, but because they were fashion-conscious. This encouraged an image of them as loose women. The entertainment districts like Asakusa in Tokyo, and Luna Park in Osaka were places where the middle class and working class mixed. In these places, available entertainments included more than just movies. Follies in which women danced and sang on stage, showing off their bodies as well as talent, were both popular and controversial. Soeda referred to this ambiguity – the excitement and cultural shock of modernity, in his discussion of the success of “Katyusha no uta” and Ibsen’s The Doll’s House. Nakayama dove straight into it with his songs “Kare susuki,” and “Habu no minato,” both of which lament the passing of tradition and the marginalization of the countryside. Although both “Katyusha no uta” and The Doll’s House predated the earthquake by nearly a decade, it is more accurate to say that they were cultural antecedents rather than anachronisms. The ready reception of these new cultural products by a new set of consumers already beginning to bend genders, question the goals their parents had set for them, and wonder what it meant to be Japanese in a society increasingly becoming Western, was not an opinion shared by older Japanese. Never the less, the popularity of these songs encouraged Nakayama, and Nippon Victor, his record company, to make more like them. Both performances tapped into a cultural trend at its beginning, and encouraged the change in women’s behavior. Both songs found audiences among what Soeda called the lower class masses. Large numbers of working people in the cities, and residents of rural areas who looked to the cities for cultural information now bought records, and they voted for what they liked every time they opened their pocketbooks in a record store. The existing critiques of popular music, including those of Nakayama’s songs, show that popular music became a record
of social change that not only catalogued ideas and historical events, but shaped the attitudes of non-elite Japanese in many ways.

Data on record sales from early in the Meiji period through the 1930s suggest that Nakayama’s choice to create shin min’yō songs was a good decision from a business perspective. The music and words of shin min’yō songs amplified themes already emerging in Japanese culture in the form of ambivalence towards Japan’s modernization. The most popular genres sold on record 1914 were Tokugawa period styles, including gidayū bushi (music used in puppet theater) and Naniwa bushi 浪花節 (narrative singing with shamisen accompaniment), followed by min’yō, and then by biwa 琵琶 (Japanese lute) music.47 So when Nakayama decided to use folk music as the basis in spirit for his songs after leaving the shingeki scene, he was tapping into a rich vein of the history of recorded music in Japan. That it took until 1923 for a shamisen to appear in any recorded song is testament to the degree to which these songs, despite their being centered on ideas of Japanese tradition, were modern and Western.48

When in 1914 “Katyusha no uta” arrived on the market, Japan was ready for the advent of a new kind of music. According to Kurata Yoshihiro, the traditional songs mentioned above were popular mostly among upper class and upper middle class professionals. Japan’s upper class also had an interest in appropriating Western culture, both for its benefits and as a symbol of their leadership, wealth and power. Music historian Sonobe Saburō associates this tendency with the historical trend defined by the Meiji slogan bunmei kaika. According to Sonobe, such appropriation of Western things and ideas, including music, was a sign of elitism. They labeled

47 Kurata, _Nihon Recōdo Bunkashi_, 66-69. Gidayu was narrative music for Bunraku puppet shows accompanied by shamisen.

such social elites haikara ハイカラ (high collar, for the high Western shirt collar worn by businessmen and bureaucrats). Commoners liked gidayū bushi, and they also liked the street music performed by enkashi; new songs like 1924’s “Rappa bushi” ラッパ節 (The trumpeting song), called hayariuta, which were not recorded often, but became popular through word-of-mouth and renditions by popular enkashi, including Soeda Azenbō. The Tokyo Mainichi Shim bun wrote in July, 1924, of the 100 or so enkashi still plying their live music trade:

Their voices are not musical, and the violin may sound like a saw, but when they sing, they firmly believe their effort to be art. When looks at the way people surrounding them listen intently, one can’t help but feel that something of the essence of the age flowes in this melody and these songs.”

The most popular composer of these songs from about 1895 to 1912 was Kaminaga Ryōgetsu 神長瞭 (1888-1976) whose “Haikara bushi” ハイカラ節 (High Collar Song) poked fun at the economic upper class from the point of view of the working class. Kaminaga’s music used Japanese instruments and musical techniques, but the songs were new, and often about situations encountered in modern life. The styles of hayariuta, and the traditional and popular narrative forms like gidayū bushi increasingly mixed. In 1912, the last year of Meiji, biwa player Yoshida Naramaru 吉田奈良丸 (1879-1967) led record sales with his naniwa bushi songs recalling pre-Meiji contexts. According to the Japan Phonograph Sales Association, in May of 1912 sales of Naramaru songs like “Akō Gishi Den” 赤穂義士伝 (The legend of the forty-seven rōnin) and “Nanbuzaka” 南部坂 (the Mountain of Nanbu) topped 500,000. Thus the recording industry started out primarily with sales of traditional music. The market for such music

49 Kurata, Nihon Recōdo Bunkashi, 85, 124.
50 Ibid., 66.
remained strong even after the creation, by Nakayama, of *kayōkyoku* (modern popular songs sold on records). Since popular music made for records was a later development, and since the traditional style songs had strong sales numbers, it is not surprising that record companies searched for products to satisfy consumers of both styles.

As Nakayama’s show tunes became popular, particularly with the success of the recording of “Katyusha no uta” in 1914, a generational shift in popular song styles also became apparent. This shift corresponds to the shifts in political and social behavior that historians identify as characteristic of the Taishō period. Rather than matching the formal change from the reign of the Meiji Emperor to that of his son, whose reign gives its name, Taishō, to the period from 1912 to 1926, this shift in cultural attitudes appeared at the end of the Russo-Japanese War. The dominant Meiji ethic of *risshin-shusse* shifted in meaning from a focus on success of the household/family to individual and economic success. According to Oka Yoshitake, Meiji people thought highly of government bureaucrats, as indicated in the idea of *kanson minpi* (respect officials, despise the people). One characteristic of Taishō culture, which Oka among others sees as having begun well before the accession of the Taishō emperor in 1912, was the appearance of an attitude better characterized by the slogan *kinson kanpi* (respect money, despise officials). According to Oka, by 1906 mass interest in national affairs and the resentment of the government’s decision to sign a peace treaty had declined. Instead, the former interest in national politics transformed into interest in the social and the individual.51

Journalist and popular culture commentator Oya Sōichi 大宅壮一 (1900-1970) claimed that “modernism” completely replaced the Meiji ethic. He argued that whereas early Meiji

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spokesmen for “civilization” stressed hard work and active engagement in society as the essence of the good, late bourgeois advocates of “modernism” accepted the passive role of people as consumers and “indolent connoisseurs of kankaku bunka” (a culture of feeling).

According to Ōya, when the quest for sensual stimulation by these consumers of life guided human behavior, decadence and perversity were the predominant cultural results, and he associated these developments with the Taishō period. Oka also perceived this shift in trends toward new Western cultural influences. He identifies a powerful impact on the family system from the popularity of the philosophy of Nietszche and the plays of Ibsen. Pessimism, anxiety, and suicide were, Oka says, signs of the times. Nonetheless, Taishō was not characterized by a sense of an ending. The pessimism was balanced by a feeling that Japan was in fact moving on, confronting problems created by the growth of industry and the economy during the Meiji period.

Donald Roden remarks that while Ōya saw Taishō culture as a sign of decadence, symptomatic of what theorists today might call “late capitalism” Others like Kuwaki Gen’yoku, a philosopher and Professor at Tokyo Imperial University, saw it as indicating evolution in a positive direction. Kuwaki did not deny the fundamental cultural shifts that formed the center of Ōya’s complaint, but he saw the changes in youth values and consumption patterns as cultural responses to problems. Kuwaki believed that culture, rather than nature, created social differences based on gender. The new open-minded Taishō style allowed for challenges to gender stereotypes and helped to break down barriers for women. For observers such as Kuwaki, modernization necessarily involved cultural change.

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53 Oka, "Generational Conflict," 199.

54 Roden, "Taishō Culture," 54.
Reading Taishō-era newspapers and magazines shows that cultural change was a major
topic of conversation between 1905 and 1930. Taishō is the time of the appearance of *ero guro
nansensu* (erotic, grotesque nonsense), a phenomenon that many historians
have tried to pin down. The elements of *ero guro nansensu* include new ideas about gender,
politics, the meaning of Japanese culture, its relation to the West and to social-class in Japan.
Enomoto Ken’ichi 榎本 健一 (1904-1970), the famous “Enoken” エノケン, a popular comedian,
hosted follies and reviews loosely based on France’s Follies Berger, but with a distinctly
lowbrow hue in Asakusa, the entertainment center of prewar Tokyo. Taakii ターキー or
Mizunoe Takiko 水の江瀧子 (1915-2009), a female entertainer and movie star, appeared so
often in male clothing with short hair that the look became her trademark. In true Taishō fashion,
Kobayashi Ichizo (1873-1957) created the cross-dressing *shingeki* phenomenon called
Takarazuka (after the town where he built his theater) in 1913, the first year of the Taishō period.
In that same year, an article appeared in the *Geijutsu Nichinichi Shimbun* 彼術日日新聞
describing the popularity of the new style: “Even among women college students, apparently told
not to sing this song (“Katyusha no uta”) outside of school, it seems they sing “Katyūsha, kawaii
yo.” To tell these kinds of groups that they cannot sing it would be to kill their youth.” A
roundtable discussion featuring young women, held in 1935, further emphasizes this reality.
Their reaction to traditional music styles was clearly negative. They claimed to dislike traditional
popular entertainments like *manzai* 漫才 (an Osaka-based genre of stage comedy) and *rakugo*
落語 (a Tokyo based form of comedic story-telling), and older musical styles, including Naniwa
bushi. Their primary entertainments were movies, revues, and dancing. One woman even went

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so far as to rule out marriage to any man who professed a liking for Naniwa bushi. The change in attitudes was palpable in the Taishō period.

We can argue, of course, that the appearance of new more radical views on women, romance, and fashion were only the point of view of vocal minorities with a penchant for irritating those with more conventional mindsets. After all, popular journalism loves scandal. It is not likely that all young women ruled out marriage to Naniwa bushi fans, nor is it likely that those who did were only women. In 1925, sociologist and popular culture observer Kon Wajiro found in a survey of a thousand women in Ginza, the fashionable district supposedly at the heart of moga culture, that less than one percent of women dressed in the fashion attributed to the moga in the press. Miriam Silverberg has also found that the real moga, young women dressed as flappers, smoking and flaunting their sexuality in cafes and dance halls, titillated the press but disappointed academics who were looking for signs of a deeper intellectual raison d’être. They were, apparently, just what they appeared to be. In turn, if the moga as a social sensation barely existed, the corollary is that the mobo (modern boy), her supposed playmate, made even less than a scratch on social trends. The image of the moga was sensual and sensational. Her male playmate was simply a playmate. Instead, for social critics, mobo and moga provided an opportunity for other critiques of modern culture that intersected with critiques of modern popular music.

The film Tokyo Kōshinkyoku illustrates this in numerous ways. First of all, the protagonist Michiyo/Orie is a modern girl in the sense that she moves through a modern world. She works in

56 Ibid., 194.
58 Silverberg, Erotic Grotesque Nonsense, 51-72.
a factory, lives in the urban sprawl, and even sleeps in a bed. But the opening of the film shows
this modern girl wearing a kimono. When she becomes Orie the geisha, her trajectory is not
toward the modern, but away from it. She is sold to a geisha house and becomes a traditional
style geisha who works in traditional style (or traditionally styled) establishments. Yoshiki, her
lover, is the modern boy in nearly every sense of the word. But he takes his modern clothing,
attitudes, and habits from his wealth and youth, not some inherent modernity or the modern girl
with whom he falls in love. This is in the way of saying that the phenomena of the *moga* and
the *mobo* were useful cultural phantasms that served as a synecdoche by which journalists and
critics could talk in shorthand about Japan’s modernity in general. In so doing, they were often
unkind.

Historian Barbara Hamill Sato notes that cultural critics understood that social changes
influenced by the mass media were shallow and artificial, and they identified the United States
with a hedonistic, individualistic culture that was unsuitable to Japanese needs. A general
rejection of popular culture was not uncommon among these intellectuals. Kurahara Korehito 藤原 慎人 (1902-1999), a Marxist and the leading proletarian cultural theoretician in Japan in the
late 1920s, saw all popular culture as leading to a decadent society. But not all intellectuals
looked down on popular culture. Academic and literary critic Chiba Kameo 千葉亀雄 (1878-1935) saw the *moga* as a symbol of women moving from traditional roles to a fuller participation
in society. To analyze them through their fashion was as superficial as the analysis suggested

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60 Sato, "Moga Sensation," 369-70.
61 Ibid., 374.
62 Ibid., 376.
that modern girls themselves were. To understand the phenomenon of the modern girl beyond superficial observations of the Westernized, liberated fashion of minority of girls wearing flapper clothing and smoking cigarettes is also to understand how modern culture percolated through society in general. Modern changes may have been most obvious through the symbol upon which journalists and social critics chose to focus, but in fact all of society faced these modern changes amplified by the proliferation of popular culture. The cultural preferences of these women was the legacy of Meiji changes in education and work life that made Japanese society more willing to accept female roles outside of the home or traditional careers.

Similarly, popular culture influenced changes in the way that workers saw their positions within society and industry as much as it was influenced by those changes. Popular culture also affected the way that outsiders, rural residents, and the marginalized thought of themselves within Japanese society. The film *Tokyo Kōshinkyoku* and its accompanying theme song were representative of Japan’s modernity on multiple levels. The film offered a picture of a modern girl and a modern boy trapped in a society still dominated by gender norms and class differences that were legacies of the Japanese past. This was modernity for real people. Michiyo may have longed to be a modern girl, but she wore kimono rather than flapper skirts, and worked hard rather than dancing into the night. In the dream sequence at the beginning of the movie, Michiyo is warned by her mother not to give her heart to men, who will cause her pain and suffering. There is no sense of control in her life. By the end, she has lost her heart to a brother she can never marry. Yoshiki, the lover/brother, can escape by leaving town. Michiyo, it is clear, is still bound by the requirements that she marry and be dutiful to her new husband, who rides roughshod over her feelings as they bid Yoshiki goodbye.
Nakayama’s song, on the other hand, appears to have little connection with the movie’s story. It makes mention of love, and hints that it may be unrequited, with two lovers passing in the dark, but the song is full of the anticipation of meeting, and the tour of Tokyo that it gives adds to the excitement and the possibility that the lovers might yet meet in the endless playground of the modern capital city. The options available to the characters in the movie are circumscribed by the circumstances of class and gender. In the song, the opportunities seem to be wide open, and the modern city full of promise. This dual view of modernity was in fact inscribed into the Japanese experience of modernity itself. Donald Roden has observed that articles in magazines such as Chūō Kōron took on the fujin mondai (the question of women) and other such social problems, bringing to public attention new ideas about the feminine role in society challenged what he calls the “psychology of submission and delicacy” in Japanese culture.63 Barbara Hamill Sato concludes that new mass market magazines, plays, and popular songs offered women a chance to participate in the creation of modern culture without an intermediary, and suggests that much of the critique of intellectuals stems from their sense of being left behind in the formation of cultural change.64 It is probable that this opportunity became available not only to women, but to members of the culture at large. In short, the contents of popular culture were sites of contention: battlefields for culture wars of great intensity over the meaning of change and the position of whole classes of people within Japanese society. The fact that Nakayama’s song “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” was smack in the middle of these culture wars was not accidental nor was it a reflection of social change. It was at the vanguard of that social change. Songs like Nakayama’s had real impact. This is visible even in more specific

63 Roden, "Taishō Culture," 44.
circumstances, such as popular culture “booms” in which songs instigated, or encouraged, 
crowd-like behavior. One such boom was a suicide jumper trend that the *Tokyo Mainichi 
Shimbun* reported in 1933.

On January 9, 1933, a girl student committed suicide by throwing herself into the caldera of Mt. 
Mihara on Ōshima Island in Izu and this set off a jumping suicide boom. Sixty people 
successfully committed similar suicides from January into April, and one hundred and sixty 
attempted such suicides. The company that provided ferry service to Ōshima suspended one-way 
ticket sales. In February, sales of a popular song called “Kurai nichiyōbi” (Gloomy Sunday) were 
stopped because it supposedly contributed to a mood of suicides and love suicides.\(^\text{65}\)

Whether those who committed suicides listened to “Kurai nichiyōbi” くらい日曜日 cannot 
now be established. But the fact that the press thought that such a link existed, and that the 
song’s distributors removed it from the market (it is unclear whether this was due to a 
government order, although some police or government pressure can be assumed) shows the 
perception of the power of popular culture. Popular myths about the importance of social trends 
often give power to those trends by imputing power to them. Since the *Mainichi* reported the role 
of the popular song in the suicides, social assumptions may have been that popular songs could 
have some power over such behavior. That assumption makes the popular song not a reflection 
of a social reality, but a part of it.

