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# Mediating Modernity through popular song: The geography of visual images illustrating *enka* in the context of karaoke and thematic parallels with *Arabesk*

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## Abstract

It is often said that *enka*, a popular song genre which has been closely associated with karaoke-singing since its inception in the mid-1970s, expresses the true Japanese heart. Although *enka* is by no means an entirely uniform song genre, encompassing some degree of stylistic and thematic variation, *enka* songs are characteristically melancholy, expressing themes related to separation, lost love and loneliness, as well as a nostalgia for the past as expressed most potently through the concept of *furusato* (hometown), but also through a panoply of symbolic images which serve to contrast contemporary, modern, urban Japan with its more traditional, rural counterpart of another (better) age. Focusing on the visual images used to illustrate *enka* songs in the context of karaoke and their categorisation by the karaoke industry, this paper examines how, through a series of oppositions –rural and urban, past and present, western and Japanese– such images serve not only as a symbolic discourse mediating modernisation, but also to articulate a collective notion of Japanese identity, at least as it is expressed through the emotive symbolism of *enka* songs. Finally, the paper explores parallels between *enka* and the Turkish popular song genre, *Arabesk*, both in terms of the sentiments and themes expressed in song lyrics and with reference to the wider backdrop of rapid change and social dislocation characteristic of the historical contexts within which both genres developed and thrived.

**Keywords:** Music, modernization, karaoke, *enka*, *Arabesk*

In his article, *Geopolitics, Geoeconomics, and the Japanese Identity*, Harumi Befu traces the “vissitudes of Japan’s identity discourse...” in specific relation to “...external factors which have affected changing definitions of national identity” at different periods in Japanese history (1997: 10). Arguing that “...national identity is a creature living very much in adaptation to its external environment” (ibid.), Befu distinguishes positive cultural identity which he suggests is associated with historical periods of relative national self-confidence from negative cultural identity or auto-Orientalism which, derivative from a collective sense of national inferiority, involves the articulation of self-definition in comparison with a superior other (i.e. the United States following the second world war) and even the internalization of notions of Japanese identity as posited by the outside world. In concluding, Befu suggests that in the construction of positive self-identity throughout Japan’s history, “...one sees an undercurrent of nostalgic gaze to Japan’s past...”, arising “...at least in part out of a dissatisfaction with the present – whether in its domestic or international aspects”. Noting that “...the nostalgic, idealized construction of the past in *Nihonjinron* becomes therapeutic treatment for the malaise of the present”, Befu suggests that the contemporary *Nihonjinron* boom should be seen within the context of a whole host of nostalgia movements in Japan, including the *furusato revival* and the popularity of *enka*.

Drawing from ethnographic research conducted within a Japanese karaoke company beginning in the mid-1990s, I examine *enka* as a contemporary example of a popular, nativist discourse. Focusing particularly on the symbolism as expressed in *enka* song lyrics and the visual imagery which illustrates *enka* songs in the context of karaoke, I suggest that the panopoly of stereotypical imagery in *enka* and its corresponding symbolic associations in Japan constitute a collective cosmology mediating tradition, modernization and, specifically, what John

Hall suggests is an ambivalence towards modernization. The final part of the paper explores parallels between enka and the Turkish popular song genre, Arabesk, with reference to both song content and symbolism and the wider social, historical and political context within which these two genres of popular song emerged and flourished.

### ***Enka***

*Enka*, it is commonly said, expresses the “true Japanese heart”.<sup>1</sup> Often compared to American country music in the themes and concerns it expresses – the difficulties of love and urban life and a longing for home and a time when life was supposedly simpler and more satisfying. Like country music and analogous genres in other complex societies, *enka* songs are characterised by a depth of emotional expression, which is occasionally gushingly sentimental, conveyed by a combination of the music, vocal style and song lyrics. Also like country music and analogous genres of popular song elsewhere, *enka* is “quintessentially the songs of the recent urban migrants” which “focus on the problems of the individual adapting to modern city life; they speak of love, drink, loneliness, homesickness, occasionally with macho defiance, often with resignation.” (Hughes 1991: 11). Among the main elements of *enka* songs listed by one early commentator were parting, memory, giving up, regret, love, loneliness, feebleness and homesickness (Minami 1959: 111).

*Enka* is often described as “wet” – a reference to its dripping sentimentality which also resonates the genre’s association with the *mizu shobai* (lit. water trade)– and it has been suggested that the three main ingredients of *enka* lyrics are harbours, tears and rain (IASPM 1993: 12), although sake (alcohol) might also be

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<sup>1</sup> A view expressed more than once by Japanese acquaintances during the course of fieldwork, it is also noted by others who have written about enka (Yano 1994, Occhi 2006, Shamoon 2014).

included. These often occur in combination in *enka* lyrics as illustrated by the opening verses of the song *Futari no kasa*:

<i>Tsurai namida</i>	Bitter tears hidden behind a smiling
<i>egao de kakusu</i>	face
<i>Ame no yatai</i>	Sharing a drink at a street vendor
<i>no fufu sake</i>	in the rain

There are in fact an array of symbolic locations, events, and elements which figure prominently in *enka* such as *minato* (port), *misaki* (cape), *furusato* (hometown), *kitaguni* (north country), *sakaba* (drinking places), *sakariba* (urban amusement quarters), *matsuri* (festival), *michi* (path), *yume* (dream), *namida* (tears), *ame* (rain), *yuki* (snow) and *sake* (alcohol), among others. Certain specific places names also appear frequently such as Osaka, Nagasaki, Tokyo, Hokkaido (Japan's northern most island) and even the names of well-known amusement quarters within Japan's major cities such as Minami in Osaka and Ginza or Shinjuku in Tokyo (Linhart 1986: 199).

The uses of these symbols in both song lyrics and in the karaoke video images which accompany *enka* songs are perhaps more easily interpreted within the context of the kinds of oppositions which are mediated in *enka*: urban and rural, past and present, male and female, inside and outside,<sup>2</sup> the modern and the traditional and which define *enka* as the music of a disaffected urban immigrant population which expresses a combination of stoic resignation of the individual to the demands of urban life and the workplace and nostalgia for another, better world,

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<sup>2</sup> Related to the Japanese dichotomy, *uchi* and *soto*, meaning literally household or inside group and outside, within the context of *enka*, it could be expanded to signify Japan (inside) and the outside world or the spatial categories of interior (of Japan) as opposed to the coastal, urban areas. It is important to mention an additional distinction made between the "front" or Pacific coast of Japan along which most of the nation's major cities lie and the "back" or Sea of Japan coast which is not only less inhabited, but also conceived to be comparatively bleak, dark and desolate.



embodied by such concepts as *furusato* (hometown).

