

JAPANESE JAZZ: FROM FOREIGN COMMODITY TO CULTURAL TROPE

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CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

Japanese Jazz: From Foreign Commodity to Cultural Trope

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An examination of the transculturation of Jazz and its manifestation in nationalistic expression in Japan, this paper argues that rather than being a mere copy of an American art form, Jazz exists in Japan with its own set of tropes, symbols and meanings within film, literature, and popular culture. It examines the absorption of Jazz into Japanese mass culture from the Taishō “Jazz Age” of the 1920s until the Post-Occupation era, and reflects on the continued impact of Jazz on present-day Japan.

Keywords: Jazz, Japan, Japanese Culture, Nationalism, *Nihonjin-ron*,  
Transculturation, Musicking, Taishō, Shōwa

## **Part One: The Transculturation of Jazz in Modern Japan**

### *Introduction: Argument for Jazz as a Transcultured Japanese Artifact*

This paper examines the transculturation<sup>1</sup> of Jazz and its manifestation in nationalistic expression in Japan. The primary argument is that rather than being a mere copy of an American art form, Jazz exists in Japan with its own set of tropes, symbols, and meanings. Therefore, this paper examines the process of the absorption of Jazz into Japanese mass culture from the Taishō “Jazz Age” of the 1920s until the Post-Occupation era, as well as reflects on the continued impact of Jazz on present-day Japan.

This project began with a simple research question: What happens when people from two different cultures observe the same cultural object or phenomenon? Although they are looking at the same thing, is it possible that they can see it differently and, as a result, it can become something different, even with minimal change to its form and shape?

A 1981 film, *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, told the story of a Coke bottle dropped from a plane and found by a Bushman who had little contact with human civilization. Since the villagers had no concept of what a Coke bottle is, each of them saw it differently, finding different purposes for it. The narrator described it as “the most beautiful thing they had ever found,” noting that it was the “most useful thing the gods had ever given them, a real labor-saving device.” Unfortunately, the gods had only sent one, and “a thing they never needed before became a necessity and unfamiliar emotions began to stir.”

To be clear, the “Coke Bottle Analogy” is not meant to suggest that the arrival of Jazz caused considerable social discord (it didn’t). Nor is it meant to suggest that Jazz considerably changed the social fabric of Japan (it didn’t do that either). In addition, this paper rejects the idea that Jazz plays a pivotal role in the Westernizing of Japan. Merit is found in the “Coke Bottle Analogy” in that Jazz arrived in Japan, and different people saw different purposes for it within the broader social framework of the times they lived. As a result, Jazz became transculturated in various ways.

Put otherwise, as stated by Simon Frith:

The problem here is not just the familiar postmodern point that we live in an age of plunder in which music made in one place for one reason can be immediately appropriated in another place for quite another reason, but also that while music may be *shaped* by the people who first make and use it, as experience it has a life of its own. (Qtd. in Hall 109)

#### *Conceptual Framework: Music as a Verb*

In arguing for transculturation, it is important to understand two closely musicological concepts: “musicking” and *Gebrauchsmusik*. Christopher Small’s theory of musicking posits that music encompasses a wide realm of activities that transcend mere composition and performance (Small 12). It is similar to Heinrich Bessler’s belief that the value of music is relative to the level of participation by the listener; hence, Bessler held dance music as superior to music created for art’s sake, using the term *Gebrauchsmusik* to refer to music created for a functional purpose. Likewise, *Eigenständigemusik* refers to music created to stand alone - art for art’s sake (discussed in Pritchard 29–48).

Modern Jazz tends to be presented and studied as *Eigenständigemusik*. It is (or was) part of an art music movement that aimed at rejecting the commercialism by many who viewed “swing” as juvenile. Hence with the rise of bebop, American Jazz clubs began to post “no dancing allowed” signs. However, if

Jazz is only studied from the perspective of art music (*Eigenständigemusik*), its manifestations in mass culture as *Gebrauchsmusik* (for example, as dance or film music) are easily missed. Two examples are:

1. Jazz's effect on the Japanese urban milieu via its presence in the Jazz *kissaten*, a place where modern Japanese go to drink, listen to music and socialize.
2. Jazz's functional presence in movie soundtracks, for example, as manifested in the postwar movies of Akira Kurosawa.

Merry White concisely describes the Japanese Jazz *kissaten* phenomena as follows:

The transformation of material culture into (modern culture) was accomplished as much in *kissaten* as anywhere – where the middle-class customer, literary intellectuals and aesthetes met, expanded their tastes or took refuge. While Jazz arrived as a captivatingly foreign cultural form, the newly shaped Japanese urbanity readily embraced it as Japanese, along with novel clothing, foods, and coffee, configured as local and urbane at the tables of the Jazz *kissaten*. (59).

Whereas the American Jazz club, and its jam sessions, served a vital role in the development of American Jazz styles (Berliner 37), the *kissaten* (Jazz café) served as the central social space of Japanese “Jazz culture” (Novak 15). As an example, David Novak analyzed the impact of Japanese listening practices on the reception and interpretation of genre, and, later the development of consequent music styles in relation to Japanese *kissaten* culture. He concluded that “listening is not the final link of a chain of musical transmission, but the very crucible of musical innovation.” In other words, he argues that the Japanese phenomenon impacted the overall development of Japanese Jazz (Novak 15).

As a second example, Jazz can be found absorbed into Japanese media and literature as far back as the 1930s. For example, Jazz appears in numerous films by the iconic director Akira Kurosawa. Michael W. Harris illustrates this in “Jazzin’ The

Tokyo Slum,” which analyzes the collaboration between Kurosawa and composer Fumio Hayasaka (1914-1955), demonstrating the way in which music mingles with and develops the storyline in the 1948 film *Drunken Angel* (Harris 52). In both cases, that of the *kissaten* and that of the cinema of Kurosawa, the functional use of the Object (Jazz) and social impact of its use are equal to or more important than the form or even the historicity of the object itself. In other words, whether or not the Jazz that is being listened to is “American” or not, the idea of Jazz develops within specifically Japanese social and cultural settings.

Hence, this paper argues that whether or not a robustly original style of Japanese Jazz exists or not, Jazz can be argued to be transculturated if it can be found to have been absorbed into a wide realm of cultural byproducts that relate directly to the receiving society culture itself. As an example, a “Boogie” tune performed by Shizuko Kasagi (1914–1985) and written by the popular 1930s and 1940s arranger/composer Ryōichi Hattori (1907-1993) is used in *Drunken Angel* (1948) to advance the film’s storyline, by shedding light on the predatory nature of one of the film’s characters. The Cab Calloway–influenced “jungle rhythm” is a borrowed influence, but it is embedded in the film as part of the work’s narrative language and specifically relates to the storyline; hence, it is not functioning as a trope from some kind of blackness or Americanism but instead is thoroughly Japanese.

### *Arguing Authenticity*

Although this paper provides numerous other examples of Jazz’s absorption into Japanese cultural objects (cinema, literature, and popular music especially), it is important to acknowledge the strongest argument against transculturation, which goes as follows: Jazz is certainly popular in Japan (Kuriya 86–91); however, it is popular

as a foreign art form. This is why the public began to rapidly lose interest in Japanese Jazz artists during the 1960s rush of foreign Jazz entertainers (Atkins 209).

There are two problems with this line of argument: First, from the perspective of musicking, actual recordings and music styles represent only one attribute of the act of music and its potential impact upon a culture. Second, arguments of authenticity border on the realm of extreme subjectivity. For example, a musician might argue that he or she is Japanese, so whether or not Japanese scales or folk songs are used in his or her music, the person's Japanese-ness is manifested in his or her music (Atkins 209). But how is the invisible boundary between personal style and cultural authenticity to be defined? And to what extent is this argument analogous to the contention that "only a black person can truly play and understand Jazz, since Jazz, in essence, is a black thing" (Ibid.)? Finally, how would a Japanese Jazz musician, such as Sadao Watanabe (b. 1933), who views him- or herself as both Japanese and *kokusaijin* (a global entertainer) fit into this picture?

