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Resonances of Chindon-ya: Sound, Space, and Social Difference in Contemporary Japan

By

Marié Abe

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requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Music

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor Jocelyne Guilbault, Co-chair

Professor Bonnie Wade, Co-chair

Professor Alan Tansman

Professor Gillian Hart

Fall 2010

Resonances of Chindon-ya: Sound, Space, and Social Difference in Contemporary Japan

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## Abstract

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by

Marié Abe

Doctor of Philosophy in Music

University of California, Berkeley

Professor Jocelyne Guilbault, Co-chair

Professor Bonnie Wade, Co-chair

This dissertation examines the intersection of sound, public space, and social difference in contemporary Japanese urban life through ethnographic analysis of a Japanese street musical practice called *chindon-ya*. Chindon-ya, which dates back to the 1850s, refers to groups of outlandishly costumed street musicians in Japan who are hired to advertise an employer's business. After decades of inactivity, chindon-ya has been undergoing a resurgence since the early 1990s. Despite being labeled as anachronistic and obscure, some chindon-ya troupes today have achieved financial success generating up to one million dollars in annual income, while chindon-ya aesthetics has been taken up by rock, jazz, and experimental musicians and refashioned into hybridized musical practices.

In the context of long-term economic downturn, growing socioeconomic gaps, and visually and sonically saturated urban streets, I ask how such an “outdated” means of advertisement has not only proven itself to be financially viable, but has also enabled widely varying sentiments, musical styles, translocal relations, forms of business enterprise, and political aspirations to articulate with one another. I analyze ethnographic observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, and archival documents I collected during fieldwork in Japan between 2006 and 2008 in order to investigate how chindon-ya has recently become reinvested and reconfigured with new meanings and possibilities.

Bridging cultural geography and anthropology of sound, I pay particular attention to the production of social space through sonic culture. The popular imaginary of chindon-ya is closely associated with neighborhood streets, everyday soundscape, and the notion of “*taishû*” – the popular mass, or the public. When the neighborhood streets are increasingly regulated, privatized, and developed, and when “*taishû*” is fragmented through the recession era, what kinds of understanding of space and “public” emerge from chindon-ya today as they resonate with the shifting geographies of urban modernity?

By extension, through this investigation, I raise what Stuart Hall calls the multicultural question in Japan by asking who constitutes the listening public as imagined by chindon-ya practitioners. I posit that listening to chindon-ya's sounds challenges the commonsense notion of Japanese public space as anonymous, transparent, and

homogeneous. Rather, the performative tactics of chindon-ya highlight issues that are otherwise silenced by the official discourse of Japan as a monoethnic nation: the Japanese colonial histories; the presence of “ethnic minorities”; and political struggles between the island of Okinawa, mainland Japan, and the US military. These analyses in turn shed light on how chindon-ya aesthetic has enabled emergent modalities of political expressions, based on politics of pleasure instead of politics of indignation.

Even though my multi-sited research takes place within the national border of Japan, it has a broader regional significance. My research elucidates connections, interactions, and flows between Japan and wider Pacific regions that are produced both within and beyond the national borders. In addition, the combination of my sonic-spatial analytic, based on cultural geography and anthropology of sound, and ethnographic focus on everyday practices has a significant theoretical and methodological import to other entanglements of translocal interaction.

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## NOTES ON TRANSLATION

All individuals mentioned in the dissertation are presented in the Japanese fashion: Family name first, personal name second.

I use *chindon-ya* to refer to both to the genre and the singular and plural term for a troupe and its performers.

Japanese terms commonly used (such as *kabuki*) are not italicized, and well-known place-names (such as Tokyo, Osaka) are written without diacritical markings, unless they appear in a Japanese phrase or as part of a proper name. <sup>^</sup> is used to indicate long vowels. All other Japanese terms are written with appropriate diacritical markings. Japanese words in the body of the text are italicized only on first use in the dissertation.

Unless Otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

Japanese history is conventionally divided into periods abased on dynastic names and individual imperial reigns. Where possible, I provide specific dates in Western terms, but the following era names are also used:

Tokugawa period 1603-1868

Meiji period 1868-1912

Taishō period 1912-1925

Shōwa period 1926-1989

Heisei period 1989 to the present

## CHAPTER 1

### LISTENING TO CHINDON-YA'S RESONANCE

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How might it help us to imagine auditory cultures as historical formations of distinct sensibilities, as sonic geographies of difference?  
— Steven Feld (2003: 223)

#### Introduction

In a small nightclub in Tokyo, a band called Cicala Mvta blasts out cacophonous and energetic sounds: the clarinet screams a klezmer-like melody; tuba, drums, and accordion play the intricate rhythm of a Balkan Roma tune; traditional Japanese percussion invokes music of *chindon-ya*, a troupe of outlandishly costumed street musicians hired for commercial advertisement. In another small underground venue, this time in Osaka, the rock/chindon band Soul Flower Union performs with a third-generation Korean singer accompanied by an Okinawan instrument, which evokes the island's folk sound. In a recording studio on the main island of Okinawa, far south from mainland Japan, folk musician Daiku Tetsuhiro sings an old protest song against US occupation of the island, arranged and backed by a group of improvisers from Tokyo playing chindon percussion instruments.

What is it about this particular practice of chindon-ya — a Japanese musical advertisement practice on the street—, appearing in such a variety of contexts, that incites a wide range of musical hybridization among the musicians at these disparate events? What cultural work do these musicians perform by drawing on chindon-ya in their musical practices?

These observations and questions were my starting point for this dissertation. Over the two years of fieldwork, I continued to listen to the sounds of chindon-ya in a wide variety of places: through the shopping arcades and back streets in Tokyo, on stage at an anti-US military music festival in Okinawa, in a dance circle at a summer dance festival in a predominantly Korean neighborhood of Osaka, on a couple of tracks of "Music of Japan" compilation CD distributed internationally, at London's Thames Festival. Chindon-ya's musical sounds echo at the intersections of widely varying locations, desires, relations, musical styles, and business enterprises.

This dissertation is about what I have "heard" in the musical sounds of chindon-ya at these intersections. I am interested in the sense of spatiality that emerges when tracing the sonic, material, historical, and social relations articulated through the contemporary practices of chindon-ya and chindon-inspired musicians in Japan today. Despite the relatively marginalized nature and size of the practice (compared to the hip-hop or "folk" music scenes in Japan), I posit that the renewed interest and activities in chindon-ya since the early 1990s compel us to carefully listen to the resonances of chindon-ya both materially and imaginatively, and ask what kind of cultural understanding of space such resonances elucidate and produce.

As I walked along and performed with some of the practitioners of chindon-ya and its various off-shoot musical practices, I not only heard the acoustic resonance of the

chindon-ya's musical sounds bouncing off the urban landscape, but "heard" their music doing different types of cultural work: recalling the past memories, inciting various emotional responses, and inspiring people to create connections with unexpected events, places, and sounds. I have come to understand that chindon-ya produce these social, historical, political, and affective resonances in the contemporary Japanese urban landscape.

I have arrived at this project through a series of unexpected turns of events and detours, all of which were necessary processes of reformulating and understanding the stakes and issues pertinent to chindon-ya. In the next section, by way of ethnographic anecdotes about how this project has unfolded, I introduce key issues and stakes of this project.

### **Unfolding of the Project**

I came to focus on chindon-ya and its offshoot practices in a circuitous manner. It began, although indirectly, in the summer of 2003, when I first listened to the album by an Okinawan singer Daiku Tetsuhiro called *Horaiko: Exo-Paipatirohma* (2003). It includes a wide-ranging mix of repertoire, and the lyrical themes cover everything from anti-US occupation to the Japanese assimilation policy in Okinawa, a song written by an Okinawan immigrant returning from Hawaii, and a song about Okinawan girls emigrating to Taiwan in search of jobs. These songs were creatively arranged with an unusual combination of instruments, orchestrated and performed by mainland musicians with whom Daiku collaborated.

What struck me most about this album was the new understanding of geography and difference of Okinawa it presented. Daiku's sounds conjured up the strange combination of messiness and unity that is made of somewhat related and yet disparate places and histories — Japan's colonial history of annexing Okinawa, Okinawans migrating to Hawaii and Taiwan, and the twenty-seven-year long US occupation of the island after the WWII. This album compelled me to re-conceive "Okinawa" as more than merely one of the forty-seven Japanese prefectures at the bottom left-hand corner of a map of Japan. Instead, it brought into the picture multiple, overlapping and often violent relations and histories that came to produce Okinawa as the Other that is sometimes different from "Japan" and, at other times, one and the same. Having spent almost all of my first fifteen years of my life in Tokyo, this was a striking experience.

Re-imagining Okinawa also meant re-imagining Japan. Daiku's music led me to wonder what kind of understanding of "Japan" as a place might emerge if I were to keep expanding this messy, moving, audible imaginary map criss-crossed with lines of interrelated histories and power relations that have produced and obscured difference. To elaborate these connections between sound and geography in relation to history and social relations, I needed to rethink the wider implications of assumptions about the concepts of space, place and time. How does re-thinking these things relate to the production of difference, and why does that matter? How has sound been theorized in relation to space, place, and difference?

As I did more research on Daiku's music by reading liner notes and online documentation while in the U.S., I also began to pay close attention to Japanese musicians who collaborate with him. A sense of a network emerged, one that I then found to be not only musical but also political. Some of them seemed to participate in

some form of political activism, that was often specific to their own locale. I first identified the overarching social issue connecting these locally specific struggles as related to “ethnic minorities”: i.e. the category of difference that is most commonly discussed under the rubric of “multiculturalism” in Japan. For that reason, I was interested in critically weaving together English language scholarship from a variety of disciplines on the topic of multiculturalism with Japanese scholarship on the discourses of ethnic homogeneity. Before going to the field, I asked questions such as what the multicultural question meant in Japan, what that highlights, and what kind of analysis of the multicultural condition would be most useful in framing my project.

