

**Shaping a Music Genre through Competition and Virtuosity: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Tsugaru  
Shamisen Contests in Aomori Prefecture, Japan**

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE UNIVERSITY  
OF HAWAI‘I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

IN

MUSIC

DECEMBER 2013

By

Jacob Meir Barsky

Thesis Committee:

Byong Won Lee, Chairperson  
Christine Yano  
Frederick Lau

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my adviser Byong Won Lee for his support, comments, remarks, and engagement throughout the learning process of this MA thesis. Furthermore, I would like to express gratitude to the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa’s music department and music department faculty. They have provided me with ongoing inspiration and encouragement through their classes and events. In particular, I would like to thank Christine Yano and Frederick Lau for being part of my thesis committee and helping me to develop and fine tune my thesis. I would also like to thank all of my informants for generously sharing their experiences and knowledge of music and Tsugaru shamisen.

Thank you friends and family for your generous support and encouragement throughout the process. I would like to express my love and deepest gratitude to my mother and father, Ella and Bernard Barsky, for financial assistance in times of need and for support in the thesis writing process. Special thanks to Min Yen Ong, who provided ongoing inspiration, encouragement, and academic expertise throughout the process. You were particularly helpful in regards to my fieldwork preparation and through intellectually supporting me during the fieldwork process.

This research and thesis would not have been possible without the financial support of the Center for Japanese Studies, the Foreign Language and Areas Studies (FLAS) Fellowship Program, the East-West Center, and the University of Hawaii Graduate Student Organization. These organizations provided me with the financial means to conduct this research.

## **Abstract**

Tsugaru shamisen is a Japanese improvisatory instrumental folk genre that developed in the northeast part of Honshu in the Tsugaru region of Aomori prefecture. Today, Tsugaru shamisen has moved beyond its roots as a regional folk style and developed into a popular form of Japanese neo-traditional music that is both commercially successful throughout Japan and often recognized internationally.

This thesis examines virtuosity and Tsugaru shamisen performance competitions through a field study of the 2012 National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki and the 2012 All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Kanagi. In this thesis I argue that the Tsugaru shamisen genre's evolution as a music driven by virtuosity and competition has made possible its unusual success as a commercially viable national and international music genre that is also able to act as a lucrative commodity for regional music tourism in Aomori Japan.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I.	Introduction .....	1
	A. Literature Review .....	3
	B. Methodology .....	10
	C. Significance .....	11
	D. Chapter Summaries .....	12
CHAPTER II.	Historical Background.....	14
	A. Origins.....	14
	B. Stylistic and Structural Background of Tsugaru Shamisen.....	15
	C. Folk Music Contests.....	16
CHAPTER III.	An Ethnographic account of The 2012 Hirosaki and Kanagi Tsugaru Shamisen Competitions.....	20
	A. The 31st National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition.....	20
	1. The Program Brochure .....	21
	2. The Venue .....	23
	3. Structure of Competition.....	24
	4. Audience.....	27
	5. Reflections on gender at the competition.....	28
	B. The 24 <sup>th</sup> All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition .....	30
	1. The Program Brochure .....	32
	2. The Venue .....	32
	3. Structure of Competition.....	33
	4. Audience.....	39
	C. Critical Summary: Comparing the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki and All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Kanagi .....	39
CHAPTER IV.	Performance of Tsugaru Shamisen.....	42
	A. Brief History of <i>Jonkara Bushi</i> .....	43
	B. The Structure of <i>Jonkara</i> .....	44
	C. <i>Jonkara Bushi</i> at the 2012 Hirosaki Competition .....	44
	D. Looking at Commercial Recordings of <i>Jonkara</i> .....	46
	E. Critical Summary .....	51



CHAPTER V.	Non-Japanese Participants and the International Community of Tsuagru Shamisen .....	52
	A. Critical Summary .....	58
CHAPTER VI.	Music Tourism through Virtuosity .....	60
	A. Intro .....	60
	B. Present State of Tsugaru Shamisen Tourism in Aomori .....	62
	1. Cherry blossom festival.....	62
	2. Tsugaru shamisen and Japan Rail .....	65
	3. Folk music cafes/bars .....	66
	4. Tsugaru Shamisen Pilgrimage.....	67
	5. Cultural Theme Park: Neputa Village .....	69
	6. Yama (Mountain) Rock and Apple Festival .....	70
	C. Critical Summary .....	71
CHAPTER VII.	Conclusion.....	72
Appendix	.....	75
Bibliography	.....	87

## Illustrations & Musical Examples

Figure 1: Map of Aomori Prefecture showing the Tsugaru Region highlighted in yellow. ....	2
Figure 2: Map showing the location of Aomori Prefecture in relation to Tokyo .....	2
Figure 3: The 2012 Hirosaki Competition Stage. ....	24
Figure 4: The 2012 Kanagi Competition Stage. ....	33
Figure 5: Outline of the Kanagi A-class Competition .....	36
Figure 6: Shibuya Kouhei announced as the 2012 Kanagi champion. ....	38
Figure 7: Temporal Outline of four A-class <i>jonkara</i> performances .....	46
Figure 8: Excerpt from Michihiro Sato's and Agatsuma Hiromitsu's Jonkara-bushi .....	48
Figure 9: Excerpts of Jonkara-bushi's 1st phrase section.....	50
Figure 10: This map displays the various highlights of Hirosaki Castle Park.....	64
Figure 11: On the right side is an advertisement that shows off Tsugaru shamisen.....	65
Figure 12: Shibutani Kazuo performing in Aiya with some of his students.....	66
Figure 13: This local tourism pamphlet highlights the Tsugaru shamisen museum in Kanagi ....	68

## CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

Tsugaru shamisen refers to both a Japanese musical instrument as well as a musical genre which has distinct roots in the Tsugaru region of Aomori prefecture in Japan but is also widely known and practiced throughout the rest of Japan. The Tsugaru shamisen instrument is a three stringed lute that is larger than other forms of shamisen and is built to produce a more powerful and resonating sound. The genre is linked to earlier styles of music found in the Tsugaru district of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. However, as a genre, it has developed through both regional and national influences (Johnson 2006:75).

Over the past thirty years, national performance contests in Aomori prefecture, like the Tsugaru Shamisen National Contest in Hirosaki and the Tsugaru Shamisen All-Japan Contest in Kanagi, have played a key role in the spread and popularity of Tsugaru shamisen through mass media involvement, special publicity for the winners, and the awarding of recording contracts (Groemer 1991:66). Three past contest participants, Ryoichiro (良一郎) and Kenichi (健一) Yoshida (吉田) known commonly as the as the Yoshida Brothers (吉田兄弟) and Agatsuma Hiromitsu (我妻博光), played a particularly influential role in the popularization and international recognition of Tsugaru shamisen during the late 1990s. These Tsugaru shamisen players combined skillful musical performance with a charismatic image and a touch of musical innovation to create a new kind of Tsugaru shamisen virtuosity. Both the Yoshida Brothers and Agatsuma climbed the ranks of the Tsugaru shamisen world through participating and winning the Tsugaru shamisen competitions in Hirosaki and Kanagi, thereby proving their technical virtuosity and gaining recognition within the Tsugaru shamisen community. Then the Yoshida Brothers broke with the genre's tradition by billing themselves as a duo within a musical style

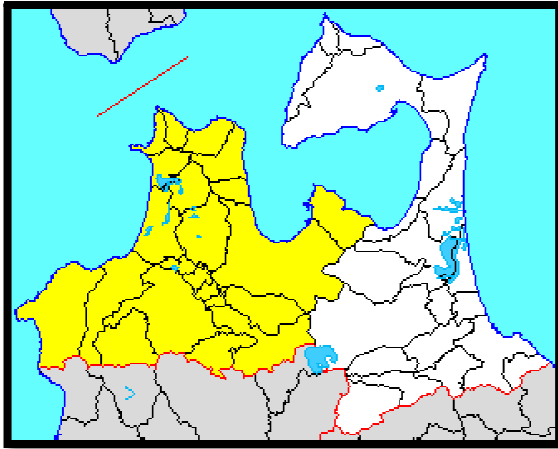


Figure 1: Map of Aomori Prefecture showing the Tsugaru Region highlighted in yellow.

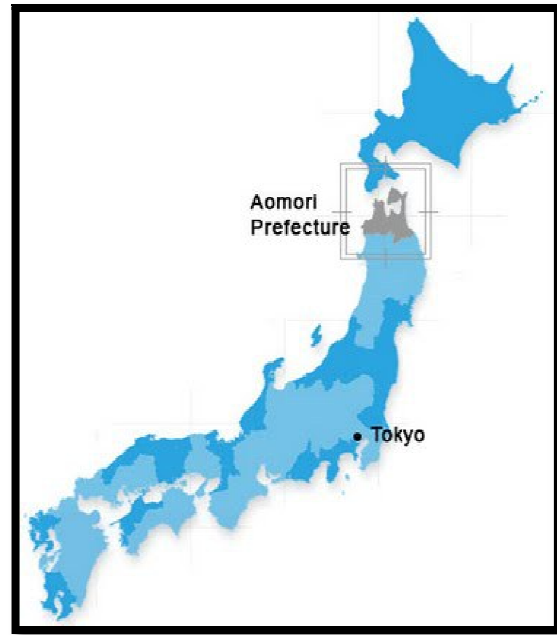


Figure 2: Map showing the location of Aomori Prefecture in relation to Tokyo

traditionally meant to be played solo, or as song accompaniment. Similarly, Agatsuma climbed the ranks of the Tsugaru shamisen world through participating and winning the Tsugaru shamisen competitions in Hirosaki and Kanagi and then broke with the genre's tradition by incorporating his rock, jazz, and flamenco influences into his album releases.

Virtuosity is often defined as an extraordinarily high level of technical proficiency but virtuosity also includes musicianship and can be partially established through presence, presentation, and charisma during a performance. The Yoshida Brothers and Agatsuma repositioned Tsugaru shamisen through their image and stage charisma. They redefined Tsugaru shamisen as a genre that can appeal to both older fans and younger generations by wearing traditional *kimono* and *hakama* on their album covers and in their videos but also maintaining stylishly dyed, spiky, or unkempt hair styles that a younger audience can appreciate. Agatsuma Hiromitsu would go a step further and usually wear modern clothing while playing and perform standing with a plugged-in shamisen (Peluse 2005:72).

This thesis examines virtuosity and Tsugaru shamisen performance competitions through a field study of the 2012 National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki and the 2012 All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Kanagi. In this thesis I argue that the Tsugaru shamisen genre's evolution as a music driven by virtuosity and competition has made possible its unusual success as a commercially viable national and international music genre that is also able to act as a lucrative commodity for regional music tourism in Aomori Japan.

Interviews, participant observation as a student of Tsugaru shamisen, study of Tsugaru shamisen recordings, and the ethnographic case studies all contribute to an examination of the way performance contests are important to the development of a communal narrative that can define the Tsugaru shamisen genre; issues related to gender within Tsugaru shamisen competitions; how competitions can influence aesthetic boundaries of genre, in particularly virtuosity; ethnicity vis-à-vis non-Japanese competitors in the “traditional” arts and their recent international contributions to the Tsugaru shamisen community; and regional music tourism in Aomori Prefecture.

## **A. Literature Review**

As a result of the surge in popularity of Tsugaru shamisen in the late 1990s, there has been a great deal of recent scholarship on the genre.

Daijō Kazuo is a lifelong scholar of Tsugaru shamisen and Tsugaru regional culture. He has written a number of historical studies on Tsugaru shamisen, focusing on the idea of Japanese roots music and arguing that the origin of the Tsugaru shamisen genre can be traced back to a musician named Akimoto Nitarō. His best known writing on Tsugaru shamisen, *The Birth of*

*Tsugaru Shamisen Music* (Daijo, Suda and Rausch 1998), was first published in 1998 to coincide with the late 90s Tsugaru shamisen boom.

Gerald Groemer's comprehensive work on Tsugaru shamisen also reviews the history of the genre but is especially unique in its detailed explorations of pieces played by Tsugaru shamisen musicians. His best known work is *The Spirit of Tsugaru* (Groemer 1999). As an improvisatory genre, the Tsugaru shamisen repertoire is quite small, but its few pieces have altered over the one hundred years of the genre's history. Groemer looks at the ways in which these pieces have been ornamented and performed by different musicians, and at the specific techniques that have brought change to Tsugaru shamisen melodies. He focuses on musicological exploration of Tsugaru shamisen music and has provided an extremely valuable service in transcribing a large number of Tsugaru shamisen songs and performances.

Anthony Rausch, Michael Peluse, and Henry Johnson have provided more recent contributions to Tsugaru shamisen scholarship. Rausch's 2010 publication, *Cultural Commodities in Japanese Rural Revitalization*, frames Tsugaru shamisen as a unique regional commodity and explores how the regional government and communities have exploited its viability as a source for revenue. Rausch brings up many interesting issues that beg further exploration but his publication focuses more deeply on Tsugaru Nuri lacquerware than on Tsugaru shamisen. Michael Peluse and Henry Johnson both show interest in the reasons behind Tsugaru shamisen's national popularity. Peluse provides insight into the late 1990's Tsugaru shamisen boom and the national popularity of Tsugaru shamisen idols like the Yoshida Brothers. Johnson contributes an in depth theoretical look at both popularizing Tsugaru shamisen and localizing the genre in Tsugaru.

All of these scholars have discussed competition as an important part of the history of Tsugaru shamisen but none of these scholars has provided a complete look at the role of the National Tsugaru shamisen competition of Hirosaki or the All-Japan Tsugaru shamisen competition of Kanagi in the recent resurgence of Tsugaru shamisen. Issues related to gender and the internationalization of the genre have likewise not been considered. I intend for this thesis to fill these gaps in scholarship and provide a detailed ethnographic look at these competitions and at other touristic Tsugaru shamisen events that occur in Aomori prefecture.

My scholarly perspective on Japan in respect to issues of national and regional narratives is highly influenced by the work of Marilyn Ivy and Christopher Nelson. In Marilyn Ivy's seminal work, *Discourses of the Vanishing*, she depicts "Japan" as both an objective referent and a discursive, and thereby emphasizes the imaginative and historical dimensions of Japan as an entity. One of her primary scholarly interests is on "discourses and practices where ethos, voice, and nation-culture problematically coincide". She describes these discourses and practices as often folkloric, temporalized as essentially traditional, and concurrently located as marginal (Ivy 1995:12). She also depicts the idea of tradition as something that develops out of an interruption or loss of custom (Ivy 1995:188). I propose that the Tsugaru shamisen genre might be looked at as a somewhat marginalized genre where "ethos, voice, and nation-culture problematically coincide." Nelson has described the Japanese national narrative as a powerful national history that is often substituted and imposed on the divergent local or individual remembrance of the past. He frames national narrative as a powerful ideology that the Japanese nation uses to suggest unified ideas of culture, origin, and destination (Nelson 2008:12). As a popular regional genre, Tsugaru shamisen can often stand opposed to this kind of central narrative.

There are a number of other theoretical approaches that apply to studies of regionalism within the nation-state and national culture. Hamelink, a professor of communications at the University of Amsterdam and Professor of Media, Religion, and Culture at the Free University of Amsterdam, looks at the ways in which cultural development is communicated from metropolitan centers to rural regions. He describes this process as *cultural synchronization* and suggests that cultural interaction between “receiving” regions and metropolitan centers is often negative because peripheral “receiving” regions are typically weak in dealing with new forms, ideas, and possibilities (Hamelink 1983:6). I do not subscribe to the idea that this kind of cultural interaction can be analyzed as positive or negative. However, in the case of Tsugaru, interaction between Japanese metropolitan centers and peripheral Aomori music culture was instrumental in the development of Tsugaru shamisen as a codified genre. Thus, Tsugaru shamisen may be an argument against the negativity that Hamelink associates with *cultural synchronization*. Conversely, as the Japanese nation-state and urban centers appropriate Tsugaru shamisen as a national “traditional” music, there is also a risk that “cultural grey-out” (Lomax 1977:125) - a drift towards standardized, mass-produced, and cheapened culture - could begin to occur. Many traditionalists argue that the regional qualities that define the Tsugaru shamisen genre - for example, song melodies with texts in the regional dialect and improvisatory techniques unique to the region - risk being watered down in favor of qualities more attuned to national consumption. Hamelink’s ideas may also be influenced by the theory of debased culture (Gr *gesunkenes Kulturgut*), which suggests that folk communities assimilate what trickles down from sophisticated urban centers, as well as the ideology of *Folkslieder*, which opposes the theory of debased culture. In the case of Tsugaru Shamisen, the genre can be traced back to rural practices but it could also be argued that those original rural practices are a result of trickle down culture.



Tsugaru shamisen matured through its popularity and connection with the urban Tokyo and its idealized vision of rural Japan's connection to Tsugaru shamisen.

From another perspective, Tsugaru shamisen contests can be studied as integral to the process of “traditionalization” of a genre. Tsugaru shamisen is a relatively new genre of music that has origins in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Tsugaru, but only recently, in the post-war 1960s, has it come to be defined as a unique genre. This happened through the popularity of folk music in the post World War II period. Tsugaru folk songs became increasingly popular after World War II. In the late 1940s and early 1950s, folk music throughout Japan became associated with new cultural and political ideas of Japan, of a Japanese style of democracy, and of Japanese values believed to spring directly from the Japanese people, rather than from the ruling elite. The shamisen players that accompanied the songs also gained recognition. In this postwar period, Kida Rinshōe, a Tsugaru shamisen player who first gained recognition as a song accompanist, did a great deal of touring in the 1960s and strove to upgrade the image of the Tsugaru shamisen performer by spreading the idea of a “Tsugaru shamisen virtuoso”. Kida also founded a Tsugaru shamisen school and announced himself as “first generation *iemoto*”, a first step in presenting Tsugaru shamisen as a unique “traditional” Japanese genre. Over the past thirty years Tsugaru shamisen has become viewed as an “icon of traditional Japanese past.” This happened through the introduction of *iemoto* style shamisen schools and the popularity of the large all-Japan Tsugaru shamisen contests that first appeared in the early 1980s. In this sense, the genre can be studied through Hobsbawm's idea of invented tradition (Hobsbawm 1992), and a discussion of the role that performance contests play in this “traditionalization” process will be a valuable contribution.

Gender theory has also been applied to the study of musical genre in a number of productive ways. Judith Butler has declared that gender is *performative*, saying: “Gender is an identity tenuously constructed in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (Butler 1990:140). Previous studies on masculinity in rock music and on women as electric guitar players offer a productive jumping off point for the study of gender construction in Tsugaru shamisen.