As demonstrated above, the question of authenticity can lead to a slippery slope that is laden with value judgments. For example, must we argue for Sadao Watanabe's "blackness" in order to validate him as an influential Jazz musician? It is here that the "Coke Bottle Analogy" re-emerges.

Leonard Neil best states the idea that a cultural object, Jazz in particular, can have different meanings to different people:

Jazz fulfilled various esthetic needs for those who rejected traditional values. For the jazz men and their close followers it provided a voice of rebellion and a source of positive morality. For its less ardent young supporters, jazz furnished accompaniment to their growing pains and adolescent enthusiasms. Intellectuals found it an exciting new form of art. And in one way or another it titillated the sensibilities of well-to-do members of slumming parties. However differently people responded to jazz, it provided all of them with emotional symbols for the relative values that were replacing the standards of traditional idealism (72).

Hence, Leonard Feather answered criticism against Miles Davis's perceived lightness by noting:

The white author of the piece would doubtless be incapable, on hearing this Davis solo, of perceiving the porcelain-like delicacy of his approach to the blues. Certainly this is not the blue of a man born in New Orleans and raised among social conditions of Jim Crow squalor and poverty, musical conditions of two or three primitive chord changes; this is the blues of a man who has lived a little; who has seen the more sophisticated sides of life in midwestern and eastern cities, who adds to what he has known of hardship and discrimination the academic values that came with mind-broadening experience, in music schools and big bands and combos, in St. Louis and New York and Paris and Stockholm. This is the new, the deeper and broader blues of today; it is none the less blue, none the less convincing, for the experience and knowledge its creator brings to it. Far from being ashamed of the blues, Miles is defiantly proud of his ability to show its true contemporary meaning (118-120).

Upon reading passages such as the ones above, two questions are raised: If Jazz is a malleable object, what happens when it is transplanted in another culture, and one group of players seeks "stylistic authenticity," and another seeks to incorporate a stylistic influence into a national sound? Second, is it still possible to argue for Jazz as a syncretic cultural object when evidence of a "vivaciously original cultural style" is paltry? To answer both questions in brief: a) Tensions between authenticity and nationalism can lead to new musical styles, but b) people outside the culture may not get what is going on.

#### *Overt vs. Innate Nationalism*

Although arguing the "Japanese-ness" of global-minded Japanese artists might be difficult, discussion of "overt" vs. "innate" nationalism is still possible. For example, if an artist subjectively claims that his "Japanese-ness" is manifest in his or her music, the perception of this may be subjective, but the fact that the person *wishes*



his or her music to be perceived as Japanese is significant in itself, as it means that the person is viewing the music as a transculturated cultural asset.

As an example, Ryōichi Hattori and a number of other popular music composers who emerged in the 1920s and 1930s were consciously attempting to create syncretic styles of Japanese music by absorbing Jazz and Blues influences (Tokita and Hughes 345). In contrast, the avant-garde bassist, Masahiko Togashi (1933–2007), who represented the Japanese free Jazz movement of the 1960s and 1970s, argued for an expressionistic Japanese Jazz built on a Japanese spirit, but without adaptation of specific Japanese melodies and scales. In response to Togashi, some might argue that Jazz without Afro- or America-centricity is not Jazz. Concurrently, a modern Jazz enthusiast might write off Hattori's music as inauthentic since it had more connection with the orchestral society Jazz of Paul Whiteman than the hot Jazz of New Orleans. But these discussions define Jazz only as a historic byproduct of American society. In doing so, they fail to address the actual cultural circumstances that led both the popular bandleader Hattori as well as the underground free Jazz bassist Togashi to create music that both viewed as Japanese and Jazz (or at least Jazz-influenced).

Aside from the times in which they lived, what set Hattori and Togashi apart was Hattori asking, "What do the Japanese people want and like?" and Togashi asking, "Who am I?" Both, however, knew they were Japanese individuals, living in a hybrid East/West society, and were interested in creating modern Japanese music. It can, therefore, be argued that an understanding of Modern Japanese art requires an understanding of a basic concept of Japanese cultural identity.

*Nihonjin-ron and Japanese Cultural Identity*

The debate of *nihonjin-ron* (the study of Japanese-ness) serves as a recurrent social discussion that stands at the heart of Japanese hybridist social identity. Taishō period (1912-1926) discourse on Japanese uniqueness emerged from a need for the consolidation of Japan as a nation endangered by a sense of social disintegration attributed to Western influence (Bukh 17). *Nihonjin-ron* once again re-emerged in the 1960s as many Japanese recognized certain defects in Western industrial society, leading to new rounds of discussion about the nature and merits of “Japanese-ness” (Lie 151).

Looking back historically to the origins of this debate, it is useful to consider the words of Kafū Nagai (1879–1959), who was part of a wave of Meiji-Era Japanese who went abroad and studied the West. Upon returning, Kafū argued that Japan needed to adapt a true “Japan-ness” rather than adopt a phony Westernization (Hutchinson 195–213). Returning from France, Kafū wistfully noted:

No matter how much I wanted to sing Western songs, they were all very difficult. Had I, born in Japan, no choice but to sing Japanese songs? Was there a Japanese song that expressed my present sentiment -- a traveler who had immersed himself in love and the arts in France but was now going back to the extreme end of the Orient where only death would follow monotonous life? . . . I felt totally forsaken. I belonged to a nation that had no music to express swelling emotions and agonized feelings. (Qtd. in Hutchinson 123)

Kafū was essentially arguing for the creation of modern Japanese arts. Yet, almost a century later the Japanese literary critic and writer Shūichi Katō (1919–2008) offered an argument that recognized the achievement of the existence of a distinctly Japanese form of Westernization. He claimed that emulation of the West was not necessary, as Japanese social and industrial innovation and thought represents

Japanese cultural experience, and therefore is distinctly Japanese (Chuh and Shimakawa 230-231).

Hence, building on Kafū's call for a national sound, the composer, Ryōichi Hattori stated: "I don't think there is any need for the blues to be monopolized by blacks, like William Handy's 'St. Louis Blues.' Don't you think there should be a Japanese blues, an Oriental blues in Japan?" (Qtd. in Bourdaghs 40)

In contrast, reflecting the nationalism of modern postwar Japan, the Japanese music critic Shōichi Yui (1918–1988) offered an argument that, in essence, provides a case for innate (as opposed to overt) nationalism:

We will not be accepted for imitating and playing the same thing foreigners play,' they say. 'That made us painfully aware that Japanese musicians should create a Japanese Jazz.' Right now this is a new global trend that is coming to rule Jazz. Even in American, blacks are aiming for black Jazz, whites for white Jazz; and in Europe as well, in Spain and West Germany different national hues using the diction of Jazz are being worked out ... One hundred years after Meiji, the course of modernization that our nation has pursued has been accomplished only by abandoning precious Japanese traditions and taking in Western culture in large quantities... What do we have to prove that we are real Japanese? Nothing. Right now there is no standard for 'Japanese things.' So aiming to create a Japanese Jazz is significant talk. (Qtd. in Atkins 227)

Yui concludes that when he listens to the famed Japanese Jazz pianist Toshiko Akiyoshi (b.1929) perform, he "knows" that something comes out that is "peculiar to Japanese" and not American although "it is difficult to explain what that something is" (Atkins 227). Atkins, however, criticizes this ideal as exclusivist, in that it supposes a music that 'only Japanese can play,' that 'foreigners cannot imitate.'" (Atkins 229).