Upon further investigating (still pre-fieldwork), I found a common sonic thread that helped me start disentangling the spatial-sonic-temporal ball of yarn. It was chindon-ya. Many of the same musicians who collaborate with Daiku draw on chindon-ya musically and discursively, investing it with their own new meanings. I became interested in whether and how chindon-ya and chindon-inspired musical practices today can link up with the project of making audible ‘social and historical relations’ that produce difference in Japan. I felt ready to go, with literature on multiculturalism and ethnic minorities in contemporary Japan under my belt. I went to the field with this hypothesis in mind: in the contemporary chindon resurgence, one can see that othering on the basis of caste, which has historically been associated with itinerant street performers, has been re-articulated with contemporary ethnic others.

However, once in the field, the analytical categories of “ethnic others” and “multicultural” sat uneasily with me. While Soul Flower Mononoke Summit, a chindon-inspired band that was formed after the Hanshin earthquake in 1995, explicitly interrogates the issues of “Japaneseness” (for example, they show how “international” Nagata is, the neighborhood hardest hit by the earthquake, whose inhabitants include resident Koreans, Chinese, and some Okinawans and Filipinos), other chindon-inspired bands or singers did not have an explicit or prolonged engagements with the issues of “multiculturalism” or “ethnicity” as I initially conceived. On one hand, I felt that my positioning as a “native ethnographer” (see below) trained in the United States, where I have gained a more acute awareness of racial, ethnic, gender, and class differences than when I lived in Japan, provided a critical distance which allowed me to critique the silenced production of difference and history that led to the widely accepted notion of Japanese homogeneity. On the other hand, I suspected that my analytical assumptions highlighted my own Anglo-American scholarly bias that might not be most effective to analyze the socio-musical practices of the chindon musicians and other cultural practitioners.

Therefore, my initial hypothesis about the re-articulation of historical caste- and race-based difference with contemporary notions of “ethnic” difference needed further critical scrutiny. What kind of production of difference, if not “ethnic minorities,” did I hear through chindon-ya and chindon-inspired musicians’ practices, I needed to ask. What kinds of differences are being unsettled, made explicit? How would that speak to the understanding of Japan as a place?

Despite the necessity to reformulate my project, chindon-ya remained a viable practice through which to raise the new questions. This is because of the multiplicity of meanings, places, sentiments, musical renderings, modalities of belonging, and temporalities that chindon-ya practices seem to embrace and produce. In the next

section, I will briefly introduce chindon-ya, and sketch the history of the practice. I do not aim to provide a comprehensive historical survey of the development of chindon-ya and its related genres; instead, I focus on key issues to highlight how chindon-ya is a productive lens through which to explore the intersection of sound, public space, and social difference in contemporary Japanese urban life.

## **PART I: BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO CHINDON-YA**

### **Description**

Chindon-ya, which dates back to the 1840s, refers to a group of performers who are hired to advertise an employer's business. The employer varies daily, and can be anything from a local supermarket or a *pachinko* slot machine parlor, publicizing opening sales or a special discount on a particular product such as cell phone plans or even happy hour at a chain bar. Outlandishly costumed, chindon-ya performers parade through the streets, not to sell products themselves, but to draw customers to an establishment by playing an assortment of instruments, including Japanese percussions and horn instruments, often clarinet, trumpet, or saxophone. There is no singing; usually the chindon player, often the leader of the group, delivers advertising speeches between tunes, or hand out flyers to the passersby.

A chindon group generally has at least three performers who play musical instruments. At the heart of chindon-ya is an instrument called "chindon." It is a hand-made portable drum set consisting of three Japanese percussion instruments: *kane* (small metallic gong chime, originally from China), *daidô* (both-sided drum, 40cm in diameter), and *shime daiko* (a hour-glass shaped drum that can be tuned by the hemp rope tied around the body). The name chindon derives from onomatopoeic sounds of the gong "chin" and the drums "don." Each chindon musician (generally a man) builds a wooden frame to put the three instruments together in order to be able to play while walking, with his left hand playing the two drums and the right hand playing the gong chime. Typically, there is another drummer in a chindon-ya group, who is often a woman.<sup>1</sup> She plays a large drum called *gorosu*, which derives from a French word *gros caisse* (big drum). *Gorosu* is hung horizontally from the shoulders, played with two different sticks; one is a mallet, and the other is a drum stick.

Along with these two percussionists, usually one but sometimes more musicians play melodic instruments. Most commonly found are the saxophone, clarinet, or trumpet. Musicologist Shuhei Hosokawa points out that, among the various street performance groups consisting of percussion and brass instruments, chindon is unique for the absence of a bass melodic instrument. Hosokawa attributes this to the emphasis on rhythm and melody, and lack of chords or harmony (Unpublished: 23). Thus the melodic instrument often plays solo, and even when there is more than one melodic instrument, they usually

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<sup>1</sup> This is more the case in Tokyo than in Osaka. In Tokyo, often married couples took up chindon-ya as their family business, thereby the wives taking the task of playing the drum. Ôkuma Wataru puts a spotlight on the role of women in chindon-ya business (Ôkuma 2003). Hosokawa Shûhei also provides a historical account that provides the background for women to play instruments in chindon-ya in the 1930s; since cross-dressing was banned, women gained more popularity, much like dancers and waitresses. Thus, although women were discouraged from playing wind instruments in general, they were in fact encouraged to play melodic instruments, and often earned more salary than male chindon-ya practitioners (Hosokawa unpublished: 11). Although the issue of gender in chindon-ya warrants close analysis in developing a historiography of chindon-ya, it is out of scope of the central questions I ask in this dissertation.

play in unison. Chindon-ya do not usually play jingles specific to the employers. Instead, the repertoire covers a wide range of songs, from military marches from the wartime to older Japanese popular songs (*enka*, 演歌), traditional theater music (*yose*, 寄席), to contemporary J-pop tunes.

While musical sounds are a significant aspect of their advertisement practice, costuming, speech, and small theatrical performance and gestures are integral to chindon-ya's enterprise. After having lured the bystanders and neighbors with their musical sounds, chindon-ya performers communicate with them verbally about what they are publicizing through theatrical speeches or informal conversations. The exaggerated style of delivery and vocabulary is informed by popular theatrical speech, such as *yose* and *shibai* (芝居).

Extravagant, vivid, and creative costumes and make-up are essential as well. Sometimes chindon-ya practitioners dress themselves up as certain historical characters or familiar characters from TV shows, as deemed appropriate for a particular client or product. While the two percussionists normally wear traditional Japanese attire, the melodic instrumentalists are often dressed in western style clothing. Furthermore, the unwritten chindon code is for the melodic instrumentalist to wear a hat (Okuma 1991: 27).<sup>2</sup> Normally, bystanders would not think twice about this vibrant hodge-podge-ness of colorful theatrical period-costumes combined with more casual, "western" style fashion. But a close attention to the material culture of chindon-ya offers us an entry point to delve into the multiple layers of temporal, geographical, cultural, and social polyvalence that chindon-ya has come to embody over the course of its history. In the next section, I provide historical snapshots of chindon-ya to highlight its changing reception, transnational roots, and popular representations. More detailed historical contextualization of chindon-ya will be discussed in chapter 2.

### Historical Snapshots

Although the origin myth of chindon-ya as an advertisement enterprise is often traced back to Amekatsu, a townsperson who capitalized on his own voice and body to be a proxy advertisement for a candy store in 1845, it was not until the 1930s that chindon-ya came to take the form it does today. For the past century, the activities and popularity of chindon-ya troupes have waxed and waned in the face of social trends, world events, and new technological developments. Ingrid Fritsch locates the roots of chindon-ya in street performers (*daidô-gei* 大道芸), particularly the street vendors of the late Edo period (1600-1867) (Fritsch 2001: 51-52).<sup>3</sup> While Amekatsu was known for his speech accompanied by bells and woodblocks (*hyôshigi*, 拍子木) only, this sonic advertisement practice expanded its form when Akita Ryûkichi incorporated the European style brass band into the practice in 1886. While Akita Ryûkichi was known for his creative use of the brass band in Tokyo, Tanbaya Kurimaru became famous in Osaka for using a musical band consisting of entirely Japanese traditional instruments, such as *ôdaiko* (big drum), *shime daiko* (small drum), kane (gong chime), *shamisen* (3-string lute-type instrument),

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<sup>2</sup> These unspoken customary codes tend to be followed more closely in Tokyo, where older generation of chindon-ya still exist and are considered as the tradition bearers by the younger practitioners. In contrast, in Osaka, where there are not many older generation chindon-ya practicing today, chindon-ya members tend to be less concerned about following such customary codes.

<sup>3</sup> Fritsch is the only scholar who has published on chindon-ya in English to this date.

*yokobue* (bamboo flute), and *tsuzumi* (tension drum). The two musical influences eventually merged over the following decades. At this time, this musical proxy advertisement practice was popularly known as *hiromeya* in Tokyo, and *tôzaiya* in Osaka.

Symbolizing the forces of modernization and Westernization that followed the end of Japan's seclusion policy (*sakoku* 鎖国, 1633-1868), the musical advertisement parades were an awe-inspiring modern spectacle on the streets. The description of the 1900 New Year parade of Lion Toothpaste company is telling of its magnificent size: fifty to sixty banner holders, a musical band, an Edo-period style float, another float with a lion statue, another musical band, followed by beautifully decorated dozens of horse carriages loaded with the products. Spectacular band-advertisement on the streets flourished as the economy boomed during the period of industrialization between the Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) and Russo-Japanese War (1904-5).

However, shortly after the Russo-Japanese War, the volatile political climate due to the increasing anti-establishment and anti-government activities as well as noise complaints led to tightening of the regulations on street advertisement practices. By 1910, a band advertisement was allowed to have a maximum of only ten members, and up to three carriages (Horie 1986: 56). The size of the troupe and business decreased further as musicians left the advertisement bands for better-paying accompanying silent films at movie theaters. Combined with the worldwide depression, introduction of new advertisement media (illumination, advertisement towers, balloons, newspaper, show windows, billboards), the musical advertisement practice on the streets lost its popularity. By the 1910s, it had become an object of mockery. The continuing economic recession and the devastating 1912 Tokyo Earthquake impinged upon the musical advertisement business further, driving them out of the city centers to suburbia, where they lived in poverty, barely affording the day's rent and each meal (Horie 1986: 98).