Musical performance contests have been studied in academia for a variety of purposes. Judith Ann Herd uses a case study of the 1982 Yamaha World Popular Music Festival to study the cultural factors that are most important to Japanese popular music genres. Herd highlights performer image and the importance of maintaining certain standard set musical formulas of performance and expectation as the most important criteria for judging contestants and determining winners. Surprisingly, “average” song types sung by performers with the “right image” fare better in popular music competitions than unusual songs that deviate from expectations. Herd also explains how ambiguity in meaning and expression, due to the inability of Japanese judges to accurately capture the meaning behind certain translations of songs performed in a foreign language, cause some contestants to be disqualified (Herd 1984). In this thesis I will be able to expand on Herd’s work by looking at the criteria of performance that most appeal to audiences and judges and brings success to Tsugaru shamisen competitors. Also, I will examine why foreign contestants in Tsugaru shamisen competitions tend to be less successful than Japanese contestants. This cannot be due to lyrical ambiguities, as there are no lyrics; but perhaps there are stylistic ambiguities in the performances of non-Japanese artists that deviate from the familiar and expected norms of performance.

Christine Yano uses *karaoke* contests to explore the unique ideologies of karaoke music performance and reception. She looks at karaoke as a participatory event that stresses shared experience over other aspects of performance. Yano explains that the judging of these contests is often consensual in that judges will confer with one another during a contestant's performance. In addition to prizes for first, second and third place, there is also a dizzying variety of additional awards for extramusical qualities such as best costume or presentation. This often results in almost everyone receiving a prize (Yano 1996). But because Tsugaru shamisen is a highly competitive genre of music, these competitions are unlikely to display that same ideology of participation over performance. However, a similar look at the judging and the prizes awarded at Tsugaru shamisen contests will lead me towards uncovering unique, and what I believe will be contested, ideologies of Tsugaru shamisen performance practice.

Shuhei Hosokawa studied amateur singing contests in Brazil's Japanese-Brazilian community and highlights their importance in promoting an experience of community among the Japanese Nikkei community in Brazil and their centrality in allowing this diaspora community to redefine its identity as Japanese. In these contests, the exclusively Japanese repertoire promoted the preservation of Japanese language, the passing on and expression of Japanese sentiments, and the cultivation of Japanese virtues through the theatrically and over-communicated "Japanese-ness" of Japanese songs in this performative context (Hosogawa 2000:96). Do Tsugaru shamisen performers craft their identity through performing in competition? Do they bind themselves to a community and culture of Japanese internal "otherness" by practicing and performing a folk genre intimately linked to the peripheral Tsugaru region?

## **B. Methodology**

The research for this thesis was conducted through face to face and email interviews, participant observation as a student of Tsugaru shamisen, the study of Tsugaru shamisen recordings and lyrics, travel around the Tsugaru region of Aomori Prefecture, and an ethnographic case study of the 2012 Tsugaru Shamisen National Contest in Hirosaki and the 2012 Tsugaru Shamisen All-Japan Contest in Kanagi.

Interviews in person and through online correspondence with Tsugaru shamisen players - male and female, foreign and Japanese – who have competed in Aomori performance contests allowed me to paint a qualitative picture of the way that performance contests and competitions have played a central role in the gendering of Tsugaru shamisen. Participant observation, a study of Tsugaru shamisen recordings, and my two ethnographic case studies have given me the tools to concretely outline the role that Aomori performance competitions play in creating and controlling aesthetic boundaries. Furthermore, interviews with Kevin Kmetz and other foreign participants in the National Tsugaru shamisen competitions and community made it possible for me to illuminate issues of ethnicity.

Face to face interviews were conducted with Kazuo Shibutani, a Tsugaru shamisen instructor and one-time competitor; Yoshida Kenichi of the Yoshida Brothers; Daijō Kazuo, author and founder of the Kanagi All-Japan Competition; Sasamori Takafusa, leader of the Hirosaki National Competition; Kevin Kmetz, a non-Japanese participant in the competitions; audience members and participants at the Tsugaru Shamisen National Contest in Hirosaki and the Tsugaru Shamisen All-Japan Contest in Kanagi; and many more informants associated with Tsugaru shamisen.

Participant observation took place during one month of fieldwork in May of 2012 as a shamisen student under Daijō Kazuo and Shibutani Kazuo in Hirosaki, a city in Aomori prefecture, Japan. I took private lessons three or four times a week in order to study Tsugaru shamisen improvisation techniques and better understand Tsugaru shamisen methods of transmission.

In preparation for my fieldwork, I studied commercial recordings of Tsugaru shamisen performers who have won or ranked with high distinction in either the national contest in Hirosaki or the national contest in Kanagi. I have also examined transcription of the various ways in which these artists improvise over “classic” Tsugaru folk melodies and compose new works for Tsugaru shamisen. Some of the artists that I discuss include Hiromistu Agatsuma, Michihiro Sato, the Yoshida Brothers, Asano Sho, and Kevin Kmetz.

I attended the 2012 National Tsugaru Shamisen National Contest in Hirosaki and the 2012 Tsugaru Shamisen All-Japan Contest in Kanagi in the first week of May 2012 and documented the competitions through audio recordings, photography, and a combination of interpretive “thick description” and social constructionist techniques.

### **C. Significance**

The study of Tsugaru shamisen regional performance competitions is a unique opportunity to delve into a variety of “hot topic” issues in the scholarship of ethnomusicology and postmodern anthropology. Even though Tsugaru shamisen is one of Japan’s best known “folk” instrumental musics, it is still seen as only a small sub-category of non-Western traditional music in a “Japan” that is more interested in imported Western commercial musics, or the Japanese pop derivatives (Groemer 1991:67). This position as a somewhat marginalized genre that is nevertheless known

and studied throughout Japan, makes it ideal for discussions of traditional music in postmodern Japan and the interaction between cultural center and periphery.

Tsugaru shamisen contests and Tsugaru shamisen culture play an important role in regional tourism in Aomori prefecture, so investigating the motivation to attend competitions and the broad attraction to the genre has profound usefulness to the lives of those who are directly or indirectly involved in it. My research will also shed light on the policing of a musical genre's aesthetic boundaries and the way virtuosity developed and is viewed within the Tsugaru shamisen genre. And by extension, it will illuminate the way virtuosity is viewed in Japan, how ideas of gender and ethnicity are shifting in 21<sup>st</sup> century Japan, and the way that performance contests contribute to the development of identity and an imagined community of Tsugaru shamisen.

#### **D. Chapter Summaries**

Chapter One provides an overview of the history of Tsugaru shamisen and Tsugaru shamisen performance contests. It brings together the views and information of a number of scholars to paint a picture of past scholarship on Tsugaru shamisen.

Chapter Two is an ethnographic and reflective account of 2012 Hirosaki and Kanagi Tsugaru Shamisen Competitions. In this chapter I explore the details of how each competition is organized and presented, and how each contest is viewed by the participants, audience, and broader Tsugaru shamisen community. This chapter also touches on issues of gender within the competitions and compares the differing narratives of the Tsugaru shamisen genre and culture that each competition presents. Here I discuss how the ideals of virtuosity are not the same in Hirosaki and Kanagi.

Chapter Three looks at the music performed in the competitions by comparing Tsugaru shamisen ideology with the reality of performances within a competition. In this chapter, I also compare the performance of Tsugaru shamisen in public competitions with the professional performances recorded on commercial albums, discussing the importance of virtuosity in a successful competition performance verses a successful commercial album.

Chapter Four looks at the international community of Tsugaru shamisen and this community's connection with the local Tsugaru shamisen community in Japan. I also discuss the views and ideas of some specific foreign performers that have competed in the Hirosaki and Kanagi competition. The foreign community of Tsugaru shamisen fans and performers represents a marginalized group within the Tsugaru shamisen world, but as such, I suggest that this community is a creative periphery of innovation that has been able to easily adopt and appreciate the genre due to its virtuosic appeal.

Chapter Five discusses Tsugaru shamisen and music tourism in Aomori prefecture. Through fieldwork in Aomori it became clear that Tsugaru shamisen and the annual competitions and events that incorporate Tsugaru shamisen have broad appeal to both musicians and non-musicians alike due to the genre's virtuosic nature. Here I discuss these various touristic events and the significance of Tsugaru shamisen competitions within the context of tourism.

## CHAPTER II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### A. Origins

The history of Tsugaru shamisen has been discussed by a number of scholars and there are varying perspectives on its true historical origins. Most scholars agree that Tsugaru shamisen music can be traced back to music played by blind street performers in Tsugaru (Daijo 1998, Groemer 1999, Westerhoven 2009).

There are few historical records of the Edo period's (1603-1868) blind itinerant street performers in Tsugaru. But, we know they existed through writings such as Tani Tadaichi's 1858 volume where he mentions a performer that is unlike the other "moth-eaten vulgar blind men" because he is able to play *biwa*, *koto*, and *shamisen*. Many of these performers were also registered at the Hirosaki Branch of the Blind People's Guild, or *tōdō-za* (Groemer 1999:35). These performers, called *bosama*, would travel door-to-door playing shamisen for food or other handouts. Sometimes they would get lucky and be asked to play for a party or to put on an informal concert at a well off home. *Bosama* also performed around temples and shrines during summer festivals and some would even give impromptu outdoor recitals to draw a crowd and collect donations (Groemer 1999:36).

Daijo Kazuo argues that the origin of Tsugaru shamisen can be found in a specific *bosama* named Akimoto Nitarō (1857-1928), popularly called Nitabō. Nitabō was born in Kanbara village in the Kanagi rice paddy district. His father worked as a ferry man on the Iwaki River and Daijō's research suggests that he showed early musical talent, such as imitating popular musical narrative and singing parts of a piece called *Aiya-bushi* at a very young age (Daijō 1998:23 and 28). Nitabō lost his sight to smallpox at eight years old and turned to music, first learning to play



a common horizontal flute, called a *fue*, and then learning popular musical narratives and shamisen from a blind traveling female musician, or *goza* (Daijō 1998:34 and 37). Daijō's scholarship charts Nitabō's growth as a musician and attributes the origin of Tsugaru shamisen to Nitabō's musical genius, innovative style, individualistic spirit, and his development of the "striking method" of playing shamisen.

Henry Johnson also traces Tsugaru shamisen back to beggars and blind itinerant shamisen players in Tsugaru and recognizes that many scholars point to Nitabō as the forefather of this distinct style of playing. However, he recognizes that Nitabō's position as forefather of the genre is contested. Johnson's writing emphasizes Tsugaru shamisen as a "relatively recent tradition". He explains that the term "Tsugaru shamisen" was not really used until after World War II and came into use through marketing Tsugaru folk music by record companies in Tokyo (Westerhoven 2009:83 and 91). Tsugaru folk songs became popular among amateur singers at folk music competitions and these songs would be accompanied by Tsugaru style shamisen. Over time, the shamisen accompaniment to Tsugaru folk songs became increasingly technical and the performers increasingly well known. Tsugaru shamisen, as a genre independent of Tsugaru folk songs, developed through the increasing popularity and respect given to folk music accompanists.

## **B. Stylistic and Structural Background of Tsugaru Shamisen**

Tsugaru shamisen mainly grew out of Tsugaru folk music and today the genre is broadly defined as including shamisen accompaniment to Tsugaru folk songs, solo shamisen versions of Tsugaru folk melodies, improvisations derived from the motives and styles of solo shamisen versions of folk melodies (Groemer, 1999:73), and newly composed works that are influenced by

or expand on the style of past Tsugaru melodies. Gerald Groemer has compiled a detailed outline of the Tsugaru shamisen repertory that I have included in my appendix. However, Groemer's outline does not include newer works like "Storm", a widely known and performed piece composed by the Yoshida Brothers or "Beams", a similarly popular piece composed by Agatsuma Hiromitsu.

The Rhythmic patterns of Tsugaru shamisen come directly from Tsugaru folk songs. Tsugaru folk songs are divided into two main rhythmic styles, songs with a strong sense of beat and songs with a weak sense of beat. Songs with a strong sense of beat are often dance songs, festival songs, songs for farming, and songs for labor. In these songs the main beat is subdivided with the second part of the beat being slightly delayed, creating a feeling of syncopation. Songs with a weak sense of beat tend to be highly melismatic and the accompanimental melody is often slightly delayed. Most Tsugaru shamisen melodies are influenced by or derived from the strong beat dance versions of Tsugaru folk songs (Groemer, 1999:76-79).

### **C. Folk Music Contests**

In 1913, Northern Japan experienced an unusually cold spring and summer. Farmers remembered similar weather from ten years earlier and feared a similar bad harvest. To exorcise the evil spirits believed responsible for the bad weather, a group of locals decided to organize a musical offering at the Inari Shrine of Kitsunemori in North Tsugaru. They came up with the idea of a shamisen competition. When invitations were sent out, Nitabō, Tsugaru shamisen's legendary founder, as well as more than ten other highly skilled shamisen players responded and agreed to participate. This is the first recorded instance that a group of *bosama*, a term that describes blind wandering shamisen players of northern Japan, gathered together to perform in a

contest (Daijō, Suda, Rausch 1998:90). This competition attracted music lovers from all over the Tsugaru region and marks the beginning of shamisen contests, events that today occur throughout Japan and are a frequent and central part of the Tsugaru shamisen world.

In early 20<sup>th</sup> century Aomori, shamisen music competitions in Tsugaru served a variety of clear purposes. The 1913 contest at Inari Shrine was used as a means of interacting with the spirit world. At festivals in the Tsugaru region, *bosama* would often give impromptu outdoor recitals, and if there was more than one *bosama*, they would compete to see who could attract the largest crowd. In private, *bosama* would gather and challenge each other to make the loudest sound or to create a certain effect on the instrument. In this way, competition was used by the performers to motivate each other's creativity. These private contests would also often double as gambling (Groemer 1999:39).

Concert-like performances had been held in Tsugaru for decades or even centuries before the twentieth century. However, from the beginning of the twentieth century, song festivals known as *utakai* became especially popular throughout the Tsugaru region. Farmers with large houses would ask singers and accompanists to come and perform on their land for the privilege of passing around a collection basket. Performers themselves would also organize events by renting small theaters, a local meeting hall, or by setting up a temporary stage. In cases where there was more than one performer, these *utakai* often became competitions. The performers and shamisen accompanists that were most successful at these competitions would often receive more professional performance invitations through the reputations they earned at *utakai* (Groemer 1999:45).

According to Japanese folk music scholar David Hughes, many folk music competitions in Japan are linked to the proliferation of organizations known as *hozonkai*, literally “preservation

societies.” *Hozonkai* exist in various fields and seem to have originated at the beginning of the Meiji period as organizations dedicated to protecting tangible heritage such as a local community shrine, building or important sculpture. But *hozonkai* are now primarily associated with the folk performing arts and the majority of them are dedicated to the preservation of one specific local song or dance. Many of the first local-singing contests put on by *hozonkai* were devoted solely to performing and competing by performing versions of one specific song. These contests are described as “local” because they tend to be held in the location, or native place, of the song that all the contestants perform. However, these contests tend to be called “*zenkoku taikai*” or national contests and welcome contestants from all over Japan or even from abroad (Hughes 2008:224). These “local” national contests are in many ways very similar to the “local” national Tsugaru shamisen contests held in Aomori. Hughes credits the late 1970s *minyō* (folk) boom as a trigger that marks the sudden increase in the number of local folk song contests and he has compiled a list of 83 ongoing single-song folk contests. The national *Tsugaru shamisen* performance contests in Aomori are undoubtedly an outgrowth of this late 1970s folk music boom and the proliferation of folk song contests. However, the appearance of national Tsugaru shamisen contests in Japanese urban centers is a new phenomenon that has not been explored.

Since the 1960s the Japanese government has been trying to encourage migration back to the countryside to prevent urban overcrowding. This initiative has been described through catch phrases like *chihō no jidai* (the age of the countryside), *chiiki shakai* (regional society) and the most widely recognized notion of *furusato*, or hometown (Robertson 1991). Part of this initiative included government projects to encourage growth of local industry and government support in the development of local cultural events like song or dance contests and festivals. In the 1960s, 70s, and 80s folk music contests, including Tsugaru shamisen contests in Aomori, were

established in small towns and villages throughout rural Japan to attract tourists, stimulate local pride, and encourage repopulation of the countryside (Robertson 1991, Hughes 2008).

In 1982 Yamada Chisato, a skilled performer and educator of Tsugaru shamisen, founded the Tsugaru Shamisen National Contest in Hirosaki. Then, in 1988, Daijo Kazuo, a novelist and researcher of Tsugaru shamisen, founded the Tsugaru Shamisen All-Japan Contest in Kanagi. Up until the late 1990s, these two Aomori based competitions were the only national Tsugaru shamisen contests and played a significant role in popularizing the genre during the time leading up to the late 1990s Tsugaru shamisen “boom” by providing a platform for virtuoso performers to emerge.

### CHAPTER III. AN ETHNOGRAPHIC ACCOUNT OF THE 2012 HIROSAKI AND KANAGI TSUGARU SHAMISEN COMPETITIONS

#### A. The 31st National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition (第31回津軽三味線全国大会)

The National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition began in 1982 and was initiated by Yamada Chisato (山田千里), a well known Tsugaru shamisen performer, teacher, and Hirosaki local resident (Rausch 2010:135). According to Sasamori Takafusa (笹森建英), the first competition was organized by Yamada Chisato, Sasamori Takafusa, Daijō Kazuo, and presented by NHK (the Japan Broadcasting Corporation). After the first competition, Yamada Chisato took full control of the event and ran the competition under his own Tsugaru shamisen organization. The competition is annually held in Hirosaki City and was the first event to regularly bring together Tsugaru shamisen players and fans from all over the country. Former winners of this competition include highly respected artists and nationally recognized performers, such as Sato Michihiro (佐藤通弘), Shibutani Kazuo (渋谷和生), Agatsuma Hiromistu (上妻宏光), and the Yoshida Brothers. Since Yamada Chisato (1931-2004) passed away (Westerhoven, Sasamori, Johnson 2013), the competition has been led by Sasamori Takafusa (笹森建英), a composer, leading scholar of *itako* studies, and professor at Hirosaki Gakuin University (弘前学院大学) and it has been run by an association called 21 Tsugaru Shamisen Network Japan (21 津軽三味線ネットワークジャパン).