**Changing the Popular Mind**

Nakayama Shimpei chose to speak from the social position of a rural migrant to the city. 
This gave his music a kind of authenticity. When we listen to songs, we do more than simply 
hear sounds and words. We decode the symbols in a song, be they encoded in the music, or the 
words, or the phrasing and rhythm, and we assign those songs meaning based on the messages

\(^{65}\) *Showa Ryūkōkashi*, 46.
we hear. These messages are conditioned by symbolic vocabularies that each of us gains through lived experience and education. Popular music, by its nature, appeals to the vocabularies of lived experience. To identify with a song is to identify with the singer, and perhaps the composer and other musicians, and to assume that their experiences resonate with our own. Nakayama Shimpei’s music encoded the experiences, hopes, and dreams of Japanese masterfully through its use of musical and lyrical cues. These cues were easily recognizable, despite their essentially Western musical structure, because they sounded like, and made reference to, older Japanese melodies, themes, and playing styles. Nakayama was careful to make this happen, and his success is visible in the fact that he has been given a genre all his own. His songs can fit within any number of musical genres that defined the market in his time. His style was distinctive enough that despite other classifications, listeners referred to them as *Shimpei Bushi*.

This was largely intentional. Nakayama did not plan his style before he composed “Katyusha no uta,” but the song was so successful that he set about learning, by trial and error, what made it work, and using those elements again and again, even as he defined new markets and new genres of popular music for his contract employer, Nippon Victor Corporation. He would have been the first to admit that his motives were less than pure. Although he set out to make music for the people, Nakayama always hoped to make money by doing so. His financial desperation, visible in letters to his brother, before Katyusha, and the pride with which he details his new royalty income in later letters, show how much the financial rewards of songwriting meant to him. He was pleased to be able to write songs that people liked and that made money. He worked hard to continue that success. On numerous occasions he toured parts of Japan, looking for inspiration, and bestowed the gift of music on local areas. None of these gift songs is even a rewritten version of a local folk song. They are all newly written, with reference to local
sounds but with no borrowed melodies. Nakayama did not just rearrange local folk songs, he created new ones, and the power of his songs as gifts was such because of his popular appeal, so that they became the new traditional songs of towns, cities, and schools across Japan. Most are still in use today.

Nakayama took the position that the market had need for a certain message. He did not concentrate on overt political activism, though he had private political thoughts. Instead, he watched, listened, and tried to understand the cultural changes of his time and place. He wrote songs that anticipated or answered social changes that he saw going on around him. In this way, his songs were both intensely personal reactions to his experiences and historical documents of change. Nakayama probably saw his own career as a monument to chance. He recognized clearly the many possible paths he could have followed that did not lead to a life as a successful and wealthy composer of popular music. He talked in his short autobiographical article for Chūō Kōron about these multiple turning points in a mindful way. His first introduction to a brass band was a clear memory for him. The same is true of his first schoolroom experience with music class, his being sent home from the Yamato 大和 clothing store, and his becoming a teacher. He mentioned in amazement in his diary the fact that he was accepted to the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, and then that, most important, Shimamura commissioned “Katyusha no uta” from him in 1912.

Nakayama was aware of his own history, and the chance events that threw him into his field. He worked hard to meet those challenges, and to convert his love of music into a career, but he saw the coincidence involved in his success. In short, he saw himself as a creature of history, and his songs reflect that.

Just as Soeda Azenbō said in his discussion of the ambiguity of Taishō spirit, Nakayama happened to write a song that highlighted the dependence of women upon men, just at the time
when this question was becoming both relevant and socially acceptable to ask within Japan’s modernizing culture. The song was the feature of a play with the same effect, and was sung by Matsui Sumako. Matsui’s notoriety for her revolutionary role as Nora in Ibsen’s *A Doll’s House* only served to cement the fact that Nakayama could make history by being a part of the changes that popular culture documented and encouraged within a modernizing Japan. From “Katyusha no uta” on, Nakayama strove to meet the demands of history by anticipating the needs of the popular market. He was an innovator. By the time he wrote, “Karesusuki/Sendō kouta,” his third market success, he had moved from the Western scale learned at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō to a modified version, the major *yonanuki* scale, and then further modified it (using the minor *yonanuki* scale) to suit the dark, depressing nature of the song. When audiences bought the song in droves, he innovated further. Nakayama looked for a way to integrate Japanese ideas into his music. The minor *yonanuki* scale provided him with a Western-based scale that mimicked traditional Japanese songs. He began to look for other elements to put in his songs that would be, as Shimamura had suggested to him, familiar to Japanese audiences.

This familiarity, for Nakayama, came not just in musical innovation, but in combining his music with the goals of poets who were on a similar quest: To find a modern poetry that also addressed Japanese cultural memory. His answer was *shin min’yō*. Although he did not invent this movement, he facilitated it by providing some of the most effective musical accompaniment to the nostalgic lyrics provided by poets like Kitahara Hakushū and Nōguchi Ujō. Here again, Nakayama was an innovator. Having created the popular genre for nostalgic songs based on local geography, he turned to the cities, and began writing urban *shin min’yō*. His tune “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” was a paean to the largest and most crowded urban area in Japan, but looked at it from the eyes of Tokyo natives who loved their city and its modernity. It celebrated a city that
was traditional in its willingness to change tradition. The song, like the movie, both embraced and critiqued modern life, without pulling punches about the pitfalls of being nostalgic about patterns disappearing. “Tokyo ondo” was if anything an even more direct appeal to the wonders of Tokyo and its neighborhoods, and he designed it to encourage visitors, in the *shin min’yō* way. It sang of the wonders of Tokyo neighborhoods, and of Tokyo people, all to a beat designed to be a modern addition to the traditional Bon festival.

All of this worked perfectly as a strategy for marketing his music. Nakayama played both sides of the board. He made modern music and made his reputation on that by producing “Katyusha no uta.” He also recognized the strength of the market for traditional music, and so added elements of that to his modern songs. The result was that his songs appealed to young women who did not want old-fashioned husbands, defined as men still listened to Naniwa bushi songs. They also appealed to people who felt nostalgic for an idealized “traditional” Japanese culture that they had left behind in coming to the cities. Nakayama’s strategy proved successful. Soeda Azenbō, a popular song composer who made his reputation as one of the first modern composers, saw Nakayama as less important than himself because Nakayama’s songs did not deal directly with political and social issues. Nakayama himself recognized the lack of any classical music, or Japanese music pedigree in his songs. He drew his success from the popularity of the songs. His strategy was to appeal to the popular masses for both inspiration and the consumption of his product.

In this way, Nakayama’s songs are documents of political and social change in Japan of the Taishō period. His compositions flowed with the tides of taste and popular sentiment. They were never overtly political, but they appealed to people who read into them codes of political and social positions. Nakayama never specifically advocated the Genbun itchi movement, for
example, but he wrote his songs for people who did, and only wrote for lyricists whose poems were understandable to an increasingly literate population. He never wrote songs, as Soeda did, that were specifically critical of government policies, yet he often challenged laws regarding appropriate social and political behavior (and railed privately against censors when they demanded changes) in his songs. He did not rewrite folk songs to preserve them for some kind of national folk catalog. He frequently took inspiration, however, from old folk songs that were so specific, or unmusical, that had little appeal outside the local villages where he heard them. Intending to modernize folk music, he wrote those inspirations into new folk songs that made the countryside a romantic place that represented authentic Japan to modern urbanites. His songs encouraged urban vacationers to visit the places he wrote about. They operated much as
television advertising does today, to create a national market, of culture products, leisure activities, and local manufactured goods. The term *Shimpei Bushi* encompasses all of these things, and its continued currency today suggests to us that to listen carefully to Nakayama’s songs can help us better listen to the people who lived in Japan during his lifetime.
Chapter 6
Sendô Kouta: Mainstreaming the Marginal in Japanese Culture, 1925-1952

In the struggle to market music to the ever-changing tastes of the Japanese public, issues like the relationship between producer, distributor, and consumer were already important to Japan’s nascent recording industry in the first decade of the twentieth century. That these patterns were present at its inception exposes the historical nature of popular music. The rules of the field already guided the goals of popular composers: to find the largest possible audience; to find a means of distribution that could reach that audience easily and frequently, and to learn what kinds of songs the audience wanted. These three simple guidelines made popular music composers particularly sensitive to changes in the social, political, and economic realities of the times. To be successful, composers had to set up a kind of feedback loop that allowed them to use songs to communicate ideas they hoped would be fashionable. They could gauge audience reaction through music and record sales, and use this information to help anticipate the next good idea. Therefore popular songs like those of Nakayama Shimpei were not simply anomalies, happening simultaneously with history, but not of history. They were a part of the changing context of the time, and carried meaning for those who created, performed, and listened to them, both in a personal and historical sense..

Popular music is an ephemeral product that depends on the relationship between audience, song, songwriter, and performer. Popular songs have always embraced new ideas, but they also made clear connections to past styles, techniques, and ideas that connected composer and musicians with the experience and expectations of the audience. As discussed earlier, popular songs are mass culture only in the sense that large numbers of people consume them. Those large
numbers, often called the masses, are not an all-inclusive group, but instead consist of segments of the music market. Popular songs appeal to those various segments through references to generalized experiences of specific culture groups. Because the membership and interests of those groups are constantly shifting, popular songs can last only so long in the market before being supplanted by something new and more relevant.

Change in popular music is tied not only to consumer tastes, but to changes in the economies of production and the distribution of songs. Hosokawa Shūhei 細川周平, in a brilliant synthesis, has shown how the mechanical reproduction of sound characteristic of popular music combined pre-modern musical purposes. According to Hosokawa, pre-recording-era music fell into two different categories: performance music and social-interaction music. While performance music was memorable and conceived of as an art form separate from daily life, and thus, like literature capable of interpretation as pure art of the kind analyzed by Pierre Bourdieu, social-interaction music was tied to everyday activities, and incapable of interpretation outside of its social context. Hosokawa claims that mechanical reproduction brought these two forms together.¹

This combination comes from the possibilities of the recording technology and the distribution needs and changing consumption patterns that come with industrial revolution. Records make repetitive, every day experience of performance music possible and turn social-interaction music into a form distant enough from context to make it readable as art. Industrial production, however, requires a mass market for profitability. So the mechanization of music meant a need to find, and constantly rebuild large numbers of consumers. Thus, as Hosokawa says, popular music is closely related to fashion in that it is constantly changing. Record

¹ Hosokawa, Aesthetics of Recorded Sound, 115-202.
companies in Japan, as in the United States and Europe in the 1920s, recognized that to create products to meet this ever-changing market demand, they needed a marketing system by which they could know what kinds of songs would sell, and then a production system through which they could create more like them. They required reliable avenues of communication with their consumers. The problem with such a system is that if consumers understand that they are being marketed to, they perceive the music produced through that system as insincere. Consumers want to believe they are buying and listening to the real thing: music made in a sincere process of creative expression by composers, lyricists, and musicians. This problem plagued Japan’s record industry in its infancy as much as it does today.

Initially, Japanese record companies responded with the simple strategy of purchasing already popular songs in sheet music form. The problem with this strategy was twofold. Because there was nothing preventing competing record companies from selling recordings of the same song at the same time, and even by the same artists, market share was difficult to capture. The other problem was repeatability. Once a song like “Sendō kouta” became popular, finding another song just like it among already-published works was difficult. The solution seemed straightforward. Benjamin Gardener of Nippon Victor applied it in 1928: commission songs that match the main characteristics of successful songs. Gardener, signing Nakayama among others, intended to follow the lead of his parent company, Victor Records, in the United States, and make this a production line system. By signing exclusive contracts with producers like Nakayama, who were already making popular songs, and asking them to repeat their success, Gardener hoped he could capture and hold market share. The other major record companies in Japan quickly followed suit, offering contracts to composers, lyricists, and performers that often
split teams whose early work together was the source of the ryūkōka boom at the beginning of the 1920s.

Nakayama saw himself as “one of the people.” His skill as a composer and his high level of musical education were only tools to make the music that reached those people. He believed that his ability to create a message that resonated with Japanese of all socio-economic classes, and all urban and rural locations, came from the fact that he was of rural descent. This was what gave him experiences that paralleled those of his listeners. This was also the primary reason for his frequent tours of rural Japan. The work that he did making contacts and listening to rural songs gave him a sense of the concerns of real people. His songs sounded authentic because they borrowed from what he learned. Christine Yano echoes the Nakayama effect when she talks about the authenticity of enka and its central role in Japanese popular culture today:

Enka is often presented as a “taste culture” (Gans 1974) associated with the blue-collar working classes, or taishū bunka (laboring classes culture), and class does in fact become part of its rhetoric of emotion, past, and place. The process of designating one class/taste culture as the national culture is critical here, but even more interesting is the process of deciding which one. According to Pierre Bourdieu’s (1984) theory that class is structured around consumer distinctions, one would expect a national culture to be drawn from the tastes and lifestyles of the dominant class. Indeed, Gerald Creed and Barbara Ching (1997) speak of the domination of the urban gaze and its devaluation of the rustic as a source of national-cultural identity. In Japan, however, through an internal exoticization, taishū bunka has become a version of national culture that keeps enka simultaneously at the margins and in the center of national-cultural identity. Through a series of transformations the folk/rural/working class is defined as the “real” nation (cf. Sorenson 1997). The ideology at work here suggests a deliberate heterogenizing of the social strata that is akin to Stewart’s sense of nostalgia as “desire for desire.” Blue-collar distinctions keep enka separate and “exotic,” and this same separateness characterizes the construction of Japaneseness. The story the Japanese tell themselves about themselves becomes one private face of the nation.²

Nakayama is seen today as one of the founders of enka. He is a hero to many of those who write and sing in the genre. In this sense, we can see his songs and their reception as real

² Yano, Tears of Longing, 23-24.
representations of the “private face” of Japan. He saw himself as a country boy transplanted to the city. More important, his audience agreed. He recognized that large parts of the population of Japan’s major cities shared his experience. Such connections made his music relevant to his audience.

That relevance was so important to him that Nakayama went to great lengths during his career to maintain the public perception of him as a one of the masses. He travelled extensively through Japan’s countryside, and made it a point to meet people and to observe local life and learn local songs, not just to tour and perform. He wrote songs for children, for factory workers, for the poor and socially marginalized, making them subjects of his art just as he did with lovers, farmers, and urban music fans. Nakayama Shimpei wrote songs for and about the people of his time. He followed the trends and sometimes set them. His shin min’yō songs talked about tradition and hometown. Songs he wrote in other genres dealt with urban concerns and modern changes and people on the margins of society. By bringing their stories to the popular audience, he created a kind of window on Japan through which consumers of his songs could imagine themselves as part of a diverse modern culture connected directly to a rich past. These songs both reflected and helped to create contemporary thinking about what it meant to be Japanese.

Nakayama’s songs included characters who were stigmatized, discriminated against, or simply not noticed. Placing these kinds of characters in his musical narrative of modernity gave real people who identified with them a virtual voice, and access to the public ear. Nakayama felt that such work was important. His resistance to government censorship throughout his life, and his continued interest in creating new genres that appealed to different audiences speak volumes about his desire to use music to create a public sphere in which he celebrated tolerance and diversity. Such a cultural space was increasingly necessary in modern Japan, where social
change was far-reaching. Those members of society who most directly experienced that change were Nakayama’s audience.

There was great variety in the subjects and attitudes of Japanese popular songs from the 1880s through to Nakayama Shimpei’s death in 1952. As the twentieth century grew older, that variety increased. Many songs, like Nakayama’s and Noguchi’s “Sendô kouta,” were songs about people on the margins of Japanese society. These songs told the stories of gamblers, the poor, gangsters, and traditionally invisible people - those who have an effaced existence, and who therefore have no historical voice.

Nakayama was not the first to write such songs. That honor goes to Soeda Azenbō, an early enkashi and political anarchist who wrote such songs as “Bimbô kouta” (Song of the poor), an exposition of the outsider status of poor people in industrializing Meiji Japan. However, because of Nakayama’s popularity his songs, from show tunes to popular urban ditties to shin min’yō, his work had access to a large segment of the population to a degree that Soeda’s songs did not. Nakayama was able to reach more people, more of the time, with more of his songs, than nearly anyone else in the field. This was in part due to recording technology, to which Soeda had no access during his active years. As a composer, Nakayama had a fan base to rival those of the celebrities who sang his songs. People bought and carefully listened to his music.