The second peak in the popularity of the musical advertisement business came around the 1930s, when *tôkî* (talkie, movies with sounds) came into fashion and musicians were driven out of silent cinema theaters. As a result, a large number of unemployed movie theater musicians came back to the musical advertisement business. The rise of the film industry also led to unemployment among other itinerant actors, variety hall artists and circus performers, who followed suit and sought their place in street advertisement. The *taishû engeki*-style costumes (popular itinerant theater), wigs, and makeup as well as theatrical performances became integral to *chindon-ya* practice as a result of these newcomers. The term *chindon-ya* is said to have appeared around this time, gradually replacing the names *Hiromeya* and *Tôzaiya* (Horie 1986; Kata 1969). The imminent world war gave the long-stagnant economy a boost, and the streets were lively with *chindon-ya* troupes. Essayist Takeda Rintarô wrote of the ubiquitous presence of *chindon-ya* in 1935: "I ran into three *Hiromeya* troupes while walking within the same neighborhood. They would appear one after another from the alleyways, quite jovial, scattering around the music that blends with the sounds of the wind, resonating melancholically into the sky" (Takeda 1935: 11.)

Under the harsh conditions, there was no room for *chindon-ya* during World War II. Soon after the war, however, street musical bands for both entertainment and advertisement were high in demand as black markets and open-air market (*aozora ichiba* 青空市場, "blue sky market") developed across the war-struck cities. *Chindon-ya* became very active again in the 1950s, when the informal economies of open-air black



markets were officially organized into *shôtengai* (commercial arcade) and *ichiba* (market) where individually owned businesses shared the public commercial space. *Pachinko* slot machine parlors were springing up all over the place, providing more business for chindon-ya. Chindon-ya's extremely localized, in-person style proved to be an effective means of advertisement, and chindon-ya enjoyed its third phase of extreme popularity as Japan's economy boomed during the post-war reconstruction era. There were estimated to be about two thousand five hundred chindon-ya in Japan at that time (Fritsch 2001: 54), and the still-ongoing Toyama City Chindon Konkûru (contest) started in 1955.

It is around this time when the present-day association of chindon-ya with the notion of everyday, and the “popular mass” emerged. Chindon-ya became associated very intimately with the notions of the ordinary — temporally, spatially, and socially. Temporally, chindon-ya's sounds were integral to the sounds of the quotidian, signaling the ordinariness of everyday life amidst other sounds. Spatially, chindon-ya's sounds also were associated with, and productive of, the public space. Words like *roji* (路地, alley), *rojô* (路上, on the street), and *michi* (道, street) are used recurrently in relation to chindon-ya; chindon-ya's sounds materially produced the public space and discursively developed a close connection with the notion of neighborhoods streets. Socially, particularly after WWII, chindon-ya became synonymous with the notion of *taishû* (大衆) or *shomin* (庶民): the popular mass, common people.<sup>4</sup> As the post-war reconstruction era created the narrative of a unified nation toward a shared goal of economic recovery, chindon-ya's popularity grew together with this emergent notion of homogeneous and monolithic middle-class national public (総中流社会, all-middle class society) (Shibuya, 2005). In popular magazines and newspapers in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, chindon-ya are often characterized as *taishû geinô* (popular performing arts), *shomin geinô* (common people's performing arts), *shomin bunka* (popular culture), or even “popular arts that is most closely connected to the ordinary people (もっとも庶民と密着した大衆芸術)” (Tamura 1970).

That third phase in the chindon-ya's popularity and activity came to an end in the late 1960s. The economic recession following the 1973 oil shock, the rise of television commercials, and the consolidation of individual stores into corporate-owned supermarkets have led to a sharp decline in chindon-ya business. Despite the bubble economy in the 80s, the death of the emperor Hirohito in 1989 impacted the chindon-ya industry because of the year-long regulation on street performances in mourning for the emperor (Ôba 2010: 29). Chindon-ya yet again entered almost a two-decade long hiatus. With no business and no practitioners, the image of chindon-ya being anachronistic, “uncool,” and marginalized was once again reaffirmed (Horie 1986: 156).

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<sup>4</sup> Taishû is a highly contested term; it is laced with “nostalgic references to ‘folk’ and ‘traditional’ ways of life in addition to less sanguine associations with nationalism, mass consumption, and citizen's movements” (Robertson, 72). Although the word has existed in a Buddhist context since the middle ages, it was only in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century that taishû began to refer to the mass, the popular, and the public. European and American discourses of mass and popular culture, which are embedded in the discourses of modernization (as in inevitable historical forces of progress emanating from Euro-American powers), industrialization, urbanization, capitalism, and media, have deeply inflected the use of the term taishû. I will discuss taishû further in chapter two.

## Chindon-ya Today

Today's popular imaginary and representation of chindon-ya largely has its roots in its heyday during the 1930s and 1950s, when the practice was a familiar sight on small neighborhood streets. The sound of chindon-ya was ubiquitous, integral to the everyday soundscape.<sup>5</sup> However, with a dramatic decline in number from the two thousand and five hundred chindon-ya performers who were active in the 1950s to fewer than thirty chindon-ya troupes existing today (Horie 1986:192; Chindon Konkûru 50 Shunen Kinenshi o Tsukuru Kai 2005: 180), chindon-ya shifted from being the everyday soundscape of the neighborhoods to symbolic references in novels, comic books, or films, signaling the bygone past.<sup>6</sup>

As if to reclaim the historicity and physicality of chindon-ya as an embodied practice, there has been also a recent resurgence of performance and recording of chindon music since the early 1990s, albeit on a relatively small scale. The resurgence has taken the forms of not only advertisement enterprise, but also new hybridized musical practices. In the past two decades, various musicians have increasingly drawn upon the older chindon-ya repertoire, instrumentation (particularly the chindon drum set), and performance sites (public places, the street), mixing chindon-ya repertoires and styles with various popular and folk musics from and beyond Japan. Within such hybridized repertoire, one can hear chindon-ya sounds fused with folk materials from Japan, Korea, Okinawa, and Eastern Europe, as well as with experimental improvisation and rock. To distinguish the older, advertisement enterprise from the new contemporary musical practices, I call the latter "chindon-inspired" musical practices. The contemporary discourses and practices of both chindon-ya and chindon-inspired musicians will be discussed in detail in chapter 4.

The recent increase in attention to chindon music was spearheaded almost simultaneously by two prominent figures: Hayashi Kôjirô in Osaka, and Shinoda Masami in Tokyo. The former started practicing chindon-ya during his University days in the late 1970s, and eventually founded his own chindon-ya as a business establishment in Osaka in 1984, called Chindon Tsûshinsha. I have spent the majority of my time in Japan with Chindon Tsûshinsha, which is now widely respected by many chindon practitioners in Japan for their great financial success. They have an annual income of one million dollars, a high level of performance, and the largest size troupe, consisting of twenty-six fulltime members who earn their livelihood through chindon practices.

The former, Shinoda Masami, is a Tokyo-based musician. A saxophone player versed in various styles such as funk, punk, and free jazz, Shinoda joined a chindon band Hasegawa Sendensha in 1983. In addition to playing for chindon-ya troupes in Tokyo,

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, chindon-ya is a recurring visual images in the popular post-war cartoon by Hasegawa Machiko, *Sazaesan*.

<sup>6</sup> There has been a considerable lack of attention to chindon music in both academic and popular discourses in the past as well. Hosokawa remains the only scholar who has published about chindon-ya in Japanese, and Fritsch the only other scholar writing in English.<sup>6</sup> The clarinet player Ôkuma, as I mentioned above, is the most prominent public intellectual who publishes on chindon. There has been a dearth of popular journalism attention to chindon-ya in magazines, newspapers, and TV shows, but most have been written in response to the recent rise of activities since the late 1980s.

Shinoda organized musical groups such as Compostela to play original, experimental styles informed by chindon music (Ôkuma, Mizuno, Ikeuchi 2008). Until his death in 1992, he kept chindon-ya as a side career. The release of the double album *Tokyo Chindon Vol.1* (1992), produced by Shinoda, is a hallmark of the recent chindon resurgence. Until the release of this pioneering project, with the exception of store advertising or for the purpose of sound effects, chindon-ya's music had never been documented. *Tokyo Chindon Vol.1* was recorded both live and in studio, and was the first ever released album that presented chindon music "not as nostalgia but as music, as one of the most exciting and original Japanese music presently performed" (Hosokawa 1992: 24).

What animates the contemporary practices of chindon-ya practice and chindon-ya inspired projects is the temporal gap between the oldest generation and the current generation. Because chindon-ya went through a period of considerable inactivity during the economic recession beginning in the late 1960s until the late 1980s, the practitioners who lived through chindon industry's third peak (ca. 1950-65) had aged considerably by the time of the most recent resurgence. The old guard chindon-ya practitioners were in their 70s and 80s by the time the next generation, then in their late twenties, started to show interest in chindon-ya in the late 1980s. This generational gap has inspired various genealogical projects, both musical and discursive, among the contemporary practitioners. Many voice the markedly different soundscapes with which they grew up compared to the oldest generation – often spoken in terms of more Westernized musical sensibility. They pay homage to, and apprentice with, the oldest generation chindon-ya members in their 80s and 90s who are still practicing today. Their constant pursuit of knowledge about the history of chindon-ya, what they sounded like and what other practices have informed chindon-ya as it is today, has given rise to various projects other than the original purpose of street advertisement.

However, their approaches are not that of preservationism or traditionalism. Instead, they imaginatively and creatively try to situate chindon-ya in relation to various other musical and performance practices, both historical and contemporary, Japanese and non-Japanese. In other words, chindon-ya reactivates cultural histories and memories from the contemporary vantage point. I will discuss further what cultural and political work such conscious genealogical projects by contemporary chindon-ya practitioners do in chapter 2.