The 2012 competition began on May 3<sup>rd</sup> at 9:00AM and ran to May 4<sup>th</sup>, in the late afternoon. The event overlapped with the Hirosaki Cherry Blossom Festival (April 23 –May 5) and was held at Hirosaki City Meeting Hall (弘前市民会館ホール). This hall is located within Hirosaki

Castle Park where, every spring, droves of tourists come to see the cherry blossoms. According to Daijō Kazuo (大條和雄), the competitions did not always happen at this time of year but the scheduling was adjusted to appease municipal leaders that aimed to attract more tourists during the festival period (Rausch 2010:95).

I first arrived in Hirosaki on May 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012, rushing to catch the start of the competition. Nearly everything I encountered on my way to the competition, traveling from Aomori City to Hirosaki, was related to cherry blossom tourism: advertisements on the train, cherry blossoms decorating Hirosaki station, the map I picked up at the Hirosaki Train Station Information Booth, and domestic tourists talking about cherry blossoms. I had only one encounter with shamisen on my way to the competition. In the Hirosaki train station, a shamisen riff was played over the public address system as my train arrived in the station. For travelers, these shamisen riffs announce ones arrival and departure from the region – indicating that Tsugaru is a place where shamisen has a unique cultural importance and subconsciously reminding travelers to seek out and expect shamisen while they are in Tsugaru. For me, it was also an announcement that trumpeted the start of my fieldwork.

## **1. The Program Brochure**

At the Hirosaki City Meeting Hall, I paid 3,500 yen (approximately 34 dollars) for the event and received a program brochure titled “Who will be crowned this year’s best in Japan?” (今年の日本一の栄冠は誰の手に). The brochure is very telling and presents a great deal of information regarding the competition. I have included copies of various sections of the brochure in my appendix.

The brochure (see appendix for visual) was printed on one large piece of orange paper (21.5 x 31 in) and folded three times - newspaper style. The front page (upon unfolding so that the brochure is made up of 4 pages) includes a message from the Aomori Prefectural Governor (青森県知事), the Hirosaki Mayor (弘前市長), and Sasamori Takafusa (笹森建英) the representative from 21 Tsugaru Shamisen Network Japan's and the main organizer of the competition. According to my conversations with Mr. Sasamori, the government does not provide any financial support to the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition but the governor's and mayor's presence on the brochure suggests that they endorse the competition.

The front page also includes a list of the past A group champions - including their names and the years that they won, a detailed history of the competition entitled "Main Current Counter Current"(本流逆流), and a list of event sponsors. The list of sponsors is significant because it aims to validate the competition as "the" national competition that the prefecture and many others support. The following groups appear on the list of sponsors: 21 Tsugaru Shamisen Network Japan (21 津軽三味線ネットワークジャパン), Aomori Prefecture (青森県), Hirosaki City (弘前市), Kuroishi City (黒石市), Hiragawa City (平川市), the Hirosaki Chamber of Commerce (弘前商工会議所), てえ Hirosaki Tourism Convention Association (弘前観光コンベンション協会), NHK Aomori Broadcasting Office (NHK 青森放送局), RAB Aomori Broadcasting (RAB 青森放送), ATV Aomori Television (ATV 青森テレビ), ABA Aomori Asahi Broadcasting (ABA 青森朝日放送), Asahi Newspaper (朝日新聞社), Yomiuri Newspaper (読売新聞社), Mainichi Newspaper (毎日新聞社), the Daily Tōhoku Newspaper (デーリー東北新聞社), FM Aomori (エフエム青森), FM Apple Web (FM アップルウェブ), the Tsugaru Domain Neputa Village (津軽藩ねふた村), Hirosaki Young Persons Association



(弘前青年会議所), Japan Folk Music Association (日本民謡協会), Japanese Native Place Folk Music Association (日本郷土民謡協会), the Japanese Music Journal (邦楽ジャーナル), and a number of smaller local administrative districts and newspapers.

The two middle pages provide details on the competition judges, the staff, the competitors – including a breakdown of the competition schedule, an invitation to sign up for next year’s competition, and a collection of advertisements. On the back page, there is a presentation of the 2011 Competition winners that includes some highlights from the event and there is also some more advertising.

## **2. The Venue**

The competition was held in the Hirosaki City Meeting Hall’s large auditorium. Upon entering the lobby I was met with a storm of shamisen noise. Competitors were spread out all around the entrance lobby and upstairs on the second floor foyer - warming up, checking their instruments, practicing, and browsing the vendor booths. People were socializing and taking the rare opportunity to browse Tsugaru shamisen scores, recordings, instruments, and accessories that would normally be difficult to find all together in one place.

The competition took place in the auditorium, a large hall built to seat 1,300 audience members. The stage was decorated simply, with a banner across the top of the stage declaring the “31<sup>st</sup> National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition of 2012” (第31回2012津軽三味線全国大会), a large Chinese character meaning “the bonds between people” (絆) in front of an orange sun, and a long table displaying all the trophies that will be awarded at the end of the competition.



Figure 3: The 2012 Hirosaki Competition Stage.

### 3. Structure of Competition

There are hundreds of competitors who play in the competition annually – including highly skilled professional performers, amateurs of various ages, and children who have only been playing for a short time. The 2012 program lists 221 competitors. These competitors are grouped into a particular class and compete within that class. At this event, the junior class (ジュニア級), C class (C 級), senior class (シニア級), and B class (B 級) performed on the first day of competition. On the second day, the A and B class ensembles (団体 A&B グループ), the accompaniment competition (唄つけ伴奏), the A class women's (A 級女性), and the A class men's (A 級男性) competitions were held.

The classes are divided up based on age, type of performance, and number of years participating in the competition. The junior class requires competitors to be no older than 15 and the prescribed performance time for a participant in this category is 2 minutes and 3 seconds (there were 28 participants in the junior class). The senior class requires competitors to be at least 45 years old and the prescribed performance time for a participant in this category is also 2 minutes and 3 seconds (there were 48 participants in the senior class). The C class requires competitors to have at least three years of experience and the prescribed performance time for a participant in this category is also 2 minutes and 3 seconds (there were 50 participants in the C class). The official three years experience required to compete in C class appears to be flexible as I interviewed a number of foreign competitors that told me they were able to register and participate in the C class competition only a few months after they started learning to play. Beyond C class, the skill level of competitors becomes much higher. B class is expected to have at least 4 years of experience and most of the B class competitors have previously won the C class competition or placed within the top 10 of the C class. The B class performance time is slightly longer at 3 minutes per competitor - as they are expected to display more technique and variety within their performance.

There are no concrete rules about what piece to play or how to play the piece. However, nearly every performer in the Junior, Senior, C, B, and A classes, performed Tsugaru jongara-bushi (津軽じょんがら節). This piece is the most popular and best known of the five main Tsugaru shamisen repertoire pieces that also include Tsugaru yosare-bushi (津軽よされ節), Tsugaru-ohara bushi (津軽おはら節), Tsugaru aiya-bushi (津軽あいや節), and Tsugaru san-sagari (津軽三下り). Jongara-bushi is a high energy performance piece that offers the competitor chances to show off their technical precision on the shamisen. But, it is also so well

known and widely performed that a successful winning performance demands a high degree of musicality. The prescribed time limit for each performer is also based on the expectation that performers will play jongara-bushi.

During the competition, each performer is introduced by their name and home prefecture before they perform. The competitor sits center stage while the next three competitors are sitting in a line of chairs on stage, as if “on deck”. When one competitor finishes their performance, the next player moves center stage, bows, and prepares to compete while the performers “on deck” move down a seat and await their turn to perform.

After a full day of over 100 jongara-bushi performances, everyone is looking forward to day two of the competition. The second day of the event is the highlight and attracts the most spectators. In the morning, the A class and B class ensembles compete. These two ensemble classes are not divided by skill or experience. To qualify for the A class ensemble competition the performance group must include 11 or more players. To qualify for the B class ensemble, the performance group must be made up of 5 to 10 players. At the 2012 competition only 4 groups competed in the A class and 5 groups in the B class. Like all the other competitions, groups are provided with a prescribed performance time. Their performances should be no longer than 4 minutes. In the ensemble category the choice of performance piece varies. Tsugaru shamisen is most often performed as a solo genre or as an accompaniment to song. When groups perform, they will sometimes perform pieces in unison and then different performers on stage will take an opportunity to perform their own variation or improvisation. Sometimes, groups will perform a specially arranged ensemble version of one of the five main Tsugaru shamisen repertoire pieces.

Shamisen accompaniment to Tsugaru folk music is an important part of the Tsugaru shamisen genre. In fact, the main Tsugaru shamisen repertoire pieces are all derived from songs.

Therefore, a song accompaniment competition is included in the competition. Competitors in this category have 2 minutes and 30 seconds to perform an accompaniment to a folk song. The singer performs backstage, out of sight, while the competitor presents his accompaniment. At the 2012 competition, there were 19 competitors. Each year a different song is chosen as the competition piece. Performers accompanied the sung version of aiya-bushi at the 2012 competition.

According to registration details for 2013, competitors will accompany yosare-bushi at the upcoming competition.

The two most anticipated competition events are the women's A class and men's A class competition. These two classes competed in the afternoon of the second day of the event. This is the only competition class where men and women compete separately. The performers in each of these two classes are some of the most skilled Tsugaru shamisen performers, made up of both up and coming performers and a few long time professionals that compete to stay in practice. Participants in the A class are expected to have more than five years experience and all have won or placed in the top ranks of past B class competitions. The A class also performs jongara-bushi but they are given 3 minutes and 30 seconds to perform. 16 women and 27 men competed in the 2012 A class competitions.

#### **4. Audience**

When I arrived on the morning of the first day of competition, I was surprised to find that the audience was almost non-existent. The first competition of the event is the junior class and not many people came to listen to the children perform. The audience was mainly made up of judges, staff, and what appeared to be family members of the competitors. Before many of the contestants played, their friends and family would shout “do your best” (頑張れ) or cheer to

show support. This portion of the event is important in terms of developing the community that surrounds the event. Many of the A class competition winners began competing in the junior class and kept participating annually in this competition until they became skilled enough to win or place high in the A class competition. The 2012 men's and women's A class winners, Shibata Masato (柴田雅人) and Shibata Yuri (柴田佑梨), both began participating in the competition in the junior class and kept competing annually until they began placing high and winning the event.

The audience began to fill out on the afternoon of day 1 and on day 2 the auditorium's 1,300 seats were about half full. As a researcher, I was excited to catch as many of the performances as possible. I tried to also watch the audience. Most of the audience would come and go. Friends and family would come to support a particular competitor, stay for a few performances, and then leave. During the A class competition, the audience was more varied, including Tsugaru shamisen fans, competition participants and their friends and families, and media.

## **5. Reflections on gender at the competition**

Historically, all of the best known Tsugaru shamisen performers have been men and the genre's loud energetic and rhythmic nature has mainly been associated with masculine ideals of virtuosity and powerfully projecting sound. Until 1998, all of the A class Hirosaki competition champions were men. But at the 2012 competition there were a large number of female competitors, nearly half the competitors. Since the competitions began women have become more interested in, and skilled at, performing Tsugaru shamisen. I suggest that this can be attributed to broader changes in the role that women play within Japanese society. However, in terms of the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition, an increase in female performers has

caused an interesting division. Beginning in 1998, the A class was divided into a women's and men's competition and there would be two champions each year.

In the world of professional sports, this would not be a surprise, but I was surprised that it would be considered necessary to create this gender divide in a musical performance competition. Furthermore, at the 2012 competition the men's A class trophy was far larger and more spectacular than the tiny trophy presented to the winner of the women's division. And on the 21 Tsugaru Shamisen Network Japan website's list of champions the men are all listed under "champion" while the women are listed under "women's division". These two things somehow trivialize the women's A class champion and give the appearance that the men's A class champion is considered the true champion.

During field interviews I spoke with four women who competed in the 2012 competition and one past winner of the competition who currently works at Neputa Mura, a Tsugaru themed cultural park in Hirosaki. When asked about women's role in Tsugaru shamisen, their increased participation in the competition, and the gender division at the competition, responses and opinions varied.

The two B class competitors whom I spoke with, Sayama Chihiro (佐山千尋) and Asai Rie (浅井里絵), did not appear to have strong feelings about the A class division between men and women – keeping in mind that in B class men and women compete against each other, and Chihiro and Rie placed 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> in the competition, respectively. Sayama Chihiro expressed that she is happy that there are more women performers competing and that it is possible to perform Tsugaru shamisen in a style that combines aspects of powerful masculine playing and a more feminine style, which is what she aims for. Asai Rie seemed to feel that men have a great deal of strength and force in their playing that, at a professional level, women cannot compete

with. She expressed that dividing the women's and men's competition is positive because it makes it possible for women to also win the A class competition.

The two female A class competitors whom I spoke with were Umewake Akiko (梅若晶子) who placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the 2012 competition, and another, who requested to stay anonymous. They both suggested that they were not entirely happy with the way that the men's and women's A class competition is separated and admitted that Tsugaru shamisen is dominated by male performers. Akiko said that she hopes that there are eventually enough strong female performers to make the division irrelevant and unnecessary. While visiting Neputa Village, I was able to interview Narita Saori (成田里織), the 1998 and 1999 A class's women's champion, who uses the stage name Yamada Sachimi (山田千里美). She also questions the way that the A class women's and men's competition was divided but maintained that she was happy to be the first A class women's champion.

## **B. The 24<sup>th</sup> All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition** **(第24回津軽三味線全日本大会)**

The All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition began in 1989 and is held annually in Kanagi Town. Kanagi is a very small country town that bills itself as the place where Tsugaru shamisen originated. The town requested that Daijō Kazuo start the competition in honor of Kanagi's historic role (Rausch 2010, pg 135) as the home of Nitabō, the man who is often credited as founder of Tsugaru shamisen. According to Sasamori Takafusa, there was also a personal conflict between Daijō Kazuo and Yamada Chisato. Daijō Kazuo was one of the original organizers of the competition in Hirosaki but started his own competition partly in response to this conflict. The Kanagi competition is smaller than the one held in Hirosaki, but the



competition also boasts highly respected artists and nationally recognized performers as past competition participants and winners: Agatsuma Hiromistu (上妻宏光), Tada Atsushi (多田あつし), and Asano Sho (浅野祥). Many competitors who perform in the Hirosaki competition also try to compete in this smaller competition in Kanagi. Daijō Kazuo still runs this competition and, in 2012, the event was co-sponsored by the Tsugaru Shamisen All-Japan Kanagi Competition Executive Committee (津軽三味線全日本金木大会実行委員会), the All-Japan Friends of Tsugaru Shamisen Society (全日本津軽三味線友の会), and the Goshogawara City Board of Education (五所川原市教育委員会). The event is also supported by a number of local newspapers, and local broadcasting organizations.

The 2012 competition began on May 4<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 AM and ran to May 5<sup>th</sup>. I was not able to attend the first day of the competition because it overlapped with the second day of the Hirosaki competition. The event was held at the Kanagi Community Center (金木公民館) which is 10 minutes from Kanagi train station. On May 5<sup>th</sup> I took the new Resort Shirakami Train from Aomori City to Goshogawara and then transferred to the Tsugaru Railroad (津軽鉄道). The Tsugaru Railroad is an old privately owned railway and the single-rail cars only come and go once per hour. It took me over two and a half hours to make the trip. Traveling on the old slow railroad and passing farms, scattered apples orchards, and scenic views of Mt. Iwaki, gave me the sense that I was returning to an older Japan. I suggest that the Tsugaru Railroad and many of the small towns along its path have embraced the idea that they represent *furusato* (Robertson 1991) and, to some extent, have constructed and honed parts of this image to better cater to travelers (see chapter 5 for discussions on tourism and *furusato* in relation to Tsugaru shamisen).

## **1. The Program Brochure**

At the Kanagi Community Center I paid a few hundred yen and received a simple one page program brochure printed on pink paper (see appendix for visual). Unlike the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition's brochure, this smaller brochure only included the bare essential information about the 2012 competition. On the front page the brochure lists each participant, separated into competition classes, the number of total competitors (150 individuals and 152 performers competing in the group classes). Unlike the Hirosaki competition brochure, this brochure included the exact piece that each competitor would perform. At the Hirosaki competition this is less necessary because nearly all the performers play a similar version of Tsugaru jongara-bushi. On the back page the brochure presents the basic competition rules, information on utilizing the community center's space, a map of the community center, and detailed contact information, including a list of sponsors and event supporters.

## **2. The Venue**

The Kanagi Community Center is a small building located just across a small river that separates it from the town proper. The main competition was held in the Community Center's Performance Hall. This is not a large concert hall and is only able to accommodate a small fraction of the people that Hirosaki's Meeting Hall auditorium can manage. The front half of the performance hall had cushions placed on the floor to act as seating. This area was set aside for competitors and media. Many video cameras and were set up around this front half of the hall. To the left of the stage was a long table set aside for the judges. Each judge could be easily identified by large labels placed on the table. The rest of the auditorium was filled with metal and plastic folding chairs for the remainder of the audience.



Figure 4: The 2012 Kanagi Competition Stage.

### 3. Structure of Competition

As with the Hirosaki competition, the competitors are divided up into classes based on age and skill levels. At the 2012 Kanagi competition, the elementary school and younger class (小学生以下の部), junior and senior high school class (中高生の部), junior and senior high school ensemble class (団体・中高生の部), senior class (シニアの部), and C class (一般の部 C 級), competed on the first day. On the second day, the B class (一般の部 B 級), the A and B class ensembles (団体・一般の部 A&B グループ), and the A class (一般の部 A 級) competitions are held.

All individual performers are expected to perform their competition piece within 3 minutes and all group performers are expected to present their piece within 4 minutes. Besides age, the

different performance classes are less clearly defined at this competition. All competitors begin competing in the C class and, upon winning or placing in one of the top spots, they can move up to the B class competition in the following year. Upon winning or placing in the top ranks of the B class competition, they can move up and compete in the A class in the following year.

The most interesting part of the Kanagi competition that strongly differentiates it from the larger competition in Hirosaki is the A class competition. At the Kanagi competition, A class competitors do not know the order they will play in, they do not know who they will compete against, and they do not know what piece they will be asked to play until right before they perform. The A class also places men and women together to compete against each other. Lastly, the A class competitors compete in a form of musical duel, where two of the competitors are on stage together and perform back to back. One player must then obtain a majority vote from the 7 judges. The stage is setup so that the audience can see the results of the matchup immediately after the two competitors perform. The various unknowns and the tension created by the direct style of performer versus performer competition make the Kanagi competition far more exciting than the Hirosaki competition.