When he began to write about outcasts and marginalized individuals with “Sendô kouta,” his songs had meaning for the masses. This suggests that ordinary people were interested in listening to songs about the criminals, the drinkers, the suicidal and the poor. It also means that they felt some connection to these characters through the music and words of the songs. Nakayama was part of the fascination of Japanese with themselves and their culture. He provided

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3 Soeda, Ryūkōka No Meiji Taishō Shi, 356.
ways of listening that emphasized Japanese understandings of their own culture as a kind of internal exotic. In his *ryūkōka* songs it is easy to see the blue-collar origins of what is called *enka* today – the identification of “real” Japanese culture with farmers, laborers, the down-and-out, and the outcasts. Nakayama and his lyricist collaborators, the singers of his songs, and the record companies that recorded and distributed them played a role in helping to define the relationship between the state and its people. They also helped to cement relationships among Japanese that had nothing to do with the state. By identifying the marginalized characters in these songs as Japanese outsiders, rather than just outsiders, he broadened the range and meaning of Japanese identity. Japanese today identify songs about tears, loss, and tragedy as the essence of Japanese culture. Nakayama and his collaborators made them so.

The Popular Music Feedback Loop

The possibility of turning outsiders into insiders was a function of the social and economic realities of the popular music world. Popular culture is always in the process of creation, and hence it is a mistake to assume that scholars can pin it down at any one point in its history. Instead, the best method for examining popular culture products and their relationship to society is to recognize the contingency of their existence. A pop song is never just the product of the imaginations of its composer and lyricist. They always write with an audience and a distribution method in mind.5

In the modern world of late capitalism, the distributors of popular music are the management and record companies, who always make contracts with music producers and

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Performers because they hope to increase music sales to a particular consumer market. Record companies attempt to predict this consumer market through market analysis methods that involve sales statistics, socio-economic analysis, geographic analysis, and methods for the discovery of talented unknown artists. Although such methods were not yet well developed in Nakayama’s day, record companies were trying to predict their markets. They were aware of the fact that record sales occurred most often in the cities. This urban market was the location of consumers for shin min’yō, as we saw in Chapter Five. It was also the source for consumers of ryūkōka, where the majority of record sales occurred.

In March 1925 Japan joined the radio era with the first public broadcast from Tokyo. But radio in Japan was restricted from its beginnings. Only government radio stations had licenses to broadcast, and their content was strictly controlled. Censorship included music along with all other content, both in terms of musical/lyrical content, and availability. The government restricted music broadcasts to nighttime and weekends, and strictly monitored both musical and lyrical content. It seems natural that radio would be easily available, but its coverage of the population was actually quite uneven. In 1932, 25.7 percent of urban households owned a radio and a listening license. In the same year, only 4.5 percent of rural households could tune in. Nonetheless, always quick to adapt to new distribution methods, Nakayama started participating in radio broadcasts immediately. In July of 1925, he joined a broadcast on JOAK, Japan’s first

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6 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 88.
radio station, and along with Satō Chiyako and Noguchi Ujō, performed some of his own dōyō compositions.10

Clearly, Nakayama was an astute player in the popular music world. He knew, despite his reputation for composing shin min’yō, that his audience was primarily urban, so radio was a good fit. He also knew that broadcasting had strict rules, and so he chose to perform dōyō. This choice probably had much to do with his past disappointment with censorship policies. More important, though, is the audience. In the context of the radio audience that existed, Nakayama provided listeners with the same kind of nostalgic experience by broadcasting these songs as he did with recordings on his shin min’yō records. Even though the songs were relatively new, they recalled the freshness of childhood experience. This nostalgia, whether for childhood, romance, or furusato, was a primary tool that Nakayama wielded to make his songs sell. As with shin min’yō, it worked exceptionally well. The songs, like shin min’yō, masqueraded as a genre for a specific demographic market, but they were really urban creations for urban consumption. The audience was overwhelmingly urban. Adults were the only ones who could afford to purchase a radio set and could legally purchase a listener’s license. The songs broadcast on weekends may have reached children, but those at night likely did so only to a limited degree. In addition, children’s songs put his broadcast beyond the reach of the popular music market. Even though the songs were published in magazines and on record, they were part of a genre viewed as outside of capitalist activity. This gave him even more security in terms of both potential government censorship, and audience reception of his first broadcast. Given his experience with recording, marketing and performance, it is unlikely that these realities would have escaped Nakayama’s recognition. With radio he must have been aware that this July broadcast heralded a

10 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 321.
new frontier in music production, offering new opportunities, and calling for new ways of reaching his audience. Certainly the listening public was aware. They gave broadcast music a new name: *kayōkyoku*. Although in practice this genre included songs also known as *ryūkōka*, *kayōkyoku* became the dominant term for pop songs distributed mostly by radio after 1925.

Many Japanese music historians and critics, including Sonobe Saburo 园部三郎 (1906-1980), Soeda Azenbō 添田啞然坊 (1872-1944), and Tōru Mitsui 三井徹 (1940-), categorize pre-war popular song genres according to the distribution method that existed when the song became popular. Prior to the development of records and record players, popular songs were called *hayariuta* 流行歌 (popular songs).11 This term, with characters that mean ‘to become popular or in vogue,’ denotes songs whose popularity spread through live performance and word of mouth. For post-war writers, it specifically refers to songs for which sheet music and street performers provided the only avenue to public ears. “Nonki bushi” was a *hayariuta*. With Matsui’s recording of “Katyusha no uta,” however, Nakayama and Orient Records changed Japan’s music market because of the huge volume of sales. Record companies began to look for other *hayariuta* to record, and eventually to commission new songs that were not already in the market – to make songs specifically for recording. In the 1920s popular songs made specifically for records were called *ryūkōka* 流行歌 (also meaning popular songs), and contemporary critics continue their use of the term for recorded songs. *Ryūkōka* used exactly the same characters as the term *hayariuta*. The distinction comes only in a change from a Japanese style reading of the kanji to a Chinese style reading. It was simply a new way to say “popular song,” in a new era defined by a new music reproduction technology. The next change in era and distribution

technology produced another new way to say the same thing. When, in 1925, NHK began the first radio broadcasts, popular songs distributed by this medium received the moniker kayōkyoku 歌謡曲. This was a different character set consisting of three of the characters for “song,” and “singing.” The first, “ka/uta” 歌 meant “song.” The second was a character read “utai/yō” 謡 referring to noh style chanting or recitative singing. The third, read “kyoku/kuse” 曲 denoted the ideas of a tune or melody, but also referred to the long musical section of a noh play. These multiple names for popular songs as they developed from Jiyūminken Enka to “Katyusha no uta” speak directly to the growing complexity of the Japanese popular music market. This growing complexity is the reason why later critics use these three terms with some specificity, relating recordings to their original distribution system in a sort of popular song periodization system.

The fact that this classification system grew out of names that came from the changes themselves demonstrates that record companies and music producers like Nakayama recognized the need to meet the desires of an increasingly diverse set of consumers. As the technology by which listeners consumed popular songs changed, those listeners coined new words with which to refer to them. In time, those new words also came to denote slight differences in sound, recording clarity, and style. In other words, popular music is a part of a cultural feedback loop that makes it fluid, rather than static. Popular music is difficult to define in part because it is always in the process of making, but never actually made. Nakayama’s songs were emblematic of that axiom.

*Dōyō: Children’s Songs and the Revolution in Childhood Education*

In the early part of the Meiji period, the Japanese government specified music as a subject of instruction for children. Just what the ideological and educational goals of children’s songs
should be remained a matter of debate among intellectuals and composers well into the 1930s. The one point of agreement in this debate was that school songs and children’s songs had a practical purpose: the moral and civic education of the next generations of Japanese. The existence of this debate clarifies the nature of children’s songs as educational, and at least nominally outside of the accepted activities of capitalism. While both sides took their opposition seriously, the didactic nature of these songs was never in question. The debate centered around whether the songs taught children to be good Japanese, or good imperial subjects.

This argument began with the founder of music education in Japan, Izawa Shūji. By the 1920s, it spilled over into the popular press and popular music spheres as well. Izawa’s ideas about music in education had a profound effect upon Nakayama. Nakayama was, like Izawa, a music educator and because of his education at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, a kind of disciple of Izawa. In the letters and documents that led to the founding of the Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari, which became the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō, Izawa made it plain that he had specific, practical reasons for recommending that Western music become the foundation of a music education program in Japan’s modern school system. Those goals included development of a sense of the beauty in the world and ability to connect with emotions, the belief that music calmed easily excitable children and made them more receptive to the classroom environment, and, most important, music promoted moral education.¹²

From its beginnings with the Ongaku Torishirabe Gakari, the way in which music should be taught, and what music should be taught, became controversial issues. Assumptions from the start had to do with the sense that children’s songs should be a natural outgrowth of the world in which children were growing up. That is, they should reflect the concerns and natural musicality

¹² Eppstein, Beginnings of Western Music, 25.
of children. The goal was not to teach music as high art, but to create an access point for children to use music as a part of their world. Ury Eppstein argues that Izawa’s goal was to blend Western and Japanese music in order to simplify the methods of teaching, and to bring to the children of modern Japan the best of both worlds.\textsuperscript{13} However, in 1900 an alternative to Izawa’s view was proposed by songwriter Tamura Torazō 田村虎藏 (1873-1943). Tamura argued that the songs published in Izawa’s school songbooks were both much more heavily influenced by Western music than necessary, and that they were too adult, and so difficult for school children to sing and understand. He offered his own songbooks as an alternative.\textsuperscript{14} Although dōyō (children’s songs) and shōka were perceived as different genres, the controversy spilled over into the more trade-oriented dōyō, and became the impetus for Nakayama to write what may have been the most memorable songs of his career.

The majority of songs that Nakayama wrote were dōyō. Many Japanese remember him more for these songs than for his shin min’yō or kayōkyoku. Although they make up the bulk of his repertoire, they were not the first songs that he wrote, nor did he originate the genre. Nakayama was somewhat of a late comer to this market. He did make a great impact by reacting to trends within it, and by bringing his characteristic combination of philosophical deliberation and practical labor to creating dōyō that worked. By carefully crafting songs that had both a carefully thought-out educational element, and could be sung by children, Nakayama made himself the king of Japanese children’s music. He did this in the popular press, particularly the growing magazine market.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[13] Ibid., 52.
\item[14] Ibid., 79-92.
\end{footnotes}
In June of 1919, Suzuki Meikichi 鈴木 三重吉 (1882-1936) launched a magazine called Akai Tori as a platform for distributing children’s literature. The magazine remains well known in Japan even today. Suzuki was already famous for turning children’s literature into a separate genre designed to help children learn about themselves and the world. In every issue of Akai Tori Suzuki provided nursery rhymes, illustrations, and dōyō.\(^{15}\) Akai Tori was successful enough that it spawned competitor publications. By October 1919 Shōgaku Dansei 小学男性 (Elementary School Boy), Shōgaku Josei, and Kin no Fune, all started publication following the Akai Tori approach. Along with market competition, the revolution in children’s literature was trendy among authors. These magazines attracted many talented writers and poets, including Motoori Nagayō 本居長世 (1885-1945), and Saijō Yaso, along with composer Narita Tamezō 成田為三 (1893-1945). Popular children’s magazines thus transposed the revolution in children’s poetry and literature into song.

Nakayama read the poems and songs in Akai Tori and its competitors, but was not impressed. He learned to analyze popular songs while studying at the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō and was an educator by profession. He felt that the songs in the early editions of these magazines were little more than adult poems re-created for children. They were not easy for children to sing, and did not sound like natural children’s songs.\(^{16}\) Rather than just criticize, however, he decided to write his own dōyō. His dedication to his profession as an educator, combined with his careful composing style, led him to refuse to publish any of his songs until he tested them in his own classroom at Senzoku Elementary School in Tokyo. Here he found that his teaching complimented his composition, and that the opposite was true as well. However, it also led to

\(^{15}\) Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 312.

\(^{16}\) Ibid.
complications in his life and work. He published his first dōyō in 1921 with the help of Noguchi Ujō, with whom he was already writing ryūkōka. Noguchi was publishing his own poems every month in the magazine Kin no Fune and apparently put in a good word for Nakayama. According to Nakayama Urō, Kin no Fune publisher, Saitō Sajirō 齊藤佐次郎 (1893-1983), commissioned Nakayama to write a song that became “Nezumi no oyomeiri” 鼠のお嫁入り (the mouse’s wedding) which appeared in Kin no Fune’s January, 1921 edition.17

Neko no oyomeiri onimotsu ha The baggage at a cat’s wedding
Setesete sete sete onimotsu ha sete sete sete oh, the baggage
“Nezumi no oyomeiri” (The mouse’s wedding) 192118

However, because of his status as an employed educator, Nakayama wrote under the pen name Kayama Sanpei 萱間三平. He may have had some scruples about being employed by the magazine while he was still employed by the school, but it seems he was also hesitant to publicize his name as a public school teacher.19 Still, his status as a teacher left Nakayama particularly sensitive to the power that dōyō could have in the lives of children. From the first moment he set foot in a music classroom in Nagano prefecture at the beginning of the twentieth century, he was committed to the idea that music could help children learn about themselves and the world in a joyful way. He decided to write these kinds of songs, in typical Nakayama fashion, as a way to return to society some of the fruits of his own fortune, and because he felt that he could do a better job than what was currently available. He was not alone in seeing the potential educational value of songs written especially for children.

17 Ibid., 315. The version of the song that appears in Nakayama Urō’s comprehensive catalogue of his father’s songs gives lyric credit to Hirayama Miyako, a popular singer in the Taishō period, and records the date as August of 1921, in Kodomo no kuni magazine.
18 Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku," 163.
19 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 314.
As *Akai Tori* and *Kin no Fune* came to dominate the genre of children’s songs in the marketplace, Japan’s Ministry of Education took notice. The Ministry of Education saw an opportunity for what Sheldon Garon has called “social management.” Ministry officials hoped to use *dōyō* to inculcate nationalism, but Nakayama saw this as a twisting of the educational potential of songs. He made his position clear on the use of children’s songs for patriotic purposes in a January 1919 article published in *Gendai: Lectures on Poetry*. His commitment to the high purpose of education shows through in a condemnation of the Home Ministry’s promotion of nationalistic songs in music education.

It seems vain to try to inspire militarism through children’s songs, so, then what is the purpose of those contents? Borrowing the words of Mr. Suzuki Meikichi, “the melody and lyrics of such a song are vulgar, mechanical nonsense. Such vulgar disparagement comes at a price.” From my point of view as someone who believes that songs should contribute to children’s moral education, this argument about the revolution in children’s songs, the discussion of the use of military songs versus gentle songs with poetic words, dilutes the old Japanese songs. The ancestors will condemn those of us who come after. Writers of children’s songs must first be aware of themselves as parents and friends to children.”

For Nakayama, like Izawa Shūji and Tamura Torazō, school music programs’ primary goal was to assist with moral education. Nakayama’s criticism of the government for meddling in the musical education of children here is an important indicator of his own attitudes. His *shin min’yō* celebrated a newly integrated Japan, and pretended towards a unified Japanese culture. But he was interested in this as a cultural idea rather than a political platform. His *dōyō* celebrated the child’s view of the world and taught moral lessons. Typical is the song “Kata tataki” 肩たたき.

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Mother, let me rub your shoulders

Mother, you have white hair

There is lots of sun on the porch

The red poppies are smiling

Mother does it feel that good?

"Katatataki" (Shoulder rub)

The tune was simple, consisting of a gradually ascending series of tones in the middle register, and an easily repeated refrain on quarter notes set to a 2/4 time. It was exactly the kind of song that children can sing and remember easily. Saijō’s words were simple and from the perspective of a child. They also provide the moral example of a child serving and sympathizing with a parent, consistent with both the Confucian and government-promoted value of honoring one’s family and parents. Nakayama added his hanashi kotoba, so popular in his shin min'yō songs, this time as onomatopoeic imitation of the sound of a child thumping a mother’s shoulders to relieve tension. In its simplicity, “Katatataki” embodies the ideals that Nakayama believed made a good dōyō. “Sei kurabe” 背比べ (Measuring my height) followed this pattern as well.