## **PART II: PERCEPTION, RECEPTION, AND REPRESENTATION OF CHINDON-YA Affective Responses and Nostalgia**

Although chindon-ya's sounds have hardly been noted in popular discourse, commentaries on the affective effect of the sounds abound. In literature, popular magazines, and in interviews during fieldwork, I have come across a wide range of affective responses that chindon-ya sounds (and not the visuals) seem to elicit. Once, when I explained my dissertation project, a woman in her forties snapped at me with an obvious feeling of contempt: "I don't like chindon-ya. They sound so depressing and shabby (湿っぽくてうらぶれてる)." After having watched a chindon-ya perform on the street for several minutes, a woman in her fifties who was standing right next to me said out loud before leaving the scene: "Ah, great, they just lifted my spirit up (元気もらっちゃった)." A French literature specialist Shibusawa Tatsuhiko uses more dramatic

language to describe what chindon-ya sounds evoke emotionally for him. For Shibusawa, chindon-ya clarinet player's sound was "melancholic," "eerie," and "mysterious," "as if to invite us into the sentiment of insanity in broad daylight" (Shibusawa 1982.) To reinforce this rather sensationalist sentiments, Shibusawa goes on to quote an episode in a novel *Genke* (幻化) by Umezaki Haruo. The scene depicts an old man who is institutionalized because he goes mad whenever he encounters a chindon-ya in town (*ibid.*) While many bystanders and passersby are indifferent to chindon-ya sounds, these sounds seemingly have the affective power to stir up a variety of emotions in those who listen.

The most common affect of all, however, is that of nostalgia (懐かしい). Writing in 1977, Fujii Sôtetsu writes that chindon-ya gives him a sense of nostalgia for his childhood, just like the way he feels about his first love (Fujii 1977: 173). For those who grew up during the heydays of chindon-ya in the 1950s, the sounds evoke memories of their childhood, and nostalgia for the "good old days." One might be tempted to explain the contemporary chindon-ya resurgence by the appeal of nostalgia; just like the retro boom of the 2000s, chindon-ya could be viewed as an entrepreneurial practice capitalizing on nostalgia as a repository of a certain generation.

However, I posit that chindon-ya's resurgence is not simply explicable by the emotional or commercial demand for nostalgia. As I spent time with the contemporary practitioners, it became clear that the practitioners had personal investments in chindon-ya as a practice worthy in its own right, relevant and viable in contemporary Japanese urban life. What are the values they find appealing in their own renderings of chindon-ya today? I will return to the notion of nostalgia in more detail in chapter two.

### **Uniquely Japanese? Transnational Roots**

Despite the popular portrayal of chindon-ya as elusive, anachronistic, and insignificant, there is simultaneously an emergent discourse of chindon-ya as being a distinctly original Japanese music. Writing in 1935, a music critic Kanetsune Kiyosuke humorously fantasizes about his own version of chindon-ya:

I would make a new chindon-ya troupe. With a violin, shamisen, gong chime and drums, and female and male voices, they would stand on the street at dusk, singing Japanese beautiful folk songs...With chindon-ya, there is no restricting traditions, so you can easily do whatever without hesitation. If you do it, it would truly be a great achievement... I would say 'the pioneer of the new Japanese music came from my own chindon-ya!'<sup>7</sup>

Although Kanetsune might have been a rare example of someone recognizing something uniquely Japanese in chindon-ya at the time, there are more who share the similar view today, including contemporary musicians such as Ôkuma Wataru and Daiku Tetsuhiro who see it as uniquely Japanese "roots music"; Osaka-based Chindon Tsûshinsha who has been invited to cultural festivals abroad as a representative Japanese performing arts group; and UK-based music producer Paul Fischer, who has put many chindon-related tracks on the "Music of Japan" in the *Rough Guide* CD series circulated worldwide.

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<sup>7</sup> Kanetsune 1992 (1935): 264-265

However, this allegedly uniquely Japanese “roots music” has its roots in places beyond Japan. As evident in the hodge-podge-ness of the chindon-ya costume, instrumentation, and the repertoire, the material culture of chindon-ya clues us into the intrinsically transnational character of the practice from its inception. Chindon-ya as known today carries traces of both Edo-period Japanese performing arts practices (heard in the sounds of the chindon drum percussions, performed by chindon-ya dressed in *kimono*) and American and European influences via military bands introduced to the country at the turn of the century (heard in the sounds of trumpet, clarinet, saxophones, played by a musician usually dressed in shirts, pants, and with a hat.) In the liner notes of *Tokyo Chindon Vol.1*, Hosokawa argues that chindon’s very hybridity of Japanese and Western influences resulted in popular and academic dismissal of chindon music. Hosokawa maintains:

Chindon-ya succeeded at this [compromising between Japanese and Western styles] without getting trapped by nationalism and tradition. That is why nationalists, traditionalists, racial purists... have never considered this music significant. Thus, chindon-ya has never been honored by national institutions, universities, or local preservation societies, as has been done for folk music and the folk arts. It was also too close to everyday life to be catalogued by any museum (at least until recently). Chindon-ya’s instruments, repertoire and business management style are too ‘modern’ or ‘commercial’ to be labeled a traditional art. (Hosokawa 1992: 74, Translated by Kevin and Hiroko Quigley.)

As evident in the passage above, chindon-ya’s cultural hybridization<sup>8</sup> is manifested not only in musical sounds, instrumentation, and costumes, but also in the ambiguities of its popular representations.

There are three key areas of tension and ambiguity embodied by chindon-ya, which render the practice evasive and uncategorizable under the contentious labels of the traditional/modern, traditional/folk, folk/art, art/commerce, and noise/music. First, the hybridized musical sounds of chindon-ya highlight the inherent contradictions between the assertion of Japanese uniqueness and its claim as a modern nation. As the domains of the national, cultural, and ethnic were conflated into one narrative of homogeneity in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century — a prevalent discourse often known as *nihonjinron*,<sup>9</sup> performing arts with pre-modern roots such as *noh* and *kabuki*<sup>10</sup> became elevated as the

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<sup>8</sup> Here, I endorse Lisa Lowe’s critique that hybridity refers not to a free oscillation between or among chosen assumed entities but to uneven processes and encounters of various historical and social forces (Lowe 2003). I also draw on Robert Young’s use of Bhaktin’s dialectical model of “intentional hybridity,” which refers to a politicized contestatory activity that has interrogative effects of hybridization on contemporary culture (Young 1995: 24).

<sup>9</sup> *Nihonjinron* refers to a body of popular discourses beginning in the 1970s that explicate the “ethnic uniqueness” of the Japanese. All too often, the notion of class, cultural, and ethnic homogeneity of Japan is treated as an axiomatic truth, and goes unquestioned in both public and academic discourses. The deep-rooted belief in Japanese homogeneity has been traced among numerous prominent figures, including “National Learning” scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the popular “Nihonjinron” writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the present-day government officials and Japanese and non-Japanese journalists and scholars (Denoon et al, 1996; Komai 1994; Ishii and Yamauchi 1999; Lie 2001; Oguma 1995, 1998; Weiner 1994, 1997).

<sup>10</sup> Noh is said to date back Muromachi period (1338-1443) and Kabuki is said to have emerged in the early Edo period (around 1600s).

“traditional” cultural practices that represent and authenticate the uniqueness of Japan as a nation. While *noh* and *kabuki* constitute what Marilyn Ivy calls “the national-cultural imaginary” of Japan (Ivy 1995: 3),<sup>11</sup> the West that is audible in the musical sounds of chindon-ya excluded the practice from being considered “traditional” (i.e. the repository of the “national” essence). There lies the contradiction: in claiming its own uniqueness as a modern nation state, Japan must negate the West, which is inextricably linked to the notion of the modern in Japan. In other words, modernity in Japan, marked by the presence of the West, sits uneasily with its effort to define itself as a modern nation state with a distinct national identity. Naoki Sakai describes this modern dilemma of Japan: “...even in its particularism, Japan was already implicated in the ubiquitous West, so that neither historically nor geopolitically could Japan be seen as the outside of the West” (Naoki Sakai, quoted in Ivy 1995: 8). Chindon-ya, then, occupies the elusive space where the complex politics of cultural hybridization and the national discourse of “Japaneseness” are held in tension. Deemed “too modern” to be traditional but too “anachronistic” to be modern today, chindon-ya is caught in the Möbius strip of modern Japan’s claim to unique national-cultural homogeneity and its recursive relationship with its constitutive “Outside,” the West. Then what is that “difference” evoked by and associated with chindon-ya? If the Westernness mixed-up in chindon-ya is not recognized as non-Japanese difference, what kind of Japanese difference does it embody? I will pursue these questions in chapter 2 and 3.

### **Performing Arts and Commerce: Uneasy Position on the Streets**

The second area of tension lies in chindon-ya’s ineluctable connection with commerce. It is often considered to be at once a musical practice, a commercial activity, and mere background noise in everyday life (Hosokawa 1991). Chindon-ya’s definition as first and foremost a business practice puts it in a tenuous position to claim its place among performing arts practices. Again, there is a sense of cultural uneasiness with modernity in chindon-ya’s history; Amekatsu’s first appearance as a street performer for proxy advertisement business coincided with the weakening of the semi-feudal economic system of the country and the rise of vibrant merchant money culture that paved the way towards capitalist modernity of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Thus, similar to the ways chindon-ya is located within the disjuncture between the discourse of cultural uniqueness and cultural hybridization, it also sits uncomfortably, and moves freely between, the categories of commerce and performing arts. The Chindon Tsûshinsha leader Hayashi Kôjirô often noted how chindon-ya is in a double bind in the political economy of the streets; both street performers and street vendors do not consider chindon-ya to be not one of them. The former sell their performances on the street, the latter sell objects on the street. In contrast, chindon-ya serves as a proxy for their employer to help sell their products; chindon-ya sells their performance to the employer, but not to the customers they directly deal with once on the street. Furthermore, both street performers and vendors disdain chindon-ya as a practice inferior to theirs. Each considers itself to be superior to the other, while they both look down upon chindon-ya

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<sup>11</sup> Pointing out that “Japan is literally unimaginable outside its positioning vis-à-vis the West,” Ivy asserts that the cultural is a domain inextricably linked to the idea of nation. Furthermore, since the discourse of unified Japan emerged only in the eighteenth century, Ivy maintains that “the articulation of a unified Japanese ethnos with the “nation” to produce “Japanese culture” is entirely modern.” (Ivy 1995: 4)

(Hayashi 2006: 98). One of the Chindon Tsûshinsha members, Uchino Makoto described how he perceives chindon-ya to be outside of the three categories of economic sectors in today's political economy of Japan.<sup>12</sup> Calling chindon-ya a “unproductive quaternary industry,” Uchino emphasizes that chindon-ya neither produces or sells goods, and it is not easily categorized as a service business as exactly what is being “sold” and to whom is ambiguous.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, it must be noted that, though chindon-ya is commercial, it has kept its distance from mass media, stage, and microphone. Until the aforementioned CD set, chindon-ya sounds had never been commodified. I will discuss further this ambiguity in chindon-ya's economic transaction in chapter three.