At the start of the A class competition, performers pick a letter from a box. At the 2012 competition, a girl from the audience brought the box around to each competitor. Each letter has an assigned place in the competition order. Upon choosing a letter, the competitors learn who they will compete against. To become the competition champion, a competitor must make it through between three and five rounds. Before each round of the competition, the performance piece is also selected by drawing randomly from a box. Therefore, to win the competition, a competitor must be able to demonstrate mastery of at least three, and sometimes four or five, of the major pieces of the Tsugaru shamisen canon.

The list below includes each of the competitors and their numbers, as they appear on the program brochure. Their order and the performer that they played against can be viewed on the chart on the next page.

- 1) Sugiyama Daisuke (杉山大祐)
- 2) Shibata Yuri (柴田佑梨)
- 3) Shibata Ai (柴田愛)
- 4) Matsunaga Daisuke (松永泰輔)
- 5) Fujiwara Tsubasa (藤原翼)
- 6) Honda Emiko (本田恵美子)
- 7) Miura Ryu (三浦龍)
- 8) Horio Yasuma (堀尾康磨)
- 9) Inoue Namiyu (井上奈美由)
- 10) Baba Atsufumi (馬場淳史)
- 11) Yamaguchi Kouji (山口晃司)
- 12) Shibuya Kouhei (渋谷幸平)
- 13) Kurihara Takehiro (栗原武啓)

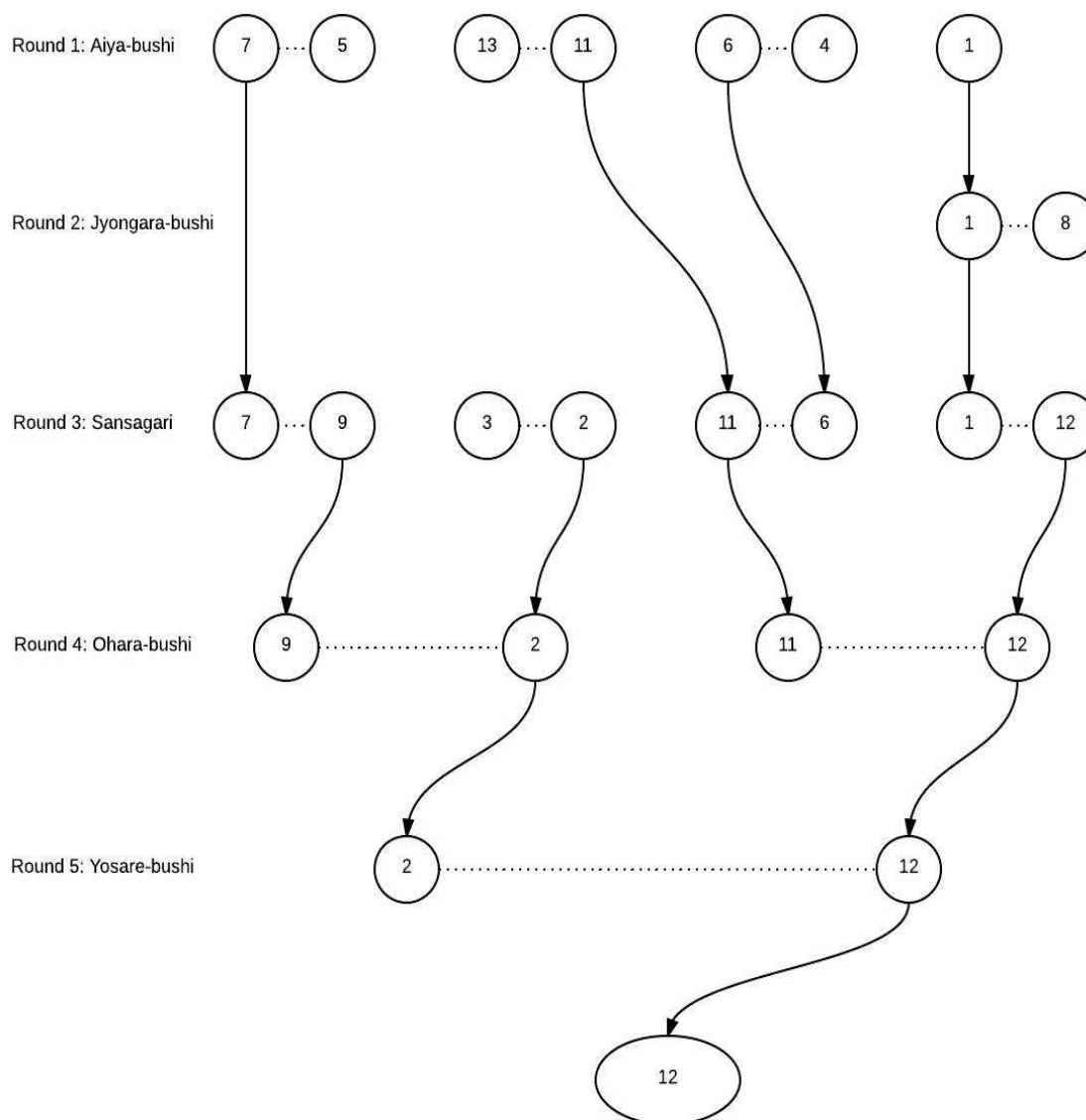


Figure 5: Outline of the Kanagi A-class Competition

The numbers I use on the list and chart (figure 5) are the numbers given to each A class competitor in the program brochure. The chart shows who competed against whom, which competitor won each round, and what melodies were played during each competition round. Competitor 10, Baba Atsufumi, was not able to attend the competition and is therefore left out of the chart. The first round was called the qualifier (予選ラウンド) and included the competitors that were relatively new or playing in the A class competition for the first time. These

competitors were randomly paired up by drawing letters from a box. Then, the competition piece, Aiya-bushi (あいや節), was selected randomly by a little girl in the audience.

Sugiyama Daisuke (competitor 1) was able to move past the qualifying round without performing because Baba Atsufumi did not attend the event. However, this made it necessary to adjust the format of the competition and add a mini round. In the chart, this mini round is indicated as round 2. Before round 2, all the remaining competitors drew new random letters to determine the round 3 competition order. Sugiyama Daisuke was matched up to two competitors in order to make up being able to skip the qualifying round. The first, Horio Yasuma (competitor 8), would compete against Sugiyama in the mini round. Then the winner of this mini round would move forward to compete in the round 3 finals. An audience member and B class competitor, Gareth Burns, selected the competition piece, Jyongara-bushi (じょんがら節), for round 2. Immediately after the competition between Sugiyama and Horio, a new competition piece was again chosen for the round 3 competition. This time, a father of one of the competitors chose the competition piece – which would be Sansagari (三下がり). For round 4, Ohara-bushi (おはら節) was selected by a boy in the audience, leaving only Yosare-bushi (よされ節) remaining as the round 5 competition piece.

Throughout the A class competition, the moderator would discuss the format of the competition with the audience, she would ask the competitors questions about how they felt they had performed, and she would try to incorporate the audience into the competition by choosing audience members to help with selecting pieces and the order in which competitors would perform.



Figure 6 : Shibuya Kouhei announced as the 2012 Kanagi champion.

There were a number of particularly exciting moments in the 2012 A class competition. In round three, Shibata Yuri and Shibata Ai competed against each other. These two sisters and their older brother are very well known in the Tsugaru shamisen world and their brother, Shibata Masato, has won both the Hirosaki and Kanagi competitions. Masato won the 2012 Hirosaki competition and Shibata Yuri, the older sister, won the 2012 Hirosaki women's competition. In the Kanagi competition Yuri won 7-0 against her younger sister and made it to the last round of the A class competition. According to my interviews, many of the performers and audience felt that she did not play significantly better than her sister but was favored by the judges because of



her age. The final play off between Shibata Yuri and Shibuya Kouhei, the competition winner, was also extremely exciting because Yuri had just won the Hirosaki A class women's competition and was a favorite in the Kanagi competition. On the other hand, Shibutani Kouhei had been competing for upwards of 19 years but had never won a top rank competition.

#### **4. Audience**

I was only able to attend the second day of the Kanagi competition. However, on the second day of competition the whole performance hall was full. The audience was made up mainly of a large number of community members and local Tsuagru shamisen fans as well as other competitors and their friends and families. The audience was very involved in this competition. They would cheer when they heard an improvisatory passage that they liked or would cheer for a favorite performer to help encourage them before competing. Also, as explained in the previous section, the audience was occasionally called upon to assist with tasks, such as randomly drawing to decide what piece would be performed during the A class competition.

#### **C. Critical Summary: Comparing the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki and All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Kanagi**

Both of these competitions provide platforms for the growth of Tsugaru shamisen but I suggest that they project two widely differing narratives of Tsugaru shamisen. These two narratives portray virtuosity in strikingly different ways. I came to this by looking at the way the performers view their participation in the events, the way the judges decide who will win the events, and the way the organizers advertise and promote the events.

The program brochures of each event tell a great deal about the vision behind the event. By asking “Who will be crowned this year’s best in Japan?” the Hirosaki competition brochure tells its audience that the competition is the most important Tsugaru shamisen competition, a point that many in the Tsugaru shamisen community contest. The brochure is also skillfully and elegantly presented as a kind of mini newspaper that includes some history of the event, biographies of the organizers, a list of past winners, and a detailed list of event sponsors that visually suggests strong support for the competition. On the other hand, the Kanagi competition brochure includes only the bare essential pieces of information that one would expect to find at a competition – performance order, which performer will perform, and what piece each competitor will play. These difference show that the Hirosaki competition organizers hope to, or are concerned about, positioning the competition as the central and most important annual event of the Tsugaru shamisen world while the Kanagi competition organizers project a vision of their event that is simply concerned with providing a means for performers to compete and be involved with a living folk tradition.

At the competition in Hirosaki, many performers participate and play the same piece, in nearly the same way, so that the performances quickly begin to feel mass produced. Upon asking what performers aim for when they compete and what they believe judges are watching for during a performance, many told me that they try not to miss any notes, they try to make smooth clear crescendos, and that they try to display an ability to create steady trance-like passages of repetition. Judges also told me that they listen for speed, rhythmic consistency, and accuracy of notes. On top of this clear focus on technical virtuosity, many participants in the Hirosaki competition view it as professional stepping stone within the Tsugaru shamisen world. This is because it was the first major Tsuagru shamisen competition and many of its past champions

have enjoyed successful performance careers – in fact, some were signed to their first music labels after winning the competition. The Hirosaki competition is also located in Hirosaki City, a hub and the historical center of Aomori prefecture. These factors depict Tsugaru shamisen as a technically demanding genre that looks forward to the genres commercial potential and define the virtuoso player through their technical showmanship and perfection.

On the other hand, the competition in Kanagi is connected with the Tsugaru Shamisen Museum (津軽三味線会館), a slightly touristic building in Kanagi that is dedicated to preserving and presenting historical information on the development of Tsugaru shamisen. Daijō Kazuo is also involved with this institution and many of the items and presentations in the exhibit are derived from Daijō Kazuo's research. At the Kanagi competition performers and judges also worry about technical issues and technical ability during a performance but there is more performance flexibility. Rather than focusing mainly on Jongara-bushi, the piece nearly all of the performers play at the Hirosaki competition, performers will often choose to play one of the other repertoire works as their competition piece. The judges also appear to be more flexible about the way that a competition piece is performed. Tsugaru shamisen is often described by Daijō Kazuo as a genre that historically spotlights the individualism of a performer's improvisation and style and this competition celebrates that in a way that is far more visible than at the Hirosaki competition. The Kanagi competition is located in the small agricultural town associated with Nitabō, the legendary founder of the genre. This competition projects a narrative that depicts Tsugaru shamisen as a musical genre of the countryside, historically grounded in the past but celebrating an individualistic interpretation of how it should be performed. Therefore the Kanagi competition defines the virtuoso performer more through creative interpretations, musicianship, and individualistic performance style.

## CHAPTER IV. PERFORMANCE OF TSUGARU SHAMISEN

As the legend goes, Nitabō (the shamisen player that is said to have established the Tsugaru style in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century) always emphasized the importance of imagination and creativity in music by telling his students that “even a monkey can copy something. You must play your own shamisen” (Suda, Daijō and Rausch 1998). Nitabō may or may not have been the actual founder of the Tsugaru shamisen style but, either way, his influence on the Tsugaru ideology was long lasting. The idea of playing your own shamisen helped shaped the art into its current improvisatory form. That said, at Tsugaru shamisen performance competitions, judges appear to place authentic representation of Tsugaru style and tradition above the creativity of an individual performer. This suggests that “cookie cutter” performances are what most Tsugaru shamisen competitors aim for. It also leads to the standardization of a Tsugaru shamisen repertory that is ideologically meant to be improvisatory and fluid.

In this chapter I look at performances and commercial recordings of *jonkara-bushi*, one of the best known Tsugaru melodies. Through studying my field recordings of the 2012 Hirosaki competition and my own, coupled with Gerald Groemer’s, transcriptions of the *maebiki* (or introductory section) and first phrase section of *Jongara Bushi* as performed in recordings by three well known performers (Takahashi Chikuzan, Hiromitsu Agatsuma, and Michihiro Sato), I expose a contradiction in today’s Tsugaru shamisen world. On the one hand, music, creativity and individuality of expression are rooted, ideologically, in the genre and the national vision of Tsugaru shamisen. However, for most performers, representing local Tsugaru authenticity by mimicking great performers and songs of the past has become essential in order to gain recognition as a professional performer. In competitions, performers must compete by playing traditional melodies from a set canon in order to embrace audience expectations of a Tsugaru

shamisen musician. In competition they can only rely on technical virtuosity to differentiate themselves. While in the commercial sphere Tsugaru shamisen performers struggle to develop their creative virtuosity.

### **A. Brief History of *Jonkara Bushi***

*Jonkara Bushi* can be traced back to a number of traditional folk melodies, or *minyo*, from Tsugaru. It is sometimes claimed that today's *Jonkara Bushi* was originally sung by a *bosama* named Gensuke living in Morita Village around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Groemer 1999). Realistically, many version of the song date back to even earlier in the 19th century making it difficult to be sure of exactly where the original melody came from.

For a long time, *Jonkara Bushi* seemed to be constantly evolving. And today's Tsugaru musicians learn the so called "old, middle, and new" *Jonkara Bushi*. Yet, in the performances of Michihiro Sato, Hiromitsu Agatsuma, and the Yoshida Brothers, I found that performers often do not conform exactly to any one of these three versions. During the first few decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the "old song", a highly embellished version of *Jonkara* was most popular. Then by the 1930's the "old song" was supplanted by the "middle song" until after the war at which time the "new song" became popular. Since then, other versions of these three songs have also appeared.

In researching this melody, and through my own field experience as a student of Tsugaru shamisen, I was surprised to discover that most students of Tsugaru shamisen actually go through a process of learning many different versions of this melody and others. Through learning all these variations the student steep in the tradition and style of the music and I imagine that this is exactly the way in which the flavor of the Tsugaru genre is passed on. An advanced student or professional musician does not perform these melodies as they were

performed in the past. In practice, even the “new song” version of *Jonkara* that marks the postwar traditional music boom is meant to be performed differently by each performer. In other words, ideologically, the creativity of the performer has become more important than authentically representing Tsugaru music of past boom periods.

## **B. The Structure of Jonkara**

Generally, most traditional Tsugaru shamisen repertoire begins with a section called the *Chōshi-awase*, meaning to tune-up. This section is part of the performance and represents a chance for both the performer to tune his instrument and the audience to tune their ears to the performer. It is followed by an introductory solo called the *maebiki*. This section is highly improvisatory but leads into the first phrase of the paraphrased song. From this point on a traditional Tsugaru shamisen performance will paraphrase the phrases of the song melody, the original accompaniment, and mix in heavily improvised interludes of the performers own creation. Often improvisation is heavy and statements of the melody are only passing references and reminders.

## **C. *Jonkara Bushi* at the 2012 Hirosaki Competition**

At the Hirosaki competition, the judges and performers have a very static idea of the appropriate way that Tsugaru shamisen repertoire should be performed. According to the judges, performers are expected to display their technical virtuosity by including a strong resounding *chōshi-awase*, a technically accurate and exciting *maebiki*, their ability to manipulate the instruments dynamic and music range, a clear statement of the melody, and long smooth

crescendos. This situation leads many performers to tailor their performances of *jonkara bushi* so that they can fit all of these expectations into a short 3 minute performance. And often, the performances can sound like the same piece being repeated over and over, while ideologically the expectation is to be creative and make the piece into your own.

The following chart presents a temporal outline and comparison of four A-class competitors: Fujiwara Tsubasa, Miura Ryu, Yamaguchi Kouji, and Baba Atsushi. These performers played *jonkara-bushi* at the 2012 Hirosaki Competition and the recordings of their performances are included for reference as audio files. Upon analyzing these four *Jonkara* timelines, it becomes clear that these four performers are not aiming to perform an exciting and improvisatory piece. On the contrary, they have tailored their piece to fit within a very exact timeframe and to include the specific criteria that the judges expect to hear during the competition. The only major temporal variation between these four performances is that Fujiwara and Miura present the theme once after the *maebiki* while Yamaguchi and Baba present it twice. These four performers only means of differentiating themselves is through their varying degrees of technical virtuosity and upon listening to the recordings it is clear that they use nearly the same ornamentations to display their virtuosity.