The scratch on the pillar is last year’s

May 5th mark of my height

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23 Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku." 111. Saijō Yaso wrote the lyric for "Katatataki." The song appeared first in the magazine "Yōnen no tomo" May 1923 edition. Sheet music was published in Dōyō shōkyoku (5) simultaneously, and recorded in 1923 on Nippon Victor catalog # 51438; Showa Ryūkōkashi, 32.
Chimaki tabe tabe onisan ga
I’ve eaten lots of chimaki and big brother
Hakatte kureta sei no take measured how tall I am on
the measuring stick
Kinō kuraberya nan no koto compared to yesterday what do I see?
Yatto haori no himo no take I’ve finally reached the height of
the Haori hanger

Hashira ni motariya sugu mieru If you look at the pillar, you can see it easily
Toi oyama mo sei kurabe Measure how tall that far mountain is
Kumo no ue made atama dashite With its head above the clouds
Tennde ni seinobi shitetemo Even if it grows to the heavens
Kumo no bōshi wo nuidesae Without its hat of clouds
Ichi ha yappari Fuji no yama Of course the biggest is Mt. Fuji

Sei Kurabe (Measuring my height) 1923

Although there are the obvious symbols of Japanese ethnic nationalism: the reference to
May 5, which was Boy’s Day, and to chimaki (a Chinese rice roll wrapped in leaves) and Mt.
Fuji, there are no patriotic lines in the song. The melody is simple and the rhythm, in ¾ time, is
uncommon in Japanese traditional music. This song fits neatly within Nakayama’s philosophy
that dōyō should be for the moral education and personal growth of Children and provide
opportunities for them to explore the world around them. For Nakayama, this was incompatible
with nationalism. Combined with his 1912 criticism of government censorship of the Geijutsuza
musical Furusato, we can read Nakayama’s position as a recognition of an ethnic, rather than a
civic, Japanese nationalism. It is for this reason that Nakayama did not participate in creating
shōka or dōyō that valorized ultranationalism or taught militarism. He would have been horrified
by the appearance in 1941 of “Mugon no gaisen” 無言の凱旋 (The Wordless Triumphant
Return) in school songbooks intended for fourth graders.

…The uncle who smashed the enemy

24 Showa Ryūkōkashi, 32.
Has wordlessly returned today.
At the wordless warrior’s triumphal return,
The plum blossoms’ fragrance permeates his body
Everyone bows wordlessly.

When for us too sometime the day will come
To serve on a mission for our august country,
Uncle, you will be an example for us.  

“Mugon no gaisen” (The Wordless Triumphal Return) 1941

Here the exhortation to sacrifice one’s life for the nation is explicit. Images of an ethnic nationalism have been replaced by the specific exemplar of a soldier who has given the ultimate sacrifice, with the single exception of plum blossoms. The plum blossoms, however, were a commonly used metaphor in Japanese culture, and in Confucian poetry, symbolizing purity, rebirth, and strength. The deployment of this kind of symbol during the Second World War reads as civic nationalism because it was used in the song to train children to a certain political point of view, e.g. loyalty and sacrifice for the nation and the emperor. This was political propaganda developed from a common cultural trope, used to express the kind of political patriotism desired from all soldiers and citizens. As Nakayama feared, this school song was a teaching tool for inculcating a specific kind of expectation for young boys. It had nothing to do with the joy of living and learning, but was centered only on the mission to die for the nation in war. Along with the wartime unpopularity of his comparatively innocent dōyō, this emphasis on songs as propaganda in opposition to his own beliefs about the uses of music in education is one reason why he limited his composition practice during the 1930s and 1940s, and for his easy comeback after the end of the war.

25 Eppstein, “School Songs,” 438. This is Eppstein’s translation from Shotōka Ongaku 2, p. 72
Songs About the Margins

Nakayama was interested in other listeners at the margins of society. He wrote music that sympathized with the plight of people who did not easily fit within Japan’s modernizing culture and economy. This included songs about the entertainment world, and other parts of Japanese society not often exposed to view in popular music. In May 1919 Noguchi Ujō came to Tokyo with his friend, playwright Suzuki Zentaro (1883-1950), to make arrangements for the publication of a new collection of poetry. At the time Nakayama was writing music for a poem by Suzuki called “Ginza suzume” (Ginza Sparrow). The poem was not an introduction to the sights of Ginza. Instead, Suzuki wrote about the entertainment culture of Ginza. Nakayama carefully crafted a light melody for the song to make it fit within the very popular entertainment culture that the song described. Although the song was popular, Nakayama published “Ginza suzume” with Yamano Music in a short-lived series of sheet music popular song collections called Shinsaku kouta (new ballads) series. In the eleventh number of the same collection as “Ginza suzume,” Nakayama published another title with a similar theme, this time with words by Kitahara Hakushū that Nakayama describes as having a similar melody. Nakayama Shimpei described his melody for Hakushū’s song “Suzume odori” (The Sparrow Dance) in a way that gives us some insight into his goals at the stage of his career for popular songs that did not fit the shin min’yō category.

This melody is so utterly a popular tune style that the score does not go beyond the contours. It has a delicate sound that cannot be approached by Western instruments in the key of a piano the tune rarely turns or gyrates. A poet can understand the bones of this score, it has the tradition of a small detailed song within it and I want it to be a suitable creation.

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Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 313.
It is evident that Nakayama was looking for a “popular tune style” in his creation. He was not interested in the piece as a poem set to classical or art music. This was to be a mass-market creation. He wanted to make it easy to understand and to sing or hum along with. He wanted the song to be elegant, but memorable by keeping the melody simple and unadorned. By the phrase, “a poet can understand the bones of this score,” he seems to mean that the song could be compared to the simple musicality of a poem, created by someone like Hakushū who could not write music. He wanted the song to be transparent; a perfect harmony of words and music.

In this same vein, he celebrated the cities, entertainment, and the lives of marginal people in 1933’s collaboration with Saijō Yaso, “Ginza no yanagi” 銀座の柳 (The Ginza Willow Tree).

Uete ureshii Ginza no yanagi
I am glad it was planted, the Ginza Willow tree
Edo no nagori no usumidori
A relic of Edo, pale green
Fuke yo haru kaze
Blow, spring wind
kurenai kasa higasa
a red umbrella, sun shade
kyo mo kurukuru hito odorī
Today again people are dancing around

Pari no maronie Ginza no yanagi
Parisian style chestnuts, and the Ginza Willow tree
Nishi to higashi no koi no juku
The meeting place for lovers East and West
Dare wo matsu yara
Whomever you’re waiting for
ano ko no kata wo
that person’s shoulders
Nadete yasashii itoyanagi
Are brushed by the gentle weeping willow

Koi ha kurenai yanagi ha midori
Love is red, the willow green*
Someru miyako no harumoyō
dyeing the capital in the colors of spring
Ginza ureshya Yanagi ga maneku
Ginza is joyful, the willow beckons
Maneku Showa no hito odorī
The call of Showa people dancing

“Ginza no yanagi” (The Ginza Willow Tree) 1933

Like “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” and “Tokyo ondo,” this song celebrates the joys of the capital. However, it is not a shin min ‘yō’ tune. Instead, its tonal structure is bright, the melody light, and
the tempo breezy. “Ginza no yanagi” celebrates a rebirth of Tokyo ten years after the devastation of the Great Kanto Earthquake. The famous Ginza willow tree of Edo was damaged in the earthquake. It was then cut down, and replaced with a hedge. However, the willow’s long history as a meeting place for lovers and its destruction during the earthquake made its memory into a nostalgic trope connoting romance play from the late Tokugawa period through 1933. Saijō wrote about it in the opening line of the popular “Tokyo kōshinkyoku.” Nakayama and Saijō deftly played on the popularity of that song with “Ginza no yanagi,” which, when it was broadcast during Nakayama’s second live radio show in 1932, along with “Tokyo ondo,” became popular instantly because of its musical and thematic association with the earlier melody. The theme of this song captured the modern nature of Tokyo with its reference to “Showa people dancing,” and attached that modernity of Jazu kissa and cafes to a nostalgic understanding of Ginza. Saijō and Nakayama created the song for nationwide radio broadcast. It built a kind of bridge between Nakayama’s shin min’yō and the kayōkyoku of the 1930s. Once again showing his mastery of popular music, Nakayama kept the elements that made his earlier songs big sellers: nostalgia, Western music, and a connection with the lives of common people. However, “Ginza no yanagi” updated them to meet the needs of a new musical market.

Workers and Managers: Songs for an Industrial Revolution

Popular music expressed the perceptions of industrialization, particularly from the point of view of the workers. E. Patricia Tsurumi, in her study of female thread mill workers, has provided the texts for some of the songs that women textile workers sang

27 Ibid., 333.
prior to the beginning of the shin-min’yō movement. In the presence of company representatives, women who travelled to their assigned factories in Suwa from Gifu to Nagano prefectures through the Nomugi tōge 野麦峠 (Nomugi pass) sang:

We don’t cross the Nomugi Pass for nothing;
We do it for ourselves and for our parents.
Boys to the army,
Girls to the factory.
Reeling thread is for the country, too.

Aa nomugi tōge (Ah, the Nomugi Pass)

This kind of sentiment was common in the publicity communications of mill owners from the inception of the industry through the 1920s. Owners of factories often commissioned songs like this one to inspire loyalty and hard work. But like most popular culture, this song did not rule the hearts of the women workers who were required to sing it. They had their own song:

Factory work is prison work
All it lacks are iron chains.

More than a caged bird, more than a prison,
Dormitory life is hateful.

Like a horse or a cow,
The reeler is fenced in

30 Ibid., 5.
31 Ibid., 93.
Like the money in my employment contract,
I remain sealed away.

If a male worker makes eyes at you,
You end up losing your shirt.

How I wish the dormitory would be washed away,
The factory burn down,
And the gatekeeper die of cholera!

At six in the morning, I wear a devil’s face,
At six in the evening, a smiling face.
I want wings to escape from here,
To fly as far as those distant shores
Neither silk-reeling maids nor slops
Are promoted or kept for long.

“Prison Lament”

Women sang songs like this when the company chaperones were not listening.

“Prison Lament” refers to the plethora of rules, fines, physical confinement and contractual obligations that silk and cotton reeling factories imposed upon their workers, more than seventy percent of whom were female. The girls’ chains were made up of these burdens used by employers to control their workers, and enumerated from the point of view of those controlled in the song. By 1880 it was common practice in mills in Kōfu, Yamanashi prefecture, to hold back two percent of a girl’s wages as forced savings, and companies could hold back even more to be sure that a girl stayed at her job throughout the contract period. In many cases, the mill for all practical purposes owned its female laborers through the contract, control of wages and movement, and then through a system of registration that prevented other mills from employing them unless the current employer formally released their contract.

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32 Ibid., 98.
33 Ibid., 33-69, 10.
34 Ibid., 67-73.
36 Ibid., 73-74, 126-27. Tsurumi writes that company contracts included clauses that prevented workers from working for any other company during the contract period, required obedience to the orders and rules of the company and managers, and gave the company the right to lay off employees or change pay policies and amounts for any reason. Companies also reserved the right to terminate workers and withhold wages due upon termination of the company felt these contract provisions to have been violated by the worker.
particularly after 1890, provided for a girl to work over a specific term of three or more years. During this period, companies held workers’ *tsūchō* (passbook), which held identity, residence, and payment information and was required for employment. The goal of this was to prevent their escaping to a different workplace, as well as to facilitate management of wages, penalties, and payments to the company store.\(^{37}\) *These* were the girls, marching stolidly to work in the morning, and exhausted at night, that inspired Nakayama to write one of his most famous *shin min’yō*: “Suzaka kouta,” about, he said, the factory girls in Suzaka town.

Because of his connection since childhood to Nagano prefecture, Nakayama was willing to overlook these realities and take payment from these textile factories to turn the songs of complaint sung by the working girls into songs that praised the silk-reeling factories for the benefit of tourists and would-be tourists from the cities. Starting in 1928, Nakayama received commissions to compose songs for factories and businesses in such rural towns as Suzaka. He designed these songs to promote the interests of the factory or company. The irony is that he often wrote these songs based on the unofficial songs he heard workers singing on their way to and from the factories, most of which were songs of complaint like “Prison Lament,” or “Ah, Nomugi tōge.” Suzaka Kouta is one example.

Commissioned by the Yamamura Thread Mill 山村製糸工場 in Suzaka, Nagano prefecture in 1928, “Suzaka kouta” was one of the earliest of these. He took notes as he listened to the girls sing on their way into the factory in the morning.\(^{38}\) What he probably heard was a song similar to “Prison Lament.” He and Noguchi rewrote the words to make

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 109-11.

\(^{38}\) Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku," 215.
them more suitable for a popular song, and for the ears of the company executives who
had commissioned the piece, and then recorded the song while still in Suzaka, with Satō
as the vocalist, accompanied by Nakayama’s piano.39 The result was somewhat more
tame that what might be expected from women laborers marching to work in the
conditions described above.

The moon is peeking out over the mountain
Who is it waiting for, or keeping waiting?
It’s not waiting for anyone, nor keeping anyone waiting
It’s come to see you, you cutie
You, you cutie, in Suzaka town—
Do you like Suzaka and that moon?
The moon comes and looks down on the factory,
Thinking of whom? Thinking of whom, my friend(s)?
Hororo, hororo, the night deepens
Hororo, hororo the moon
Keeps guard over Suzaka town, never sleeping.

Suzaka kouta (1924)40

Nakayama regularly travelled with one of his lyricist collaborators and a vocalist to
write and record songs as they came to him. This made it possible to create new popular
tunes, and to accept and fulfill commissions easily and quickly. Examples abound of his
willingness to accept the largess of corporate interests to subsidize his music and travel.
In August of 1929 he wrote “Habu no minato” after a trip provided by Tokai Kisen 渡海
汽船 (Tokai Steamship Co.) to Ōshima 大島, on the Izu peninsula 伊豆半島. Such trips
normally provided benefits for both Nakayama and his sponsor. In this case, the
popularity of the song lead to heavy tourist bookings for the company. According to

39 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 215.
40 David W. Hughes, "The Heart's Hometown: Traditional Folk Song in Modern Japan," (Ann Arbor: University of
Michigan, 1985), 281.
Nakayama Urō, this led the company back to profitability in hard times.\textsuperscript{41} Such a willingness to sacrifice the political needs of the people on the alter of success was what made him a popular song composer, as opposed to an artist dedicated to leading his field, or a political activist like Soeda Azenbō. This tendency is what Soeda would have complained about most in Nakayama’s character. It is also what made Nakayama a relatively wealthy man by his death in 1952.

He debuted many of his songs in rural towns for this reason.\textsuperscript{42} “Okutama yosasa bushi” 奥多摩ヨササ節 (Okutama yosasa song) came from a commission by the Ōme Railroad 青梅鉄道 to celebrate its thirtieth anniversary.\textsuperscript{43} For some songs, local color was more than just sheet music influenced by local sounds and sights. “Okazaki kouta,” 岡崎小唄 (Okazaki melody) which debuted in Tokyo at the Hibiya Center for New Arts during a celebration of “Nakayama Shimpei Min’yō,” immortalized the Okazaki Geijutsudō 岡崎芸術堂 (Okazaki performing arts theater). This same group performed the vocals on the 1928 record.\textsuperscript{44} “Senkyoku kouta” 千曲小唄 (Senkyoku Melody) provided the best of both worlds. It debuted at a concert Nakayama played at Senkyoku, a hot springs resort town, and performed by the Senkyoku Geijutsudō 千曲芸術堂.\textsuperscript{45}

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\textsuperscript{41} Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 328.
\textsuperscript{42} Nakayama, “Nakayama Mokuroku,” 216. Examples include “Senkyoku kouta,” which debuted at the Nagano onsen where Nakayama was staying when he wrote the song. The local performing choir did the honors for him.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 215. Now the JR Aoume Line. Lyrics by Noguchi Ujō, music by Nakayama Shimpei, and on the record sung by a performance choir known as the Aoume geijutsudō.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 216.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid.
Nakayama created “Iizaka kouta” through a similar process and, like “Senkyoku kouta,” intended the song to lure tourists to the Iizaka hot springs.