Musicologist Elizabeth Selser-Beckaman offers a similar argument, but when Beckman sees an "essence of what it is to be Japanese," she fails to demonstrate (or define) the essence of what it is to be Japanese (Qtd. in Craig 39-40). Yet others attempt to bypass this with Japanese aesthetic terminology, claiming, for example,

that the Japanese use of “space” relates to the Japanese aesthetic of “*ma*” and that even though American musicians such as Davis and Monk used space as well, it was “different” in that it was forced (Craig 41).

Others argue from the perspective of “natural character,” for example, claiming that the Japanese people are essentially a sad people, and this moodiness is reflected in their music. Another argument presented by Leonard Neil is “Jazz activist” Shūichi Sugiara’s contention that the Japanese don’t have the power to play like Westerners, so they play in their own way (Qtd. in Craig 42). Jazz drummer Donald “Duck” Bailey put it in other words: “They had a different type of beat, time feeling and it was difficult for me to adjust to at first. I felt more comfortable eventually. It’s like the difference between swing or bebop” (Qtd. in Moody 150).

Yet while some may argue that Japanese musicians lack feel and cannot swing, others may respond that their authenticity springs from not trying to sound American. For example, Togashi proclaimed, “I would be happy if you listened to my *Song for Myself* and could feel that it does not swing like American Jazz, that it is fundamentally different. I believe that the awareness that my music is fundamentally different from American Jazz will become the basis on which the originality of Japanese Jazz will be established” (Qtd. in Atkins 239). However, if one were to listen to Togashi’s album *Song for Myself* (1974), what would be heard? Because it is experimental/expressionistic Jazz, the impressions are subjective. Nevertheless, compared with the experimental free Jazz typical of an artist such as Ornette Coleman (1930-2015), the first noticeable thing missing would be the “Afro-centricity” of the music, which is replaced by “Japanese-y” stylizations at times. But if the album is to be considered Jazz, at what point would compositions of John Cage (1912-1992) fall into a similar categorization (and where is the line between Jazz and expressionistic

and post-expressionistic improvisation in general)? Likewise, if Togashi is to be described as postmodern, to what degree can a music form that is fragmentary and personally expressionistic be tied into a national sound in the first place?

It is here that the distinction between *Eigenständigemusik* and *Gebrauchsmusik* comes back into the picture. As will shortly be demonstrated, the transculturation of Japanese Jazz is best observed through the lens of mass culture. This seems counterintuitive from the perspective of the anti-commercial tendencies of the modern Jazz movement; however, the aim is to avoid the subjective question of whether an artist is sufficiently Japanese or original, but rather to ask the objective questions a) Where does Jazz occur? b) Why does it occur? and c) What is the consequence?

#### *The Three Questions from the Perspective of Japanese Literature*

Moving away from the binary of overt vs. innate nationalism, this section offers a brief example of the three-question approach to studying transculturation by examining Japanese writers who identified with Jazz and absorbed it into their work.

Michael Molasky analyzed the presence of Jazz in Japanese fiction since the 1950s stating: “Japanese poets and novelists have helped glorify the image of Jazz as the music of choice for aspiring artists or intellectuals with an anti-authoritarian bent.” He cites poets and writers such as Kazuko Shiraishi, Kenzaburō Ōe, Haruki Murakami, Ryū Murakami, Hiroyuki Itsuki, Yasutaka Tsutsui and Shintarō Ishihara, who have either written about Jazz, incorporated stories about Jazz, or absorbed Jazz influences into their writing (Qtd. in Rife 50).

The anti-establishment poet, dramatist, film director, photographer, and novelist Shūji Terayama (1935–1983) writes in the afterword to his first full novel: “I

tried to write this novel using the method of modern Jazz. The way I did it was to treat the characters like instruments in a combo, decide on the basic story as a chord name, and then fill it with completely improvised depiction” (Qtd. in Ridgely 79).

Steven C. Ridgely notes that Terayama probably first encountered Jazz in his middle-school years in the late 1940s, growing up near the army base of Misawa, noting that Terayama’s book *Enjoying Jazz* (1961) makes reference to the Norman Mailer essay “The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster” (1956), referring to himself as a “yellow negro” (Qtd. in Ridgely 80). Terayama stated that his interest in Jazz developed by spending time in a Jazz club called *Kiiyo* in Shinjuku’s “seedy” Kabuki-chō district:

A friend of mine asked me, ‘Why don’t you listen to modern Jazz?’ I’m interested in modern Jazz because it’s action. When someone mentions a piece by Wynton Kelly, they’re not talking about the chord name of a song he played or the score he arranged. They mean the action that took place in some club near dawn with rotten apple cores and cigarette butts and whiskey bottles strewn all over – people are able to powerfully connect their consciousness with his by taking his work to be that action alone. (Qtd. in Ridgely 81)

A personal connection within the context of a Japanese socio-political milieu is similarly described by the novelist Kenji Nakagami (1946–1992):

I graduated from high school, and came to Tokyo from Shingū City in Wakayama Prefecture. I was eighteen at the time. I arrived in Tokyo, rolled into a friend’s cheap, rented room, and the next day heard Jazz at a modern Jazz coffee shop in Shinjuku. It was my first experience with Jazz. It was fresh. It was stimulating. More than anything else, I was taken with a sense of liberation. My arrival in the city called Tokyo meant liberation from the provincial and from the ties of my blood relationships that persisted no matter how I tried to sever them, and Jazz literally flowed into me, reverberating, penetrating deep into my body, to the recesses of my soul. (Qtd. in Cornyetz 158)

Cornyetz dedicates an entire chapter to the sociopolitical connection between Nakagami’s relationship with Jazz and his own *buraku* identity.

Haruki Murakami writes that he was first exposed to Jazz when Art Blakey came to Japan and performed. Murakami saved up his money and opened a Jazz *kissaten*, which he ran for seven years. References to songs in his record collection play a prominent role in many of his books, sometimes to advance the story, other times just for entertainment. Murakami also sees Jazz as an embedded influence in his literary style: “My style is as deeply influenced by Charlie Parker’s repeated freewheeling riffs, say, as by F. Scott Fitzgerald’s elegantly flowing prose. And I still take the quality of continual self-renewal in Miles Davis’s music as a literary model.” (Qtd in Siegel, *Murakami Uses Bach*).

Far from representing American or Westernisms, it can be noted that although Haruki Murakami’s art is influenced by Charlie Parker and Miles Davis, the interaction with Jazz occurred under Japanese historical circumstances. The “where” occurred during Art Blakey’s visit to Japan during a foreign, Jazz, and black entertainment boom called the *Rainichi Rush* (Atkins 191). To E. Taylor Atkins, the rush represented a turning point when foreign musicians were glutting the marketing, and Japanese fans were becoming less interested in Japanese Jazz. At the same time, it also represented a split, in which Jazz was losing its stronghold as a form of popular music, but was re-emerging within *kissaten* culture, which in turn played a strong role in various art and student movements (Ibid.). Murakami’s Jazz, therefore, is not a West-bound escape from Japan, but a participation in contemporaneous social trends, followed by a contribution to them as a major Japanese novelist (the consequence). Commenting on the misconception that his own works are Western, not Japanese, Murakami stated:

I certainly think of myself as being a Japanese writer. I write with a different style and maybe with different materials, but I write in Japanese, and I'm writing for Japanese society and Japanese people. So I think people are wrong when they are always saying that my style is really mainly influenced by Western literature. As I just said, at first I wanted to be an international writer, but eventually saw that I was nothing but a Japanese writer. But even in the beginning I wasn't only borrowing styles and rules. I wanted to change Japanese literature from the inside, not the outside. So I basically made up my own rules. (Qtd. in Gregory & McCaffery 114)

Murakami's use of Western styles and imagery, therefore, can be viewed as tools used to realize the Japanese relevance of his works.