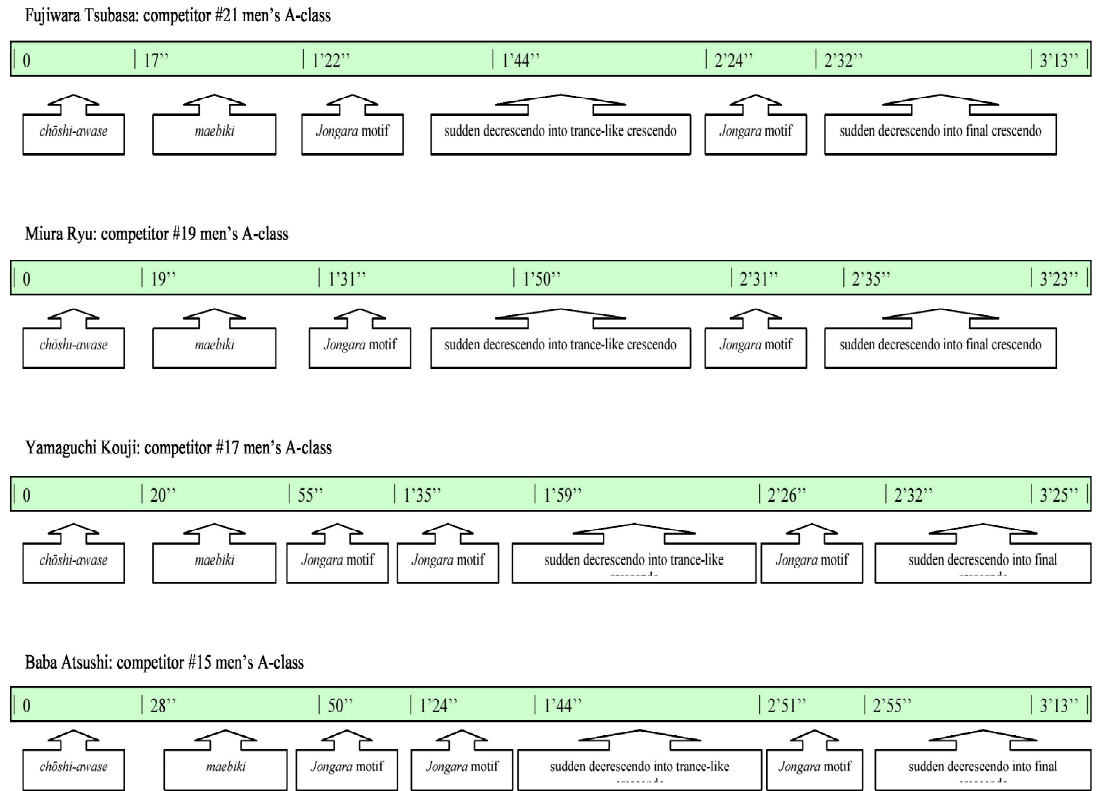


Figure 7: Temporal Outline of four A-class *jonkara* performances

#### D. Looking at Commercial Recordings of *Jonkara*

There is a great deal of contrast between performances of *Jonkara-bushi* in competition and commercial recordings of the melody.



I transcribed excerpts from sections of Michihiro Sato's and Hiromitsu Agatsuma's versions of *Jonkara-bushi* and then compare them to transcriptions done by Gerald Groemer of Takahashi Chikuzan's version. I also compare Yamada Chisato's version of new *Jonkara* to the version performed by his famous student, Michihiro Sato.

I chose to look at the *maebiki* and first phrase of these performers *Jonkara*. The *maebiki* tells a great deal about the performer, their style, the way they are approaching the song and the way that they approach the tradition in general. Michihiro Sato is one of the best known living Tsugaru shamisen players. He is very creative with his presentation of the music but also holds to many traditions of Tsugaru music and seems to be concerned with maintaining a sense of local authenticity in his music. His *maebiki* to *Jonkara* is played at roughly 112 to the quarter note, not especially fast, and he also presents himself as a representative of tradition through his timbre, triplet figures, and choice of clothing. Sato's *maebiki* is reminiscent of his teacher, Yamada Chisato but is far more ornamentally elaborate. On the other hand, Agatsuma, who is also a very well known living Tsugaru shamisen performer, presents himself very differently than Sato. He plays with a harsher timbre, louder sound, at a faster tempo (at a tempo of roughly 138 to the quarter note), and with more note stretching. On top of that, his clothing (black slacks, black jacket, white shirt) and chosen performance environment (dark black theater stage) suggest he is not trying to represent himself as a traditional Tsugaru performer.

I transcribed the following Michihiro Sato excerpts from a 2006 documentary entitled “The World of Michihiro Sato” and the Hiromitsu Agatsuma excerpt came from a 2008 performance captured on the DVD “Agatsuma Spirit”

## Maebiki

The musical score is titled "Maebiki" and is arranged in three systems. Each system contains staves for Sato (treble clef, 2/4 time), Agatsuma (treble clef, 2/4 time), and a Plectrum hitting instrument (percussion, 2/4 time). The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, quarter notes, and triplets, as well as rests and dynamic markings. The first system covers measures 1 through 6. The second system starts at measure 7 and continues to measure 11. The third system starts at measure 12 and concludes the excerpt. The Plectrum hitting instrument part is marked with a double bar line and a vertical line, indicating a specific playing technique.

Figure 8: excerpt from Michihiro Sato's and Agatsuma Hiromitsu's commercially available versions of Jonkara-bushi, as transcribed by Jacob Meir Barsky

As is typical of Sato's elaborate improvisations, this transcribed excerpt of his *maebiki* shows him mainly ornamenting a simple motion from Bb to C. On the other hand, Agatsuma presents a less ornamental but more forceful introductory melody in this transcribed excerpt. You can see him outlining a motion from C to Bb to F to Eb to G and back to F. Agatsuma is also already using his characteristic string stretches and rough playing timbre at the very beginning of his performance. In the transcription, I have described his note stretching with small lines next to the notes he stretches.

In the first phrase sections of these performances we are able to see more specific details about the way that professional performers are approaching the music and Tsugaru traditions. The top line of Takahashi Chikuzan's first phrase section was transcribed by Gerald Groemer and I have transposed it down a major second so that it can be more easily compared with the other two transcriptions. In Chikuzan's performance his strings were tuned to D-A-D while in the other two performances the strings are tuned to C-G-C. Chikuzan's performance represents an example of how the melody has been performed over much of the past century. As I mentioned earlier, he is considered the last in a line of blind *bosama* and is a direct link to the origins of the Tsugaru tradition. It is doubtful that he is playing the phrase exactly as his teacher played it but he maintains much of the melody as other past performers have performed it. It can be seen clearly between measures 1 and 10.

## Phrase 1

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the first phrase of Jonkara-bushi. Each system includes staves for Chikuzan, Sato, and Agatsuma, along with their transcriptions. The notation is in 2/4 time and features various musical symbols such as treble and bass clefs, notes, rests, and triplets. The first system (measures 1-6) shows Chikuzan and Sato with triplets, and Agatsuma with a plectrum hitting instrument. The second system (measures 7-10) shows Chikuzan and Sato with triplets, and Agatsuma with a plectrum hitting instrument. The third system (measures 11-14) shows Chikuzan and Sato with triplets, and Agatsuma with a plectrum hitting instrument.

Chikuzan

Sato

Plectrum hitting instrument

Agatsuma

Plectrum hitting instrument

7

Chiku.

Sato

Plec.

Aga.

Plec.

11

Chiku.

Sato

Plec.

Aga.

Plec.

Figure 9: Excerpts of Jonkara-bushi's 1st phrase section as performed by Takahashi Chikuzan, Michihiro Sato, and Agatsuma Hiromitsu. Chikuzan transcription by Gerald Groemer, Sato and Agatsuma transcriptions by Jacob Meir Barsky.

Sato and Agatsuma are freely altering this melody and almost creating their own new melody rather than conforming to the traditional paraphrased version. Both Sato and Agatsuma are performing more elaborate ornamentation than Gerald Gromer's Chikuzan transcription. Michihiro Sato's version uses augmentation to stretch out the phrase. Chikuzan completes his first phrase on the 10<sup>th</sup> measure but Sato extends the phrase far beyond the 14 measures that I am presenting here. Agatsuma similarly extends the phrase through augmentation and changes so many of the notes that it can barely be recognized as being based on the original melody. Agatsuma's tendency to stretch and slide his notes also adds to his unique interpretation of *Jonkara*. Notice that Sato expresses himself in a lighter style and doesn't strike the instrument as regularly as Agatsuma. Agatsuma maintains a near constant steady rhythm through striking down very hard with his plectrum against the shamisen's skin.

These performances of the same quote on quote "traditional work" are actually extremely different and other performances such as interpretations of the work by the Yoshida Brothers and other professional performers dramatically vary.

## **E. Summary**

By examining performances of the competitors at the 2012 Tsugaru shamisen competition and comparing them to commercially produced versions of *Jonkara-bushi* it is clear that there are conflicting ideologies at work. Within the Hirosaki competitions an increasingly standardized version of *Jonkara* is becoming normative. In the commercial sphere Tsugaru shamisen continues to be advertised and produced as a genre celebrating individuality and free interpretation. A successful competition performance demands virtuosity through technique while a commercial success demands creative virtuosity.

## CHAPTER V. NON-JAPANESE PARTICIPANTS AND THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY OF TSUGARU SHAMISEN

Tsugaru shamisen is an instrumental music genre that the Japanese national audience typically regards as a traditional or neo-traditional style of music. But unlike most other traditional and neo-traditional genres, internationally it has been surprisingly successful and influential. Shortly after World War II, Japan experienced a boom in traditional arts that garnered national success for Tsugaru shamisen players like Chikuzan Takahashi (竹山高橋), but which barely influenced audiences outside of Japan. Tsugaru shamisen's recent overseas appeal can be partially explained by the Tsugaru shamisen boom that arose in the late 1990's (Peluse 2005). The recent popularization of Tsugaru shamisen also takes place in conjunction with a period of strong Japanese regional and international cultural influence, where Japanese cultural commodities like anime, karaoke, Godzilla, sushi, sake, computer games, and television dramas are gaining wider international appeal and recognition (Johnson 2006:101).

At the 2012 Hirosaki Tsugaru Shamisen Competition, there were three foreign competitors who played in the C class: Gareth Burns (ギャレッス・バーンズ) and Joshua Soloman (ジョシア・ソロモン), both Americans, and Dimitris Rapakousios (デミトリス光生), a Greek. Two of these competitors, Gareth Burns and Dimitris Rapakousios, also competed in the 2012 B class competition in Kanagi, with Dimitris Rapakousios winning a special award (特別賞). At the 2012 Hirosaki competition I met Kevin Kmetz, a former competition participant, and two of his students. It was surprising for me to see that this many people had traveled internationally to participate in the Tsugaru shamisen events and to learn that they regularly try to attend. I took the opportunity to speak with each of the participants to gain a sense of their place within the

competition community. I also spoke to Kevin Kmetz and Grant Reiner, about Tsugaru shamisen in America which they describe as the “California Shamisen” music community.

Unlike the other two foreign participants, Gareth Burns has lived in Hirosaki long enough to feel that it is his home. He is an American who works as an English language instructor in Hirosaki City and recently opened his own English language school. He has lived in Hirosaki for many years and started playing shamisen after hearing Shibutani Kazuo and some of his students perform. I spent some time at Aiya, Shibutani Kazuo’s Tsugaru shamisen bar, to talk with Gareth Burns, Mr. Shibutani, and some of his other students. I was surprised to see that Burns performs at the bar and helps work at the bar in the same way as Shibutani’s other students. According to Burns, many of the top ranked teachers are more hesitant to take on a foreign student or apprentice, but Mr. Shibutani has been very accommodating and understanding of Burns’s work schedule as an English teacher.

Joshua Soloman is an American graduate student in East-Asian Studies at the University of Chicago, and plays Tsugaru shamisen as a hobby. He explained that the 2012 competition would be his second time participating in the Hirosaki Tsugaru Shamisen Competition. For him, the competition is a personal challenge and he participates in it to push himself to play better.

Dimitris Rapakousios is from Greece and is a luthier. Of the three foreign participants, he was probably the most skilled player. He explained that he also studies with Mr. Shibutani but does not live in Japan. Dimitris studies shamisen through correspondence, including online lessons, and by sending Mr. Shibutani recordings of his playing for critique. This method of correspondence practicing and online music learning is essential to the international community of Tsugaru shamisen and was used by Team Bachido (an international Tsugaru shamisen team - organized by bachindao.com to prepare for the 2013 Hirosaki competition).

Each of these three competitors has a unique reason for becoming involved and interested in Tsugaru shamisen and each is uniquely lucky to be able to travel to, or live in, Tsugaru for the competition. But it is likely that, if three foreign Tsugaru shamisen competitors were able to make it to the competition, there are thirty or more foreign players who would have liked to come (in the 2013 competition there were substantially more – 19 participants on the international team). This kind of foreign participation shows that interest in Tsugaru shamisen is seeping out of Japan and into the cracks of the international music world. In fact, at the 2013 Hirosaki competition, a whole team of foreign performers lead by Kevin Kmetz competed and won third place in the team competition.

Both Kevin Kmetz and Grant Reimer explained that the competitions are very open to including anyone who wants to play. Kmetz began competing in 2005 and became the first foreign participant to get awards at the Hirosaki and Kanagi competitions. He participated every year up until the 2011 Tohoku earthquake, winning 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Kanagi A-class tournaments of 2006 and 2007. However Kmetz, who came close to winning the competitions, told me that he believes it is highly unlikely that a skilled foreign competitor could win first place in one of the competitions. He explained that many of the competition winners have performed in the event for many years and often one of the strong A-class competitors with seniority will win the title. According to Kmetz, all of the A-class competitors are very skilled professional musicians, making it difficult to choose definitively who the best performer is.

Unlike the other foreign participants I spoke with, Kmetz actually grew up in Aomori Prefecture. He went to school on the American Misawa Air Base and started playing in the 1990's, after being inspired by a live performance of the master Tsugaru shamisen performer, Takahashi Chikuzan. After studying at California Institute of the Arts, he took lessons with



Kazuo Yasukore, an older shamisen performer who mainly plays *minyo* style accompaniment, and Akihito Narumi, a shamisen performer that Kevin describes as "more of a rock-star-performer". Kmetz also took a few lessons from Kinoshita Shinichi, a performer known for playing nontraditional hybridized Tsugaru shamisen. I became acquainted with Kmetz at the Hirosaki competition and then made a special trip out to Misawa, where he lives and works, to have a more in depth discussion with him about his thoughts on Tsugaru shamisen, participation in the competitions, and style of playing.

I asked Kmetz about his playing style and he explained that he created his own style of playing through listening and incorporating various types of music into his shamisen music. Outside of the annual tournaments in Hirosaki and Kanagi, Kmetz mainly plays non-traditional Tsugaru shamisen. In fact, he makes a clear point of distinction between Tsugaru shamisen and the music he plays. In the Tsugaru shamisen community the boundaries that define what is played, or what "should" be played, are a sensitive issue. Within the Tsugaru region and, by extension, at the Hirosaki and Kanagi competitions, the image of Tsugaru shamisen as a rural music genre intimately tied to the Tsugaru region is important to tourism and to maintaining a sense of authority among local instructors and the organizers of these two major competitions. Historically, the associations between the music and the rurality of the Tsugaru region have been important to the popularity and appeal of the genre. However, Kmetz argues that he is trying to "expand the philosophy of the tradition."

Kmetz argues that the Tsugaru shamisen is one form of an instrument, the three stringed lute, that originated thousands of years ago in the middle east and the instrument was used as a canvas in China, in Okinawa, in Japan, and in Tsugaru, to capture aspects of the time, mood, and feelings of the people through various types of music. With this in mind he asks "why are we

trying to put a lid on this thing?” in reference to a large portion of the Tsugaru shamisen community, including many organizers and participants at the Hirosaki and Kanagi competition that, according to Kmetz, appear more concerned with maintaining genre boundaries than with bringing their own ideals, personal feelings, and views into their music. He explained that the Tsugaru shamisen sounds the way it does because of the technology the musicians could access, the sounds they were influenced by, and the certain value system in place at the time. He has access to and is influenced by different music, technology, and a different value system and wants to capture those influences through shamisen. Kmetz has called the music he plays “California shamisen” to differentiate it from Tsugaru shamisen and to acknowledge his musical influences, his students, and the place where many of his musical ideas and values matured.

While Kmetz was living in California he began teaching a group of people to play Tsugaru shamisen. Grant Reiner, originally a guitarist, initially became interested in Tsugaru shamisen when he saw Kmetz perform and explains that he was captivated by the energy of the performance. Kmetz also taught a number of other students and friends while living in California. One student of his, Kyle Abbot, became especially focused on perpetuating their ideology of shamisen through making equipment more easily accessible in the United States and by founding bachido.com, a website dedicated to creating a worldwide network for the shamisen community.

Kevin Kmetz no longer lives in California but this group of people, including Kyle Abbot, Grant Reimer, Mike Penny, and Luke Abbot, and many others, appear to be further developing the community. The website provides access to audio examples of Tsugaru shamisen repertoire, turning instructions, articles on caring for the instrument, history of Tsugaru music, lessons on playing music and improvising through the use of non-Tsugaru scales, an online store, and an

active blog which is the true heart of the project. Through the bachido site and blog, this marginal community of foreign shamisen players and hobbyists is building a whole culture around the instrument and music. They set up gatherings, put together jam sessions, post videos on YouTube, encourage discussion on various topics related to buying, using, playing, maintaining, and restoring shamisen. In 2013, bachido put together an international team to compete in the Hirosaki group competition, bringing an unprecedented foreign presence to the competition, creating a great deal of excitement.

However, In terms of performing in Tsugaru shamisen tournaments, one of the main difficulties for performers like himself and his students is that their main musical interests are not in playing so-called traditional Tsugaru shamisen, which is what is expected at a tournament performance. He and his students are interested in stretching the boundaries of what can be played on a shamisen, yet Kmetz told me that adding new and unusual improvisations to a competition performance would not help or impress the competition judges. This reinforces that there are very clear genre boundaries that organizers and judges at the Hirosaki, and to a lesser extent, the Kanagi competition, work to maintain.

When I traveled to Misawa to interview Kmetz, I found him outside the train station by listening for the sound of shamisen. He was sitting under a gazebo playing and his music echoed around the surrounding neighborhood. He played for a while, greeted me, and then offered to play some more so that I could record his musical style. I realized that he is presenting a display of virtuosity. His playing style and musical influences are clearly coming from outside of the traditional Tsugaru shamisen world but his performance practice is that of a virtuoso Tsugaru shamisen player. Unlike the Hirosaki and Kanagi competition competitors that I had spent the previous two weeks recording, Kevin was improvising, as a Tsugaru shamisen player might do,

but mixing Tsugaru shamisen technique with heavy metal style ornamentations and Middle Eastern scale patterns. Kevin is not the first shamisen player to perform hybridized shamisen music. Yamada Chisato is known for attempting to mix Jazz into his shamisen performances, Kinoshita Shinich is known for his forays into rock and roll, and Agatsuma Hiromitsu has put out successful albums that incorporate a great deal of original genre bending music, but unlike many other performers he is not self conscious about his lack of interest in, so-called traditional Tsugaru shamisen, and as a foreigner he is not subject to the same expectations as Japanese Tsugaru shamisen players.