On the northern Road of love, hiding from prying eyes,  
In the steam of the stylish hot springs at Iizaka  
Well, then, come along, come to visit  
Come around to Iizaka

Is that a spring peeper crying or is that her?  
Parting tonight at Tozuna Bridge  
Well, then, come along, come to visit  
Come around to Iizaka

Where are you going, carrying your lunch?  
I’m going to the river banks to fish for sweetfish  
Well, then, come along, come to visit  
Come around to Iizaka

Shall I go on to Matsushima? Shall I go back to Tokyo?  
I like it right here, in the baths at Iizaka.  
Well, then, come along, come to visit  
Come around to Iizaka

Iizaka ko-uta (Iizaka song, 1930)\textsuperscript{46}

The marketing orientation of this song is obvious. Like many of his other business-oriented \textit{shin min’yō}, it never became a major market success. Still, he had a steady income stream because of songs like “Iizaka kouta,” “Misasa kouta,” and the 1930 gift to his home town, “Nakano kouta,” 中野小唄 which debuted in Nakayama’s own home town.\textsuperscript{47} “Misasa kouta,” first performed in 1927 on stage at Misasa, in Tochigi 栃木, was also written on commission. The Misasa Onsen 三朝温泉 asked Nakayama to create a

\textsuperscript{46} Hughes, “The Heart’s Hometown,” 285.

\textsuperscript{47} Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku," 215.
song to help bring customers. He wrote this song using local melodies as inspiration to bring tourists from the cities to Misasa for vacation.

Outside of shin min’yō, though in many ways related to it, were songs that were about leisure activities. These, too, tended to have the effect of calling people to the countryside, some composed on commission and others as a part of a trip to a local area. Classified as kayōkyoku in Nakayama Urō’s complete catalogue of Nakayama Shimpei songs are the 1926 “Sukii bushi sarasara to”スキー節さらさらと (Slipping Along Skiing Song), and the “Sukii bushi yuki no oyama de”スキー節雪のお山で (Snowy Mountain Skiing Song), both of which are in the same key, but do not share a melody or words. Nakayama wrote both songs on commission for the Takada city 高田市 performance hall in Niigata prefecture using words provided to him by the city. Takada City also produced the debut performances of these songs at local concerts in their Tairyō 大量 Concert Hall. The intent was clearly to promote skiing, and by association, tourism in Takada. Nakayama produced a further two “Sukii bushi” songs, “Sukii bushi yuki to fure fure”スキー節雪と触れ触れ (Let It Snow Skiing Song) in 1928, and “Sukii bushi chirari sarari to”スキー節ちらりさらりと (Swishing Along Skiing Song) in 1929. These two were not composed on commission, though, and only one shares even the same key signature as the two songs commissioned by Takada City. Clearly, Nakayama was always in the business of making music. As a popular song composer he appears never to have looked down his nose at the guaranteed income a commission might provide.

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48 Ibid. The song was formally published, then recorded, only in 1929.

49 Ibid., 41-44.
At the same time, despite his willingness to reuse a popular formula, he also wrote from inspiration, and sometimes donated his songs to local organizations as gifts in public service. Such were his contributions of school songs to his alma mater Nakano Elementary School, and to his first Tokyo school, Senzoku Elementary. In 1929, as a further example, he gave “Matsumoto minyō” 松本民謡 (Folk Song of Matsumoto) to the local Matsumoto city performing group who debuted the song at their local performance space, the Matsumotoza 松本座, in March of that year. As he travelled around Japan, he seems to have been inspired to write for local areas whether paid or not. It was a good marketing practice and helped to keep his name in front of popular music consumers throughout Japan. Thus another reason that Nakayama may retain so much of his early twentieth-century popularity even into the twenty-first century no doubt has to do with his perceived friendliness to areas outside of the big cities. Even as Japan’s economy slid into recession in the 1920s, his songs promoted tourism, culture, and business in rural areas.

These differing motives for writing local songs seem contradictory. Did he write these factory songs simply for money? How do we square these songs with the fact that he was honored only months before he died as a great friend of folk music by the Folk Music Association of Japan? Popular music historian and critic Sonobe Saburō’s analysis seems useful here. Sonobe has said that shin min'yō was not a product of Japanese farming villages. He asserts that rather than following the path expected for folk music, which almost by definition came from the countryside to the cities, the popularity

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50 Ibid., 218.
51 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 353.
and sales vectors of shin min ‘yō flowed from the urban areas toward the countryside. Sonobe observes that while the musical content of the songs mimicked that of rural areas, the lyricists included lines unrelated to rural poetry or verse. Instead, Nakayama and other composers of shin min ‘yō were writing for residents of the cities. There were rural residents who liked and purchased this music. However, the target audience was urban dwellers. This marketing reality clarifies the reasons that organizations in rural Japan might have been interested in becoming the subject of a Nakayama Shimpei song. The popularity of his songs almost certainly meant exposure to a market wider than any other communication medium at the time. To be featured in a Shimpei Bushi meant to become famous. Companies, resorts, and towns could be immortalized if Nakayama chose to write about them. The potential financial benefits of such an opportunity were large. It paid to support him, and he was willing to accept the support and put his name at the top of these songs. It was not long before business people in the cities, too, tried to get in on such advertising.

City Songs: Celebrating the Urban Modern

One of the major urban genres of ryūkōka were songs about living in the city. Like the shin min ‘yō songs, they aimed at an urban audience and concentrated on the sites, traditions, and culture of their subject. In an earlier chapter we looked at the way in which Nakayama adapted shin min ‘yō to the cities. The subject itself was the difference. In many ways, these were shin min ‘yō about modern urban life. Songs like “Ginza no yanagi” regaled listeners with urban legends or descriptions of famous parts of Tokyo or Osaka. Other tunes, like “Tokyo

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52 Sonobe, Nihon Minshū Kayō Shiron, 100.
kōshinkyoku,” took the night tour, discussing the merits of different entertainment sites around town. There were songs that recalled the glories of old Edo, sang the praises of certain businesses, and even narrated the results of the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake.\(^{53}\) Nakayama Shimpei, with his finger on the pulse of popular culture, was in the center of this genre from the beginning of the 1920s.

In writing about the city, Nakayama was taking part in a general extension of the idea of folk hometown status to the cities. One obvious example of this genre that may have inspired Nakayama was the “Shin tairyo bushi” 新大漁節 (New big catch tune). This song caught the broad experience of Tokyo life when it was published in the early 1920s:

How exciting, it's spring  
It’s Ueno or Mukojima for blossom viewing  
And Koganei-asukayama flowers  
sake at blossom-viewing time

How exciting, it's summer  
fresh leaves of Hakone  
and the sea at Zushi  
In sight are Enoshima and Izu  
The beach  
Boats for enjoying the cool wind

“Shin tairyo bushi” (New big catch tune, 1919-1922)\(^{54}\)

The images in this song are characteristic of shin min’yō. The difference was in its subject: the range of exciting places and sights available to residents of Tokyo. “Shin tairyo bushi” emphasized Tokyo’s centrality. Ueno, Mukojima, and Koganei-Asukayama were all locations

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 358.  
\(^{54}\) Soeda, Ryūkōka No Meiji Taishō Shi, 340.
inside the city; Hakone and Zushi were resort areas within a day’s travel by train in the 1920s. Enoshima is still a popular beach near Kamakura, also less than a day’s journey from Tokyo by train; and Izu, only slightly closer than Hakone, was a resort area famous for its beaches, hot springs, and beautiful mountain views. The way this song boasted of the centrality of Tokyo to recreation and entertainment was an invitation to come and experience life at the center of Japanese society. Nakayama joined this trend happily, and made plenty of money from his forays into city songs. In 1921, again under the pseudonym Kayama Sanpei, he penned “Ginza arukeba” 銀座歩けば (When Walking in Ginza), a song that extolled the beauty of the café waitresses ubiquitous in the district at that time. In 1933, the same year as “Tokyo ondo,” he published “Asakusa no uta” 浅草の唄 (Asakusa song) on commission to commemorate the reconstruction of the district’s central Buddhist temple the Sensōji. He recorded “Ginza ondo,” 銀座音頭 (Ginza dance) in 1934 with words by Saijō Yaso. “Tokyo jinku” 東京甚句 (Tokyo jump) came in 1934 as well.

Nakayama recognized that city residents wanted to hear about their real homes as well as their fantasy hometowns. He wrote music about both, and unsurprisingly, they had a similar style. However, many of the songs in which Nakayama wrote about the cities were about his own world of entertainment. These songs invited listeners into the lives of entertainers, and provided lists of what he and his lyricists considered essential urban experiences. Unlike the shin min’yō songs, these songs were specifically about the modern life of urban residents. No activity and no street scene were too small for Nakayama to comment upon, and this appears to have been

55 Nakayama, "Nakayama Mokuroku," 36. “Ginza arukeba” appeared as sheet music only in Nakayama’s collection titled Shin saku kouta (23) in September of 1921. Nagata Tatsuō (1890-1965) provided the words to the song.
56 Ibid., 64-90.
another key to his success. His songs could popularize what otherwise might be an unremarkable modern moment. Such was the case with “Beniya no musume” 紅屋の娘 (The Girl in the Red House) in 1925.

*Beniya de musume no iu koto nya* in the red house what the girl says…
*Sano iu koto nya* ah, what the girl says…
*Haru no otsukisama usugumori* the spring moon behind light clouds
*To saisai usugumori* to sai sai …light clouds

*Okao ni usuben ni tsuketa to sa* She put light rouge on her face
*Sano tsuketa to sa* ah, light rouge on her face
*Watashi mo usuben ni tsukeyō ō kana* I’ll put on rouge, too
*To saisai tsukeyō ō kana* to sai sai, I’ll put it on, too

*Koyō mo otsukisama sora no ue* Tonight again the moon is in the sky
*Sano sora no ue* ah, in the sky
*Hito hake sararito someta to sa* one brush stroke completely colors it
*To saisai someta to sa* to sai sai colors it

*Watashi mo ichi hake somerukara* I will color mine in one stroke, too
*Sano somerukara* ah, I’ll color it
*Tamotono usuben ni kudasai na* give me the rouge inside your sleeve
*To saisai kudasai na* to sai sai, please give it to me

“Beniya no musume” (The Girl in the Red House) 1925

“Beniya no musume” is characteristic of Nakayama’s modern *kayōkyoku* in the sense that it continues the tradition of giving voice to male fantasies about women. The girl in the song is a moga putting on makeup while a man is watching. This situation gives weight to the erotically charged title. Moga, especially those who were café waitresses who worked only for tips, had the reputation for being from a lower-class background, desperate for money, fashionable and sexy, and liberated sexually. This girl who will put on her makeup in the presence of a man may or may not be a prostitute, but the distinction is unimportant. She provided male listeners with a

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57 Ibid., 39.
fantasy and female listeners with the image of a modern woman. In fact, Nakayama was not as interested in the character as he was in the modernity of the moment. The girl in the song is without doubt behaving in a modern way.

By contrast with his *shin min’yō*, which provided urban audiences with fantasy images of traditional Japan, Nakayama’s urban songs romanticized the ubiquitous trivialities of modern urban life. In 1935 he even recorded a song called “Modān Nippon” モダーン日本 (Modern Japan) that talked excitedly about romance and the material accessories of modern life. It began “Let’s go to my car. I’ll call you, we can go for tea”58 He found in the behavior of a *moga* putting on rouge and lipstick, or the moment when two lovers, riding different trains, unknowingly passed by each other in the busy throng of a big city a kind of poignant allure. Saijō’s line in “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” that goes, “Wide Tokyo made narrow by love/In busy Asakusa a secret tryst/You on the subway, me on the bus/Love never stops,” is an example. The secret tryst in Asakusa is not just a secret from family, friends, and workmates. It is secret from the lovers themselves, who both find themselves travelling through the same place, unaware that the other is there, too, using a different mode of transportation. Such a moment in the song calls into focus loneliness. The image highlights the idea that in such a large city, there was a special someone for each person, but finding them in the crowd might be impossible. The ambivalence toward modernity in such a moment is palpable. Modern urban life presents limitless possibilities. However, the sheer volume of possibility creates limits on social interaction. This, for Nakayama, was one of the sources of the excitement of modern life, and of the longing for the simpler lifestyle idealized in his *shin min’yō* songs.

58 Ibid., 67.
Nakayama initially published “Beniya no musume” as “Haru no tsuki” 春の月 (Spring Moon) in the March, 1925 issue of Reijokai 令女界 (Ladies’ World) magazine. Reijokai, started in 1922, marketed itself to girls between the ages of ten and twenty. It was perceived as a magazine for assertive modern girls who did not know their place in society, and banned from many girls’ school campuses because it encouraged women to step out of assigned gender roles and to be assertive about their sexuality. Originally published in such a magazine, the song could not help but be categorized with moga as a modern challenge to Japanese tradition. It also held a secret fascination for both men and women because of the reputation of the magazine. In 1926, after the invention of light makeup products, Nakayama changed the title and two verses of the song, and it became “Beniya no musume.” He published the new version in 1929 in his Min’yō kyoku 民謡曲(10) collection, and recorded it for Victor. In 1929 the song became popular when he and Satō performed it as accompaniment for the 16th Annual Fujikage Kai 藤蔭会 dance competition organized by Fujima Shizue 藤間静枝 (1880-1966).59 Writing a song about popular culture, Nakayama hit a nerve. “Beniya no musume,” innocuous as a piece of literature or poetry, spoke powerfully to young women who used makeup and were not shy about their own interest in men and modern life. It became a theme within popular culture itself, taking on a life of its own, and even inspiring dance choreography by an entertainment world icon of the day.

Many of Nakayama’s songs sang the praises of modernity by describing entertainment choices available in different districts of Tokyo or Osaka. There were even examples of inter-metropolitan competition. When “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” appeared in 1929, it quickly spawned responses from Osaka, including the 1929 Orient Records release of “Osaka kōshinkyoku” 大阪

59 Ibid., 39.
行進曲. The words to this song, like “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” took listeners on a tour of the districts of Osaka, reciting what entertainment options each had to offer. The urban competition was not limited to the two biggest metropolitan areas. Nakayama also wrote songs with “kōshinkyoku” 行進曲 (march) in the title for Shizuoka, and included “ondo” 音頭 (dance) in the titles for other songs, probably on commission, from many other cities and towns.

The degree to which everyone wanted to get on the modern dance song bandwagon was similar in many ways to the competition between urban areas in 1990s Japan after the release of the first rap song in Japanese to find popular media success, “Da yo ne” (Isn’t it?) by East End X Yuri. That song was answered within three months by “So yo na,” meaning the same thing, but in the Osaka dialect, by a group called West End X Yuki, which was then followed quickly by similar rap tunes in local dialects from Nagoya, Sendai, and other urban localities. Nakayama’s “kōshinkyoku” and “ondō” dance tunes seem to be early examples of this kind of popular culture meme in Japanese popular music. In Nakayama’s day, composers and consumers thought of these songs as different from the touring songs that were part of the shin min’yō style so popular in the 1930s. These songs reveled in the revelers more than the places. They were unapologetically about frivolity and fun. This made them targets of the authorities, and that fact made them all the more popular. If anything, these songs were the representatives of the changes in Japanese popular culture after the beginning of radio broadcasting in 1925. They epitomized the reasons given by the government for its censorship of popular culture in general, and some may have been among the causes of that censorship.

The ability to reach a mass audience through radio led to major changes in popular culture. There was a new sense that popular culture promoted a kind of subjectivity and individualism that was already present in Japanese culture in other forms. The phenomenon of the moga and
her male counterpart the *mobo*, media icons of popular culture gone awry, whose fashions were scandalous and whose habits, like smoking, were public activities and embodied this individualism. Yet popular culture after radio became more than just a market phenomenon. According to Sonobe Saburō, it contained a heightened element of activism.\(^{60}\) Political activism was a subject of popular songs throughout modern Japanese history, beginning with the Seinen Kurabu’s *jiyūminken enka*. The new broadcast distribution method for popular songs also meant a broader reach for the distribution of political ideas. Since the government controlled radio, this reach led to new uses of music to inculcate state-approved ideology. Along with political uses, the new form of mass communication also brought with it some degeneration in the authenticity of popular music, causing new market changes. Record companies needed to reach the largest possible audience. To do this their songs had to be appealing across broad swaths of the population. The record companies released song after song built on formulas derived from successful record sales and avoided risky new ideas because of intense competition within the industry. They also narrowed the diversity of their output based on knowledge of what censors would and would not allow. The formulae for success quickly became hackneyed. Innovation became rare. Ironically, a broader market had the effect of squeezing out much of the diversity and novelty in the music markets. Instead of finding new diversity, record companies looked for recordings with mass appeal.