In both *enka* song lyrics and the karaoke video images which are produced to accompany them, 'place' figures prominently as both setting and as the vehicle for conveying specific kinds of moods or emotions. Such locations may be either generalised such as *furusato* (hometown), *minato* (harbour or port), *hatoba* (pier or quay), *misaki* (cape), *kita guni* (north country), *sakaba* (drinking place) or specifically named as is often the case with urban settings such as Tokyo, Osaka, Kobe, Nagasaki, Yokohama, and Sapporo for example. In either case, place as it occurs in *enka* can be both physically and symbolically mapped, as *enka* provides a narrative on modernisation which is geographically oriented, reflecting both specific patterns of urban migration in the early and middle decades of this century and the historical significance of particular locations in the transmission of European culture in Japan.

There are several general features relevant to the geography of *enka*. First, a distinction must be made between the Pacific coast of Japan and the Sea of Japan coast. Most of Japan's major urban and industrial centres, the nation's major ports and the vast majority of its population are concentrated on the Pacific or roughly east/south-east coast along a narrow strip of relatively flat land stretching from Tokyo to Hiroshima. In *enka* lyrics and accompanying visuals, images of urban settings and depictions of a modernised or westernised Japan tend to be set along this corridor.

By contrast, the sea of Japan coast, sometimes referred to as the back (*ura*) of Japan, and occasionally described as dark, perhaps because of the region's more tempestuous climate, is depicted in *enka* and *enka* visuals as the seat of Japanese tradition. Comparatively rural and agricultural, this region and specifically its northern reaches (north-west of Tokyo), provide the setting for a highly idealised version of a Japanese past. Although these areas are no less modern than their Pacific coast counterparts

in contemporary Japan, they are depicted in the context of *enka* as thoroughly traditional, without the slightest hint of post-industrial life, save occasional depictions of ships sailing out of port – a common image symbolising separation in *enka*. Otherwise, depictions of the back of Japan are dominated by rice fields, thatched wooden houses with firewood stacked outside, traditional fishing villages, and coastal landscapes inhabited by characters always adorned in traditional dress (kimono).

Between these two coasts, Japan's rugged interior is another setting for the narrative of Japanese popular song. Mountainous and heavily forested, crosscut by rivers and valleys, this region provides much of the natural and seasonal symbolism which permeates Japan's artistic and musical expression.<sup>3</sup> As with the regions along the Sea of Japan, the interior is associated with tradition. In the video images illustrating songs such as Kitajima Saburo's hit song, *Tani* (valley) for example, the protagonist is portrayed in traditional dress, wearing *geta*, and carrying a parasol as he strolls across an old wooden bridge suspended between two mountain faces above a river in a scene reminiscent of those commonly portrayed on traditional wall hangings. It is unquestionably a scene from the past, but a scripted and sanitized vision of the past within the context of the present.

Within the context of *enka* then, a return to the "back" or Sea of Japan side of Japan represents an atavistic journey to a previous condition in which all that is representative of Japanese traditional ways remains intact, uncontested by the corrupting forces of modernization. In the same vein, Japan's geographical interior is synonymous with the Japanese psychological interior

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<sup>3</sup> John Knight has claimed that the idea of mountain and forest are nearly interchangeable in Japanese thinking, suggesting that the former (*yama*) are "symbols of procreation in their volcanic aspect, symbols of fertility in their watershed aspect, and abodes of the dead in their isolation from the everyday world of man" (1996: 223). Citing Berque (1986), he adds that "The mountains, like the sea, are a site of the *oku* (or *oki* for the sea), the interior, a wild space associated with kami spirits and opposed to the worldly space inhabited by human beings".

or “heart” which, like the rural agricultural regions, represent a pre-modern and in a sense pre-lapsarian condition of relative innocence and purity.<sup>4</sup>

### **Images of Place in *Enka***

*Furusato* — One of the most prominent locations in *enka* music and accompanying visual images, *furusato* or hometown is, as Christine Yano argues, as much a psychological as discreet physical location. On the one hand the seat of unique local identity as expressed through dialect, special regional cuisine and other locally produced goods, *furusato* is also a generalised category embedded in the collective conscience of the Japanese which is associated with a longing for an idyllic and irretrievable past, with lost innocence of childhood and, related to this, the warmth and nurturing of the mother. In the context of *enka* and karaoke, the local specificity which distinguishes one *furusato* from another is transcended by the role of *furusato* as a generalised and shared image. Everyone after all has their own *furusato* and although the particular locale may differ, the emotional and psychological response elicited by the image of *furusato* is shared. This is suggested by the many *enka* songs which bear *furusato* in their title – *Furusato o hanashiyô* (Let's talk about our hometown), *Furusato keishiki* (Hometown scenery) and *Furusato ga ii* (The hometown is good). *Furusato* has also figured prominently in political policy, such as the

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<sup>4</sup> As an historical aside, Hoare notes that during the latter part of the last century, travel to Japan's interior was severely restricted for foreign residents of the so-called treaty ports. According to this author, “The treaties limited travel, except for diplomats, to a maximum of twenty-five miles in any direction in the area around each port” (1994: 47) and although restrictions were somewhat relaxed by the late 1870s, allowing “... journeys into the interior of Japan for reasons of ‘health, scientific investigation, or urgent business’”, the Japanese government remained “adamant on not allowing unrestricted entry to the interior unless foreigners who went there were placed under Japanese jurisdiction” (ibid.: 48).

furusato development programs initiated by Prime Minister Takeshita in the late 1980s. Furusato has also been the object of rampant commercialisation –as potential tourist destinations and sources of local speciality goods– through the exoticising of rural locations close to home (Yano 1994). While on the one hand emphasising regional distinctiveness, the promotion of regional culture also implies a generalised definition of furusato as places which share in common a set of distinctive traditions, festivals, sights, and locally produced consumer products.

Within the context of *enka*, *furusato* is an important concept in a nativist discourse which pits the hometown and everything it symbolises against the vagaries of modernisation as represented by life in the city. This is generally depicted in both song lyrics and accompanying visual images as a return, usually by train, to furusato. The song “Furusato ga ii” (the hometown is good) for example is illustrated with images depicting first a work-weary company employee in his urban milieu –in one shot, standing alone in the summer heat on an empty city street dwarfed by the surrounding multi-story office buildings and in another, bowing low to his superior in the office– followed by a glimpse of the back of a train in route to furusato which is portrayed through highly idealised shots of small-scale rice farming, orange sunsets behind silhouettes of mature rice stalks, snow-covered thatched houses, fishing villages and the like.