#### **A. Summary**

This budding international community of Tsugaru shamisen is exciting because it exists in a creative marginal position, on the outskirts of the Tsugaru shamisen community in Japan and similarly bordering many other musical communities around the world. The community is tied together by a website ([bachido.com](http://bachido.com)) that links a network of musicians from Japan, America, Canada, Greece, Sweden, and China – to name just a few. It is argued that Tsugaru shamisen's unique rhythmic, creative, and improvisatory qualities developed partly through the Tsugaru regions historically marginal position, both geographically and culturally, from the Japanese cultural centers of Tokyo and Kansai. However, Tsugaru shamisen is viewed more and more as a national *minyo* genre and, though it could not be considered culturally mainstream, its repertoire and improvisational style has become increasingly canonized and codified. The international community of Tsugaru shamisen is loosely connected to the cultural centers of the Tsugaru shamisen community, through musical tourism, occasional attendance at competitions, correspondence lessons with a teacher in Japan, or an expatriate living in Japan - like Kevin

Kmetz or Gareth Burns. But, its marginal position offers artistic freedom from performance expectations in Japan.

Through interviewing non-Japanese performers like Kevin Kmetz and reflecting on the aspects of Tsugaru shamisen that appeal to me as a non-Japanese fan and student of Tsugaru shamisen I would argue that the genre's penchant for virtuosity is what makes it highly attractive and easily accessible to non-Japanese musicians. The music can be easily appreciated without any detailed cultural knowledge through simply appreciating its technical complexity and can be creatively adopted, transformed, and applied to musical styles and genres outside of the Japanese cultural through its improvisatory nature.

## CHAPTER VI. MUSIC TOURISM THROUGH VIRTUSOITY

### A. Introduction

Tourism is an important industry in Aomori Prefecture. Travelers come from all over Japan to ski, visit *onsen* (hot springs), see the famous Aomori cherry blossoms, attend the annual Neputa Festival, visit apple orchards, and in many other ways experience the region's unique character. Music in Aomori, Tsugaru shamisen in particular, produces part of the characteristic soundscape that helps shape the identity that is associated with Aomori. Whether travelers come to Aomori for music or for another reason, Tsugaru shamisen will probably be encountered. Tsugaru shamisen is particularly effective as a touristic commodity because it can be appreciated by musicians and non-musicians, Japanese and non-Japanese through sheer appreciation for technical complexity, speed of performance, intensity of rhythm. The virtuosity of a Tsugaru shamisen performance appeals to almost any audience as an exciting and impressive spectacle through its virtuosity in the same way that a Maori Haka performance appeals touristically through its fierceness even without any culturally specific understanding of the performance.

In Japan, mass tourism began in the nineteen seventies with the World Exposition in Osaka, held in 1970 between March 15 and September 13. Packaged tours were organized for people from many foreign countries and from all over Japan, who came to Kansai for this event (Nobukiyo 2010). Soon after the World Exposition, National Railways (the company that is now known as JR) launched its "Discover Japan" campaign, using imagery of rural and traditional Japan to encourage domestic tourism in rural areas and towns (Ivy 1995).

In the late nineteen eighties, as a reaction to mass tourism and Japan's "bubble economy", alternative tourism began to become popular. Examples of alternative tourism includes

ecotourism (environmental tourism), green tourism (nature based tourism), blue tourism (water based tourism), cultural tourism, and other forms of niche tourism, including art, food, or music. In 1987 the Japanese government passed the Resort Act which facilitated the development of resorts, theme parks, and other amusement facilities by private companies teaming up with local governments. When the “bubble economy” collapsed in the early nineties, many of these projects failed or were abandoned with huge amounts of unpaid bank loans and environmental impact. Alternative tourism appealed to people who recognized the negative impacts of mass tourism and yearned for a more fulfilling kind of travel.

Nobukiyo marks 2006 as the most current period of tourism in Japan, what he calls “Tourism Nation”. In 2006 the Basic Act on Promotion of Tourism Nation was passed with the intention of increasing the number of foreign tourists in Japan, the number of international meetings in Japan, the nights each domestic tourist stays in a particular accommodation, the number of Japanese tourists traveling overseas, and the national expenditure on sightseeing tours. During this period there is also a marked increase in the post modern phenomenon of obscuring fixed roles – the delineation between tourists (observers) and the people of a host country (hosts) becomes less and less clear. Nobukiyo presents the example of tourists paying to don geisha attire, where the tourist will then spend the day walking around as a pseudo-geisha and become the observed. In Tsugaru musicians from other parts of Japan will similarly come to perform in local Tsugaru events with the goal of becoming authentic Tsugaru performers. Other tourists will then view these performances as a Tsugaru attraction.

## **B. Present State of Tsugaru Shamisen Tourism in Aomori**

I suggest that the music and the history of the Tsugaru shamisen music in Aomori plays a spectrum of roles within Aomori's tourism economy. Most typically, Tsugaru shamisen music acts as an accompaniment to other tourism activities, forming a backdrop or secondary attraction to cherry blossoms, cultural festivals, visiting hot springs (*onsen*), or as a unique music heard on the train while traveling through the prefecture. The large majority of tourists who come to Aomori have heard of Tsugaru shamisen and are probably familiar with popular and widely known performers, but this majority of tourists are not drawn solely by Tsugaru shamisen.

However, there are also travelers who come specifically for Tsugaru shamisen. These tourists are performers and fans of Tsugaru shamisen who travel to Aomori to visit historic locales associated with the origin of the music, to participate in the annual Tsugaru shamisen competitions, and to study or apprentice under well known Tsugaru shamisen performers. In some cases, Tsugaru shamisen tourists could be described as pilgrims. Tsugaru shamisen tourists are a minority and neither the local nor national government has focused on Tsugaru shamisen as a tourism commodity. But, in much of Aomori Prefecture, the Tsugaru region in particular, people and business have made use of Tsugaru shamisen as an important component to their local branding of place.

### **1. Cherry blossom festival**

In Hirosaki, there is a very popular and well known cherry blossom festival. In this region, the cherry blossoms bloom at around the same time as the national Golden Week holidays, at the beginning of May. Originally the annual Tsugaru shamisen festivals and contests were held at a separate time that was most convenient for the musicians. However, the local government



pushed the private shamisen organizations to schedule their annual competitions at the same time as the annual cherry blossom festival. The Hirosaki Cherry Blossom festival is the largest tourism event of the year, averaging two million visitors from all over Japan. By scheduling the Tsugaru shamisen competitions at the same time as this festival, the local government has created a musical soundscape to support the event. Though musicians primarily come to attend the competitions, afterwards, many of them find a comfortable spot in Hirosaki Park under cherry blossom trees and perform mini concerts. The Hirosaki Tsugaru shamisen competition, including day, time, and price of attending, is prominently featured on the cherry blossom festival map.



Figure 10: This map displays the various highlights of Hirosaki Castle Park

## 2. Tsugaru shamisen and Japan Rail

On the business end, Japan rail has also incorporated Tsugaru shamisen into the experience of traveling by rail in Aomori. The most immediately noticeable example is that every time a train leaves the station in Hirosaki, a short Tsugaru shamisen riff is played to announce its departure. Also, there are small musical performances held regularly at the Hirosaki train station. The performances that I encountered appeared to be amateur performers but Sibutani Kazuo, three time winner of the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki, and his students, are also known to perform at the station.

The most interesting way that Tsugaru shamisen has been used by the railroads can be seen by riding the Resort Shirakami train. This line travels between Aomori City and Akita Prefecture and runs the Northwestern Japan Coast, a place famous for its scenic ocean views and rugged rural countryside. The train is built especially for enjoying the views and, on Saturdays, there are also live Tsugaru shamisen performances scheduled inside the train cars.

**リゾートしらかみ車内イベントのご案内** ※展望ラウンジ(先頭車両)がイベントスペースでの演奏・実演となります。  
※諸事情により演奏・実演できない日もございますので、あらかじめご了承ください。

**津軽井「語りべ」実演**

- 陸奥鶴田駅～川部駅間
- 3号・4号 ※4/1～19は1号での実演となります。
- 土・日曜、祝日・振替休日

津軽に古くから伝わる昔話を、地元の言葉でやさしく語ります。雄大な岩木山を望みながら聞く津軽井は、貴重な旅の思い出になるでしょう。 ※語りべは2名です。



**津軽三味線生演奏**

- 鯉ヶ沢駅～五所川原駅間
- 1号・2号・3号 ●リゾートしらかみ運転日

津軽三味線の生演奏をリゾートしらかみで体験。独特の速いテンポで叩きつけるように撥を弾き、「津軽じょんから節」など代表的な民謡を朗々と唄います。 ※演奏者は2～3名です。



Figure 11: On the right side is an advertisement that shows off Tsugaru shamisen being performed on the train.



### 3. Folk music cafes/bars

Throughout Tsugaru, one can find folk music bars that are run by well known Tsugaru shamisen performers. These bars are popular places for tourists to come and hear performances of Tsugaru shamisen and Tsugaru folk songs. The bars also act as stages for students of Tsugaru shamisen to perform at regularly and polish their playing. Three of the best known bars in Hirosaki are Yamauta, originally run by the now deceased Yamada Chisato; Aiya, run by Shibutani Kazuo; and Anzu, run by Tada Atsushi. At these folk music bars, Tsugaru shamisen music is performed nightly as an accompaniment to dinner and drinks. I visited Aiya to meet with a few informants for interviews and to take some lessons from Shibutani Kazuo. That evening at the bar, there were about 15 customers and Mr. Shibutani has 4 apprentices working as both staff and performers. During the performances Mr. Shibutani explains various details about the lyrics and history and regional relevance of the music. He even passes out red head scarves in the style that apple pickers used to wear while singing and picking apples at the local orchards.



Figure 12: Shibutani Kazuo performing in Aiya with some of his students.

#### **4. Tsugaru Shamisen Pilgrimage**

Certain places in the Tsugaru region are so strongly and uniquely identified with the music that they have become tourist sites that specially appeal to musicians and Tsugaru shamisen fans. This kind of heritage tourism is based partially on the Tsugaru region's natural position as the location where many famous shamisen performers originated and the historic home to the Tsugaru style of shamisen playing. Music pilgrimage tourism to Tsugaru is also a result of local musicians and Tsugaru shamisen enthusiasts working to localize the genre around certain recognizable sites: such as Yamauta, or Kanagi town.

Yamauta (山唄), literally meaning mountain song, is a folk music bar that was run by Yamato Chisato, also the founder of the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki. The bar opened in 1964 during the post-war folk music boom and still holds nightly performances of Tsugaru shamisen and other Tsugaru folk music. According to my interviews with Mr. Sasamori, Yamada Chisato had a specific goal of transforming Hirosaki City into a central location for Tsugaru shamisen. Historically, before Yamada Chisato, the best known performers originated from other parts of Tsugaru, but today Hirosaki is known for Tsugaru shamisen. The fact that the National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki is a longest running competition also has transformed Hirosaki into a musical center for shamisen tourism.

Kanagi town is near the birthplace of Akimoto Nitarō, who came to be known as Nitabō the founder of Tsugaru shamisen. However, Kanagi Town's more recent image as a historic center for Tsugaru shamisen has been constructed in a way that has lead to musical heritage tourism. The development of the Tsugaru Shamisen Museum, the All-Japan Tsugaru Shamisen Competition, and Nitabō tours that bring travelers to places where Nitabō is believed to have lived, traveled, and written various pieces of music, are recent developments that have branded

Kanagi as a historic place of Tsugaru shamisen. Tourism pamphlets and maps of Kanagi also focus on this aspect of the town.

2007年6月20日で築100年を迎えた  
**太宰治記念館「斜陽館」**

作家太宰治の生家旧津島家がそのまま記念館。国指定重要文化財の建物は息をのむほどの重厚さ。館内ではスタッフが毎日無料で巡回ガイドをしていて、聞いているうちに何だかタイムスリップするような不思議な気分になります。「津軽弁で頼む〜」って言ってもらえれば津軽弁でもやれるけど...どこまで理解できるのかな？

大人お一人様 **500円**  
(20名様以上団体割引)  
**お得です**  
 津軽三味線会館と別館の入場料は共通券が有効です。  
 大人お一人様 **900円**  
 期間時間 5-10月 8:30-18:00  
 11-4月 9:00-17:00

**芦野公園**

日本の桜百選に選ばれ、樹齢百年を超える古木もあります。ゴールデンウィークには桜まつりが開催され、花火大会やステージショーで連日大賑わいです。

秋は、紅葉の並木道などデートにおすすめ。吊り橋(渡って帰ってきたら幸せになれる)と浮橋(全国第2位の長さ)があり、さらには動物園やバッテリーカー乗り場、オートキャンプ場もあるので家族で楽しめます。

いやしの再生古民家「**かだるべえ**」  
 かなぎ元気村

築140年の旧傍島家住宅(太宰の生家津島家の親戚宅)

都市農村交流・世代交流・伝統文化体験活動の拠点として2010年6月に開村。  
 中には各種体験や茶房、邸家があります。  
 営業時間 10:00-16:00  
 定休日 12月29日  
 おすすめ 手打ちうどん

行ってみるがな、**津軽**

**金木**

発祥地で聞く津軽三味線はひと味違います。一番前の席で聴く、津軽三味線は音が体に響いて迫力満点です！

2007年7月 始祖仁太坊 生誕150年を迎えた

**津軽三味線会館**

なんとなんと、金木町は津軽三味線発祥の地。発祥の地ならではの生演奏が毎日会館で聴けます。津軽三味線の歴史や世界の弦楽器を、紹介している展示室もご覧いただけます。入場料は一日中いつでもたったの500円。

※演奏者は、ほぼ毎日変わります。

プロからの指導で演奏体験もできます。お気軽にお申し込み下さい。  
 予約TEL 0173-54-1616

大人お一人様 **500円**  
(20名様以上で団体割引になります)

**お得です**  
 津軽三味線会館と別館の入場料は共通券が有効です。  
 大人お一人様 **900円**  
 期間時間 5-10月 8:30-18:00  
 11-4月 9:00-17:00

**金木町はこんな町。**  
 津軽平野のほぼ中央。  
 銘木「青森ひば」の集積地として木材がお金に換わり潤った町である、という説がある。金木町は見どころがいっぱい。郷土料理なども充実し一人旅にも優しい田舎町です。

金木町をプロデュースする！

**NPO法人 かなぎ元気倶楽部**

太宰治記念館「斜陽館」・津軽三味線会館・喫茶店「駅舎」・かなぎ元気村「かだるべえ」

Figure 13: This local tourism pamphlet highlights the Tsugaru shamisen museum in Kanagi

## **5. Cultural Theme Park: Neputa Village**

Neputa Village is a tourist attraction that is located next to Hirosaki Castle Park. It is named after the Neputa festival, which is Tsugaru's most well known annual event. The festival is famous for its parade of massive glowing floats that are wheeled around town to the music of flute, drums, and chanting. According to my experiences in Hirosaki, Neputa Village is one of the most common places for tourists to visit while traveling in Hirosaki and appears to be a stop for most tour buses. It is a small collection of traditional-looking buildings where tourists can shop for items that are characteristically associated with Tsugaru and have come to symbolize and represent Tsugaru culture: products made from apples, local delicacies, local pottery, books by authors from the region or that contain regional folk stories and histories.

At Neputa Village it is also possible to take a short tour through the cultural museum. This tour starts with a show discussing the history and significance of Neputa, the floats used in the Neputa Festival and then the speaker tries to teach the audience some basic beats and rhythms of Neputa festival music. After the short show spectators can walk through the cultural museum and see how various local crafts are made and view a variety of local art. The museum also includes a room with some historical information on Tsugaru shamisen and regular live performances of Tsugaru shamisen. When I interviewed the performer, I learned that she was the first winner of the woman's division A-class Hirosaki shamisen competition. She told me that she runs a small shamisen school and sometimes performs at Neputa village. For many visitors to Tsugaru, the shamisen performance at Neputa village may be the only live performance they see. She takes her job very seriously because of this and tries to teach the audience a little bit about Tsugaru shamisen during each show.

## **6. Yama (Mountain) Rock and Apple Festival**

Tsugaru shamisen often appears at events that have very little to do with the genre, such as Yama Rock – a concert held on the slopes of Mount Iwaki, or the Apple Festival – an agricultural festival that celebrates Tsugaru as a major apple producing region. I suggest that including shamisen performances at these kind of events paints the instrument and genre as a sort of mascot. It contextualizes the events as regional and rural, marking the naturalness of a rock festival held high on the side of a mountain or the rurality of an agricultural festival.

The Yama Rock Concert is a concert organized by a number of bars and clubs in Hirosaki. Much of the audience was made up of college students and young professionals that frequent the various bars and clubs that sponsored the concert. I attended to get a taste of life in Tsugaru outside of the Tsugaru shamisen community. I was surprised that one of the performers was a shamisen player, with his instrument plugged into an amplifier and he performed a combination of Tsugaru shamisen and a form of shamisen rock. A variety of rock bands and solo performers drew a steady crowd throughout the night but the shamisen performance was a strong reminder that the event is regionally specific.

I attended the Apple Festival with Shibutani Kazuo. His shamisen school was one of the folk music groups that would perform on the stage at the festival. The festival made up of a collection of food tents selling apple products but the stage, full of Tsugaru shamisen and Tsugaru folk singing truly contextualized the festival as regional and rural through the ideas and nostalgia associated with Tsugaru shamisen.



### **C. Critical Summary**

Displays of Tsugaru shamisen virtuosity at competitions, cultural events, and at touristic locales throughout Aomori Prefecture provide a unique backdrop that can be easily appreciated by a wide range of tourists. Tsugaru shamisen virtuosity creates such a spectacle even through simply watching the speed of the hand and finger motions the onlooker would be able to appreciate the simple speed and dexterity of the musicians hands. The genre also evokes images of rurality and thereby highlights the regions agricultural hometown image.

## CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION

In 2012, the spirit of competition and showmanship in Tsugaru shamisen continues to drive the genre and bind together the greater community of Tsugaru shamisen. The way that virtuosity is defined dictates how competitors perform in annual competitions, how commercial recording artists develop their style, the way that the non-Japanese community adopts Tsugaru shamisen, and how the genre is often commoditized in Aomori Prefecture.