The improvement of recording technology and the arrival of radio in 1925 meant a truly mass market for music for the first time, and the popular music world underwent an unprecedented democratization. On either side of this divide it is possible to see popular music rushing to fill the empty spaces in the market. The two major record companies, Victor Japan

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\(^{60}\) Sonobe, *Nihon Minshū Kayō Shiron*, 95.
and Nippon Columbia, were fierce competitors. Their intensification of marketing efforts is one key part of the spread of popular music.\footnote{Ibid., 95, 102.} Evidence of such diversification includes the increase in imported records in the late 1920s. Japanese record companies were by 1925 capable of recording and pressing their own discs. This technological capability led to both an increase in production of domestic popular songs, but also in the distribution of foreign music. Companies found it much less expensive to buy foreign master recordings and press them in Japan. So foreign, particularly European, songs became increasingly popular as their numbers and prices made them more available. Songs like “Mon Paris,” a French chanson, were translated into Japanese and recorded by Japanese musicians and singers.

These songs were popular, especially among the urban intelligentsia.\footnote{Ibid., 96.} Jazz gained a foothold in the Japanese market as well, and became popular enough that by 1924 Osaka’s Nadaman Café なだ万カフェ employed Japan’s first resident jazz band. Like the European show tunes, jazz gained such a following in the 1920s and 1930s that Jazu Kissa popped up in large numbers in the major cities, and jazz remains a popular genre today, despite wartime censorship.\footnote{E. Taylor Atkins, \textit{Blue Nippon: Authenticating Jazz in Japan} (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 93-163.} But Jazz and European show tunes were not the only evidence of a diversifying popular music scene. Dance halls became ubiquitous in major cities in the 1920s as well, and movies with sound arrived in Japan within two months of the popular debut in American theaters.\footnote{Sonobe, \textit{Nihon Minshū Kayō Shiron}, 96.} The new technology caused an explosion in the availability of music, and a drastic reduction in prices. This initially led to unprecedented diversification of styles and genres as

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\footnote{Ibid., 95, 102.}{\bibitem{1} Ibid., 95, 102.}
\footnote{Ibid., 96.}{\bibitem{2} Ibid., 96.}
\footnote{Sonobe, \textit{Nihon Minshū Kayō Shiron}, 96.}{\bibitem{4} Sonobe, \textit{Nihon Minshū Kayō Shiron}, 96.}
\end{thebibliography}
record companies rushed to fill the holes in the music market with products. It also led to difficult competition issues in the business.

One result of that competition was an attempt by record companies to control the scattering of musical genres by looking for formulae that could make songs that worked across genres. A single song that was popular in many different market segments could make record production and sales profitable. Despite the decreasing cost of production and distribution, record companies found that expanding music catalogs and serving songs to match the tastes of diverse small markets was by comparison less profitable than aiming at the larger numbers of consumers with songs that appealed to broad combinations of music fan groups. If fans of shin min’yō and fans of kayōkyoku could both see a song as belonging to their favorite genre, then the song could be sold to both markets without significantly increasing production costs. Of course, expansion of production, and of variety, did occur. However, the avenues for distribution of music remained in the hands of the government (NHK) and the record companies. This limited access to new music meant that corporate and government control of certain markets was to some degree possible. To make this control work, record companies began in 1924 to look for successful songs that they could then turn into formulae for new songs.

Perhaps the most famous of these was Nakayama’s “Habu no minato.” This was not the first Nakayama song to be used as a model. “Sendō kouta” was used as a model for songs by 1923. But “Habu no minato” had a much larger effect, perhaps because, published in 1929, its popularity was comparatively greater. The song sold more than 100,000 copies in its first pressing. It led to a whole cluster of imitations. “Debune,” 出船 (Departing Boat) also released in 1929, used the same scale as “Habu no minato,” though it came from a different composer.

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65 Ibid., 97.
working for Nippon Columbia rather than Victor. It many other ways it was similar to Habu no
minato as well. In 1930, the composer of “Kimi Koishi,” Sasa Kōka, also used a minor
yonanuki scale, much like the scale used in Nakayama’s “Sendō kouta,” but with a more upbeat
rhythm and brighter lyrics. “Kimi Koishi” was designed to have all of the appeal of “Sendō
kouta” with none of its dark clouds.

Ultimately, the popularity of Nakayama’s songs did much to focus the attention of Japanese
upon their own hopes, dreams, and daily habits. His shin min’yō provided a set of ideas and
sensibilities that helped people to think beyond the rush to modernity that they experienced in the
first half of the twentieth century by giving them a fantasy of a modernity that worked according
to imagined principles of traditional Japanese culture. He helped Japanese to be comfortable with
Japan as a modern place. In a related way, Nakayama’s kayōkyoku celebrated the daily habits
and changes of modern life, showing Japanese how exciting all of the newness was, and allowing
them to gaze in admiration at shiny modern Japan, despite its problems. In making songs that
spoke so effectively to the Japanese public, however, Nakayama helped to create the increasingly
large market for popular music that made record companies profitable. His audience was so large,
and the popularity of his songs so great, that they crowded out the market potential of many other
kinds of music. This allowed record companies and the Japanese government, with the advent of
radio, to make some headway in their attempts to manipulate consumer habits and ideologies.
Still, in what appears to be a confirmation of much of the theory of Stuart Hall and the
Birmingham School, consumers did not accept such attempts at control passively. They turned
popular music to their own purposes.

66 Ibid.
67 Ibid., 98.
Class Consciousness: Songs of Resistance and Marginality

The leading analysts of popular culture, since it became an academic discipline in the 1960s, including Stuart Hall, Charles Hamm, and Simon Frith, have seen popular culture as an integral part of industrial society. In Japan, just as city life and urban life became increasingly distinct, society itself became more diverse. Industrialization meant the creation of new occupations and the adjustment of older ones to suit industrial needs. The location of factories and the rise of railroads and steam ships meant mass migrations of job seekers to urban settings. We have seen how popular music took part in a set of culture debates about what modernization meant, and how to tame it. *Shin min'yō*, developed by Nakayama Shimpei among others, had a sound and an ideology that paralleled academic and government programs to revive the countryside in the face of urban migration, and even to create a rural modernity distinct from that of the cities. But popular songs also reflected, and encouraged, the increasing diversity of lifestyles and work both inside and outside of urban areas. By attempting to reflect modern realities, popular songs dealt with economic and political issues in a populist way. By learning about their sound and lyrics, we can contextualize events from a new point of view – that of the song writers, who wrote what they hoped would appeal to the masses, and of the consumers, who listened to what spoke to them. Nakayama Shimpei was on the leading edge of the development of this kind of music, too. He wrote music for songs about the growing gap between rich and poor, and about life as a common laborer, or as a marginalized member of a centralizing society.

Popular songs were involved with the political in Japanese culture. Not surprisingly, it is possible to define popular songs as songs that appeal to (and so take the positions of) a mass audience. It should be no surprise to see, therefore, that class-conscious songs played a major
role in the development both of audience and genre from the early part of the Meiji period onward. Nakayama Shimpei did not invent this style of song. He did get caught up in its development, and his songs became some of the first designed for mass broadcast on the radio. They were songs that appealed to common people, and successfully navigated the rocky shoals of government regulation and moral suasion campaigns.

In 1887, the year that Nakayama was born, “Dainomaito bushi” ダイノマイテ節 (the dynamite song), sung by Jiyūminken activists on street corners, was already discussing the need for political participation by the masses and warning of an explosion if the franchise was not extended:

People's power activists  
Rain down their tears  
To polish the brave spirit of Yamato

(Chorus)  
Strengthen the nation and public welfare  
Power to the people  
If it doesn't happen  
Dynamite boom

Oh, happy dream  
Of lifting extraterritoriality

(Chorus)  
Forty Million compatriots  
For your sake  
In red prison uniforms  
We would suffer

“Dynamite song” (1887)  

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68 Sonobe, Enka Kara Jazu E No Nihonshi, 35.
Ten years after the promulgation of the Meiji Constitution, the political message of popular songs had not disappeared. The songs survived and evolved despite the end of the Jiyūminken Undō and the Seinen Kurabu whose songs and performances had been a pillar of its public support. Heir to the consciousness of “Dainomaito Bushi,” the immense popularity of the “Storaiki bushi” ストライキ節 (Strike Song) of 1900, also known as “Shinonome no uta” 東雲の唄 (Shinonome’s Song) is testament to the direct connection between popular songs and the common class.

What are you worried about
Willow on the riverbank
Kogarurunantosho
Life watching the water flow by
A strike at dawn is wonderful, isn’t it?
Isn’t that what is said?

“Soaiki bushi” (Strike song, 1900) 69

Shinonome was the professional name of a Nagoya prostitute, and it became a rallying cry for the common classes when, in 1899, she attempted to leave the profession. Meiji law allowed her to do so, but Shinonome went farther. She refused to repay the “advance money” she had received at the time she entered the pleasure quarters. With support from the Methodist Church in Japan she won her case in a court of law, setting a new legal precedent, and earning the admiration of many others who felt repressed by the Meiji government. By happy coincidence, her name, the characters for which mean “dawn”, could also be considered symbolic of the new precedent of commoner freedom. Her victory also gave commoners another reason to take seriously the lyrics of freedom and protest meant, by the higher classes, to do little more than stir up fear in those in power.

69 Ibid.
Nakayama Shimpei was never fond of government censorship or intrusion into the world of art in any form. He was, though, a popular music composer. Writing songs for the mass market was his bread and butter. It should be no great surprise that he did not overtly resist government efforts to direct music toward wartime goals. Still, in small ways, he did challenge the nationalist line in popular art.

In 1935 the Home Ministry began the process of directing the content of popular songs by discouraging the production of what it called “frivolous” songs. Instead, composers were to compose songs consistent with the ideologies of Japan as a divine nation composed of the kokutai (national polity). At the same time, foreign firms were forbidden to own Japanese firms. For that reason, the Victor and Columbia record companies severed all ties with their foreign counterparts.

Nakayama continued composing in all genres. There was little effect on his shin min’yō songs due to the new policy. Their subject and musical composition fit nicely with ideas of an alternative Japanese modernity based on rural traditions and authentic Japanese culture. But most songs he wrote for other genres, and particularly his dōyō, had to change to some degree. According to his son, Nakayama Urō, in 1937, “a government postcard arrived requesting that he follow government policy.” His dōyō published in Kodomo no Kuni (Children’s World) after that were primarily about soldiers or Manchuria. Like most musicians and

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70 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 337.
71 Ibid.
72 Ibid.
composers, he found that his career could continue only if he followed government policy, which was to use music and the entertainment industry to help harness all Japanese to the work of the state.73

For the most part Nakayama did not want to compose songs in major Western keys (such as military marches). This is not a reflection of resistance to wartime ideology. Although his interest in ethnic nationalism, displayed in his shin min’yō compositions, was not equivalent to state promotion of patriotism, it paralleled ideas being promoted by the government. He simply preferred to use the pentatonic scales he had developed for his song style. He also had little interest in producing nationalistic or military songs for similar reasons. So he continued to compose tunes with the pentatonic scales he had devised, with upbeat rhythms, and colorful melodies.74 His strategy was risky from both a political and a popular standpoint. Though the themes of the songs and their musical composition remained legal, they did not overtly address the nationalist themes that the government censors were looking for. In addition, consumers at the time bought mostly military marches and songs of soldiers, war, and the empire, such as the famous “Sen’yū” 戦友 (War buddies), or “Dōki no sakura” 同期の桜 (Cherry blossom classmates). Since Nakayama did not write such songs, his popularity faded.

Although he never became a target of government censors, Nakayama did experience a decline in popularity, and a consequent loss of popularity and income. In September of 1938, he published a new sheet music collection, the, Nakayama Shimpei shinsaku dōyō sakushū 中山晋平新作童謡作集 (Collection of new children’s songs by Nakayama Shimpei). However, no

73 Atkins, Blue Nippon, 142-43.
74 Nakayama, Nakayama Nenpu, 338.
artists came forward to sing the songs, nor did any record company pick them up for recording.\textsuperscript{75} In February of 1939, Victor declined to renew his artist contract. Instead, the company signed him on as an artistic consultant.\textsuperscript{76} In order to find work composing songs, he had to use connections at his daughter’s high school, where he received a commission to write some dōyō for school use. Following that, he wrote exclusively on commission for girls’ schools, and not for the popular market.\textsuperscript{77} His popular music career at a standstill, Nakayama looked to duties supporting the music industry and composers in general. It was not inconsistent with his earlier career choices, despite (even because of) his early conflicts with censors, that he found work supporting composers as they worked within the new state system which directed art for the sake of the nation. Victor signed him as a consultant to their marketing and public outreach arm, the Victor Bungeibu ビクター文芸部 (Victor Arts Division) in 1939. In that same year, he participated in the founding of the Dai Nippon Ongaku Chosakuken Kyōkai 大日本音楽著作権協会 (Dai Nippon Music Copyright Association), founded primarily to protect Japanese composers from copyright infringement of their works abroad.\textsuperscript{78} In 1941 he was present at the beginning of the Nippon Ongaku Bunka Kyokai 日本音楽文化協会 (Japan Music Culture Association).\textsuperscript{79} This was an organization established according to the recommendations of the Taisei Yokusankai 大政翼賛会 (Imperial Rule Assistance Association) that encouraged member

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 339.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{78} Ibid., 340.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 341.
musicians to make music about patriotism and individual loyalty to the state.\(^8\) In wartime, then, and as his career flagged, Nakayama remained true to his beliefs. He joined to help musicians navigate the space between government censorship and artistic freedom. He also did his patriotic duty.

Conclusion

Nakayama Shimpei’s career trajectory, like his music, set the pattern for the world of popular music in Japan. As he started composing, he stumbled into popularity. “Katyusha no uta” provided him with a taste of income from his songs, and a pattern by which he could create other popular tunes. The popularity of “Gondora no uta” and “Sendō kouta” showed that his formula worked. However, the popular music market was fickle, and Nakayama recognized that he had to continue to adjust to the moving target that was popular taste in order to keep his songs in front of listeners.

This turned out to be his strong suit. Nakayama had an uncanny ability to read public attitudes. He produced songs that suited the words of the cutting edge poets with whom he collaborated, and more importantly, the popular mood of Japan. “Katyusha no uta” arrived by accident into a social milieu primed by poets and activists, journalists and café waitresses. For that reason Nakayama was able to maximize the song’s impact because of a social mood that encouraged empathy with female characters and their problems. The fact that Matsui was both Ibsen’s Nora, and Shimamura’s Katyusha, amplified the effect of the song she sang on the public consciousness. “Katyusha no uta” made sense to audiences throughout Japan. It resonated with the personal experiences of men and women in the late Meiji period. Despite the fictional nature

\(^{8}\) Atkins, \textit{Blue Nippon}, 142-44.
of the characters that Matsui played, their problems, the male-oriented organization of society, and the growing economic importance of women in Japan, combined with the subjects of both plays to speak to modern people about issues they recognized as part of their own lived experience. With his first big seller, Nakayama hit a nerve. After “Katyusha no uta,” the authenticity of Nakayama’s songs in the minds of his listeners was less a matter of luck than of strategy.

Nakayama wrote his second song, “Gondora no uta,” using the same formula that gave his first tune such market power. “Gondora no uta” was set to a major yonanuki scale. The words for the song focused again on the life of a young woman in a modern culture. Nakayama’s audience responded because the precarious position of a young woman behaving according to her own desires in the modern city reverberated with the ambiguity of their own lives as workers in modern factories and offices. They dealt daily with management exhortations to produce ever more goods, and with the calls of corporate and government leaders who mobilized ancient mores and philosophy to motivate workers in a modern industrial world. Although less overtly political than his fellow song writer, Soeda Azenbō, Nakayama wrote songs no less critical of the gap between ideas like Shibusawa Eiichi’s paternalist management style and the economic and social realities of the people whom he was managing. Nakayama wrote for the latter. His songs made them keenly aware that they lived in a contradictory space between the modern industrial economy and ancient agrarian values. Nakayama’s uncanny ability to understand this contradiction, and to be able to write songs at once modern and reminiscent of tradition, made his work sound authentic to those who listened. He appears to have achieved authenticity through sincerity.
Nakayama’s sincerity became unquestionable when, in 1921, he began to publish dōyō. First, he entered this market meekly. His primary reasons for beginning to write in the genre in which he became most prolific appear to have nothing to do with profit. Instead, a teacher, he came to feel that he could write better songs for children than those being published at the time. Nakayama’s entry into this market was the result of a confluence of social conditions that led him, as always, to seek to use his skills for the benefit of the masses. Despite his interest in money, he always tried to be useful and authentic when writing songs.