*Misaki* (cape) — Usually depicted in karaoke videos as a steep promontory perched high above rugged coast, *misaki* generally implies a Sea of Japan or perhaps a northern Pacific coast location. A sad, lonely and windswept place,<sup>5</sup> *misaki* is widely perceived to be a place where women go to commit suicide, particularly after a disappointment in love. Images of *misaki* in karaoke visuals typically portray a forlorn woman – always in traditional dress (kimono) perched on the edge of the cape’s

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<sup>5</sup> As suggested by the *enka* song *kaze misaki* (lit. wind cape), released in March, 1996.

cliff, gazing out towards the sea. Although the exact origins of this image are difficult to pin down, it is one which can almost certainly be traced in art and literature, appearing for example in the paintings of Taisho artist Takehisa Yumeiji. An example of an image which can be said to resonate in the Japanese collective memory, *misaki* was described by university-aged students<sup>6</sup> in the following terms: lady standing and looking out to sea, windy, very quiet, famous place for suicide, blue, lonely, sad, very far from here (=Osaka), lighthouse and dark. Not surprisingly given their geographical location, *misaki* are often associated with lighthouses and, by extension, with *furusato*, as in the song entitled, *furusato no tôdai*.

*minato* (port) — Port towns in both *enka* and other artistic/ expressive forms signify both separation and contact with the outside. They are lonely places and quiet, except for the sounds of squawking seagulls, the whistles of ships and the sea. As one university student asked to describe their impressions of *minato* commented, “I feel calm there, but if I go there by myself, I will feel kind of sad”. Other student descriptions included, “lonely”, “dark”, “the place to be apart”, “wide”, “quiet”, “blue”, “sad” and “nostalgic”. In *enka* visuals, common images of *minato* include the parting of a ship, connoting separation and a lonely woman with eyes cast out towards the sea, sometimes watching the departing vessel. *Minato* can be located on either the Sea of Japan or Pacific coast, but whereas the former tend to be depicted in traditional guises –rugged, rural windswept location with a woman in traditional kimono for example, the latter are portrayed in modern terms– the woman in western dress, the

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<sup>6</sup> About one hundred students from several universities with which I was associated prior to and during the period of fieldwork were asked in a word-association exercise to give their spontaneous impressions to half a dozen different words, all of them prominent images in *enka*. Although I did not explain either why these words were chosen or the nature of my research until after the exercise, a number of those surveyed made the connection with *enka*.

setting more likely a large, modern, urban port. Among the most significant of port cities in Japan are Yokohama near Tokyo, Kobe further west and Nagasaki on the southern island of Kyuushu, all of which were historically significant as points of contact with the world beyond Japan and points of entry for foreign culture and thus indirectly for the forces of modernisation and change.<sup>7</sup> Minato commonly appear in both *enka* lyrics and song titles, such as Minato-machi (port town), which is a pilgrimage to several minato including Kochi and Takamatsu on the island of Shikoku, Hakkodate on the northern island of Hokkaido, Beppu and Nagasaki, both on the southern-most island of Kyuushu. Here, minato, like furusato, serves as a unifying concept for a diversity of locations which in this case, are unified by their physical and symbolic status as ports.

*Kitaguni* — literally north country, *kita-guni* is a general tag for regions stretching from the northwest Sea of Japan coast up into Hokkaido. Rural country renowned for its snowfall in winter, it is sometimes referred to in *enka* as *yuki-guni* (snow country), also the title of a novel by Nobel Prize winning writer Kawabata which is set in the region. Kitaguni also suggests furusato and this seems to be at least in part linked to the specific patterns of migration from towns and villages north of Tokyo into the city, especially between the 1920s and 1930s, but also en masse during the 1950s and 1960s. Urban-based companies and factories tended to recruit employees from rural educational institutions with which they had developed links, resulting in the employment of thousands of junior high school graduates who arrived by the busload to take up their urban employment. Every major urban centre had its particular catchment area for

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<sup>7</sup> J. E. Hoare notes that of the first seven foreign settlements and trading posts established in Japan by 1870, "... only those at Nagasaki, Yokohama and Kobe thrived; the other four were all more or less failures" (1994: 18). This may account, at least in part, for the strong association between the foreign and these three locations, as well as their prominence in *enka* lyrics and accompanying visuals.

recruiting, generally encompassing adjacent rural prefectures. However, the scale of migration from the prefectures north of Tokyo into the capital city was such that kitaguni has come to represent the notion of hometown for all Japanese. It is, in a sense, the nation's symbolic hometown – rural, peaceful, agricultural, traditional and the actual hometown area for a disproportionate number of Tokyoites.<sup>8</sup>

The Tohoku region, along the northwest Sea of Japan coast which is probably depicted in *enka* more than any other rural region not only epitomises kitaguni, but has become almost synonymous with the concept of *furusato* in the popular imagination. This is almost certainly related to specific patterns of migration between Tohoku and the Tokyo region which date to at least the Tokugawa period when the region served as a source for young prostitutes – usually the daughters of farmers sold by their families – for the pleasure quarters of Tokyo. According to one Japanese academic, perceptions of people from Tohoku as industrious and conscientious commonly held by employers who looked to the region as a preferred source of labour can be historically traced the reputation acquired by women imported as prostitutes for uncomplaining perseverance (*gaman* in Japanese).<sup>9</sup>

Hokkaido, Japan's largest and northern-most prefecture, is something of a last frontier. Rural, expansive, and until the completion of an undersea tunnel in 1988, accessible from the mainland only by ship or plane, Hokkaido is home to several state parks, dozens of natural onsen (hot springs), and high quality agricultural products, especially milk, cheeses and

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<sup>8</sup> In his article on *enka* singer Misora Hibari, Alan Tansman writes that, "In the public mind, Hibari always remained the child who sang for the trainloads of junior high school graduates in the early 1950s, arriving at Ueno station in Tokyo from the hinterlands of Aomori, sacks of apples on their backs, to begin working at small factories and stores" (1996: 124).