The competitions at Hirosaki and Kanagi, shape the music and performance styles of young performers that often begin participating in the competitions at a very early age and become integrated into the greater Tsugaru shamisen community through these competitions. The structure of the competitions, the priorities, and the boundaries put in place by the competition's organizers and the greater community help define the music that professional and amateur performers play when they are outside of competition. Within competitions, performers are driven to more and more virtuosity in their performances, leading to more and more virtuosity within the genre. Furthermore, I argue that the Hirosaki and Kanagi competition project specific narratives that play a vital role in defining the different faces of the Tsugaru shamisen genre: the depiction of Tsugaru shamisen as a virtuosic genre based around technical dexterity and fast ornamentation that is easily commercially marketable, and the depiction of a genre that is rural, individualistic, historically grounded in the past, and values creative virtuosity.

At competitions, these narratives and boundaries of genre can sometimes constrain performers, limiting creativity and going against some of the most basic ideologies of Tsugaru shamisen – such as the widespread idea passed down from Nitabō that “you should play your own shamisen”. I have suggested, based on recordings analyzed and collected while in the field,

that within competitions, performances are often formulaic and uninteresting in their performances. Performers are more concerned with including the expected number of technical moments than with creating a uniquely improvised version of a folk melody – namely technical virtuosity over the creative.

The budding international community of Tsugaru shamisen, led by a group of musicians and fans that run a website out of California, maintains its connections with the Tsugaru shamisen community in Japan through participation in the annual performance competitions and a loose connection of web-based social networks. The international community easily is able to adopt Tsugaru shamisen due the broad appeal of sheer virtuosity. I argue that this group, through its marginalized position as an outsider to the Japanese Tsugaru shamisen community has a great deal of artistic freedom that can be lacking within the constraints of Tsugaru shamisen in Japan. Musicians like Kevin Kmetz and Dimitris Rapakousios are able to be part of the competitions and the Japanese Tsugaru shamisen community, but can do so without the pressures of special allegiance a specific teacher's stylistic ideas or performance repertoire.

Tsugaru shamisen in Aomori and, in particular, in the Tsugaru region of Aomori, is an important touristic commodity due to its showy appeal. Virtuosity in music can be appealing to both specialists and those without any specific cultural or musical knowledge of the genre. Therefore, Tsugaru shamisen, and the Tsugaru shamisen competitions, have become important parts of the tourism industry in Tsugaru. Tsugaru shamisen is included in many regional festivals and the competitions have been specially linked to other touristic places and events, such as the Cherry Blossom Festival, the Tsugaru Shamisen Hall in Kanagi, and Neputa Village. The movement to localize Tsugaru shamisen in the Aomori region, by setting up tours of historic places where Tsugaru shamisen is believed to have originated, by creating museums dedicated to

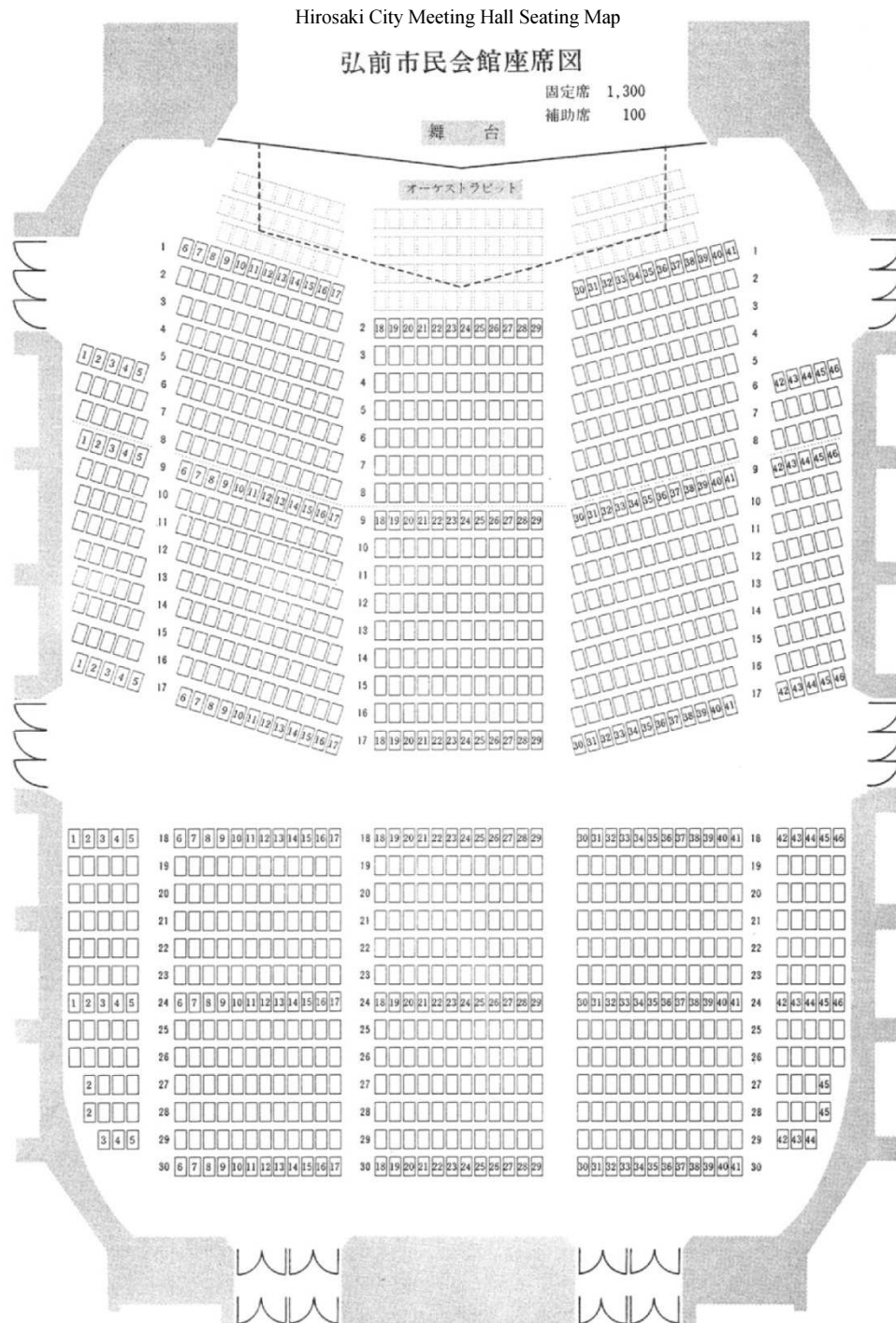
Tsugaru shamisen, and by cementing the tale of Nitabō as the founder of Tsugaru shamisen, is increasingly important to the identity of the genre itself – a genre that has been largely successful in Japan through its image of rurality, individuality, and an internally exotic regional genre. At the same time, the act of Tsugaru shamisen musicians gathering annually from around the country to participate in competitions bind together a community that is otherwise spread out all over the country and even internationally.

In 2013, the Hirosaki National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition was live streamed for the first time. This could not match the experience of attending the event in person, reconnecting with fellow fans and musicians, talking about new development in Tsugaru shamisen, or participating in the competition itself. However, it provides a broader stage and new accessibility for the multitudes of fans who are often unable to attend the event. The 2013 competition was also significant because it was the first time that a large number of foreign participants attended as representatives of [bachido.com](http://bachido.com); and more significantly, it was the first time that the Tsugaru shamisen community made special acknowledgment of the international community of musicians that are interested in shamisen.

All of this indicates that qualities of virtuosity and competition strongly impact the directions and development of Tsugaru shamisen as a genre and as a regional tourism commodity.

## APPENDIX

### Layout of National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition Performance Space



Layout of Hirosaki City Meeting Hall

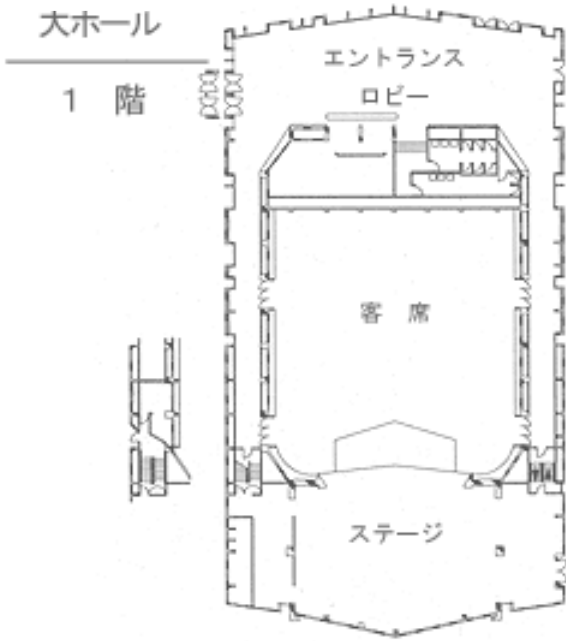
Administrative Building  
1<sup>st</sup> floor



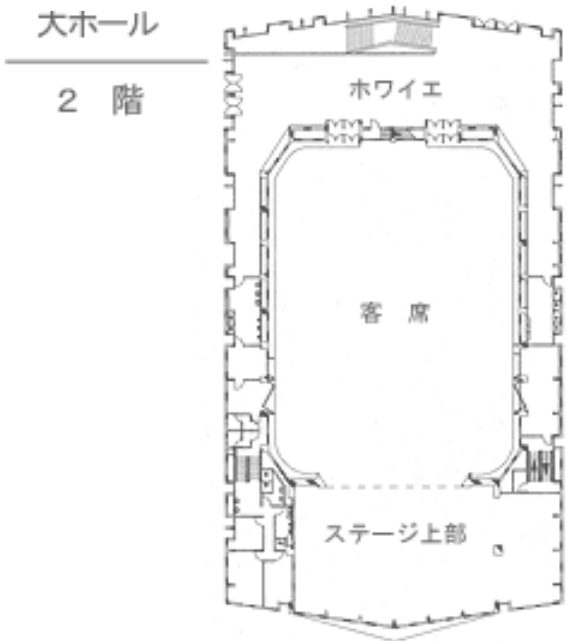
Administrative Building  
2nd floor



Grand Hall 1<sup>st</sup> floor




Grand Hall 2<sup>nd</sup> floor









DEER PRINTING  
**YOKOYAMA**  
印刷・デザイン・印刷

最新デジタル・ポスター  
ディスプレイ・商品製作  
ガラス印刷・封筒印刷  
出版刷版印刷・CD  
ポスター・チラシ

デザイン印刷 **ココヤマ**  
〒100-0001 東京都千代田区千代田5-1-1  
Tel. 03(5561)7000  
Fax. 03(5561)7004  
E-mail: info@yokoyama.co.jp


## 三味線製造・販売・修理

強骨、全国宅配にてお受け致します。

# 和泉屋三絃店

東京都狛江市元和泉1-10-12  
TEL 03 (3488) 1366

東北運輸局 認証工場  
東北製罐第1-6974号



Bosch Diesel Service  
佐川グループ  
TEL 036-8265  
青森県弘前市大字米谷五丁目12  
Tel. 0172-1461  
Fax. 0172-1462  
a.y.z@bosch.co.jp, bos.co.jp

弘前市駅前町12番 3F  
0173-610361

# いした総合食品

宮園	荒野	村崎	横久	片駒	明川	牧平	元森	高葛	武成
崎	木	田	池	酒田	辛口	野木	木下	橋西	馬田
喜里	美慈	春美	里田	英代	希央	紀比	太彬	杏里	朱貴
石花	海沙	貴平	美里	英代	希央	紀比	太彬	杏里	朱貴

（12）（10）（9）（11）（10）（12）（10）（9）（10）（12）  
（新田）（大宮）（静岡）（佐賀）（宮城）（静岡）（愛知）（徳島）（青森）

## 進行計画

< 3 日 >  
開 会 宣 言 級 級 会  
ジュニア 級 級 会  
C シ 級 級 会  
B 閉  
< 4 日 >  
弘前市長挨拶  
開 会 宣 言 戦  
グループ 伴奏  
唄付け 性 級 級 会  
女 性 級 級 会  
男 性 級 級 会  
表 彰 式 会  
閉

第十七代津軽三味線手頭名人  
工藤悦子

# 第三一回・2012 津軽三味線全

第 1 回 津軽三味線全  
小山内 忠 勝

津軽三味線を生で聴ける処  
LIVE HOUSE  
酒処 **山 唄** 福士りつこの店  
弘前市大町1丁目2-4 ☎36-1835

第24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1  
山高荒坂鳴渡相違水村安久金高松山長遠三鈴宇山泉栗  
田高松谷中津馬島村津津津津津津津津津津津津津津津津

[illegible]



## 早くて仕上がりキレイ

**宅配で取り次いだからとてもお手軽・便利!**  
そんな理由から、全国のお客様より  
定価の半額を希望されているのです。

**毎月支払予定年間20,000円未満!!**

情報の、技術の、安心の低価格。

【大見】清潔	洗面・風呂	流し・排水口	換気扇
初期：15,000円	10,000円	7,000円	
中期：20,000円	15,000円	10,000円	
上：35,000円	25,000円	15,000円	
特上：50,000円	35,000円	20,000円	

※相場範囲。お見積り金額は作業内容により異なります。お見積りへの対応には追加料金はかかりません。お見積りにお越し下さい。

TEL:012-72-8420 FAX:012-72-3423

## 出場者募集 第1回

### 津軽民謡語り部節世界大会

●日時 平成24年10月18日(金) AM10:00より

●ところ 弘前市三好会館ホール TEL:0172-92-7420

●観客のみなさまへ 津軽文化センター・津軽ふるさと館へお問い合わせください TEL:0172-92-1111


●入場券

- 大人部門
  - ・一般部
  - ・少年部
  - ・自卒の部
- ジュニア部門
  - ・少年部以上から順
  - ・小学生以下
  - ・児童部
  - ・児童部以下

申し込み料は一回につき2,000です

大会事務局  
住 址：弘前市番町二丁目7-3  
電 話：0172-430-2707  
携帯電話：090-2790-1529

---



もうしんは地域ぐるみ商店を応援中

●実業信用金融

株式会社実業信用銀行 支店営業課 TEL:012-72-8420 FAX:012-72-3423

## 第 6 回

## 全日本津軽三味線競技会

# 名古屋大会


日時：平成24年7月29日(日)  
場所：名古屋市会館中ホール(本願寺と隣じ)


「さらに、目指す頂上を待っています」  
応募締め切り 5月31日(木)迄  
応募要項あり、詳しくはこちら（事務局へ）  
HP:www.wapaki.com/nagoyataikai  
名古屋大会事務局 TEL:052-846-8080

## 会 員 募 集 中

大人の休日

倶楽部



誠意と技術の  特定建設業・一級建築士事務所

## 株式会社 丸ノ内建設

代表取締役 野澤 浩

品質 〒59001  
連絡 〒14001  
設立 昭和三十九年  
(審判期間) JICA A

〒590-0063 西宮市御厨五丁目1番地  
FAX 01275-33-6814  
E-mail Center@marunouchi.co.jp  
Sales@marunouchi.co.jp

24 23 22 21 20 19 18 17 16 15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6

吉野 新郷佐伊川小島高千穂明矢桑瀬木小松

法

[illegible]











# Judges and Staff of 2012 National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki

TEL(0172)27-5511 FAX(0172)27-0074  
http://www.hiroka.jp

〒036-8332 青森県弘前市亀甲町61  
TEL 0172-39-1511(代)  
http://www.neputamura.com

品

**三味線審査員**

21津軽三味線ネットワークジャパン代表  
審査委員長 **笹森建英**  
東奥日報社弘前支社長  
**佐藤秀樹**  
陸奥新報社取締役総務局長  
**三上知見**  
郷土芸能研究家  
**本間操**  
青森テレビ弘前支社次長・営業部長  
**白戸恵美子**  
青森朝日放送弘前支社長  
**赤平至**  
民俗芸能研究家  
**松尾多喜**  
第二十八代青森県民謡王座  
**菊池鉄男**  
第四十代青森県民謡王座  
**佐藤信夫**  
郷土作家  
**大導寺隼人**  
第十三代青森県手踊り名人  
**森久子**  
第十七代青森県手踊り名人  
**工藤悦子**

**唄付け審査員**

■今年の課題曲  
「津軽あいや節」  
弘前学院大学教授・作曲家  
**笹森建英**  
郷土作家  
**大導寺隼人**  
第二十八代青森県民謡王座  
**菊池鉄男**  
第四十代青森県民謡王座  
**佐藤信夫**  
第十三代青森県手踊り名人  
**森久子**

**大会宣言**  
21津軽三味線ネットワークジャパン  
津軽三味線全国大会実行委員会  
事務局 長 **佐々木憲一**

**司会**  
RABタレント  
**田中耕一**  
**民謡**  
第四十二代青森県民謡王座  
**川村貞夫**  
第二十二代青森県民謡王座  
**小山内忠勝**

**大会スタッフ**

石井美也子  
伊藤有希  
井上清美  
菅野修一  
太田順一  
工藤悦子  
佐々木賢一  
斉藤ツネ  
佐々木綾  
佐々木洋子  
花田良子  
成田洋子  
竹谷光子  
前田公正  
松橋マキ庫  
木川宣子  
山内真理子  
佐川真博  
加藤静子

**来年も多数のご参加をお待ちしています**

■お問合せ  
しり出平

■申込期  
す受ホ

部 門	対象者・課題曲	演奏時間	申込定数
A 級 県 性	5 年 以 上 の 経 験 者	3 分 30 秒	3 0 名

■期  
日

■出場種  
場

■会場  
場

第 22 回



## History of National Tsugaru Shamisen Competition in Hirosaki – according to 21 Tsugaru Shamisen Network Japan

### 本流逆流

◆この津軽三味線全国大会は、故山田千里師が一  
九八二年に創設したものであり、以来連続三〇年  
の開催を通じて津軽三味線の素晴らしさを国内外  
に発信し、奏者の裾野を広げ、その普及と発展に  
貢献してきた。本大会は津軽三味線日本一を競う  
唯一の全国大会として期待を集め、数多の優れた  
奏者を世に輩出してその実績を積み重ねてきた。

◆この間、A級男性チャンピオンは十三人、A級  
女性チャンピオンは八名誕生している。三〇年の  
大会史上で、津軽三味線の最高峰を極め日本一の  
栄冠に輝いたのは合わせて二十一名である。いつ  
の間にか全国の合言葉になった「弘前の大会で入  
賞する、弘前の大会でチャンピオンになる」とい  
う悲願に燃えて、互いに切磋琢磨して技術を高め、  
挑戦を重ねてきた人々たちである。数ある部門での  
入賞、チャンピオンをめざして技量を磨き、人々  
に夢と感動を与えてくれた奏者に惜しみない拍手  
を送りたい。