### **Soundings: Chindon-ya and the Sound-Noise-Music debate**

The third area of tension in popular perception of chindon-ya stems from the ambiguity of its sonic presence. The contemporary chindon-inspired musicians discuss whether chindon-ya practice should be considered music, sound, or noise:

Kimura Shinya: “...The truth is that nobody listens to chindon-ya as music. There is a lot of noise in the city, and [the chindon-ya sound] is floating around. I'm not sure if we can call that music.”

Okuma Wataru: “Certainly, chindon-ya doesn't fit in the concept of music, does it.”<sup>14</sup>

Throughout its history, chindon-ya and its precursors have had tenuous relationships with categories of music, noise, and sound. During the period of rapid industrialization around 1900-1910, when the public landscape and soundscape were rapidly changing, the large scale band advertisement *gakutai kôkoku* (楽隊広告) was considered part of the “noise” of the forces of modernization. Hosokawa adds: “For them [people] it is merely street noise, difficult to view as a new concept in music, originating through 19<sup>th</sup> century western influence” (Hosokawa 1991: 14). Thus they were regulated along with other vehicles on the streets due to the mounting complaints about the increasing noises of street traffic.<sup>15</sup>

Once the musical advertisement on the street ceased to be associated with the notion of modernity, not only the volume of the band but also the public debate over the

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<sup>12</sup> In Japan, Colin Grant Clark's classification of industries is commonly used. Primary sector deals with raw material, secondary refers to manufacturing, and tertiary involves service and distribution. Some other chindon-ya members consider chindon-ya as part of the service industry, whereas Uchino here zeroes in on the ambiguity of whether chindon-ya is selling service or performance to its employer by considering chindon-ya to be outside of the three demarcated economic sectors.

<sup>13</sup> Personal communication, April 13 2007.

<sup>14</sup> Ôkuma 1991: 72-74

<sup>15</sup> Such narrative of music pitted against noise resembles the analysis of noise by Jacques Attali, who is interested in the ideological work that creates and maintains the boundary between music and noise, which is a political one. The boundary always reflects a political reality; thus for Attali, the structure of music reveals/conceals/becomes/reflects the order of things. Chindon-ya poses an interesting challenge to Jacques Attali's notion of “noise,” as it is embedded within capitalist economy but not commodified via mass production. Instead, it is improvised, which Attali equates to the “refusal of the cultural alienation inherent in repetition” typical of capitalist economy (Attali 1985: 138).

chindon-ya sounds itself became quiet. Once performing music, then considered noisy, now it is a mere sound. By the 1950s, “it [chindon-ya] was a background sound, or sound effects that was not worthy of listening to... the costumes stood out, but the sound itself was simply there, without anyone noticing it” (*ibid*). Speculating why chindon-ya has not received critical discourse or been documented in the past, Hosokawa asserts that the proximity to the quotidian has rendered the presence of chindon-ya almost like the “air” (Hosokawa unpublished: 14).

Chindon-ya has been closely tied to everyday life and yet ignored. It was a forgotten music precisely because it was always there, in everyday life. It’s been forgotten, not only by foreigners, but also Japanese who take it completely for granted.<sup>16</sup>

No longer a site of power contestation (i.e. in the form of noise and crowd regulations), chindon-ya was perceived to be mere sounds, part of the everyday soundscape. Neither music or noise, chindon-ya has not been canonized, documented, or commodified, but they were hardly been *listened to*, for that matter.

Cultural critique Shirahara Kenichirô even heard chindon-ya’s unmediated acoustic sounds on the streets as a curious contrast to the sounds of mechanized, technologically mediated modernity. In his 1972 journalistic piece on a chindon clarinet player, Shirahara comments on the changing soundscape in modern Japan: “Before the mass production and information era, so-called “sound” had an important place. However, in modern day, such sound... has extinguished, and the carcass of civilization that is noise is pervasive” (Shirahara 1972: 132). In this narrative critical of the modern capitalist society whose sounds are mere noisy “carcass,” chindon-ya stands out as sounds-in-flesh:

Everyone has the impression that chindon-ya means an anachronistic clown. However, somewhere in the circumstantial twist that makes us consider them as such, we discover the odd existence and the natural voice of the ‘sound.’” (*Ibid.*)

Although Shirakawa’s tone is reminiscent of an Adornian critique, he is not simply romanticizing chindon-ya’s sounds as pre-modern remainders of authenticity. Instead of denying the coevalness of chindon-ya’s sonic presence and the noises of modernity (Fabian 2002), he points to the curious presence of chindon-ya’s sounds as simply sounds in the contemporary moment, evading the sound-noise delineations. In conversations with chindon-ya practitioners, most of them almost consistently referred to their practice as producing sound (*oto*, 音) instead of making music (*ongaku*, 音楽).<sup>17</sup> Like Shirakawa, instead of trying to locate chindon-ya practice in Attali’s noise-music dichotomy, I am more interested in the very ambiguity and elusiveness of chindon-ya as sounds, as a sonic

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<sup>16</sup> Hosokawa 1992: 73, Translated by Kevin and Hiroko Quigley.

<sup>17</sup> Hosokawa Shuhei argues that the notion of *ongaku* itself is a product of modernity, popularized by the Meiji government’s education policy, which mandated Western music in the public school curriculum around 1870. (Hosokawa, unpublished: 4)



practice that resists the discursive categories of music and noise.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, rather than viewing chindon-ya's sounds as an object upon which power relations work to delineate music from noise, I analyze them as a constantly shifting sound-space that is dynamically produced through social and musical practice. I will return to this discussion in the analytics section below.

### **PART III: Analytical and Methodological Considerations**

#### **Research Questions**

Because of its hybridized musical sounds, its commercial nature, and its intimacy with everyday street life, chindon-ya has evaded the preexisting labels and categories. It is this ambivalent and polyvalent place chindon-ya occupies in Japanese popular imaginary that interested me. Chindon-ya, as elusive, anachronistic, and innocuous it often is portrayed to be in the popular discourse, caught my attention for the rich historical sedimentation it embodies, its contentious positioning among the commercial and performative activities in public space, its arguably polyvalent position along the sound-noise-music continuum, the wide range of emotional responses it seems to solicit from the listeners, certain historical temporalities and sensibilities it seems to re-activate, and the diversity of related musical activities, groups, and projects chindon-ya has spawned in various locations and styles. Why has chindon-ya engendered wide-ranging cultural and commercial activities among diverse practitioners after decades of inactivity? What historical, geographical, and social relations have enabled this practice to gain traction in contemporary Japan, recalling nostalgia for some, inciting intrigue or nuisance for others, and indifference at its best?

Further, chindon-ya's historical embeddedness with the everyday life, public space, and the national public/popular mass also provides a fertile ground for exploring the understandings of space and social difference in contemporary Japan. As Japan's miraculous economic recovery came to a lull in the early 1990s, the spatial and social "ordinariness" in Japanese everyday life started to shift. The open markets and individually owned shops became corporatized; streets became increasingly privatized and regulated, and filled with technologically mediated sounds blaring from speakers and shops. How do we understand the significance of such a deliberately non-digital media in the present moment that is otherwise saturated with so-called virtual and digital media and flooded with recorded sounds? When the neighborhood streets are increasingly regulated, privatized, and developed, what kinds of understanding of public space emerge from chindon-ya today as its sounds resonate in the midst of the shifting geographies of urban modernity?

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<sup>18</sup> The contested boundary between sound, noise, and music has been critically questioned and surpassed by experimental artists in Japan around 2000, whose music was termed "onkyô" (音響) — literally, sound and vibration or resonance. While the relativistic perspective that consider environmental sounds and humanly organized sounds equal may resemble the "oneness" of chindon-ya sounds and surrounding urban noises in the streets, what is decidedly different is that chindon-ya practitioners or listeners have never made an conscious effort to define the practice in relation to sound or music. Hosokawa, in a tongue-and-cheek manner, suggests that chindon-ya perhaps should be called "onkyô" instead of "ongaku" (1991, 13). For comprehensive and critical discussion of onkyô and the transnational circulation of the term itself, see Novak (2010) and Plourde (2008).

Curiously, as *chindon-ya* —the emblem of the ordinary people— started to regain its popularity in the late 1980s, there was an increasing sense of social fragmentation and crisis of national identity due to the collapse of the economic bubble (Haratsonian and Yoda eds 2006). Together with the neoliberal policies that produced widening social economic gaps (“*kakusa shakai*” 格差社会 – gap society), the narrative of homogeneous, class-less, unified nation crumbled as Japan went through a long period of economic crisis.<sup>19</sup> With the demise of homogeneous middle class in the era of recession, and economic restructuring that resulted in widening socio economic gaps and an influx of flexible labor, who does *chindon-ya*’s soundings interpellate as the “public”? What makes *chindon-ya* viable and sustainable as both an aesthetic and economic practice today, when the initial conditions in which it developed no longer hold true in contemporary Japan?