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Akira Deguchi, personal communication.

other dairy foods. It is a popular Japanese tourist destination in both summer and especially in winter, when its attractions include some of Japan's best ski resorts and annual snow and ice festivals. Perhaps more than any other location in Japan, Hokkaido provides an alternative to modern urban life as has been dramatised in a popular television drama in the 1980s exploring the trials and tribulations of a single man and his two children who abandon their lives in Tokyo and embark on a Waldenesque adventure to Hokkaido, building a farmhouse and living off the land. As this suggests, in comparison to *kitaguni* in reference to the northern reaches of Honshu, Japan's main island, which, like *furusato*, symbolises an idealised, rural agricultural past, Hokkaido is a more natural, rugged and less "cultivated" landscape which exists on the margins, if not outside the bounds of society. This sublime aspect of Hokkaido is most poignantly symbolised in both *enka* and accompanying karaoke visuals with the image of *ryûhyoô* or ice flow, referring to the breaking up of the frozen sea off the northern coast of Hokkaido every spring.

*Sakaba* — literally "drinking place", *sakaba* encompasses a variety of bars, pubs, and *nomiya* (drinking houses) which are the setting for much of Japan's night life and a major location for and subject of *enka* songs such as *sakaba*, *sakaba gawa*, *sakaba no hana*, *sakaba hitori* and *kita no sakaba* among others. Although *sakaba* are usually (but not always) depicted in *enka* visuals as quiet places where lonely hearts can retreat to drown their troubles —an aspect of these places which is much emphasised in the world of *enka*— this is not entirely consistent with general perceptions of *sakaba* as crowded, bustling, happy places. University students asked to give their off-the-cuff responses to "sakaba" described them as "dark", "noisy", "crowded", "warm", "drunken", "boisterous", "pleasurable", "narrow", "chaotic", and "smoky" places where "people gather together". The dichotomy in perceptions of *sakaba* hints at their dual role in Japanese society, as both venues for gathering with colleagues and friends



in order to relax, drink, socialise and have a good time, but also as watering holes into which the solitary salaryman can disappear en route from the workplace to the home in order to relax and unwind in a friendly and familiar atmosphere. Responsibility for establishing and maintaining the proper ambience rests with the *mama-san* whose job it is to make her mostly male customers feel at home.

In either case, *sakaba* is associated with concerns of the heart –with the realm of *ninjo* as opposed to that of *giri* (the workplace or family), with *honne* (true feelings), rather than *tatemae* (the outward social mask)– and this at least in part accounts for its prominence in *enka*. Consistent with *enka*'s role in the mediation of a discourse on modernisation, both modern and traditional *sakaba* are portrayed in karaoke visuals, depending on the particular setting and theme of the song.

## Precursors

Many of the standard images in *enka*, including *misaki*, *furusato* and *minato* for example, have been used in popular song since at least the late Meiji/early Taisho period, as the images of artist Takehisa Yumeji, who both illustrated and penned the lyrics to *enka* songs from the period, suggest. Such symbolism is also reflected in the literature of the Meiji and Taisho periods as has already been noted in the title and imagery of Kawabata Yasunari's novel *Snow Country* (1992), in Tanizaki's fascination with the women of Osaka and in the "... increased focus on women of the demimonde..." which Suzuki Tani claims was typical of the Meiji "I" novel and which persists as a central motif in the world of *enka*, and finally, in a general nostalgia for the past in the midst of the rapid modernisation and monumental transformations of Japanese society during the Meiji period as typified by writers such as Nagai Kafu whose commentary was fuelled by "... his lyrical lamentation and sense of nostalgia for

a lost past, particularly for the dying culture of Edo” (Suzuki 1996:136). In the case of writer Shiga Naoya, this sense of loss in the face of change has been explored through the concept of *furusato* which Steven Dodd suggests represents “... a settled place, ... a site of authentic unmediated experience compared to the far more problematic, fractured and uncertain experience of everyday modern life.” (Dodd 1994: 2)

As these examples at least suggest, although *enka*, as a genre of song, is specific to a particular generation in contemporary Japan –primarily those of middle age or older– the symbolic imagery, which has been incorporated into the genre since at least the Taisho period, is not. The prevalence of these images in other forms of cultural expression –art, literature, and cinema for example– seem to confirm Dan Sperber’s observation that “... symbolism does not have its own signals; it uses as signals signs already established elsewhere” (Sperber 1975: 5).

Such contrasts of imagery constitute a nativist discourse which attempts to articulate a sense of pure or real Japaneseness through an association with places and sentiments perceived to constitute an essential Japanese identity and which can be distinguished from others shaped by the multifarious influences from outside which have become amalgamated into modern Japanese life. This discourse is mediated by a series of oppositions which contrast present, modern, industrialised Japan as represented by its cosmopolitan and economically vibrant cities along the Pacific corridor with rural locations along the sparsely populated Sea of Japan coast, in the rural north, or in the mountainous interior which, immutable, cloaked in tradition and unchanging, represents an idealised past invoked as symbolic of an essential and enduring Japanese identity. It is this aspect of *enka* as much as the sentiments expressed in its lyrics and music, which have led to the genre being dubbed as expressive of the Japanese heart (*nihonjin no kokoro*).

As Peter Nosco demonstrates in his book, *Nativism and*

*Nostalgia in Eighteenth Century Japan*, this notion of the “Japanese heart” as the embodiment of Japanese identity and the process of looking to the past to discover its essence are not unique to either contemporary Japanese society or the musical genre of *enka*. Noting that “Asian thought has traditionally located the idealised condition in the past, and it is specifically this ‘looking back’... that is meant by the term nostalgia”, Nosco suggests that the “tradition of longing for the past and attributing to it desirable qualities perceived to be associate with one’s own times was so prevalent during the medieval period (1185-1600) of Japanese history that it became, during those centuries, a virtual literary conceit” (1990: 4). Whereas, in the context of *enka*, this idealised past serves as a repository for a sense of Japanese identity which is articulated in contradistinction to forces of modernisation associated with the influence of Western contact, particularly during the Meiji restoration at the end of the nineteenth century and the post-war restructuring in the twentieth century, Nosco suggests that in eighteenth century nativist discourse, Japanese identity was formulated in opposition to modernising forces associated with China which was castigated as a “repository of wickedness”.