In the three examples cited above, members of Japanese society become exposed to Jazz, often under situations where Jazz has already been absorbed in some way into Japanese society itself. Consequently, they absorb the influences or experiences into their own cultural output. Their words are then mass-produced and marketed to the Japanese masses. The masses then experience the concept of "Jazz" as absorbed by the creators of the product. In addition, media and products tied into the product itself lead to further exposure.

### *The Westernization of Japanese Nation and Song*

Returning to the Coke Bottle Analogy, it is possible for the received Object to retain its original shape and form even while becoming something else. But this is not to say that it cannot become problematic.

Feather and Yui's statements seem similar on the surface, but represent very different cultural perspectives. Feather, for example, observed Japanese Jazz in 1964 and painted the following picture of cultural disconnect:

The Westernization of Japanese culture has reached a point of no return with the passion for Jazz. Today's young urban Japanese often knows less about the



*koto* than about John Coltrane and is concerned more directly with the problems of Jim Crow than with memories of Hiroshima. (Feather 164)

In contrast, Yui points out that 100 years after Meiji, the course of modernization was accomplished by abandoning elements of Japanese culture and taking in the West (Qtd. in Atkins 227). Furthermore, it is true that by the rise of the student movement in the 1960s, young Japanese students were finding inspiration in Black culture, but it was not that they were “more interested in Jim Crow than Hiroshima”. Rather, they were more interested in *Anpo* (the student movement of the 1960s) than World War II (which occurred before most of them were born).

Hence, correlation between “westernization” and Jazz is incongruent.

Westernization was already well in place, even by the 1920s, when Jazz first started gaining a foothold in Japan. In general, development of Japanese culture can be viewed in several stages, first with the integration of Chinese cultural influences in reference to a defined “Japanese spirit.” Absorption of Chinese cultural influence intensified following the Ōnin War (1466–1477) (Iryie 146) and lasted until Colonel Matthew Perry’s American gunboats forced Japanese ports open in 1853. Japanese authorities quickly learned that Western technology would be necessary to stand up against Western powers. Consequently, Japan deemed itself a backward nation and strove to become civilized. This would be done by merging Japanese knowledge with Western skill, but the aim was not to become Western. In contrast, it was to “worship the emperor and expel the barbarians” (Kitahara 47–53).

This trend led to a type of “modernization for nation’s sake”; hence, the post-Tokugawa State of Japan adapted elements of Western imperialism and liberal democracy, and promoted it by developing a modern educational system (Duke 2).

This system included Western music education that began with *shōka* (choral singing) texts for elementary school children, which included compilations of Western folk songs translated into Japanese that all children had to learn (Mitsui 4). It also included tunes with what Jones (33) describes as “intensely nationalist” proclivities. Another source of Japanese–Western syncretism could be found in student protest music and (old) *Enka* music. These tunes often borrowed from Western melodies, with Japanese lyrics replacing English lyrics.

With Japan’s rapid modernization came a conscious promotion of Western music styles. Japan’s first exposure to Western music came in the form of military music. It also seems that Colonel Matthew Perry put on an “Ethiopian Show” for his unwitting Japanese guests (King, Poulton, and Endo 170). Hence, by the time “mass entertainment” arose (around the turn of the twentieth century), almost all Japanese were raised in the Western musical tradition.

As a result, we can point to Toshiko Akiyoshi’s explanation of why Japanese musicians inevitably leaned towards Western styles of expression. In discussing her rejection of “orientalism,” Akiyoshi explains:

When I went to school in Japan, from kindergarten to grammar school, high school, and so on... all association I had with musical schooling was Westernized. It happens with all my generation and younger. Western music is not really foreign, and on top of that I was studying piano since I was six, so that added more to it. (Qtd. in Stowe 86)

As demonstrated, even if Japan’s initial opening to the West was forced, cultural influence came in the form of voluntary absorption. Jazz’s absorption into Japanese society was neither forced nor accidental. As an example, the Rokumeikan, Japan’s first cultural ballroom, was constructed in 1863, the aim of which was to be a showcase for Japanese modernism and a venue for the exchange of culture and ideas.

Japanese conservatives viewed the place as vulgar and a threat to traditional mores. Nobles, for sure, did not want their eligible daughters dancing in what was viewed to be a crude and vulgar Western style (Karatsu 422-423). Dance halls, however, spread, and were subject to licensing and regulation. By the 1920s Taishō Era Jazz Age, these halls were even subject to raids by “sword-wielding ruffians” (Atkins 80). Nevertheless, Tokyo continued to grow and expand, with many areas becoming virtually indistinguishable from a Western city.

## **Part Two: The Transition of Jazz from a Commodity to Cultural Commodification**

### *Circumstances of the Commoditized Arrival of Jazz*

So far, this paper has primarily discussed the process of transculturation from an ideological perspective. This section will discuss the historical process of transition from foreign commodity to cultural trope. In answer to the core questions “When did it occur?” and “Why did it occur?”, an influx of foreign goods began to find their way into Japan after Japan’s successful participation in World War I and renegotiation of unequal trade agreements with the West. The consequence was that cargo and passenger trade increased the import of commodities such as vinyl recordings (Nagahara 158). Soon after, American gramophone records (mainly those by white dance bands) began to be played at Western-style coffee houses. Steamship bands also began playing at hotels in Yokohama and Kōbe when their ships were lying in harbor. Radio stations JOAK and NHK began broadcasting in 1925, and radio ownership increased to 338,204 (Nagahara 73). Record companies began to form relationships with the new radio stations and movie companies, allowing for the cultural inundation of their products. Jazz was also embedded in popular culture, for example, via the stage performances of the *Casino Follies* in the early 1930s. In turn, the Japanese writer Yasunari Kawabata (1899-1972) immortalized this social phenomenon in his novel *The Scarlet Gang of Asakusa* (1930). Japanese Jazz Age writings by him (and others) were serialized in Japanese movie and even radio adaptations. Consequently, Jazz and references to Jazz Age culture were almost immediately absorbed into Japanese literature (Lippit 145).

### *From Localization to Transculturation*

Appreciation of a foreign commodity is one thing, but if transculturation is to be argued, the beginnings of a process of local absorption and local production, followed by local appropriation must be identified. Orvell Miles argues that the development of American culture from one of imitation to a culture of authenticity. His primary argument is that as a byproduct of the Industrial Revolution, machine facilitated technology allowed for the mass production of imitative consumer goods, but that by the turn of the twentieth century, a modernist “machine aesthetic” emerged which aimed to use technology to create “authentic experience and new realities.” The primary gist of his book, then, is that a fine line exists between technology and culture (Miles xx).

Beyond the discussion of the relationship between culture and technology, one must consider the role of economic incentive. Tariffs, for example, can protect a local culture from an influx of foreign goods and create incentives for them to create their own. Hiroshi Kitamura discusses in detail the effect of this type of protectionism on the Japanese movie industry in detail, describing Hollywood’s growing presence in Japan in the 1910s and 1920s, but noting that by the 1920s “Japanese studios contested the “Hollywood menace” by gearing up their own filmmaking (Kitamura 139) at a time when the Japanese government began to regulate the U.S. film business through fiscal and cultural protectionism.

Similarly, in 1924 the government levied a 10% tax on imported luxury goods in order to boost production of local records. The result was that by the mid to late 1920s record companies became motivated to reorganize and press records domestically. For example, in 1927 *Nichiku* Records formed a subsidiary with

Columbia, becoming one of the largest record companies in the world; in the same year, *Victor Talking Machine* established a subsidiary in Japan and built a large factory in Yokohama. Partnerships such as these allowed domestic albums to be sold at 1/6 the price of foreign ones (Nagahara 30). Soon, record companies began pressing Japanese-translated domestic “cover” versions of original records. For example, in 1936 Dick Mine<sup>2</sup> (1908–1991) took the tune “Dinah” and translated it into Japanese. Subsequently, many artists began recording their own versions of foreign songs. Among these artists were Raymond Conde (1916–2003), Jimmy Harada (1911–1995), Betty Inada (1913–2001), Nancy Umeki (1929–2007) and Tib Kamayatsu (1911–1980). Many of these singers were American-born Japanese who returned to Japan (Atkins 151).