Putting these perspectives together, in this dissertation I explore the intersection of sound, public space, and social difference in contemporary Japanese urban life. I believe that attentiveness to the sounded space around the recent *chindon-ya* resurgence in Japan allows me to examine how contemporary practitioners articulate various material, geographical, historical, and social relations to produce tangible, emotional and imagined effects. By listening to their sounds and space produced by those sounds, I examine how their practices elucidate, valorize, or challenge sedimented histories that have produced normalized understanding of the public, space, and difference in Japan.

### **Emergent Analytics: Resonance**

“There are many sounds that override noise. I don’t want to make such strong aggressive sounds, but rather sounds that can merge with other sounds, sound that can’t be overpowered but won’t overpower others. It’s not something an individual can do, but it can only be possible through collaboration, spatially and temporally. This is the kind of thing that I’ve thought about while playing with *chindon-ya*.”  
— Shinoda Masami<sup>20</sup>

”Take the drum, for example. You hit it. Then listen to the lingering resonance of your own sound. There isn’t a habit of listening to the “gong, gong” of the drum after it is hit. Hitting the drums in rhythm and you’re content. If you can’t listen to the resonance, it’s not fun.”  
— Hayashi Kôjirô<sup>21</sup>

In my investigation, I explore the intersection of sound, space, and social difference through the notion of “resonance” as a critical way to discuss *chindon-ya*. As the quote above indicates, Shinoda’s philosophical understanding of *chindon-ya*’s sound-making process is inherently social (through collaboration), relational (creating sounds in

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<sup>19</sup> Lifetime employment system eroded, and temporary employment and part-time labor force called *frîtâ* (フリーター) became prevalent by the late 1980s, signaling the furthering of postindustrial capitalism and neoliberal policies.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Ôkuma 2001: 106-107

<sup>21</sup> Personal communication, September 3, 2007

relation to other sounds in the environment), spatial, and temporal. Sounding and listening are inextricably linked in chindon-ya's cognitive processes; chindon-ya's sound making processes are inherently relational in that to sound, one must listen—and to listen, one must situate one's sound in relation to each other and to the surroundings.

Hayashi Kôjirô emphasizes the importance of listening to the lingering resonance (*zankyô*, 残響) of one's drumming sounds, as a crucial skill, the essence of fun in playing chindon-ya, that is nonetheless often neglected among the Japanese. Hayashi attributes the lack of attention to the lingering resonance of one's playing to “Westernization” of listening; for Hayashi, attention to resonance is a distinctly Japanese sensibility of listening—whether self-Orientalizing practice of *Nihonjinron* or essentialist discourse, it was persistent in chindon-ya's discourse. Taking the recurrent trope of “listening” “sounding” and “resonance” among chindon practitioners, then, I try to listen to the sound-space created by chindon-ya sounds in order to analyze the multifaceted cultural work that the sounds do: they evoke particular historical moments, incite various sentiments, interpellate certain subjectivities, and articulate various social relations.

There were several Japanese words that I encountered during fieldwork that I roughly translate as “resonance.”<sup>22</sup> Just as the English translation, these words mean and evoke a wide variety of meanings, from a quality of sound—reverberating, deep, and full sound—and the ability to evoke images, memories, and emotions, to the sense of space and time produced by the lingering sounds. Resonance also is often used in scientific fields; in acoustics, resonance is also referred to as sympathetic vibration, whereby sound is reinforced and prolonged by vibration of a neighboring object, created by an oscillating force of a frequency that is close to the object's harmonic frequencies.

Drawing on the rich reservoir of meanings of the word, both literally and metaphorically, I define resonance as a spatial and sonic articulation of listening and sounding, histories and memories, and physical geography. In other words, resonance is intrinsically and constitutively produced by sound, space, time, and sociality; it is a way to think of these things together. Resonance is the sound-space that physically and imaginatively interrelate listeners and performers. Resonance is where the “public space” is sonically produced—both in material, acoustic space and imagined, discursive space. Resonance has a temporal aspect as well; resonance lingers, allowing the practitioners to tune into the previous relations and histories that have formed the site of performance at a given place and time.

With its multiple meanings and definitions in various scientific fields as well as literary metaphor, resonance can be an powerful trope. Here, I outline the particular analytical force “resonance” carries for my project. I have formulated the analytic of “resonance” by drawing on three theoretical insights: the production of space (Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1994), the emphasis on the practice of *sounding*, and the concept of articulation (Hall 1985, 2002).

I came to resonance as a trope through the geographer Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of space. Lefebvre's understanding of space is helpful in understanding the sense of spatiality that emerges from chindon-ya's translocal relations, imaginary evocations, and sounds that permeate physical boundaries. One does need to look too

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<sup>22</sup> I have translated various words in Japanese as “resonance” at large: 余韻 (reverberations, an aftereffect)、響き (sound)、残響 (reverberation, echo)、共感 (sympathy).

hard to see the significance of music/sound for Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1991 [1974]). It is in fact striking that sound has been left out of the picture by the majority of intellectuals who have drawn on Lefebvre. The recurrent references to music are abundant, and almost all of them point to Lefebvre's belief in the "animating power of the spectacle, of poetry, and of artistic practices" (Harvey 1990: 426). Several passages show how Lefebvre finds music to be a practice that opens up the possibility of achieving the unitary theory of space to bring together the spatial, mental, and physical through a "spatial code," of "point[ing] up qualities and underscor[ing] difference" (Lefebvre 1991: 370).

Speaking about an embodied, meaning-producing everyday practice, Lefebvre accounts for non-verbal "signifying sets" as a possible means of merging the perceived and the conceived, and of challenging abstract space. Non-verbal artistic expressions, including music, are important to the concept of "spatial code." Defined as a means of living in a space, of understanding it, and of producing it, spatial code, according to Lefebvre, brings together verbal signs and non-verbal signs (music, sounds, evocations, architectural constructions.) (Lefebvre 1991: 48) The role of the embodied practice of music as part of the construction of spatial code here is central to Lefebvre's project on advancing a unitary theory of space. Situated vis-à-vis the lived and perceived, spatial code is a "language common to practice and theory, and to inhabitants, architects and scientists," which "recaptures the unity of dissociated elements, breaking down such barriers as that between private and public, and identifying both confluences and oppositions in space that are at present indiscernible" (1991: 64). Thus conceived, for Lefebvre's project to bring together the physical, mental, and physical fields, the construction of a spatial code seems to be a significant process toward "the reversal of the dominant tendency" (*ibid*). Lefebvre's inclusion of artistic and musical practices to what constitutes a spatial code thus reinforces the necessity to understand sound in relation to production of space.

Instead of understanding space as a physically delineated enclosure, Lefebvre and other geographers following suit put forward an understanding of space as dynamic milieu that is actively produced through multiple social and historical relations which stretch beyond its geographic boundaries (Hart 2004; Hesse 1993; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1993, 1994; Smith and Katz 1993).<sup>23</sup> Space, in Massey's words, is "geographical stretching-out of social relations" without geographic boundaries, that is actively produced through dynamic process in other places, through interactions with wider relations (Massey 1993: 147).

If we take the production of space seriously as Lefebvre urges us to, then "we are dealing with history" (Lefebvre 1991: 47). At the fundamental level of this alternative notion of space is that space is constituted through interconnections of the social, temporal,

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<sup>23</sup> Following Massey (1994), I distinguish «place» from «space». While space is dynamically produced through social relations and histories, place is constantly produced by a mixture of distinct local and wider social relations and histories which intersect at a particular spatial nodal point. Following this definition, identity of place is never singular but multiple. Place, then, highlights the processes of drawing and contesting boundaries that allow itself to emerge out of the dynamic social relations. Donald Moore's rendering of place illuminates the similarities between articulation and dynamically conceived "place": for him, "place emerges as a distinctive mixture, not an enduring essence, a nodal point where these translocal influences intermesh with practices and meanings previously sedimented in the local landscape" (Moore 2005: 20). Like articulation, place is a temporary fixing of meaning, a moment in a complex and contradictory interaction of meanings, that are constituted through ongoing practices.

and spatial. Rather than seeing time and space as a dichotomous pair, they are inextricably interwoven, and are constructed as the result of interrelations (Massey 1993: 152). In other words, historical sedimentations are integral to the dynamic processes in which space is produced.

Similarly, in “Waterfalls of Song” (1996), Steven Feld advocates multisensory conceptualization of place, particularly auditory experience of place. Pointing out that the sonic conception of space – “space as sounding or resounding” – has received little attention, Feld draws upon a music philosopher Victor Zuckerkland (1956), who “argued vigorously against the notion that music was purely an experience of tone as time” by detailing ways in which “space is audibly fused with time in the progression and motion of tones” (Feld 1996: 95). This attention to the entanglement of sound, space, and time necessitates the incorporation of sound into the alternative conception of spatiality. Thus, I suggest that power-laden practice of producing space and difference should be examined with attention to the dynamic simultaneity of not only space and time but also sound — in resonance.

As I have maintained earlier in the discussion of sound, noise, and music, I conceive sound to be *not* an object for power relations to operate upon, but rather a dynamic process produced through the *practice of sounding*. Therefore, in my analysis of chindon-ya’s resonances, I offer an inclusive understanding of chindon-ya’s practices as *sounding*: an always ongoing, embodied and situated practice that bring together discursive and material resources, practices, and relations in order to produce musical sounds at a specific time and place. My conception of “sounding” follows Lefebvre’s insistence on analyzing space *not* as a passive, Cartesian grid but rather as socially produced through relations and practice. By insisting on *sounding*, I highlight the importance of examining the production of space/sound, instead of “things in space” or “things in sound.” When conceptualizing musical practices, it is not simply symbolic representations ‘in’ sound that I consider as subject of my research, but also the process of “sounding,” or the production of sound-space.

Thus, by focusing on resonance, I highlight how ‘sounding’ is a productive concept of examining chindon-ya, as a way to skirt around the contested discourses around chindon-ya in relation to the labels of music, sound, and noise. Thus conceived, “sounding” is an affectively, politically, and discursively generative practice that produces a conception of space that is *not* physically delineated but rather socially produced milieu. Resonance therefore allows us to understand the dynamic conception of space and time through the focus on the social practices of listening and sounding.