Whereas Mabuchi’s nativism is articulated in response to Japan’s extended contact with and borrowing from China, Karatani Kojin emphasises Japan’s encounter with Europe and North America during the last century as the impetus for the formulation of a distinct identity, “...it is precisely in the nineteenth century that spirit comes to be attached to ‘community’. In Japan, too, moreover, it is the nineteenth century that one begins to speak of ‘Japanese spirit’” (1989: 267). This concern with the notion of “Japanese heart” or “Japanese spirit” has also persisted with various intensity throughout the twentieth century which has been, with the possible exception of the decade or so leading up to the second world war, an era of continuous and unabated modernisation. In contemporary Japan, which Lebra has recently

suggested is “... confronted with a historically unparalleled situation: unrestricted access to constantly changing up-to-date information and expanding foreign contact” the Japanese “... react by searching for fixed, ‘timeless’ roots of their ‘indigenous’ identity” (1993a: 12). A recurrent theme in Japanese history as Mabuchi suggests, it is one that underlies *nihonjinron* discourses (see Dale 1995, Mouer and Sugimoto 1986, Yoshino 1992) which have become the focus of so much academic attention. The premise of much of what passes as *nihonjinron* theorising is, as the term suggests, a belief in and desire to articulate what it is that distinguishes Japan and the Japanese. In both academic discussion and particularly in the many popular varieties of this discourse, explanations appeal to some notion of an essential, Japanese essence –Japanese heart or Japanese spirit– which has its origins in a dim and distant, even mythological past.<sup>10</sup> It is a tendency which, as these commentators suggest, is more pronounced in response to eras of intensive contact with and influence from the outside, confirming Edward Shils’ (1981) suggestion that “... the more sweeping and radical a change is, the more likely it is to invoke the past, tradition, and continuity” (quoted in Lebra 1993a: 12). As Tetsuo Najita explains,

For Japanese, self-knowledge, derived from a prelapsarian encounter with the gods and the land they created, always forced a difference between the plenitude of being and otherness, whether the other was China or the West (1989: 9).

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<sup>10</sup> The appeal to a rural agricultural heritage as an explanation for things contemporary in Japan is one of the more prevalent forms of this tendency which has even manifested itself in popular explanations of karaoke. One example, which appeared in one of the many popular weekly and monthly magazines, linked karaoke’s popularity with a Japanese propensity for holding a microphone, which, it was suggested, served as a surrogate for holding a plow. One of the more outlandish examples of this genre of explanation, it seems to imply a cultural addiction to holding something plow handle/micriphone shaped in the hand, analogous to the former smoker’s need for something to hold as a surrogate to the cigarettes they’ve given up.

As is suggested in both *enka* and the visual images which illustrate it in karaoke, this retreat into a mythological or prelapsarian past as the fount of “self-knowledge” and group identity is synonymous with a retreat into the interior (both geographical and metaphorical) or as Tanizaki (1991) suggests in his famous treatise on Japanese aesthetics, into the shadows. Confronted with the irreparable and irreversible effects of modernisation as represented for example by the importation and incorporation of technologies and aesthetic principles from abroad, Tanizaki suggested to his Japanese readers that “... we should by self-consciously identifying with culture as an internalised space of resistance”, urging a strategic cultural “retreat into the interior spheres of ‘dimness’, ‘shadows’, and the ‘stillness’ of dark places...” (quoted from Najita 1989: 12). Perhaps it is just such a retreat which is represented by the predominant locations in *enka* and its accompanying karaoke visuals – the fishing ports and rugged capes along the Sea of Japan coast or dark side, the dimly lit drinking places in which the lonely or broken heart salves its wounds, the misty mountain valley of Kitajima Saburo’s *Tani* (valley), the rural outposts of Japan’s north country, blanketed in snow, and the enduring image of *furusato*, perhaps the most potent symbol of both individual and collective origins and one which, as already mentioned, permeates the nation’s popular and political culture.<sup>11</sup> Laden with emotional significance, these dark and interior locations also symbolise the collective *kimochi* or feeling of the Japanese – the Japanese heart.

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<sup>11</sup> The *furusato* movement initiated by former Prime Minister Noboru Takeshita is an example of the latter, whereas the recycling of the same storyline played out in different regional localities in the Torah-san series and the numerous television programmes either directly about or alluding to the character and products of different *furusato* are examples of the former.

## **Karaoke machine technologies and the categorization of images illustrating *Enka***

### *Development of karaoke technology*

In order to understand how visual images illustrating *enka* songs in the context of karaoke singing are organized and presented for consumption, it is helpful to briefly examine at least the early development of karaoke-related technology and the evolution of the karaoke machine. Karaoke-singing, which involves singing along (i.e. providing the vocals) to technologically mediated musical accompaniment, first appeared in the urban drinking and entertainment districts of the Kansai region (encompassing Osaka, Kyoto and Kobe) of Western Japan in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Although it is difficult to identify its precise origins since there are several, apparently independent accounts of sing-along contraptions being developed in Kansai at about the same time. Between 1971 and 1976, several companies, including Nikkodo, an Osaka-based karaoke manufacturer and wholesaler within which I conducted ethnographic research in the early to mid-1990s, produced and brought to market various sing-along devices, including the so-called mini-juke (short for miniature juke boxes), which was, essentially, a jukebox adapted for providing musical accompaniment. Reconstructions of karaoke's subsequent history have been divided into three 'booms'. During karaoke's first boom, lasting roughly between 1976 and 1982, the spread of the phenomenon was more-or-less confined to the drinking establishments of Japan's urban amusement quarters where it became associated with the "after-hours" leisure of the Japanese salaryman. Karaoke systems continued to combine eight-track audio recordings (software) with a player, microphone mixer, echo function, and speakers (the hardware), although in 1978, a component which graded the pitch, tempo and rhythm of singing on a scale of one hundred was added becoming a prevalent feature of karaoke systems (Mitsui 1995: 222). At

the same time, the variety and quantity of software rapidly expanded, resulting in much greater selection of both old and new songs, thus further fueling karaoke's growing popularity. As for song lyrics, throughout the 1970s and first years of the 1980s, these continued to be provided on photocopied sheets of paper protected in plastic sleeves and bound together in a vinyl folder of some sort. It was not until 1980 that video pictures were first introduced as VTR karaoke by Toei video, although it was several more years before this technology became the standard nation-wide.<sup>12</sup>

The second karaoke boom was launched when stereo component maker, Pioneer, introduced laser disk (LD) karaoke in October, 1982. These were either 20-centimeter or 30-centimeter high volume disks on which songs were encoded. The following year, Victor and Matsushita electronics introduced VHD karaoke which utilised laser disks upon which the information for a visual programme, including song lyrics, were superimposed. Whereas the first laser disks, without video programmes, held 28 songs (14 on each side), VHDs initially stored 24 songs, although this eventually increased to 28 songs as well. Disks were at first manually inserted into machines, usually by the establishment's proprietor, and the appropriate song code entered, selecting the requested song almost instantaneously, similar to the way in which standard music compact disks are played today. VHD karaoke, which became synonymous with and usually referred to as LD karaoke since almost all laser disk software produced eventually incorporated both audio and visual programmes with song lyrics, quickly became the industry standard. Not surprisingly, 1983 was also the year in which eight-track karaoke peaked, after which it was rapidly displaced by the new

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<sup>12</sup> The karaoke bar "Pub Friendmake" which I visited occasionally between 1987 and 1989, while living and working in Izumo City in rural Shimane Prefecture, continued to provide song lyrics in this way, even presenting me with a folder of songs as a "sayonara" gift when I returned to the United States.

technologies.