Between 1918 and 1921, Nakayama’s success with show tunes made him a person of interest for poets like Shimamura Hōgetsu, Kitahara Hakushū and Noguchi Ujō, who were on self-appointed missions to bring literature to the masses. They also hoped to participate, through their work, in a national conversation with Japan’s masses about how to reconcile Westernization, modernity, and Japanese culture and tradition. Nakayama’s success with these things in his show tunes drew them to him. Noguchi pestered him with letters for months before Nakayama finally agreed to set to music the poem that would become “Sendō kouta.” Nakayama’s career provides an interesting twist on Bourdieu’s ideas of the workings of artistic fields. His close contact and success with the masses, which as Bourdieu might predict, made him wealthy, but not a holder of great cultural capital in his own field, led him to a position of both wealth and great respect within the field of literature. Literary types seem to have regarded him as a means by which to popularize their ideas. Nakayama, whose own philosophy on the importance of the working class and rural farmers agreed with their goals, was happy to have such a rich source of collaborators to provide him with the words for his songs.

Polite and deferential to all throughout his life, nevertheless he did not look up to these poets as superior intelligences for whom he was performing a market service. He seems to have
maintained a confidence in his own skills that led him to treat these literary lights as social and
economic equals. Perhaps the fact that he spent his youth with Shimamura and other members of
the Meiji literary elite acclimated him to literary fashions such as the Genbun Itchi movement
and realism, and to the people who espoused and professionally acted on such theories. His life
in the home of Shimamura may have been an experience somewhat akin to regular attendance at
literary salons. He knew personally many of the teachers of the generation of poets and novelists
who sought him out. He moved among them with ease, and he recognized the market value of
working with such people on his songs. This social acceptance allowed him to cross the
boundaries between fields of cultural production, becoming a musician amongst novelists and
poets. His popularity as a composer then made him interesting to poets who wished to make their
work more visible in the field of power (i.e. to the general public) by putting it into popular
music form.

When these people began to create popular magazines, and include songs as part of their
content, Nakayama became an early contributor. As magazines for underserved, but increasingly
economically important markets, such as single women, married women, and finally children
grew to ubiquity in the 1920s, Nakayama read and began to write for them. When Hakushū and
Noguchi began to write for children’s magazines such as *Akai Tori*, Nakayama took an interest in
the songs they published. His critique, as it had been during his Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō days when
he wrote a column about popular songs, was skillful, direct, and populist in nature. He felt the
songs intended for children were really just simplified songs for adults. Too complicated, and
with themes too difficult for children to grasp and sing, he felt these songs did not accomplish
their goals at all.
In many ways, Nakayama’s critique parallels that of Tamura Torazō, a popular music composer and critic of Meiji period school songs. In the period just after 1905, Tamura criticized the way in which Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō founder Izawa Shūji’s official school songbooks included more Western melodies than Japanese, and dealt with subjects that were beyond the understanding of school children. In answer to the problem he perceived, Tamura published a series of school songbooks that addressed these problems by simplifying melodies, referencing Japanese sounds and songs that were familiar to school children, and including words that children could understand and apply to their experience of the world. Nakayama felt that popular children’s songs needed the same treatment. A teacher, he was in the perfect position to create good children’s songs. As he wrote, he tested his songs and his own theory in the classroom. He believed the songs that he created were successful, but was hesitant to publish them. Eventually, through connections in the literary and publishing fields, he ventured to submit a song to *Kin no Fune*, a children’s magazine, and with its success became a regular in such magazines. Today, Nakayama’s name is nearly synonymous with *Kodomo no Kuni*, a series of volumes in which children’s songs were collected that continues to be a staple source of songs for children even today. However, at the time, Nakayama published his children’s songs under the sobriquet “Kayama Sampei” for fear that there might appear to be a conflict of interest between his teaching career and his life as a working composer. In short, his authenticity as a composer of children’s songs is indisputable from the point of view of the popular music market. He did not foist his theory and songs on the public as an educational measure from the cultural high ground. Just the opposite, he was public about his disgust at those, including the Ministry of Education, who tried to use songs to instill adult and nationalist values instead of helping children to make sense of their world through their own observations. Instead, as a music teacher, he wrote songs
that he thought would be best for children, and was sufficiently circumspect about the process of making a profit from them. He appeared sincere in his efforts, and children and adults sincerely loved his songs. Nakayama was thus a natural at the popular music feedback loop. Coming from the masses himself, he and his audience believed that he understood their needs. He took careful stock of the market before he entered, and made sure that his contributions were meaningful to consumers. His songs appeared to both respond to the historical conditions, and predict the public mood, providing exactly what they realized they wanted just as their want manifested itself. This uncanny ability to listen to, and predict, what the public wanted was the talent that appealed to poets of dōyō and shin min’yō, as well as kayōkyoku.

Knowing what the market wanted extended Nakayama’s marketability in the 1920s. As modern society diversified, so did the subjects of his songs. He proved that he could continue to understand the popular market by recognizing that the masses were a kind of putative entity talked about in a single unit but actually composed of a fractured group of interrelated fan groups. In the 1920s, Nakayama’s success lay in his ability to discover and connect to many of those fans. Of course, as Chapter Five made clear, urban residents longing for the simplicity and cultural purity of a romanticized past provided him with his audience for shin min’yō. Many of these same people, who also formed a part of the working class in Japan’s cities, also felt marginalized as social change left them behind, either in spirit or in fact. Nakayama wrote kayōkyoku for these people as well. The characters in his shin min’yō songs about this kind of marginalization lived in the same locations and experienced many of the same problems as his audience. In these songs, however, he wrote not about the beauty of tradition and the simplicity of a place close to the past, but of the difficulties of labor, poverty, and low status. In this he was participating in an already established musical tradition. Soeda Azenbō wrote songs that functioned as apologetics for social
protest actions by oppressed workers’ and their representatives, including representatives from trade unions, who often critiqued the gap between the rich and poor, and lampooned the paternalist policies of industrialists and bureaucrats. Nakayama’s contribution to this genre had the effect of lightening the complaints, thinning out the issues, and mainstreaming the characters involved in the songs. Along with Noguchi Ujō, his “Sendō kouta” complained about alienation by describing how two characters felt left behind by society. The images were dark and desperate, but also ironic, and in no way called for political action. Like Charlie Chaplin films on the subject of modernity, his songs created tableaux rather than calls to action. He was no Nakano Shigeharu.

His drive for financial success led him where the money was in the case of popular songs. He had no qualms about writing songs on commission for capitalists who wanted to make themselves appealing as potential employers for new workers, and to market their image as a part of the products they sold to consumers. In “Suzaka kouta” he used songs sung by young women on their way to work in textile factories as the basis of a new song, paid for by the company that they worked for, that sympathized with the workers but made them a part of the local scenery. A short jump from that were songs like “Iizaka kouta” whose sole purpose was to advertise rural entertainments to the urban crowds who presumably had the money and time to pay for them. From songs for workers and the destitute, to songs about the wonders of the countryside, to songs that pretended to be folk music, Nakayama created a carnival, in the sense of Mikhail Bakhtin’s location for “the laughing folk,” in which his songs tamed and redirected popular discontent and critique to benefit the status quo. These working-people’s songs, and the touring songs that existed on the edge of the shin min’yō genre had great appeal to Nakayama’s audience. Ultimately, the fact that Nakayama’s songs reached so many people across such a diverse set of
social differences helps to understand both the diversity, and the sense of common culture and purpose that existed in Japan at the time.

The unity that Nakayama’s songs sold to his audience had to do with ethnic nationalism and a sense of common cultural values. Nakayama did not see himself as a spokesman for the state. Just the opposite, as many of his urban shin min’yō show, he was willing to oppose government censorship rules and even find ways around the Peace Preservation Law of 1925 in order to perform his songs. “Tokyo ondo,” for example, was part of a plan for a large gathering of people for a Ginza bon dance. The Peace Preservation Law forbade such large gatherings, but the sponsors of the bon dance subverted that proscription by selling yukata, the wearing of which allowed the gathering to proceed legally.

Nakayama often criticized government censorship laws in his diary as well. He intended to speak to Japanese people, not for any organization or great purpose. That this effort sometimes brought him into conflict with censorship laws and the morality that the Japanese government hoped to disseminate seems to have been inevitable, but not intentional. Talking about the situations of regular folk ran the risk of intersecting with political ideologies. However, Nakayama never espoused a specific ideology, except for an interest in the way Japanese lived, loved, and worked. He wrote songs about those things, and sold them into the popular music market to provide himself a living. Ideologically, if not in terms of skill, there was little of the pure artist in him.

This was the reason for his uncanny ability to predict the popular music market. He knew the entertainment world, and he knew what new plays, movies, and events were popular. He had his finger on the pulse of popular culture because he wrote songs for movies, plays, local theaters, and the radio. He had connections in all of these businesses. His travels also took him to popular
culture venues throughout Japan. These contacts gave him an awareness of the latest fashions, literary concerns, and Western culture. He combined this with the current events through which he was living to be able to predict the emergence of audiences and create music that addressed their circumstances and interests.

His adaptation of shin min’yō to urban environments is one example. Shin min’yō had proved popular enough that urban businesses began calling on him to provide them with a similar kind of publicity. His strategy of creating songs that celebrated the traditional within the cities and spoke to residents about their urban hometowns, was as simple and brilliant as it was unlikely. In the 1920s Tokyo and Osaka identified as modern, and even carried a kind of foreign taint. To celebrate their Japanese cultural heritage and allow new residents to claim a part of that was a master stroke. Nakayama’s urban shin min’yō changed the market once again.

Nakayama innovated even after he created the market for popular songs in the 1920s and 1930s. With the great success of his early songs, he could easily have continued to write according to his popular song formula, and would likely have become relatively wealthy before his kayōkyoku audience dried up. In the position close to the market and far from pursuit of music for music’s sake that he took for himself, he could certainly have considered himself successful had he done so. He found it no contradiction to write popular music for common people, and to accept commissions from corporations as well as royalties from record sales as recompense. This already placed him, in the field of musical production, outside the realm of the pure artists, and left him with little cultural capital. However, he was more ambitious than that. He saw a contradiction between making money and creating art. His popularity and his unquestionable musical skill and understanding of the market made him the best choice when a hot springs resort wanted to attract customers, or a corporation burnish its image. The same was
true for poets and playwrights who wanted to create songs that could reach the mass market. Kitahara Hakushū, for example, one of Japan’s most famous modern poets, nearly starved on the income from his poetry. When Nakayama put his words to music, he recognized that his ideas gained a popular following, and his pocketbook a degree of income that was impossible in his own pure art form. Nakayama’s understanding of the changing cultural context of modern Japan made him more than a writer of popular ditties. He functioned as a bridge, or better, a loudspeaker, writing tunes that carried the ideas of Japanese culture to the mass market. If he had no cultural capital in the world of pure music, a statement that is debatable given his close connection with Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō classmates throughout his life, he certainly had cultural capital in the field of literature. These pure artists looked to him to bridge the gap between
cultural capital and the world of power (political capital) and money (economic capital). His popular songs made their art valuable to the mainstream. He knew how to reach the masses, and so could function as a carrier for the messages of the intellectual elite, as well as an entertainer and luminary for the music-consuming masses.
By the time Nakayama Shimpei was born in 1887, popular music was already an important part of social and political life in Japan. This dissertation argues that the music of Nakayama Shimpei was more than just a soundtrack to the history modern Japan. Nakayama Shimpei’s songs provided Japanese with, in popular culture critic John Storey’s words, a “way of being in the world.” Popular songs helped to shape the way that people thought about their lives and the time in which they lived. Nakayama Shimpei, from 1887 to 1952, was among the most important popular music composers, and his songs, in multiple genres, provided an ideological context for the masses. His songs were so important that Japanese still consume and label them as essentially Japanese music. Nakayama Shimpei, along with other popular song composers, thus put into song the spirit of modern Japan.

This study seeks to place Nakayama within a historical matrix of music consumers, music producers and other artists between 1887 and 1952 suggested by the work of sociologist and cultural theorist Pierre Bourdieu. In it, I have attempted to analyze Nakayama’s professional life in the context of both Japanese history and Bourdieu’s ideas of fields of cultural production and habitus. Ultimately, understanding the historical, professional, and market context in which Nakayama produced his songs using this framework has yielded a recognition that popular songs are primary source documents that do much more than just decorate history. The music of Nakayama Shimpei shows that music at times both shaped and commented upon Japanese understandings of their historical situation. As such, popular songs like those of Nakayama can deepen historians’ understanding of their subject.
It is true that understanding popular songs can add depth to the way we think about history. However, understanding popular music is a complex task. Even the term “popular” hides more than it reveals about this mode of music making. This brings us to the critical question of what Japanese popular music was in the first half of the twentieth century, and what it can tell us about Japan’s experience of modernization. Many Western historians of Japan have concentrated on trying to explain the successes and failures of the industrial revolution that Japan experienced during the Meiji era. A large part of that explanation has involved ideas that evolved from Marxism. Postwar Japanese historians in the United States, such as John W. Hall and Edwin O. Reischauer frequently explained Japan’s rapid Meiji-era industrialization as possible because the complex economy of the Tokugawa period had set Japan up for modernity. This modernization school thus implicitly accepted that history works in developmental stages – an idea also shared by Marxist historians. Marxism was also one of the first, and still is one of the most influential ways of thinking about the social meaning of popular culture.

However, this view has limited utility. A Marxist critique of popular culture, in part because of its emphasis on the dissemination of ideology as the primary function of culture, oversimplifies the ways in which popular culture is produced, consumed, and understood. In part to address those analytical limits, this study uses an approach to history that takes into account the nature of popular culture as a site for negotiating meaning found in books by Carol Gluck and John Dower, Marilyn Ivy and Miriam Silverberg, among others but concentrates on a narrow band of cultural activity (the professional life of Nakayama Shimpei) during the period from 1887 to 1952, I have attempted to show how the analysis of popular songs can help to expand the context by which historians think about modern Japanese history. To do this, I have had to rely on a theoretical framework suggested by Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu’s explanation of the
behavior of artists based on fields of cultural production suggests a set of social and behavioral patterns by which we can attempt to understand the choices of artists from a historical perspective. I have attempted to understand the songs of Nakayama Shimpei as history through this lens.

Bourdieu suggests a methodology in which the first step is an analysis of the field of cultural production and its constituents. In the second chapter of this dissertation, I have attempted to outline the field of musical production in Japan during the time of Nakayama’s life, and place the constituents of that field in relation to each other and to the changes going on politically and socially in Japan as a whole – a field of historical activity that corresponds with Bourdieu’s field of power. I then placed Nakayama into that field and attempted to illuminate his own positions, taken through his life choices, the songs he wrote, and the relationships he built among members of the field of musical production and other artistic fields such as that of literature. Therefore to understand the position within Japanese history of Nakayama’s popular songs, we have to understand how the influence of others in the field of music production in Japan during the first half of the twentieth century affected his choices and work habits. Chapter Two is the root of this analysis. The remaining chapters illuminated how various events in Nakayama’s professional life were both a part of Japan’s history, and created, not only for historians but for consumers of his music, some attempt at interpreting the meaning of that history.

In using Bourdieu’s methodology, I have also been able to break down some popular myths about popular music. It is important to recognize that Nakayama’s position in the field of musical production in Japan does not fit the broad brush strokes with which popular songs and their composers and performers are often painted. Nakayama was not a mediocre composer who came to music after finding little satisfaction in other work. He was from the beginning committed to
music for both artistic and career reasons. He chose music as a career in childhood, and became an educator before he became an entrepreneur. That he was always concerned about money does not make him an avaricious opportunist. Instead, he worked hard to find a way to bring his financial needs and his artistic ambitions together. His life was an attempt to reconcile art and life.

In the same way, a look at Nakayama’s professional life in historical context reveals a need to reconcile historical fact with Bourdieu’s theory. Perhaps what is most striking about Nakayama’s career is not his combination of artistry and professionalism, but instead the fact that he was accepted by so many in his own field, and in other artistic fields, as a legitimate artist. The position he took in the field of musical production in Japan was much closer to the field of power, and the ostensible corrupting influence of the market, than those of many of the relatively “pure artists” that he worked among. Ironically, the historical situation of Japan during Nakayama’s professional lifetime was such that his goals, and those of pure artists tended frequently to coincide. Moreover, Nakayama’s market success made him not an object of disdain, but a person of interest – someone who could help poets, writers, and thinkers reach a large section of the Japanese population. The fact that Nakayama’s music sold well was also a draw for artists like Kitahara Hakushū and Noguchi Ujō, who otherwise lived in penury.