To understand the processes in which sounding practices assemble various resources, relations, and discourses to produce resonance, I draw on the analytic of “articulation” (Hall 1985, 2002). Articulation is a productive concept for thinking about the production of resonance, because it elucidates how disparate differences or relations have been combined to produce sound and space, while resisting a unitary structure to account for its coherence or structure.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> As Hall, adopting, a similar critical distance towards both economism and voluntarism, Gillian Hart (2002) shows the conceptual relation between Hall’s articulation and Lefebvre’s notion of the production of space. Both concepts link up as they highlight the multiple assemblages of relations working together at a particular historical and geographical conjuncture. By highlighting the inexorable spatiality of situated practices, and the emphasis on the inseparability of space and time, Lefebvre’s conceptual framework foregrounds spatiality and temporality in Hall’s articulation.

Furthermore, as I am trying to show through “resonance,” Stuart Hall also brings temporality into articulation in a productive way. While uncritical assumption of pre-existent elements or identities can be

Ethnomusicologist Jocelyne Guilbault has called attention to this process, in which musical practices embody and assemble specific constituencies, historical moments, imaginations of longing, belonging, and exclusion. Coining the term “audible entanglements (Guilbault 2005), her analytical insight highlights the various relations and materials that are articulated through performance. While my understanding of resonance shares the same analytical concern, by referring to the same articulatory process as “resonance,” a concept of importance for chindon-ya practitioners, I put emphasis on spatiality and cultural specificity.

The notion of resonance, understood through articulation, allows for non-human agencies in resonance. Whereas commonly received phenomenological notion of “place” defines it as an abstract and general “space” made meaningful by human subject (Casey, Basso 1996), the notion of articulation “is open to recognizing that nonhumans produce materially consequential sediments that also inform politics” (Moore 2005: 25). In their ethnographic works, Donald Moore and Gillian Hart bring to attention that nature and landscape can also be brought into the concept of the production of space/place and articulation. Nature and landscape, unlike Foucault’s assumption of territory as a pre-given element, too are part of the double processes of “joining” and “enunciating.” As a contested terrain of practice that is simultaneously material and symbolic, not only human subjects but also land and landscapes are actively being produced through sediments and contingent constellations. As chindon-ya practitioners are constantly producing and listening to resonances in relation not only to each other and listeners, but also as they echo across acoustic environment and physical geography of the city streets they walk through, the emphasis on the physical geography as part of the articulated assemblage that produces resonance is crucial.

The poetic ambiguity and metaphorical polyvalence of the word “resonance” also allows for the analyses of imaginary and discursive articulatory work made possible by soundings. Resonance gives a way to discuss “imagination”; in resonance, listeners and practitioners feel various sentiments, remember certain historical moments, and imagine the future.<sup>25</sup> In other words, the power of resonance to incite imagination, of both past and future, is essential in both chindon-ya’s street routine and chindon-inspired musicians’ hybridizing musical practices (chapter 4). In particular, as part of the trope of resonance, I discuss the significance of affect and psychological ramification of chindon-ya practice in chapter three through what I call “imaginative empathy,” an ability to imagine the sentiments of invisible listeners behind the walls and perform accordingly. Just like the acoustic phenomenon of sympathetic vibration, if the sound reaches the listeners at the right frequency, certain imaginations, memories, or sentiments get

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problematic, Hall’s notion of “double articulation” provides a way to think about the conditions, which make articulation possible. By double articulation, Hall refers to how the given conditions of existence can also be understood as simply the result of previous practices (Hall 1980: 95) Attention to historical sedimentations as necessary conditions for articulation also allows us to examine how older meanings can get reconfigured in the terrain of the conjunctural. Gillian Hart (2002) conceives this as “structured contingencies,” referring to sets of situated practices that are contingent on what is already there, which is itself the outcome of previous processes (Hart 2002: 298). Articulation of ongoing practices with previously sedimented meanings can be a site of struggle; calling these sedimentations as “traces,” Hall maintains that they can be reactivated at a later stage, even when the discourses have fragmented as coherent or organic ideologies (Hart 2002: 111).

<sup>25</sup> Don Ihde insightfully discusses the role of imagination in listening practices (Ihde 2004.)

triggered. These imaginative works of resonance are as tangible and consequential as the practice of sounding itself. Resonance matters because it also conditions what is imaginable.

Above all, resonance matters because that is what chindon-ya produces, on many levels, to sustain itself as a business enterprise. The production of resonance in other words is what they get paid for; it is not simply an intellectual exercise. Resonance, taken as both an analytical lens that brings together the production of space and sounds, and a multifaceted trope that sheds light on the tangible consequences of their practice historically, economically, acoustically, psychologically, and politically, guides my analysis of the chindon-ya soundings I encountered during fieldwork.

### **On Being a “Native Ethnographer” and an Active Musical Collaborator**

In order to explore soundings and spatiality that emerged through chindon-ya practices, I took multiple roles as a researcher. The types of ethnographic information I gathered and the level of access to them during my research varied greatly according to the specific occasions and the multiple roles I held – as a researcher, performer, friend, staff member, and so on— and relationships I held with my interlocutors. The primary research activity was holding conversations and interviews. I conducted countless interviews with the practitioners, musicians, record label owners, record shop owners, bar owners, businesses that hired chindon-ya troupes, and chindon-ya fans. Some conversations were formally arranged, others were informal; for instance, on a tour bus, over a meal, on a train ride, during a set break, over a drink. Some were recorded with an audio recorder, some written down in notebooks. In the process of reconstituting my research questions, these conversations and the practitioners’ answers to my questions helped me tune into what sets of practices and values were at work and what was often left unspoken that should be critically investigated.

In addition to interviews and conversations, I attended numerous festivals. I attended some of them as a staff worker, some others I attended as an audience member. I had more access to back-stage conversations and behind-the-scene interactions as a staff worker, whereas I was more available to focus on observation and to interact with other audience members when I was not assigned staff duties. I also observed many rehearsals, sound-checks, concerts, and after-concert parties with the performers. A countless number of hours was spent on following chindon-ya troupes on the streets. I made both audio and audio-visual documentations of these events for later reference. My research also involved archival work. To understanding better the shifting receptions and public discourse around chindon-ya, I collected writings on chindon-ya in popular publications at libraries. Many chindon-ya practitioners, particularly members of Chindon Tsûshinsha, were generous to share with me copies of past TV programs that documented chindon-ya as well.

Being a native Japanese with a musical background was both helpful and distracting. It was certainly helpful in gaining most of the information I gathered through these activities. Needless to say, being fluent in Japanese, and having cultural familiarity with various related performing arts that chindon-ya often referenced in the conversation was greatly helpful. It also seemed to help my interlocutors feel comfortable about sharing their intimate feelings, opinions, and knowledge. However, having linguistic and cultural access to various resources has also made myself extremely vulnerable to all

sorts of distractions from research. In Japan, I was not only a researcher, but also a family member and a friend who had been gone for over a decade. Inevitably, I felt compelled to spend time with my family. In other words, it feels easy to justify my being there aside from research – a case that may not necessarily be true for researchers who would perhaps not be in the place they are unless for research. Especially, a sense of putting roots down again in a country where I was born sometimes obscured the main objective of being in Japan for research in my everyday awareness. Balancing social obligations outside of my own research required more effort than I imagined before going into fieldwork.

Having lived outside of Japan for almost half of my life, however, I was often marked as somewhat “non-Japanese,” often registered in my speech, gesture, or clothing.<sup>26</sup> The challenge of being a simultaneously “native” and “not quite native” ethnographer was that I did not have the benefits of being a “foreign” researcher, and was thus not exempt from not following rules, not knowing, and not behaving properly. For instance, at the beginning I was constantly intimidated at a “hang” with relatively famous musicians, whether and/or how to get into backstage, although I was fully aware that I was expected to know them. I had been subject to comments such as “you’re Japanese and study ethnomusicology and don’t know this?” I did not know how to start filling what seemed to be a dauntingly big gaps in my historical knowledge of rather obscure traditional performance arts that they nonetheless expected me to know— kinds that were rarely covered in courses offered at schools I had attended.<sup>27</sup>

I did expect this disadvantage of not being given the “foreigner” exemption. However, I was determined to turn it into an advantage, to play up my out-of-place-ness, to show why I could not be necessarily expected to know the rules, to ask for help when I needed guidance with learning the codes and background information necessary, and ultimately to write something that could be seen precisely as the result of my ‘out-of-place’ perspective. Having lived in several countries since I left Japan, my experiences and transnational mobility have profoundly changed and shaped my way of thinking about Japan as a space. Being a native and an outsider at once, I became more aware of the complex dynamics, histories, and social differences that contrast starkly with the Tokyo-centric views of Japan that I had until I left Japan. I became more interested in looking at Japan as a space actively produced through intersections and interrelations with other places beyond its borders – such as Korea, Taiwan, Okinawa, America, for example.

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<sup>26</sup> I frequently encountered various comments made about my “non-Japaneseness.” Particularly at the beginning, many people commented on my accent (not that I have an English accent, but rather a unique amalgamation of various Japanese dialects, plus occasional blacking-out on words) that allegedly signified “foreignness” in my speech. Even after people started to mention how much smoother my Japanese had become compared to the first couple of months in Japan, I would still be asked from time to time by shop attendants where I was from. They described my speech using the word *katakoto* (“broken Japanese” or “smattering”); this was rather odd, as my sentences are completely full and grammatically correct. What they detected in my speech was probably more in the intonation, or even the directness of my expressions, both of which seem to signal my “un-Japaneseness.”