Between the displacement of one system with the other, there was however a brief period of overall decline in the popularity of karaoke, a possible indication that the novelty of the sing-along trend was beginning to wane. This was perhaps due in part to the inconvenience of audio karaoke systems which did not facilitate instant song selection, requiring time to cue tapes to the beginning of requested songs and relying on index cards or sheet music to provide customers with the lyrics to songs. With the development of laser disk, video disk and, in 1984, compact disk karaoke systems, these shortcomings were alleviated and the market for karaoke enjoyed rapid growth. Other significant technological innovations of the early and mid nineteen eighties included Pioneer's introduction of laser karaoke system with autochanger which automatically selected and changed (20 cm.) disks, thus further simplifying karaoke's operation. In 1985 Pioneer developed a laser karaoke system for the home market and the following year, a version of a laser disk system with autochanger for 30 cm. disks onto the commercial market.

Karaoke's third boom was marked by two technological innovations. One was the development and spread of the karaoke box which was first commercially marketed in 1988<sup>13</sup> and the other was the development of the *tsuuhins* karaoke system developed in the 1990s. The late 1980s and early 1990s was also the era of karaoke's expansion overseas, primarily in Southeast Asia, but in Europe and North America as well. Pioneer for example opened a software production facility in the United Kingdom in early 1991 in order to establish and better serve the European market and produced software in German,

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<sup>13</sup> According to Pioneer's 1994 *White Paper on Karaoke*, two significant events in the evolution of the karaoke box occurred in this year: (1) Pioneer developed an indoor karaoke box which was installed in bowling alleys and at game centres; and (2) an Okayama businessman converted rail cargo containers laying dormant in an empty lot of land into karaoke rooms.



French, Dutch, Italian and Spanish the following year. The company also experimented with the marketing of the karaoke box outside of East and Southeast Asia where it was already proving successful, opening a branch of its “Star Factory” first in Honolulu (December, 1992), where there is a large population of native Japanese, as well as Japanese-Americans, and later in Los Angeles and Barcelona Spain (both June, 1994). In the case of Nikkodo, offices were opened in Hong Kong in 1989, in Korea in 1990 and in London in 1991 and the company’s U.S. offices, first established in 1985, were expanded.

Several significant technological innovations and events occurred during this period. In September, 1992, karaoke maker Taito began a service using ISDN or *tsuushin* technology. Soon after, another company, Ekushingu, introduced its version of *tsuushin* karaoke, marketed under the label, Joysound. Several other companies followed suit – Kiga Networks in 1993, Daiichi Kosho introduced its system, DAM, in March of 1994, Ukara was introduced onto the market by Osaka-based company Usen in July of the same year and finally, BMAX, a *tsuushin* karaoke system jointly developed by Pioneer, Nikkodo, JHC and Toei video, appeared on the market in February, 1995.

*Production of visual images illustrating songs and matching of audio and visual in karaoke*

In the case of Nikkodo, the company within which I conducted ethnographic research in the 1990s, the production of video images is contracted out to a company in Tokyo which assembles the “actors”, “actresses”, camera and technical team together, decides on the appropriate location, props and costume, and choreographs the scene – a woman in traditional kimono walking along the quay in a rural fishing village, a Tokyo businessman returning to his hometown, or a young woman drinking alone in a Nagasaki bar. As has been suggested throughout the discussion of music, the images created are symbolic, reflecting conceptual

categories which resonate in the collective memory or collective conscience of many Japanese.

Based on a content analysis of karaoke visuals produced by Nikkodo for both its laser disk and BMAX *tsûshin* karaoke systems, this section examines several issues relevant to an interpretation of visual symbolism. The first relates to technological developments in the karaoke systems. Prior to the development of *tsûshin* karaoke systems, there was a one-to-one correspondence between songs and the visuals which illustrated them. In other words, for each song produced in karaoke format, there would have been a video program specially choreographed and filmed to correspond with the genre, themes, and specific lyrics of a particular song. In the case of laser disc karaoke, the dominant format from the decade beginning in the mid-1980s, the song recording and video program were carefully matched together and then superimposed or “pressed” onto the same disk. Although there was still a high degree of patterning and repetition of images within a song genre such as *enka*, the production process allowed for a degree of specificity between visuals and the song illustrated.

In the case of *tsûshin* karaoke systems, songs are transmitted from a central computer database to compatible karaoke machines in clubs, pubs and karaoke boxes across Japan where they are stored in the unit’s memory and transformed into song via the machine’s synthesiser. As the great virtue of this system, at least from the viewpoint of the young consumer, is its ability to deliver the latest popular songs in karaoke format quickly, ideally while they are still current in the music charts, the problem of matching song and visuals has been solved in an entirely different way.

One distinguishing characteristic of *tsûshin* karaoke systems was their ability to accommodate far more songs than their predecessor systems –more than 10,000 as compared to the 4,000-5,000 typical of the standard LD system– which makes

the production of a separate video program for each much more problematic. Instead, *tsûshin* systems are equipped with a component which houses a series of compact discs on which are encoded a limited number of visual programs which are organised into categories constructed to encompass all of the possible permutations of song genre and theme. Within each category or series, several sub groupings which are roughly variations on a theme –nature (*shizen*) for example– are listed and within each of these, there are four or five visual programmes which are virtually interchangeable and are randomly chosen with each corresponding song selection. In other words, for any song selection made, there are several matching video programs, one of which will be selected. Thus each time the song is chosen, a video programme from the same sub-grouping is randomly selected so that the same song is unlikely to be illustrated by exactly the same visuals in consecutive playings. Of course, after being selected several times, the visual programmess will start to repeat as there are only a handful from which to choose in any subgroup. Songs are tagged with an electronic code, indicating the subgroup from which a visual program is to be selected.<sup>14</sup>

Aside from cleverly solving the industry’s problem of matching each of so many thousands of songs with an appropriate visual program in an efficient and cost-effective way, the *tsûshin* system has provided a framework of what might be thought of as indigenous categories (in as much as the karaoke industry’s classification of images can be considered indigenous) and thus a great aid in making anthropological sense of the symbolism of karaoke visuals. Several features of Nikkodo’s MXV-Series of

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<sup>14</sup> Examples of subgroupings into which visual images for karaoke songs are categorized include, “woman (Japanese dress), sea, *misaki, minato*” in Series 7; “nature, landscape, winter, north country, snow, iceflow” in Series 6 or “man, drinking place (*izakaya*)” in Series 8. Nikkodo’s BMAX *tsûshin* karaoke system included more than eighty subgroupings of images, organized roughly thematically into eighteen different series.