Nakayama’s relationship with his own field was somewhat more complicated, but here again the disdain of pure artists for the work of a popular song composer did not materialize. In part, this was because of his classical music education. His degree from the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō assured fans and critics alike of his ability to understand and write classical music. Many of the composers who created the field of musical production in the Meiji period were his teachers and classmates. In short, he ran with the right crowd. That many of the members of that
crowd, and others who, because of their choice of a Japanese musical genre, were not a part of
the Tokyo Ongaku Gakkō milieu, also shared with Nakayama the desire to make music popular.
Japanese musicians like Kikutaka Kengyō hoped to make their music relevant to modern
Japanese, and in the process save both their livelihoods and their art from extinction. Western
classical composers and musicians from Japan wanted their music to catch on for similar reasons.
Nakayama was doing the same things they were doing, and borrowing from their work, to mix
Japanese and Western styles. Like them, he wanted music that was relevant to the times. That the
genre he worked in ultimately sold more records than others does not appear to have aroused
professional jealousy or dismissal of his skills. Rather, it seems to have validated the work that
other musicians were doing by making it successful in the general population.

In the first stage of his life, Nakayama’s upbringing and professional education prepared
him both to compose music and to speak from the position of one of the people. That is, he did
not come from an elite ruling class, nor did he come from deep poverty or repression. He was in
most ways a middle class individual. He experienced the modernization of Japan from a street’s
eye view. This gave him legitimacy when he wrote about the lives of everyday Japanese later in
life.

His work with the literary world, particularly as directed by Shimamura, placed him in the
center of a number of important cultural movements of the time. He got to know literary scholars,
poets, and writers who were busy with the Genbun Itchi movement, with modernizing Japanese
poetry and novels, and with popularizing Western ways of thinking not just about art, but about
the meaning of the changes going on in Japan during the Meiji period. These influences became
the central factor in his early career as he went from music educator (a position already heavily
influenced by Westernizing ideas) to music director of Shimamura’s Geijutsuza. In this position,
he was responsible for creating music that made sense of Western dramatic stories for a Japanese audience. Here he learned to blend Western music and Japanese sounds to make modern songs with references to Japanese traditions. His success here came in part from the fact that other, more ‘serious’ musicians in Japan were trying the same thing during the Meiji period. He began to make enough money to support himself primarily because, despite his experimentation, he worked in the field of popular culture. The shingeki that Shimamura produced drew large crowds in part because the members of the Geijutsuza worked hard to make their interpretations of Western high art accessible to Japanese of all levels of education, both by touring, and by writing dialogue and music in ways that appealed to Japanese sensibilities. Shimamura’s success meant exposure for Nakayama and a salary. Thus Nakayama brought experimental music to a popular audience, and was lucky enough to do it well.

Nakayama then became the market-maker for popular songs. Recorded music predated Nakayama’s first successful record. However, before “Katyusha no uta,” in 1914, most of the best-selling records were of more traditional styles of music. Nakayama’s modern blend of Western musical construction with Japanese-sounding elements and a short nonsense phrase was so popular that “Katyusha no uta” sold more than any other record had to that point. This single record marks almost an epistemic shift in the way in which Japanese conceived of and consumed popular songs. No longer were they the hayariuta of the past, popularized by live performance and word of mouth through the performances of enkashi street singers and local kaeuta versions.

After 1914, popular songs increasingly had to sound like the record. Popular music moved into a new industrial era of production. Like much in industry, Nakayama’s method of blending Western and Japanese elements became a part of the production pattern. Record companies carefully watched audience reaction in the form of sheet music and record sales. They competed
with each other to release sheet music on record first. By 1923 record companies hired composers and musicians on long-term contract to create popular songs, and to analyze successful songs so as to be able to recreate them through an understanding of the elements that made them successful. “Kimi Koishi,” was just such a song, created by Sasa Kokka for Columbia Records to mimic the elements of Nakayama’s own Nippon Victor release of “Sendō kouta,” but with improvements. Here is the beginning of the Japanese popular song as industrial product. Songs were not just the soundtrack to Japan’s industrial revolution, they were a part of it. In his contract with Nippon Victor, Nakayama became a laborer working in a record factory, not just an artist working for his own satisfaction.

The new industrial era’s need to expand markets by finding new products was especially clear after the Great Kantō Earthquake and the urban growth of the 1920s. By the end of 1923, Nakayama was wooing a market of rural transplants to the city with songs nostalgic for the Japanese countryside. These songs, which he sometimes called shin min’yō, and at other times chihō shin min’yō, evoked nostalgia for a pre-modern world that many felt they had lost. These songs spoke of the beauty of Japan’s countryside, used the rhythms and melodies of traditional country songs, and had names that linked them to rural Japan. Shin min’yō songs spoke to Japanese about a lost past, and built on a desire to include that past within the modern Japanese identity. Here we see one of the chief ironies of examining Nakayama’s life in terms of Bourdieu’s theory. Rather than being rejected by other artists closer to the pure art side of the field, poets especially embraced Nakayama’s success and found ways to join in it. His shin min’yō was inspired by the cultural theories of intellectuals like Yanagita Kunio, and abetted by poets who wished to reconcile modernity with Japanese culture such as Kitahara Hakushū. These artists collaborated with him for intellectual, artistic, and market reasons. He could get their
message to a large audience, and that audience was willing to pay. Nakayama’s choice to produce music for popular songs rather than classical music put him in a position to take advantage of the profitability of music for the mass market. It also allowed him to communicate his own and his collaborators’ ideas to a broad public. This, what Bourdieu calls position-taking in relation to other members of his field of art, put Nakayama relatively close to the field of power. That position made him a bridge to the popular music consuming public for other artists who perhaps made more ideological work, but had less access to the public because of it. Since his artistic goals coincided with theirs, and his market access was great, they embraced rather than shunned him professionally. *Shin min'yō* was a master stroke, and placed Nakayama, a popular music composer, smack in the middle of a high culture literary movement designed by writers to do the same thing. In fact, without the poets, his musical education, and the advice of his late mentor Shimamura, Nakayama might never have been able to create the songs that led to the *shin min'yō* boom.

Nakayama’s greatest career move was to take *shin min’yō* back to the cities. Writing new folk songs for Tokyo neighborhoods and for cities across Japan, Nakayama cemented his own popularity by helping Japanese invent a kind of Japanese modernity. His children’s songs and popular songs became a part of this as well. If *Shimpei Bushi* sound old today, we must understand that they sounded both new and traditional to Japanese in his lifetime.

The final element of Nakayama’s success was his success in speaking to Japanese about their historical and cultural beliefs. He moved into children’s songs reluctantly, but mostly for artistic and educational reasons: he wanted, in true Tamura Torazō fashion, to write songs that children could sing and understand. As a former school teacher, he hoped that these songs could teach good social values. He also hoped to prevent the hijacking of children’s moral education by
nationalist and government ideas. Despite this fact, he was a nationalist himself, but thought the purpose of music was to provide moral or cultural education that helped children find their place as a part of the culture, and the folk, of Japan. He opposed its use as a crass means of imbuing obedience to the government policy of the moment. The survival of his songs in school song books and children’s records even today is a testament to the way in which Japanese feel that his music embodies foundational Japanese cultural ideals.

He embodied those ideals in other songs too. His songs spoke to Japanese on the margins of their society, including them in the fold of Japanese culture and history, and to some degree validating their existence. People who heard and sang his songs about their hometown, or their personal situations, could think themselves into the envelope of Japanese experience, and thus recognize themselves as legitimately Japanese, despite their outsider status. By including these people in his songs, he helped define the ethnic nation of Japan, and create some meaning out of modern Japanese history for his listeners.

Nakayama’s most prolific period ended in 1930. Although he still produced songs in all genres, sales of his songs slowed. Victor revised his contract in 1939 when he agreed to become a consultant for the company’s artistic division, and again in 1943 when he became a director of the company. This was effectively retirement for Nakayama. While still composing at a more leisurely pace, he seems to have decided to becoming a supporting player as Japanese popular music developed in new directions. The mantle of musical leadership passed to Kōga Masao, the composer of the big band kayōkyoku that defined the immediate prewar era. Nakayama also helped to found the Dai Nippon Music Copyright Association in 1939. This organization, still active today, was designed to prevent copyright abuses both within Japan and internationally by calling for clarifications of copyright law and exhaustively cataloging the copyright data of
Japan’s composers. Nakayama’s low level of participation in popular music markets during the 1930s and 1940s allowed him to stay out of most controversies revolving around censorship and the unification of artists’ associations that occurred as Japan’s political climate became increasingly narrow-minded about the proper content of cultural products. Ironically, Nakayama also became a founding member of the Japan Music Culture Organization. This was one of the umbrella associations for artists that folded all pre-war musicians’ groups under its aegis in an attempt to vet artists by their work, making sure that what they produced was consistent with the prewar political wind. Given his long-standing concern about government censorship of the arts, it may be that Nakayama took the job in order to help lighten the hand of the censors. If so, he seems to have been frustrated by the work, and ended his association with its executive functions within a year.

Nakayama grew old during the war on many levels. His friend and long-time collaborator Noguchi died in 1945. His songs received less airplay as gunka and official news broadcasts dominated the airwaves, and he was left to tour Japan with his shin min’yō. He seems to never have entertained soldiers at home or abroad during the war. Instead, he became more famous for his shin min’yō. These songs, for the most part, could be played on domestic radio because they extolled the virtues of an idealized Japan. Because of these songs, Nakayama’s reputation swelled to include min’yō. By 1945, Japanese consumers no longer made a distinction between the songs that he had created from whole cloth and the older min’yō: rural folk songs on which he had based his own new compositions.

In all, Nakayama Shimpei created the market for popular music in twentieth century Japan. His songs set forth many of the themes and kata that Japanese popular songs used even after the end of the Second World War. He became Japan’s first record producer, thinking of songs in
terms of how they would sound on record, rather than composing for sheet music that others would interpret. In doing so, he created his own sound that was unique enough that consumers named it after him. He felt strongly about the right of the artist to express ideas without censorship, and about making music appropriate for the intended audience. His kayōkyoku and shin min’yō played to urban audiences. Kayōkyoku spoke to city people about their daily circumstances. Shin min’yō spoke to them about their nostalgic desires for authentic Japanese culture, and taught them what they meant by “authentic.” His dōyō, on the other hand, he made especially for children, writing only for lyricists whose words conveyed simple truths about the daily experiences of children and helped them learn universal moral lessons. The music for his dōyō also reflected his philosophy that music was for the audience. He made the songs simple enough that elementary school children would be able to sing them. For Nakayama, the audience was not just a group of customers, but people that he loved to relate to, and he helped them to gain some understanding of where they stood within the dizzying changes that were occurring around them. As the popularity of his songs dropped off, he remained active in supporting the work of other popular music composers, and continued to reach out to the audience that was, perhaps, most like himself. He wrote and performed folk music until his death in 1952.

What the life of Nakayama Shimpei brings into sharp relief is the real-world application of much of Bourdieu’s theory. Nakayama chose both to join the field of musical production, and to take a position in the part of that field where he could earn the least cultural capital, primarily because he needed income in the form of money. In this sense, he was willing to compromise his art, becoming a popular music composer in order to make ends meet. However, he does not appear to have ever really been interested in becoming a composer of either classical music or Japanese traditional music. Instead, he felt he could use music to communicate with others like
himself: he identified with the rural village residents of Japan, and with middle class urban residents, both of whom he felt were like himself. He used his songs, therefore, in a kind of pure artistic way, attempting to reach people who had the experience in life and music to understand him. He took his cultural capital not from the field of music, but from the appreciation of those he considered to be most authentically Japanese – the middle class and working class masses. They inspired him, and their approbation validated his work. He felt, in 1952 when he received his award for lifetime contributions to Japanese folk music, that he had received artistic acceptance. The fact that such acceptance was also validated by the cultural capital that accrued to him from the attention he received from Japan’s literary elite also highlights the interactivity with which Bourdieu’s ideas of fields of production are imbued. Like the fact that the field of power acts as a kind of container for fields of other social and economic activity, the field of art is a broad one that contains artistic fields of various kinds, each with its own form of independent artistic capital. Each of these fields interacts with others, either indirectly through artists interests in money and directly, through the ways in which artists collaborate to increase exposure to their own work, or to try to create synergies with other art forms they appreciate. The life of Nakayama Shimpei is a study in such collaboration.

If, then, the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu can help us to illuminate the reasons why artists behave the way they do, and produce the art that they do, we also must recognize that such behavior and work are the products of historical and social contexts. Artists do not work in a vacuum either within their field or within their societies. Nakayama Shimpei’s work is therefore a deep source of information about the social, artistic, economic, and power relations that existed and evolved during his lifetime. Each of his songs is the product of a complex set of influences that have to do with the history of music in Japan, but also the history of Japan’s political, economic, and
social change. Nakayama’s collaboration with literary lights gives a new window on the motives and goals of such figures and Kitahara Hakushū, Yosano Tekkan, and Yanagita Kunio. His ability to reach a large audience consistently and in multiple genres suggests that popular music is more than just a reaction to social and cultural climates, but helps to mold that climate. The fact that his songs, written well after recording technology became available, became the impetus for the growth and commercial viability of a recording industry shows that popular music as a product can tell us much about how popular markets, and popular ideas, developed in historical time.

As historians, we must realize that popular songs, and popular culture in general, matter. The use of these cultural artifacts, be they movies, songs, or other popular entertainments, provides us with an opportunity to enrich our historical understanding with more data about the way in which the subjects we study affected the everyday lives of people. Songs have an effect on the way in which we live – our “way of being in the world.”

In 2013, enka is given a place of honor in Japanese culture as a traditional form of Japanese music. The fact that Nakayama Shimpei’s music laid the foundations for the sound of enka, and that his collaborators set up many of the standard tropes of enka’s lyrical content is taken by critics and fans alike as evidence of that “traditional” nature. Yet Nakayama was a modernizer. He updated Japanese music through innovation, not preservation. It is the popularity of his songs, and those derived from his ideas, among the great grandparents and grandparents of today’s Japanese that gives it that sense of tradition.
Appendix

Chronology

1887 - Born in Shimotakai-gun, Nagano Prefecture
1898 – Entered Shimotakai-gun Mura-ritsu Nakano Elementary School
1899 – Briefly went to work for the Yamato-ya dry goods store
1903 – Began work as a substitute music teacher in Nagano Prefecture
1905 – Moved to Tokyo, began living with the Shimamura family
1909 – Entered the Tokyo Ongakku Gakkō to study Piano
1912 – Graduated Tokyo Ongakku Gakkō

Began teaching music full time at Senzoku Elementary School, then moved to Senzoku Higher school.

Composed songs for Geijutsuza production of *Furusato*

1914 – Composed “Katyusha no uta”

“Katyusha no uta” sold 20,000 copies

1915 – Composed “Gondola no uta” on the train after attending the death of his mother, Zou.

1919 – Put poems by Kitahara Hakushū to music for the Geijutsuza production of Carmen

1921 – Composed “Sendō kouta” with Noguchi Ujō, “Teru teru bozu” with Asahara Kyoson, and “Natsu no kumo” with Soma Gyōfu.

1922 – First published song, “Nezumi no oyomeiri,” in *Kodomo no kuni* magazine

1925 – Composed and recorded “Beniya no musume.”

1929 – Composes “Tokyo kōshinkyoku” with words by Saijō Yaso as the theme song for a silent film of the same title produced by Teichiku.

1936 – Death of first wife Toshiko

1932 – Composed “Tokyo ondo,” which set off a popular ondo boom

1933 – Composed “Ginza no yanagi” with Saijō Yaso, extolling the virtues of pre-Meiji Ginza

1939 – With popularity of songs flagging, joins Victor Bungeibu as a consultant to develop new artists.

Participated in the founding of the Dai Nippon Music Copyright Association to help
protect Japanese composers from intellectual property theft.

1941 – Founding member and Chairman of the Japan Music Culture Association, an umbrella organization to promote orthodox compositions for wartime Japan.

1943 – Director of the Dai Nippon Music Copyright Association

1944 – Resigned as Chairman of the Japan Music Culture Association

1945 – Japan Music Culture Association Dissolved at the end of the Second World War

1948 – Became President of the Nihon Music Copyright Association

1952 – Chief Judge for the Second Annual Red and White Song Competition on NHK Radio

Composed the school song for Senzoku Elementary School

Provides commentary on an NHK Radio broadcast dedicated to his work.

Awarded the Minyo Bunka Prize by the Minyō Bunka Kyōkai

Provided financing and dedication for the Noguchi Ujō memorial monument in Inokashira Park, Tokyo

Died of acute Pancreatitis at the Asumi National Hospital in Tokyo
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