As can be seen, Jazz entered Japan as a physical commodity. Popular foreign tunes were licensed to record companies, who localized them by translating the lyrics (at least partially) into Japanese. The studios of the era often maintained their own songwriters, arrangers, and house bands, who were expected to keep up with the latest trends of the day. By the 1920s, five major studio orchestras existed in addition to “symphonic Jazz” orchestras which played for movies, radio broadcasts, and theatrical reviews (Atkins 59). Besides Hattori, other composers such as Kōichi Sugii (1906–1942) and Masao Koga (1904–1942) made efforts to create Jazz-influenced syncretic pop music. In particular, they strove to create styles of music that somehow captured the essence of Japanese-ness.

### *Transculturation Through Technology*

Taylor, Katz, and Grajeda note that “With recording technology, music could be disseminated, manipulated and consumed in ways that had never been before

possible,” further noting that “when recorded, music comes unmoored from its temporal origins” (11). Hence, modern technology changed the way music was listened to. Cinema, novels, theatre, and later radio and eventually TV allowed for additional cultural transmission even without substantive migratory influence or an overt dominant cultural influence.

Vis-a-vis transmission of music removed from its cultural origins, Hattori’s music was *Gebrauchsmusik* that was meant to be consumed and understood by the localized masses. It was absorbed into a growing network of mass media and entertainment that included film, radio, and record. As an example, *King Records* was established by publishing giant *Kōdansha* in 1930, which could advertise or promote new music in *King* magazine (1927-1957), which had a circulation of over a million copies per month (Galliano 107). Under this system, films could be used to advertise songs and songs were used to advertise films. For example, by 1933, songs could be distributed to a network of over 40,000 *kissaten* spread throughout the nation (Silverberg 25).

Another example of Jazz’s absorption through mass media was the “theme” to Kenji Mizoguchi’s (1898-1956) film *Tokyo March* (1929), which received further promotion by becoming a topic of national debate and scandal due to its theme. *Tokyo March* itself was a serialized novel, radio drama, and silent film. Using cross-media marketing, the original recording sold over 400,000 copies. One example of novel promotion involved the distribution of one thousand free copies to bars and cafés throughout Tokyo (Atkins 48). In order to conjure the image of modernity, the theme song to *Tokyo March* made reference “to coquettes sitting in cafes, drinking whiskey and dancing to Jazz all night” (Nagahara 35). Therefore, although it was not a Jazz tune, the idea of Jazz and an association with modern Tokyo was propagated on a

mass scale. As Silverberg observed, one mass medium often promoted the other (Silverberg 25).

It should not be surprising, then, that Japan's first talking movie, *The Neighbor's Wife and Mine* (1931), told the story of a comic playwright who moved to Tokyo in order to complete a work, but who was distracted by one thing after another, most notably, the noisy Jazz band next door (Kolker 107). The modern Jazz Age neighbor and freewheeling girls sharply contrasted with the playwright's wife in a kimono, as the raucous neighbors danced to Mammy's Jazz Band while the band played "Age of Speed." Yet, the film ended with the intact "nuclear family" heading off into the sunset to the strains of "My Blue Heaven" (Silverberg 259).

Even during the military build-up of the late 1930s, what Justin Vicari describes as "au-courant swing time Jazz" could be heard in Japanese films such as *The Girl in the Rumor* (1935), *Sisters of Gion* (1937), *Ōsaka Elegy* (1937), and *Woman in Tokyo* (1939) (Vicari 50). Whether or not the music was hot swinging American or Negro Jazz, the people, stories, language, and images were about Japanese people, living in Japan, and dealing with Japanese social circumstances.

#### *Jazz and America as a Trope for Japanese Urban Modernity*

As demonstrated, with the advent of the phonograph, talking films, and the development of the Japanese publishing industry, it became possible for culture to be transmitted with or without direct exposure to the culture from which it emanated. In the process, parts of Tokyo such as the Ginza began to be associated with images offered by mass culture. The result was the rise of a certain "American-ness" supported to a great extent by the storefront culture of the Ginza and other big cities (Chua 205). In 1929, the social critic Takanobu Murobushi<sup>3</sup> wrote a book entitled



*America*, arguing: “Where could you find Japan not Americanized? How would Japan exist without America? And where could we escape from Americanization? I dare to even declare that America has become the world. Japan is nothing but America today” (Qtd. in Chua 204).

Although Murobushi’s statement could have been somewhat of an exaggeration, it is true that during the 1920s and 1930s, monthly magazines had features on the U.S. Itaru Nii (1888-1951) wrote that the young were “intent” on Jazz and willingly imitated the hairstyles, makeup, and dress of Hollywood movies (Ibid.). Kōsei Andō (1900-1970), in his 1931 book about the Ginza, further observed that it was the American style that dominated Ginza at the time. “You find at once that their style and behavior is completely imitated from American movies...You can hear American Jazz in every café. Today, most Japanese want to understand the world through America” (Qtd. in Chua 205).

Yet, whereas Murobushi and Andō were seeing “America” in the Ginza of the 1920s and 1930s, *Tokyo March* (1929) views the “Coke Bottle” through a different lens: in the film’s theme, the lyrics of Saijō Yaso (1892–1970) are a poetic ode describing Tokyo’s fashionable neighborhoods such as Ginza, Asakusa, and Shinjuku as well as specific landmarks that dotted the Tokyo landscape, including the Marunouchi Building, a cinema, and a department store, and referencing modes of transportation which were rapidly changing the city. Further enhancing the effect of the tune, the composer Shimpei Nakayama (1887–1952) used the Japanese minor pentatonic scale to create a sentimental Japanese effect (Nagahara 50-51).

Hence, *Tokyo March* offers a nostalgic ode to a modern city:

Longing for old willows on the Ginza streets.  
Who knows of the middle-aged coquette?

Dancing to jazz, liquor in the wee hours.  
 And with the dawn a flood of tears for the dancer...  
 Vast Tokyo is too small for love, Fashionable Asakusa, secret trysts...  
 Long-haired Marxist boys, ephemeral love of the moment...  
 Shall we see a movie, shall we drink tea, or shall we run away on the Odawara  
 express? (Trans. in Atkins 66)

### *Jazz as the Primitive and Exotic*

As demonstrated above, Jazz could be viewed as either a symbol of Japanese modernism and cosmopolitanism or as a vulgarity. This is evident in social critic and philosopher Shūzō Kuki's (1888–1941) disdainful reference to Jazz in his sarcastic contrast between Jazz and *iki* (an Edo-period (1603-1868) Japanese concept of cool sophistication) in his study of the Edo period Geisha:

The facial expression of *iki* is premised on a disengagement from the winking of one eye, the jutting forth of the mouth, and of such Western vulgarity as the performance of jazz with two feet. (Qtd. in Silverberg 81)

Silverberg concludes that “it is not farfetched to imagine that he was condemning the new type of sex worker who moved among male customers, in syncopation to the rhythms of the Jazz played in the cafes of modern years” (81). Regarding vulgarity, 1920s Jazz was further associated with dance halls and dance halls were increasingly associated with the seedy realm of cabaret and prostitution (Karatsu 416–440). Men paid to associate with hostesses, and the package included drinking, conversation, and dancing.

Similarly, *Tokyo March* could be viewed in three ways: first, as a tribute to the wonders of a modern and wondrous city; second, as a satirical view of it; or third, simply as a vulgar piece of music glorifying the worst of modern Japanese life. The narrative to the silent titles of the film begins:

Tokyo – the only truly modern city in the Orient. The center of Japan's culture, academy, cultivation and art as well as sin and depravity.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, as *Tokyo March* was debated on the front page of the *Yomiuri Newspaper*, the actor and playwright Takashi Iba (1887-1937) stated that *Tokyo March* is a jazz-like satire of the superficial lives of modern Tokyoites, who dance away as the economy expands with all its contradictions... Art is re-creating life” (Qtd. in Nagahara 47).