BackGrandVisual (BGV)<sup>15</sup> merit comment. Although there are a variety of categories designed to encompass every possible karaoke song, most are organised in terms of gender, place, nature or seasonality, and to a lesser extent, song genre. Of the eighty-one subgroups listed, twelve have as a primary term of classification “woman”, nine “man”, one “man and woman” and one “couple” (fuufu), eight “foreign country” (one of which is specific to Korea, one to China, and the others primarily “the West” –usually the United States– although this is not specified in the classification terminology) and ten discreet locations within Japan, nine roughly according to nature or seasonality including two “summer”, three “winter”, three “nature” and one “rain” and roughly ten according to song classification – six *minyô* (folk song), one *gunka* (military song), one *natsumelo* (lit. nostalgic melody), one “children’s songs”, one “folk” or folk songs and one “dance”, presumably referring to dance music. Remaining categories of images include *matsuri* (festival), *kekkon* (marriage), *nanayomeishyô* (bridal dress), *anime* (animation), *komikku* (comics), and a variety of groupings with headings such as “drama, up tempo, happy” and its five other possible permutations (drama, medium tempo, happy; drama up tempo, unhappy, etc.), “image, up tempo, man” and its five other possible variations (image, medium tempo, man; image, slow tempo, woman, etc.) and two categories labelled “abstract image, up tempo” and “abstract image, slow tempo”. Although I was not able to discover how these groupings were arrived at, they presumably represent the fewest categories of images deemed necessary to adequately illustrate the full range of songs and song genres available in karaoke.

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<sup>15</sup> The full name of the product line is Alpha Vision BackGrandVisual MXV-Series, which, like so much of Japanese advertising and product nomenclature, is written in English (with the exception of alpha, which is rendered with the Greek letter). I assume that BackGrandVisual is a misprint of Background Visual, although it is possibly an invented label which incorporated “grand” as a wordplay.

Although the list is somewhat self-explanatory in light of the previous discussion of karaoke music, several general patterns relevant to the matching of karaoke visuals and song warrant further comment. As regards the significance of location, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a much greater specificity in the images used for Japanese as compared with foreign locations. Categories listed under the primary heading of “foreign country” are differentiated according to the following sub-headings: “up tempo, sea”, “up tempo, city”, “slow tempo, sea”, “slow tempo, city”, “love story”, “nature, landscape” and “Korea”. Aside from the last, which is specific to Korean songs, “foreign country” implies images of “the West”. Although the six sub groupings insure some degree of relevance between English language songs and visuals, the matching is relatively non-specific. Thus, “I Left my Heart in San Francisco” might be accompanied by video footage of New York<sup>16</sup> or inversely, Frank Sinatra’s “New York, New York” by images of a west coast city and although a song like “Green, Green Grass of Home” would be fairly well matched with video images from the category “foreign country, nature, landscape”, it might be the dry and barren hillsides along a southern California Highway, rather than the more verdant landscape suggested in the song. In the case of Christmas songs, there are two categories of images, “winter, Christmas, kids” and “winter, Christmas, love story”, corresponding to imported Christmas songs and Japanese Christmas songs respectively.

Although the lack of specificity in the matching of foreign songs with visual images is common to both the *tsûshin* karaoke system and its predecessor systems (compact disk and laser disk), the one-to-one correspondence between song and visuals which is a feature of the latter allowed for the possibility of the

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<sup>16</sup> The sequence of images for this song were roughly as follows: City streets at sunset >> taxis in traffic >> scenes of buildings (sky-scrapers) >> man playing saxophone in front of shop >> houses along street with Empire State building in background (confirming that this is New York) >> boy with mother in parked car >> streets at sunset.

production of visuals specifically for a particular song.<sup>17</sup> Despite differences pertaining to the matching of song with images on different karaoke systems, visuals for foreign, English-language songs tend to be much less specific to the themes and locations signified in song lyrics than is the case with visual images to Japanese song. This is suggested in the sub-groupings for images of locations within Japan which are much more specific in the locations they identify – the city of Sapporo on the northern island of Hokkaido, Yokohama, Nagasaki and Kyoto. Sub groupings for Osaka include “Osaka/ Naniwa”, “Osaka North” (*kita*) and “Osaka South” (*minami*) – the latter two referring to the city’s main entertainment districts. In the case of Tokyo, “Tokyo Akasaka”, “Tokyo Ginza” and “Tokyo Shinjuku” are likewise all major amusement quarters or *sakariba* in Japanese. Named locations are also depicted in the visuals for Japanese folk-songs which, as David Hughes has pointed out, tend to be specific to a particular locality or hometown. Categorized according to the terms folk song (*minyô*), hometown (*furusato*), landscape, followed by place name, sub groupings for this genre are specific to region. On Japan’s main island (Honshû), areas depicted include Tohoku in the Northeast which is representative of the notions of *kitaguni* and *yukiguni* which permeate *enka* song lyrics and, as already suggested, epitomises more than any other region in Japan the concept of *furusato*, Kanto, which refers to the greater Tokyo area and Koshinetsu, an archaic name for the area encompassing Nagano and Niigata prefectures.<sup>18</sup> The other three of Japan’s four

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<sup>17</sup> One example is the visual program for the song “Somewhere Over the Rainbow” (from the film, *The Wizard of Oz*), which proceeds as follows: opening shot a close-up of a child’s color drawing of a rainbow >> cut to blond-haired, blue-eyed little girl in a dress drawing in a park (possibly in southern California judging from the background scenery and palm trees in the park) >> enter clown who entertains girl with various magic tricks >> girl laughing >>. two playing happily together >> exit clown who magically disappears behind palm tree >> smiling girl >> final cut to drawing of rainbow again >> end.