◆津軽三味線の今日の隆盛は、この津軽三味線全  
国大会の存在を抜きにしては語れない。そしてこ  
の大会を支えてきたのは個々の出場者と選手を育  
て大会に送り込んでくださった各流派の先生方だ  
がある。

今年も個人、団体戦合わせて三〇〇名を超える奏  
者が、霊峰岩木山とさくら満開の弘前城を背に熱  
戦を繰り広げる。本大会に寄せる期待の大きさと  
信頼の証として厳粛に受け止めている。

◆本大会は二〇〇三年に21津軽三味線ネットワー  
クジャパンが創立され継承した。「津軽三味線全  
国大会」の灯を消してはならないという全国の願  
いと識者の助言を私たちは真摯に受け止め、決断  
したことである。ほかに本大会の歴史と理念を受  
け継ぎ、責任をもつべき条件を備えた組織はなか  
ったからである。私たちはこれまで培ってきた協  
力体制をさらに強化しながら、大会運営の改善充  
実を図ってきた。ここから本大会は飛躍的な広が  
りを遂げ、その勢いは海外へとその輪を広げて行  
った。これが後の津軽三味線国際シンポジウム開  
催の基礎になっていくのである。同時に本大会の  
将来構想と発展方向については折に触れて提示し、  
その条件整備を図ってきたことである。

◆一方、私たちが提唱して岩木山頂に津軽三味線  
の碑を建立したのは一九八五年九月である。ここ  
から流派の垣根を越えて心を繋ぎ、津軽三味線新  
時代を切り拓く新たな挑戦と数々のドラマがはじ  
まった。とりわけ津軽三味線全国サミット、全国  
フェスティバル、全国協議会の創設、津軽三味線  
の里づくり構想などの提起はその組織的保障とな  
り、数々の成果をあげて行った。私が一貫して強  
調してきたのは「足ふばり」との決別である。

◆しかし、津軽三味線の発祥地における全国大会  
の乱立と競合は、全国のファンや奏者を混乱させ、  
大会出場者を奪い合うという異常事態をエスカレ  
ートさせている。しかも自らの約束、公言を翻し  
本大会との同日開催を固定化してきた意図は明々  
白々である。執拗に繰り返された「この全国大会  
を無条件に放棄して開催権を渡せ」という無理難  
題を思い出す。奸智術数を労して組織を分断支配  
し、本大会の略取に失敗した私憤に捏造された大  
会の未来は、誰のために何をするのか注視したい。  
こうしたうごきは、津軽三味線発祥地の誇りと権  
威を貶めるものであり容認できない。

◆21津軽三味線ネットワークジャパンは、こうし  
た歴史の成果を逆転させる妄動に与するものでは  
ない。「津軽三味線の発祥地で醜い争いはなぜ」と  
いう疑問があちこちから寄せられる。事情を知ら  
ない人から見れば当然だろう。私たちは全国の期  
待と信頼に応えて、本大会の歴史と伝統を守り、  
津軽三味線の原点を継承し、その創造・発展に肅  
々と邁進するのみである。同日開催の意図があか  
らさまになった今、本大会の名誉と奏者の誇りを  
守るため、紙数の許す範囲で胸の内を記しておく。

二〇一二年五月三日

大会事務局



A B 級	審査基準	① 20点	② 20点	③ 20点	④ 20点	⑤ 20点	100点
		① 調弦(調子)が 良く合っているか	② 指の押さへえ つぼ(押し)を おぼろしく押さえて いるか <small>旋律が滑らかであるか。</small>	③ 曲とリズムの バランスが良く 出まってくるか又 バネさばきや 強弱が出来るか	④ 技巧(テクニック) 前進しているか さて音質がとも なっているか	⑤ 総合的(総合的) いまだ演奏の風土(まじ) に良く近く曲の まとまりが、うまく いったか	
		例 20	15	15	17	18	85点

C 級	審査基準	① 25点	② 25点	③ 25点	④ 25点	満点 100点
		① 調弦(調子)が 合っているか 良くバネが あたっているか どうか	② 指の運びか つぼ(押し)に よく流れていくか ばまて	③ リズム(テンポ) の狂いがないか どりでいどで 変化と統一あるか	④ 技巧(テクニック) より後であるか又 曲をどの様に まとめたか	
		例 15	15	15	20	65点

グル ー プ	審査基準	① 25点	② 25点	③ 25点	④ 25点	満点 100点
		① 調弦(調子) が全員 良く合っているか	② リーダー によくリズム を教せているか	③ 曲の区切り又 移り変わりの 呼吸が良く 合っているか	④ 総合的 全員が初めか 最後迄曲が流 れにわたるか	
		例 20	20	15	20	75点

Chart of Hirosaki 2012 competition winners (for translation please see the chart on

page 102 and 103)

部門	対象区分	入賞区分	入賞者名	出身地
男性 A 級	5 年以上の 経験者	チャンピオン 準チャンピオン 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞	柴田 雅人 葛西 頼之 山中 信人 佐藤 知 上村 彰洋 山口 晃司 木田 林秀栄	宮城 青森 埼玉 新潟 大阪 愛知 山形
女性 A 級	5 年以上の 経験者	チャンピオン 準チャンピオン 入賞 入賞 入賞	柴田 佑梨 柴田 愛 えり奈 木田 亜矢 梅若 晶子	宮城 宮城 青森 新潟 大阪
B 級	4 年以上の 経験者	チャンピオン 準チャンピオン 入賞 入賞 入賞	小島 康平 佐山 千尋 齋藤 沙希 松永 弘彦 浅井 里絵	青森 兵庫 青森 神奈川 宮城
C 級	3 年以下の 経験者	チャンピオン 準チャンピオン 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞 特別賞 特別賞	多田 実有 小竹 美里 高橋 拓美 相馬 美幸 水村 一徳 小島 伸陽 矢口 祐介 川上 浩市 田中 勇貴 原田 和孟	青森 新潟 茨城 青森 神奈川 青森 千葉 千葉 福島 神奈川
シニア級	45 才以上	チャンピオン 準チャンピオン 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞	小林 申岨 荒木 久幸 三上 森丸 西山 恵美子 市川 清男 小熊 昭良 伊藤 雅仁 大角 哲也	新潟 長崎 神奈川 山梨 山梨 富山 北海道 宮城

		特別賞 特別賞	石川 久美子 工藤 純一	東京 青森
ジュニア 級	15 才以下	チャンピオン 準チャンピオン 入賞 入賞 入賞 入賞 審査員特別賞 審査員特別賞	平野 ことは 高橋 諒介 北村 美里 本多 凜 牧野 太紀 荒谷 翔集 對馬 朱里 成田 貴紀	静岡 神奈川 埼玉 石川 静岡 宮城 青森 青森
A グループ	11 名以上	優勝 準優勝 金賞	井坂三絃会 和坊&和三絃会 小田島三絃会 堀沢ファミリー	茨城 青森 宮城 新潟
B グループ	5～10 名	優勝 準優勝 金賞 銀賞 銅賞	疾風 三絃小田島流 阿修羅 珠の音会 岩木清勇会	東京 宮城 青森 東京 青森
唄付け伴 奏	津軽三下がり	優賞 準優賞 金賞 銀賞 銅賞	上村 彰弘 山中 信人 川上 浩市 石黒 みゆき 福井 真希子	大阪 埼玉 千葉 北海道 青森

**Chart information from <http://www.21tsnj.jp/>. Translation of the men's A-class competition winners can be found in the appendix.**



**Translation of the Hirosaki 2012 competition winners chart found on page 100 and 101  
(Names have not been translated because I do not have access each individuals official  
phonetic name reading)**

<b>Playing Division</b>	<b>Method of Division</b>	<b>Type of Prize</b>	<b>Winners Names</b>	<b>Prefecture</b>
Men's A-class	More than 5 years of experience in the competition	Champion Runner-up Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner	柴田 雅人 葛西 頼之 山中 信人 佐藤 知 上村 彰洋 山口 晃司 木田 林秀栄	宮城 青森 埼玉 新潟 大阪 愛知 山形
Women's A-class	More than 5 years of experience in the competition	Champion Runner-up Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner	柴田 佑梨 柴田 愛 えり奈 木田 亜矢 梅若 晶子	宮城 宮城 青森 新潟 大阪
B-class	More than 4 years of experience in the competition	Champion Runner-up Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner	小島 康平 佐山 千尋 齋藤 沙希 松永 弘彦 浅井 里絵	青森 兵庫 青森 神奈川 宮城
C-class	More than 3 years of experience in the competition	Champion Runner-up Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Special award Special award	多田 実有 小竹 美里 高橋 拓美 相馬 美幸 水村 一徳 小島 伸陽 矢口 祐介 川上 浩市 田中 勇貴 原田 和孟	青森 新潟 茨城 青森 神奈川 青森 千葉 千葉 福島 神奈川
Senior Division	Age 45 or older	Champion Runner-up Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner	小林 申帖 荒木 久幸 三上 森丸 西山 恵美子 市川 清男	新潟 長崎 神奈川 山梨 山梨

		Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Special award Special award	小熊 昭良 伊藤 雅仁 大角 哲也 石川 久美子 工藤 純一	富山 北海道 宮城 東京 青森
Junior Division	Age 15 or younger	Champion Runner-up Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Prize-winner Judges choice Judges choice	平野 ことは 高橋 諒介 北村 美里 本多 凜 牧野 太紀 荒谷 翔集 對馬 朱里 成田 貴紀	静岡 神奈川 埼玉 石川 静岡 宮城 青森 青森
A Group Division	11 or more member	Winner Runner-up Gold	井坂三絃会 和坊&和三絃会 小田島三絃会 堀沢ファミリー	茨城 青森 宮城 新潟
B Group Division	Between 5 and 10 members	Winner Runner-up Gold Silver Bronze	疾風 三絃小田島流 阿修羅 珠の音会 岩木清勇会	東京 宮城 青森 東京 青森
Song Accompaniment	Must compete playing Tsugaru San-sagari	Winner Runner-up Gold Silver Bronze	上村 彰弘 山中 信人 川上 浩市 石黒 みゆき 福井 真希子	大阪 埼玉 千葉 北海道 青森

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abram, Simone, Don Macleod, and Jackie D. Waldren. *Tourists and Tourism: Identifying with People and Places*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1997.
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.
- Baily, John. "Learning to perform as a research technique in ethnomusicology." *British Journal for Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2001): 85-98.
- Blacking, John. *How Musical is Man?* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1973.
- Bohlman, Philip. *The Study of Folk Music in the Modern World*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988.
- Case, James H., *Competition: The Birth of a New Science*. New York : Hill and Wang, 2007.
- Cohen, Sara. "Ethnography and Popular Music Studies." *Popular Music*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (May, 1993): 123-138.
- Connell, Chris and John Gibson. *Music Tourism: On the Road Again*. Multilingual Matters, 2005.
- Connell, Raewyn. *Gender: In World Perspective*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.
- Daijō, Kazuo, Naoyuki Suda, and Anthony Rausch. *The Birth of Tsugaru Shamisen Music: The Origin and Development of a Japanese Folk Performing Art*. Aomori, Japan: Aomori University Press, 1998.
- Dale, Peter N. *The Myth of Japanese Uniqueness*. London: Croom Helm, 1986.
- Dunsby, Jonathan. "Music and Semiotics: The Nattiez Phase." *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 69, No. 1, (Winter, 1983): 27-43.
- Fairbank, John K., Edwin O. Reischauer, and Albert M. Craig. *East Asia: Tradition and Transformation*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.
- Goodman, Paul. "Contests" *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 5 (Apr. 1947): 55-57.
- Fujita, Hiroyasu, and Takada Isao. *Oto no Tabibito: Tsugaru Shamisen, Takahashi Chikuzan Monogatari (Traveling Sounds: The Story of Takahashi Chikuzan and Tsugaru Shamisen)*. Tokyo: Kin no Hoshisha, 1986
- Groemer, Gerald. *The Spirit of Tsugaru: Takahashi Chikuzan, Tsugaru-jamisen, and the folk music of northern Japan, with the autobiography of Takahashi Chikuzan*. Warren, Michigan: Harmonie Park Press, 1999.

Groemer, Gerald. "The Guild of the Blind in Tokugawa Japan." *Monumenta Nipponica* Vol. 56, No. 3 (Autumn 2001): 349-380.

Guerron-Montero, Carla. "Can't Beat Me Own Drum in Me Own Native Land: Calypso Music and Tourism in the Panamanian Atlantic Coast." *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (Autumn, 2006): 633-665.

Guo, Nanyan, Seiichi Hasegawa, Henry Johnson, Hidemichi Kawanishi, Kanako Kitahara, and Anthony Rausch. *Tsugaru: Regional Identity on Japan's Northern Periphery*. Otago, New Zealand: Otago University Press, 2005.

Hamelink, Cees. *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications: Planning National Information Policy*. New York: Longman, 1983.

Hauser, Michael. "Traditional and Acculturated Greenlandic Music." *Arctic Anthropology*, Vol. 23, No. 1/2 (1986): 359-386.

Hendry, Joy. *Understanding Japanese Society*. London: Croom Helm, 1987.

Herd, Judith Ann. "Trends and Taste in Japanese Popular Music: A Case-Study of the 1982 Yamaha World Popular Music Festival." *Popular Music*, Vol. 4, Performers and Audiences (1984): 75-96

Hilderbrant, Edith L. "Music Memory Contests." *The School Review*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (Apr. 1922):300-306

Hobsbawm, Eric, ed. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Hosokawa, Shuhei. "Singing Contests in the Ethnic Enclosure of the Post-war Japanese-Brazilian Community." *British Forum for Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (2000): 95-118.

Hughes, David. "Japanese New Folk Songs, Old and New." *Asian Music* Vol. 22, No. 1 (Autumn 1990 – Winter 1991): 1-49.

Hsu, Francis. *Iemoto: The Heart of Japan*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975.

Isaku, Patia. *Mountain Strom, Pine Breeze: Folk Song in Japan*. Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 1981.

Ivy, Marilyn. *Discourses of the Vanishing: Modernity Phantasm Japan*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Jinko, Katsumura. "Some Innovations in Musical Instruments of Japan during the 1920's." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* Vol. 18 (1986): 157-172.

Johnson, Henry. "Tsugaru Shamisen: From Region to Nation (and Beyond) and Back Again." *Asian Music* Vol. 37, No. 1 (Winter 2006): 75-100.

- Kadushin, Charles. "The Professional Self-Concept of Music Students." *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (Nov. 1969): 389-404.
- Kawanishi, Hidemichi. *Tohoku: Tsukurareta Ikyo (Tohoku: The Formation of a Strange Land)*. Tokyo: Chuo Koron Shinsha, 2001.
- Kennedy, Paul. "Are Contests Musical Experiences?" *Music Educators Journal*, Vol. 47, No. 3 (Jan. 1961): 60+62+64-67.
- Kinoshita, Shinichi. *Tsugaru Shamisen Sutairu Bukku (Tsugaru Shamisen Style Book)*. Tokyo: Shinko Myujikku, 2003.
- Lomax, Alan. "An Appeal for Cultural Equity" *Journal of Communication*, Vol. 27 (1977): 125-138.
- Lowenfield, Viktor. "An Attempt to Analyze the Effect of Contests." *Art Education*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Apr., 1952):7-8+16.
- Malm, William, P. *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*. Rutland, VT: Charles E. Tuttle, 1959.
- Malm, William, P. *Nagauta: The Heart of Kabuki Music*. Rutland: Charles E. Tuttle, 1963.
- Matsuyama, Jin. *Shosetsu: Yamada Chisato Tsugaru Shamisen (A Novel: Yamada Chisato and Tsugaru Shamisen)*. Hirosaki: Aomori-ken Geino Bunka Kenkyu-kai, 1996.
- McClure, Steve. *Nippon Pop: Sounds from the Land of the Rising Sun*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1998.
- McClure, Steve. "Japan's Yoshida Brothers eye overseas audience." *Billboard* Vol. 115, Issue 48 (November 2003): 52.
- Marriam, Alan P. *The Anthropology of Music*. Northwestern University Press, 1964.
- Myers, Helen. *Ethnomusicology: an Introduction*. London: The Macmillan Press LTD, 1992.
- Nelson, Christopher. *Dancing with the Dead: Memory, Performance, and Everyday Life in Postwar Okinawa*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- Nobukiyo, Eguchi. "A Brief Review of Tourism in Japan After World War II." *Journal of Ritsumeikan Social Sciences and Humanities* Vol. 2, Tourism in Asia: Trends and Challenges (2010): 141-153.
- Ohtani, Kimiko and Tokumaru Yoshihiko. "Ethnomusicology in Japan since 1970." *Yearbook for Traditional Music* Vol. 15, East Asian Musics (1983): 155-162.
- Peluse, Michael S. "Folk Revival or Pop Sensation? The Latest Tsugaru Shamisen Boom." MA Thesis, Wesleyan University, 2002.

- Peluse, Michael. "Not Your Grandfather's Music: Tsugaru Shamisen Blurs the Lines Between Folk, Traditional, and Pop." *Asian Music* Vol. 36, No. 2 (Summer 2005): 57-131.
- Robertson, J. 1991, *Native and Newcomer: Making and Remaking a Japanese City*. Berkley, Los Angeles, Oxford: University of California Press.
- Sakata, Lorraine. "The Comparative Analysis of Sawari on the Shamisen." *Ethnomusicology* Vol. 10, No. 2 (May 1966): 141-152.
- Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. "The Ethnomusicologist and the Transmission of Tradition." *The Journal of Musicology*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Winter 1996): 35-51.
- Takeuchi, Tsutomu. *Minyo: Sono Hassei to Tensen (Folk Song: Its Development and Transformation)*. Tokyo: Kadogawa Shoten, 1981.
- Weiner, Michael, ed. *Japan's Minorities: The Illusion of Homogeneity*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Westerhoven, J. N., Takafusa Sasamori, and Henry Johnson. "The Last of the Tsugaru Troubadours." YAMADA Chisato. 20 Oct. 2013 <http://www.umbc.edu/eol/9/yamada/index.html>
- Whiteley, Sheila. *Sexing the Groove: Popular music and gender*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Yano, Christine. *Tears of Longing: Nostalgia and the Nation in Japanese Popular Song*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Yano, Christine. "The Floating World of Karaoke in Japan." *Popular Music and Society*, Vol. 20, Issue 2 (Summer 1996): 1-17