### *Jazz as a Trope for Urban/Rural Tensions*

Bonnie Menes Kahn, in her analysis of Japanese cosmopolitanism, points out the tension that existed between traditional rural lifestyles and those of cosmopolitan Tokyo, arguing that Japan at the turn of the twentieth century was still a rural and deeply conservative society. Even though fashionable districts were beginning to emerge in cities such as Tokyo and Ōsaka, Western goods did not flow into the countryside until 50 or 60 years after “city use” (Kahn 183). Even by 1925, only 10% of the general electorate could vote and most were wealthy landowners representing rural districts very much at odds with what they perceived to be the decadent customs of many of Tokyo’s young modernists (Sorensen 383–406). As Kahn observes:

Western goods seemed to need Western showcases and department stores, but these certainly were nowhere to be seen in the countryside. Western methods were equally resisted. Modernization was slow because, in an age of radical change, the old ways, meaning the rural ways, were respected. (Kahn 183)

Hence it can be concluded that Japanese respected rural values, and those values influenced capital cities. As a result, under the influence of nationalism, movements exalting rural virtues gained power through rural support (Kahn 188).

[*illustration*/Japan Census Statistics]

Jazz, therefore, can be seen as a symbol of encroachment not so much of the foreign, but rather of the “urban lifestyle” upon Japanese rural mores. As can be seen in the chart above, Japan remained a predominantly rural country until sometime after World War II. As the economy underwent rapid economic expansion beginning in 1912, people left their small towns en masse in order to attain better jobs and higher standards of living.<sup>5</sup> Hence, the Taishō era rise of the Ginza represented the beginnings of a significant shift in cultural values.

### *Jazz and Race*

Although Jazz’s transmission in Japan was primary in a “culturally odorless form,”<sup>6</sup> it would be a mistake to write off all knowledge of blackness. For one, the music critic Saburō Sonobe (1906–1980), reflecting a similar debate in America, wrote of Jazz that the *nigro* origin of the songs only served to liberate the “primitive instincts” (Mentioned in Nagahara 155).

Similarly, the music critic Kamesuke Shioiri (1900-1938) offers a contemporaneous analysis of Paul Whiteman, the controversial white 1920s/1930s orchestral bandleader who billed himself as “King of Jazz.” After acknowledging

Jazz's Afro-American origins, Shioiri stated: "If it were not for Paul Whiteman's creative powers, Jazz would have ended as a simple fox trot" (Qtd. in Atkins 105).

Hence, Whiteman's powers liberated Jazz from its origins in barbarism (Atkins 87).

While painfully racist to read, Shioiri's writings echo similar sentiments by American intellectuals and composers. As Kathy Ogren wrote:

In a sense, Whiteman and others like him were trying to have it both ways. They wanted to disassociate Jazz from its Afro-American traditions, but preserve the excitement in the music. They did not entirely want to abandon participation – their emphasis on dancing belies this notion, but they wanted to stylize and formalize it, virtually to codify it. (Qtd. in Hardie 257)

Rie Karatsu similarly argues that "cultural absorption prompted by recoil from an attraction to the exotic typically features taming the exotic, stylization with rules, kitschification, and nationalization" (Karatsu 430).

In regard to cultural disconnect, there is a noticeable absence of minstrelsy, pseudo-minstrelsy,<sup>7</sup> or primitivism in Japanese Jazz. Atkins notes that a key difference between the early Jazz experiences of Japan and Europe was a lack of a Japanese analogue of the primitivist *negrophile*, observing that there were far fewer and much less known black musicians performing Jazz in Japan than there were in Europe. In addition, most American Jazz recordings were recorded as "race music" and marketed to black communities within the U.S. In reality, few records featuring African American performers were reaching Japan in the 1920s (Atkins 80). This, to an extent, worked in favor of Jazz musicians who wished to continue during World War II. Those who did were able to perform Jazz for shortwave radio propaganda or could perform "light music" for domestic audiences.

### *Hattori's Syncretism*

Could it then be said that Ryōichi Hattori's recordings of the 1930s and 1940s were an attempt to tame the exotic to make it palpable for Japanese audiences? Undoubtedly, understanding the power of the Japanese consumer, Hattori aimed at creating tunes that would sell. His formulas changed over time; for example, his works from the late 1930s with the popular singer Noriko Awaya (1907-1999) reflect the domestic influence of the *Koga Melody*,<sup>8</sup> whereas the famous post-World-War-II-era "boogies" center on Japanese themes, but reflect the influence of the American Occupation.

This transition in cultural influence can best be established by comparing Awaya, the 1930s "Queen of the Blues" to Kasagi, the Occupation era "Queen of Boogie." For one, Awaya's vocal style reflected a traditional Chanson influence, whereas Kasagi broke ground by using an American-style chest voice. In the 78rpm version of "Jungle Boogie," she is even heard emulating the roar of a Jazz Age trumpet.

Comparing Awaya to Kasagi, two forms of Jazz transculturation can be found. First, neither musician is trying to copy any particular American singer. Awaya may have been monikered "The Queen of the Blues," but the blues is adapted as a concept relative to Hattori's aim of creating a distinctly Japanese blues. For example, Tōru Mitsui described Awaya/Hattori's blues as "slow-tempo songs with minor keys with melancholic lyrics without musical affinity with the blues proper" (161). Consider "Wakare no Blues" (1937), which opens with a clarinet-driven Jazz Age swing/blues feel, but has a bridge more influenced by the Japanese minor pentatonic scales of Masao Koga. Likewise, Kasagi's Occupation-era "boogie" absorbs a great degree of American Big Band swing influence, but unlike an earlier generation of popular

singers, Kasagi does not copy American songs in Japanese, or emulate any particular foreign personalities (Nagahara 158).

Hattori's syncretism is evident in "The Mountain Temple Priest" (1937). In his autobiography, he stated:

With *The Mountain Temple Priest*, I ventured to emphasize the rhythm and maintain a Jazz style. But that would not have been enough to make a hit. I think it worked because I chose a folk song, a handball song that everyone knows. In other words, the fact that I aimed at a Japanese Jazz, within the Jazz idiom, led to its success. The same can be said of my blues. The plan was for a Japanese blues that used the motions of Japanese people as material. (Qtd. in Atkins 116)

Atkins argues that by "Jazzifying" Japanese folks songs, Hattori was able to avoid wartime censorship, especially during the wartime ban on Jazz from the 1940s onward (Atkins 106). Hattori's formula of syncretism evolved after World War II as he demonstrated that tunes did not necessarily need to be melancholic in order to be Japanese. "Shopping Boogie" (1950), for example, is a novelty tune performed by Kasagi that became a popular hit song, selling over 450,000 copies. "Shopping Boogie" is about something true to the heart of any Japanese *obasan*: the daily food shopping. The humorous effect is achieved by Kasagi taking on the role of a (presumably much older) *auntie* who rants and sings about a food-shopping trip gone wrong, singing in a mixture of colloquial and Ōsaka-inflected dialect, also singing parts of the melody using notes of the traditional Japanese *miyako-bushi* (minor pentatonic) scale (Bourdaghs 22).

Ryōichi Hattori's Jazz and blues stand as genuinely syncretic Japanese compositions built on an "imagined" Japanese-ness that evolved alongside changing political and social circumstances. As an example, shortly after World War II, Hattori wrote "Samisen Boogie" (1949) for the famous geisha Ichimaru (1906-1997), and it reflects his humorous side. The track starts off with a swinging American boogie-

woogie intro, then suddenly the strumming of a *samisen* is heard, and the tune morphs into a traditional Japanese folk rhythm; however, the refrain of the chorus ends with a one-verse, boogie-woogie rhythm. Of Hattori's many pre- and post- World-War-II Jazz tunes, a unifying element is that Japanese characters are brought into play against the backdrop of some kind of Jazz theme: a Japanese mountain priest, a geisha, and an Ōsaka auntie.