<sup>18</sup> Nagano prefecture, which lies in central Honshu, at the island’s interior, encompasses much of the Japan Alps. Niigata prefecture is situated along the Sea of Japan, on the

main islands –Hokkaido in the north, Shikoku and Kyuushu– are also represented in subgroups of visual images for folk songs, as is Okinawa, a semi-tropical island at the southern reaches of the Japanese archipelago. This specificity of location is also expressed in subgroups labelled with the images of symbolic places already discussed – *sakaba* (drinking place), *minato* (port or harbour), *misaki* (cape), *kai* (sea), *eki* (station)<sup>19</sup> and others. In summarising the categorisation of visual images of place, it is clear that the specificity of place is greater for *enka* and related genres or popular song than it is for Japanese new music and popsu, with the visuals illustrating foreign, imported songs expressing the least specificity.

### **Music and Modernisation: A Comparative Perspective**

Although *enka* serves as an idiom for the expression of a Japanese collective identity or the Japanese heart as it is usually put, it is thematically consistent with popular musical genres of urban migrant populations in other complex societies. A most striking illustration of this is provided by Martin Stokes in his account of Arabesk (1992). Like *enka*, Arabesk is a popular genre of Turkish music which the author describes as “... an essentially new music whose creation must be seen in terms of the technology and organisation of the recording industry in Turkey, and whose consumption must be understood in the context of a society undergoing rapid urbanisation, industrialisation, and absorption into world economic systems.” As with *enka*, “The implicit background of the arabesk drama is labour migration, *gurbet*...” and song lyrics “concentrate... upon the state of loneliness and sadness brought about by the state of being in *gurbet*...” (Stokes 1992: 143).

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northwest coast of Honshuu, almost opposite the Kanto area (see map, Appendix A).

<sup>19</sup> Like *minato* (port), *eki* (station) is a place which symbolises departure and separation (*wakare*) and is another prominent symbol in *enka* lyrics.

Not surprisingly, the themes which pervade arabesk parallel those of *enka*, encompassing disappointment, sorrow, frustration, yearning, longing, melancholy and desire (ibid.). This sentiment is conveyed through many of the same idioms and images which typify *enka* lyrics and Stokes notes that song texts focus “a dense cluster of themes connected with the arabesk drama: *gurbet* (living alone as a stranger or foreigner, particularly a worker), *yalnizlik* (loneliness), *hicran*, *husran* and *ozlem* (sadness and yearning), *gozyaslari* (tears), *sarhosluk* (drunkenness), *zulm* (oppression)... *kadar* (fate).” (ibid.: 142). Like *enka*, arabesk might be described as ‘wet’, with tears and alcohol figuring prominently in song lyrics. According to Stokes, “tears pervade arabesk lyrics” and alcohol serves “as a refuge and consolation, its consumption an act of simultaneous self-gratification and self-destruction” (ibid.: 148). “The resort to alcohol” the author explains “is seen as an image of the passive acceptance of fate, a decision to evade responsibility and not make an active stand against the way things are.” (ibid.: 149). A central motif in *enka* lyrics as well, this resignation to ‘fate’, an idiom for the social and economic forces against which the individual perceives themselves to be powerless, is similarly expressed as a retreat to alcohol as a source of comfort and escape. In the context of karaoke, this is commonly depicted in the videos which accompany *enka* songs with images of a man or woman alone in a bar or other drinking place looking sad and forlorn and cradling a glass of sake (Japanese rice wine), whisky, brandy or other spirit as the printed song lyrics pass across the bottom of the screen, hinting at the source of despair.

This tendency towards the expression of resignation in the face of modernisation which characterises both genres also forms a common basis for criticism. In the case of arabesk, detractors take issue with the genre’s “message of passivity”, claiming that “arabesk not only numbs the critical faculties but deadens a sense of political awareness and responsibility by blaming everything on fate” (ibid.: 152), while others suggest



that “the result of arabesk is to drive those who listen to it to despondency and alcohol” (ibid.: 148). Similar claims have been levelled at *enka* which has been characterised as “pessimistic” as opposed to the more optimistic popular music of the younger generation. Early criticisms of karaoke as a social ill and pastime of a generation of lost souls, during the time when it was largely confined to the realm of “after hours” socialising in the context of urban drinking spots, reflect its association with the drunken singing of *enka* by mostly middle-aged company employees taking refuge in drink and memories of an idealised past.

Although the striking similarities between *enka* and arabesk may reflect features of the music of urban migrant populations in response to processes of industrialisation and modernisation which are generalised, there are historical and sociological parallels between these two cases which should be mentioned. As Karl Signell points out in his discussion of the modernisation process in Turkish and Japanese music cultures, “Under the threat of European domination, the rulers of both Turkey and Japan undertook a conscious, large-scale adoption of their enemy’s culture”, noting that before these periods –late nineteenth/early twentieth century in Japan, 1920s and 1930s in Turkey– “both societies could be considered Oriental, especially in music” (1976: 72). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), the Turkish leader who “abruptly stepped up the pace of modernisation and Europeanisation” (ibid.: 76) after wresting political control of the country in the early 1920s, called for a “‘new and modern Turkish music’, combining the tunes of the shepherds with the harmonies, scales, and forms of European music” (ibid.: 78). As in Japan, a national anthem, “musically cast in a purely European mold” (ibid.) was introduced in 1924, in part to symbolise Turkey’s status as part of the “civilised” world. In 1926, the traditional classical music conservatory at Istanbul was closed, replaced in the same year by The *Istanbul Belediye Konservatuari* which taught only European classical music and a number of foreign musicians –Bela Bartok and Paul Hindemith among

them— were invited to advise and consult on issues relevant to the process of musical modernisation. However, in Turkey, European music never became the basis of musical education in schools as it did in Japan which may account for its being largely confined to the realm of elitist, rather than popular culture. Nevertheless, these parallel processes of musical modernisation in combination with the large-scale urban migration which occurred in both countries must go some way to explaining the thematic and musical features shared by both arabesk and *enka* as mass-produced popular music genres. Thus, although *enka* is popularly conceived as reflecting the Japanese heart, it is perhaps more the particular idioms and images employed in *enka* lyrics which are specific to the Japanese experience —and even many of these, such as tears and alcohol, for example, are shared in common with arabesk and no doubt other analogous genres— than the emotions which they represent.

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