Interestingly, the same trend that allowed Japanese performers to absorb American performance styles into their music, would also hinder the ability of modern Jazz musicians to insert Japanese influences. By the end of World War II, "Nativist Swing" came to an end when a total Jazz ban was overturned, and "light music orchestras" were able to play American-style Jazz once again (Atkins 144). Only a decade later, when Hideo Shiraki (1933-1972) attempted to include an original modern Jazz composition with Japanese scales and rhythms in his album "In Festiva" (*King Records*, 1959), the *Swing Journal* reviewer (March/1962) commented that it sounded like the type of music the government was making during the war.

### *Jazz as a Negative Trope?*

In the examples above, Jazz occurs in a distinctly Japanese realm. While varying compositional styles are absorbed, there is almost no minstrelsy or imagined blackness. Instead, the trope of "Blackness" is replaced with various Japanese-isms or even fantasy elements. Michael Bourdaghs, however, finds some problems with Hattori's music. For example, in analyzing "Hot China" (1940), he sees a type of yellow minstrelsy (Discussed in King 170). Bourdaghs sees little difference between *tairiku*<sup>9</sup> and American minstrelsy.



Bourdagh's also sees sexual exploitation in Kasagi's Occupation-era association with Afro-American styles, noting that Kasagi was famous for the way she used her body in performance, writing that she was subject to "exoticization" and "racialization" in her career (Qtd. in King, Poulton and Endo 181).

In addition, Bourdaghs views Kasagi's performance style through a defeatist/colonial lens:

Despite her enormous popularity among postwar Japanese audiences, there was something foreign about Kasagi, a foreignness that everyone identified with the Occupation and the United States. She represented a kind of colonization of Japanese popular music by a foreign power, and to accept the pleasures her music offered was, for better or worse, to embrace a certain geopolitical arrangement of the world. (Bourdagh's 51)

Bourdagh's argument is strengthened by a quote from a women's magazine explicitly linking teenage performer Misora Hibari (1937-1989) to Kasagi's "corrupt" music:

That those boogie-woogie numbers shouted through a wide-open mouth would touch people's hearts is no doubt a technique that arises from the postwar sense of liberation, but when we encounter a wicked boogie-woogie number skillfully sung and danced by an innocent young singer, it only reinforces our sense of being a defeated nation. (Qtd. in Bourdaghs 55-56)

Kōichi Sugii's song "Hana Uri Musume" (1946) would certainly seem to reinforce Bourdaghs' association between Jazz and the Occupation:

Jazz is playing  
the lamplight shadow of the hall  
buy a flower  
buy my flowers, buy my flowers  
An American soldier in a chic jumper.  
a sweet fragrance chases after her (Trans. in Chen and Chua 255).

The lyrics of the Hattori/Kasagi number "Jungle Boogie" (1949), which appears in an important dance hall scene in Kurosawa's *Drunken Angel* (1948), further drills the case home:

I was born in a southern land  
 where volcanoes blow fire  
 on a night lit red by the moon in the jungle  
 I had a love so wild made my bones swoon  
 I was so wild with love in the jungle  
 I left my panther skin on a rubber tree.<sup>10</sup>

Bourdagh notes that Kurosawa located Jazz in sleazy, filthy ghettos populated with swaggering gangsters, coquettish taxi dancers, prostitutes, black marketers, and gamblers, and goes so far as to conclude:

For Kurosawa, popular music represents no subjectivity or liberation but enslavement. It is part of the sticky web of commodified culture that Kurosawa repeatedly portrays as a threat to the fragile male ego, a threat that referred implicitly back to the U.S. Occupation and the changes it was bringing to Japan. (22)

Yet, upon returning to the original three questions — Where does Jazz occur, Why does it occur, and What is the consequence? --a very different picture is painted. *Drunken Angel* tells the story of Matsunaga, a tuberculosis-infected Yakuza who is on his way down and Okada, a rival on his way up. Nanae, the dying Yakuza's opportunist girlfriend, is given a dance with his cold-faced, hard-boiled, fresh-out-of-the-slammer rival. Her face is soft, seductive, inviting, but it is no more than a mask: Suddenly, the lights dim and Kasugi appears amidst an exciting orientalist trumpet fanfare. Backed by a Cab Calloway–influenced big band, she sings the above-cited lyrics.

Two scenes later, the film having established that Matsunaga is “down on his luck” and Okada is on his way up, the two are seen at the club again. The band warms up and plays a Benny Goodman–style swing version of the “Overture” from *Carmen*, foreshadowing the film's tragic conclusion. Hence, the Jazz has gone from a symbol of sexual tension and seduction to one of conquest.

Jazz (and other styles of music) is used in *Drunken Angel* (1948) and other Kurosawa films to push the story forward. The music is appropriate to the setting, but also mirrors the development of the story: Hattori's Jazz symbolizes the predatory Nanae, who lives in a typhus-infected dog-eat-dog jungle. She is, after all, a woman who has "left her panther skin on a rubber tree." On the surface, she behaves properly, at least as one would expect of a dance hall seductress, but as the film hard cuts from Nanae to Kasagi, her true persona is revealed in song.

As demonstrated above, the circumstances of the occurrence of the Object shape the meaning of the Object itself. Hence, while Hattori and Kasagi's "Tokyo Boogie Woogie" (1946) may seem a cultural appropriation of an Afro-American style, or a symbol of surrender to an occupying force to some, it represents something very different to others. "Tokyo Boogie Woogie" is special for Japanese people, as it stands as a postwar anthem. For one, it marked the end of an era of government-sponsored marches and a specific style of "syncretic" wartime era music. It stood as an uplifting tune with an uplifting message in an era when Japan was, as Dower describes it, "embracing defeat"<sup>11</sup> (Qtd. in Bourdaghs 31). Its optimistic refrain is translated as:

Tokyo boogie-woogie, happy rhythm/hearts throbbing, exciting sounds  
What reverberates across the ocean Tokyo boogie-woogie.  
The boogie dance is the world's dance. (Trans. in Nagahara 153)

The allure was further captured in a 1958 poem by Noriko Ibaragi (1926-2006):

When I was at my prettiest  
Jazz spilled from the radios  
Feeling as dizzy as when I smoked my first cigarette  
I gorged on the sweet music of a foreign land (Trans. in Ōoka 51)

### *Between Imitation and Authenticity*

As discussed so far, Jazz was transculturated at a time when creators had the luxury of stripping it from its cultural origins, then reinventing it as a distinctly Japanese form of music; however, during the Occupation, musicians would finally have a chance to perform with and for American musicians. Although Tokyo was burnt out and impoverished after the war, musician jobs were plentiful, and paid well (Mitsui 54). Older Japanese musicians were not necessarily familiar with the new styles, and younger ones had to learn it; as a result, a generation of Japanese musicians, young and old, emerged who were trained to play in the most requested styles of the day, in particular Big Band, small combo, and swing (Ibid.) The American Occupation further affected the Japanese entertainment industry, as middlemen formed agencies in order to procure entertainment. These agencies (as well as freelance agents) also supplied entertainment to off-base clubs, some of which catered exclusively to Afro-Americans. Note, however, that most Japanese had no access to the musical practice off “off-limits” areas; hence, *kayōkyoku* (mainstream popular song) grew alongside it (Mitsui 60).

By the end of the occupation, members of the U.S. Army base-driven entertainment establishment had to find new work. Furthermore, those who embraced hardcore modern Jazz received only minimal support from Japanese Jazz collectors, who clearly preferred the real thing once it was available. Jazz bassist turned music promoter Shin Watanabe (1927-1987) accommodated this trend by forming close relations with the big TV production companies, at a point when the Japanese middle class was rising and modern Japanese TV variety shows were seeking new entertainment. As a result, *kayōkyoku* as well as American influenced entertainers could be seen performing on many of the same shows (Nagahara 139).

## Conclusion

Jazz entered Japan as a form of urban music at a time when the country was predominantly rural; therefore, it came to represent tension between the urban and modern and the rural and traditional. Little by little, Japan's workforce shifted to the city, and a predominantly middle-class society emerged. By this time, Jazz was so thoroughly transculturated that it truly meant many things to many people. It could be a form of popular music, a type of modern music, a record album played at a *kissaten*, incidental music or a leitmotif in a movie, a reference in a novel, a soundtrack of leftist rebellion, or a subtle influence in a nativist Enka melody that was left over from the days of Noriko Awaya and Masao Koga. It could even be heard in films such as *Quick Change Tanuki Palace* (1952) and *Travels of Hibari and Chiemi* (1962), samurai musicals affording the opportunity for the stars to swing, mambo, and sing traditional Japanese folk songs, sometimes all at the same time.

Ultimately, Shizuko Kasagi would stand out as the mentor of Japan's three postwar first ladies of pop: Eri Chiemi (1937-1982), Misora Hibari, and Izumi Yukimura (b.1937). Hibari's "Kappa Boogie" (1949) would go on to sell over 45 million copies (Standish 198–200). While simultaneously shifting towards nativist song (*enka*), Misora Hibari also recorded dozens of swinging Jazz standards between the years 1955 and 1966 alone. It is here, however, that the dividing line of two approaches to Japanese Jazz and popular music appear. First, that of Ryōichi Hattori's Western-inspired nativism, and a style that extended from a breed of postwar singers who would copy the latest American hits, singing them, at least partially, in Japanese (Shamoon 114-115).

Eri Chiemi, on the other hand, stayed true to her experience as a base entertainer. For example, in 1962 Chiemi was featured in *Ebony* magazine discussing

her 10-year mentorship (since the age of 16) with Carl Jones of the Delta Rhythm Boys.<sup>12</sup> It also stated that at the time she was starring in a “musical TV show” alongside Jones, she was also recording “modern versions” of Japanese folk songs. She was backed by a hot swinging Japanese Afro-Cuban band, but was singing in a “husky” American Jazz style. Chiemi also recorded albums with the Delta Rhythm Boys and The Count Basie Orchestra,<sup>13</sup> typically alternating between Japanese and English lyrics. Other Chiemi albums featured the likes of Japan’s Jazz elite, for example, Nobuo Hara and his Sharps and Flats, The Hideo Shiraki Quintet, Matsumoto Hidehiko, and Sadao Watanabe.<sup>14</sup>

Ultimately, this story of transculturation leaves off at a pivotal time in Japanese history. As alluded to at the beginning of this paper, more global, eventually more radicalized forms of Jazz and Jazz associations emerged. For example, in the mid-1950s a genre of “Sun Tribe” films that told the story of young Japanese who had all of the money in the world, but a disconnect from culture featuring Jazzy West Coast-style soundtracks became popular. As described by Ann Sherif, “The Sun Tribe boys looked bored and they made a point of rebelling against their elders” (39).

After the “Sun Tribe” wave abated, a New Wave movement that lasted through most of the 1960s emerged.<sup>15</sup> For example, Koreyoshi Kurahara’s (1927-2002) movie *Black Sun* (1964), told the story of a unique friendship between a Japanese drifter who lives in a burnt-out church that he has converted into a Jazz shrine, and an AWOL black American soldier. He has nothing but Jazz, and his identification with the black man as a fellow underdog. The soundtrack featured fiery bebop and free Jazz by Max Roach and Abbey Lincoln.

Since then, acculturation has built upon acculturation. Most Americans reading this will have probably grown up seeing episodes of *Speed Racer* (1967-

1968). Perhaps those who read this paper will be able to go back and have an even deeper appreciation for Nobuyoshi Koshibe's (1933-2014) deeply swinging and modernistic soundtrack. Yet others will be familiar with Yūji Ono's (b.1941) progressive Big Band-driven *Lupin The Third* soundtracks (1978-present), which in turn inspired *Cowboy Bebop* (1998), *Kids on The Slope* (2012) and *Blue Giant* (2013) stand out as manga and anime using Jazz themes to tell coming-of-age stories. In 2004, Shinobu Yaguchi's (b. 1967) *Swing Girls*, a feel-good film about a rural girl's high school Big Band, ranked eighth at the Japanese box office and took home seven prizes at the Japan Academy Awards.

Although the future of Jazz may very well be debatable in the East or West, it is very possible that anthropologists a thousand years from now may find themselves unearthing a century's-worth of cultural artifacts with references to this music called Jazz and ask what it was and what the origins were of this music so deeply embedded in so many Japanese artifacts. As they begin to listen and research, much to their surprise, the story that will be told will unravel the story of Japan's journey from a small rural country opening up to the world, to a nation in search of its future.

History is a toy box of sounds and artifacts. In viewing any set of these artifacts, the most significant questions that can be asked are: Where did it occur? Why did it occur? and What was the consequence? As demonstrated in this paper, Jazz transplanted itself in Japanese society at a time of great social and technological change and as a result quickly made the transition from foreign commodity to cultural trope.

This paper began with reference to the Coke bottle from the 1981 film *The Gods Must Be Crazy*, which demonstrated how one cultural object can mean so many things to so many people. In the film itself, Xi rids his culture of the object by

throwing it from the end of the earth. The Japanese, by contrast, opted to keep, localize, replicate, and arguably outbound-market their Coke bottle, ultimately leading to one final question. *What would have happened if Xi had kept his?* Would it have grown with his society, or would his society have grown with it?



## notes:

<sup>1</sup> The concept of transculturation first enters the English language in Pratt pp. 1-11.

<sup>2</sup> Dick Mine was a Japanese national also known as Tokuichi Mine.

<sup>3</sup> This may be a misreading by Chua of the identical Chinese characters for the writer Murofuse Kōshin (1892-1970).

<sup>4</sup> Translated in Nagahara p. 55.

<sup>5</sup> A discussion of Japan's rapid economic expansion and first "unprecedented economic boom" (1912) can be found in Flath pp. 99-142.

<sup>6</sup> The concept of "odorless culture" is used by Kōichi Iwabuchi to describe modern Japanese transnational culture, which is intentionally made to look non-Japanese. See Iwabuchi p. 94.

<sup>7</sup> For example, Japanese musicians donning black face or portraying an "imagined blackness."

<sup>8</sup> "Koga Melody" refers to a melodic style popularized by the composer Masao Koga in the 1930s and based on Japanese folk music of the 1890s (Tokita and Hughes p. 350).

<sup>9</sup> *Tairiku* was a 1940s wartime genre that blended Hot Jazz rhythms with songs in which Japanese composers create their own imagined visions of the Far East.

<sup>10</sup> Taken from subtitles to *Drunken Angel* (1948)/*Criterion Edition*.

<sup>11</sup> *Embracing Defeat* (1999) by John Dower, analyzes the immediate postwar period.

<sup>12</sup> As an example: Chiemi Eri and Carl Jones/*Chiemi and Carl*. King Records, 1962.

<sup>13</sup> As an example: Chiemi Eri/*Chiemi, Count Basie Vs. Jimmy Witherspoon, Sharps & Flats*. King Records, 1963.

<sup>14</sup> As an example: Chiemi Eri and Carl Jones/*Crazy Rhythm*. King Records, 1961 alone featured all of these artists.

<sup>15</sup> David Desser's *Eros Plus Massacre: An Introduction to the Japanese New Wave Cinema* offers a thorough overview of this movement.

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