<sup>27</sup> In *Crafting Selves: Power, Gender, and Discourses of Identity in a Japanese Workplace*, anthropologist Dorinne Kondo shares a similar experience as a Japanese American doing fieldwork in Japan. Though her nationality as an American posed different questions to her and to her interlocutors, I find this challenge in my fieldwork to be similar with her experiences around the discrepancy between her appearance and her cultural competence (Kondo 1990: 11-26)



By setting out on a travel “back” to Japan, I wanted to rethink and experientially learn what kind of space Japan is by examining the entanglements of memories, histories, and current practices in disparate locations with a type of a musical interest as a guide. In that sense, having chosen chindon-ya as a lens through which to experientially re-learn Japan feels appropriate in some ways. Chindon seems and sounds as elusive and ambivalent as I find my own positioning to be in relation to the discourses of Japaneseness. On one hand, it is recognized as something distinctly Japanese, but on the other hand its “difference” or “out-of-ordinary-ness” within Japan has been an intrinsic part of its characteristics on the other hand. Further, as I kept finding “chindon sound” in various places and musical mixings — from an Okinawan singer to zainichi Korean singer in Osaka and progressive-rock Balkan band in Tokyo, or even in London, it seemed that it would allow me to explore translocal networks of musicians (an interest I’ve had as a performing musician myself) as a way of thinking about Japan that takes into account its constitutive relationships and histories with places outside of its national boundaries.

In these ways, I personally resonated with and was drawn to chindon-ya’s already-mixed-up-ness and the ambivalent positioning in relation to Japaneseness in my research. Perhaps I was seeking my own sense of displacement and difference in chindon-ya to express my own view of Japan as a dynamically produced space in an unresolved postcolonial state. That might explain why I shifted my research focus from chindon-inspired musicians who weave together disparate folk and popular musical elements with chindon-ya to chindon-ya *sui generis*. What I thought was simply a musical referent for hybridized practices turned out to be an extremely fertile ground for critical inquiry. The difficulty, though, was that if there were such displacement and difference that were articulated with chindon-ya and chindon-inspired musical practices today, then they were very subtle, not explicit, or not always consciously done.

To access such subtleties and nuances in chindon-ya practices, my role as an active performing musician was critical. During the fieldwork, I developed a career as a musician. I already had connections with musicians from having toured through Japan with my own musical group from San Francisco in 2004, and it was a natural development for me to start collaborating with local musicians on my accordion. Even though most of my musical activities did not involve playing with chindon-ya troupes, making my name as a musician in the greater Kansai area (Kobe, Kyoto, and Osaka) gave me access to various information and scenes to which I would not have had access otherwise. As an accordionist, I creatively collaborated with many of the musicians who are involved in the chindon-inspired projects. This gave me access to many intimate conversations about their aesthetic, personal, and financial investments and how such investments inform many of the strategic choices they make in relation to performance opportunities. Through performing, I was able to build closer relationships with some of the musicians than I would have been able to otherwise as a researcher. It brought my attention to the micropractices informed by aesthetics, pleasure, finances, and networking among the musicians/practitioners. For example, it allowed me to perform regularly with Seto Nobuyuki, one of the Osaka’s chindon-ya troupe musicians who leads his own klezmer/Gypsy brass band. Such experiences allowed me to gain insights into not only his activities in a chindon-ya troupe, but also how he perceives the relationship between livelihood, musical creativity, different sets of aesthetic values, and labor.

In addition, being known as a musician allowed me to be invited to attend rehearsals, learn songs, hear stories and histories behind the songs, and be part of the performance of Okuma's band Jintala Mvta and Cho Paggie. Even though I was a substitute then, and therefore I could not expect to perform regularly with the two, it seemed to help put the musicians' guards down to interact with me as both a musician and a researcher. It also helped me feel less of an intruder to be spending time with them backstage. Furthermore, it gave me the opportunity to travel with one of the offshoot musical bands, Cicala Mvta, to London. I became implicated in the transnational circulation of chindon-ya music myself by performing with them.

I must briefly note that, except for a couple of informal occasions where I was invited to jump in and "sit in" on a tune or two, I did not join chindon-ya on their job for several reasons. Despite the long-held tradition and emphasis on participant-observation method in fieldwork, there were two concerns that outweighed the possible insights that might have been gained from performing with the troupe. First, I had a financial and ethical reason. In Chindon Tsûshinsha, most members are paid per gig. If I were to volunteer to be part of chindon-ya one day, someone in the troupe would lose his or her job. As a non-member of the troupe, I could not justify taking an income opportunity away from a member even if I refused compensation for my work. Secondly, I felt simply unprepared to perform; soon after I started observing chindon-ya, it became obvious that many things beyond musical competency on a particular instrument were crucial to perform well. Although simply walking along with the members and giving flyers to the passersby seemed like a simple task to many (including myself at first), I was daunted by the prospect of simply jumping in as a researcher. Precisely because performing with chindon-ya on their advertisement meant business for them, I felt not equipped with necessary skills and experiences to take the responsibility in case my performance hindered their reputation or economic opportunity. Later in my fieldwork, this decision proved to be favorable in chindon-ya practitioners' eyes. I was told that my decision not to participate was taken as a sign of my understanding of the seemingly simple and often underestimated practice that many assumed "anyone could do." In retrospect, although I frequently doubted my decision not to actively participate in chindon-ya gigs, I consider winning the practitioners' trust and respect by showing my respect for their financial, professional, and aesthetic investments to be far more important than the insights I might have gained through participant observation.

### **Constituting a Research Topic, Conducting Multi-sited Fieldwork**

As I continuously re-formulated my research inquiries during fieldwork, and shifted my research focus from chindon-inspired musicians to chindon-ya without excluding the former, I encountered a challenge that was both analytical and methodological. In my research, I examined how a wide range of groups and individuals with varying financial/artistic/political interests and varying modes of cultural expression are articulating with one another — but not particularly in the interest of one cause or to form a unitary whole as a mutually recognized "genre" or "scene." This posed a question of how to talk about chindon-ya as an advertisement enterprise per se and chindon-inspired musical projects today within one framework. The chindon-inspired musical

practices and styles vary widely, and each practitioner (both chindon-ya and chindon-inspired bands) has different views and imaginations of what chindon-ya is, and how their own practices do or do not relate to it, and to each other. Even though many agree with what I consider to be “related” or part of some kind of a network or scene around chindon, those who are inside what I perceive to be a loosely networked circle would not easily admit to the existence of it. There isn’t quite the right word readily available to describe the larger connection, either.

Thus, I constantly had to critically examine how I should identify the “subject” of my research as a cohesive and tangible whole. An inevitable process of defining a topic can pose an analytical challenge, especially in the ever-increasingly hybridized and translocally produced, circulated, and consumed popular musics. How do I define the subject of my research, when there does not seem to be a preexisting singular concept that encompasses all practitioners and practices that I am examining? The labels of genre or scene don’t seem to work well to designate the music I studied or practitioners with whom I worked. Similarly, none of the labels of “folk” “popular” or “traditional” appropriately describes chindon-ya. What does the absence of a term to designate the key players as I conceive them speak to? Beyond the un-translatability of the words, what does this uneasiness of chindon-ya in relation to the labeling as neither traditional or folk/popular highlight?<sup>28</sup> These questions are not simply that of labeling-bashing, but a conceptual challenge of how to “bound” a topic as loose, inclusive, and yet internally incoherent as the contemporary practitioners participating in chindon-ya and chindon-inspired musical projects. What are the specificities of chindon-ya as a Japanese musical practice that demand an analytical intervention that is different from pre-existing Anglo-American analytical approaches? What is a common thread that ties these disparate, interconnected, translocally and transnationally produced networks of musicians engaged in the recent chindon-ya resurgence?

The slipperiness of the term chindon-ya itself complicates this analytical challenge. Chindon can simultaneously refer to the business enterprise, the actual instrument of the chindon drums, and the sounds of the drums. Consequently, the definition of what chindon-ya is varied among chindon-ya practitioners and chindon-inspired musicians. I have noted that for many, including chindon-inspired musicians, it is the chindon drum set that visually and aurally signifies “chindon.” However, I learned from my fieldwork with Chindon Tsûshinsha troupe that it is not necessarily the instrument itself but the process of sonically communicating and creating relationships with customers on the streets that defines a chindon-ya. According to that view, chindon-ya can theoretically be a chindon-ya without a chindon drum. Instead of identifying a particular common denominator, then, I explore the sonic and discursive traces of chindon-ya in its business practice, imagination, sounds, and material culture. By focusing on various interpretations and imaginaries of chindon-ya “sound” and “style,” I examine a variety of agents – musicians, writers, artists, audience, promoters,

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<sup>28</sup> This then leads me to the Chindon Tsûshinsha troupe leader’s commitment to trace, through performance and oral histories, other itinerant/brass band/popular entertainment practices that have historically informed chindon-ya practice. In chapter 2, I will discuss in detail how the practitioners situate chindon-ya historically in the present, and re-articulate it with other historical musical practices in the process.

distributors – and their social, musical, and political relations under one loosely linked network.

Examining the distinct yet overlapping networks of chindon practitioners and musicians in different locales is integral to my theoretical framework, which foregrounds the dynamic production of space through geographically dispersed interrelations (see below). Multi-sited fieldwork was crucial, as I view these practitioners in different locales *not* as separate sources of research in different places, but rather as overlapping and interconnected networks that produce a relationally understood space/soundscape in contemporary Japan. My conception of “field” as interrelations, interconnections, and translocal movement echoes Ian Condry’s innovative analytic of “*genba* (現場)” in his work on hip-hop in Japan (Condry 2006). A Japanese term in circulation among the participants of the hip-hop scene,<sup>29</sup> it refers to the actual sites of performance, such as clubs and recording studios, where participants collaborate and improvise. As a creative response to the calls for rethinking the notion of “field” and space in anthropology (Gupta and Ferguson: 1992, 1997; Marcus, 1998), Condry’s use of the *genba* concept redefines the “field” of his research by shifting the ethnographic focus from a geographically enclosed unit of analysis toward performative practices that unfold within the geographically dispersed but socially interrelated relations. Similarly, through chindon-ya’s socio-musical practices, my dissertation examines how socio-musical practices of neo-chindon movements embody and make audible multiple social relations, political formations, historical sedimentations, and cultural expressions that are geographically and temporally dispersed but interrelated.

Because of the way I conceived my research subject as such, it was essential that I remained flexible and mobile as crucial events and connections emerged. Many of the musicians and chindon-ya members were extremely mobile. I went along on their tours to festivals, local folk festivals, and concert venues sometimes as a staff member, and other times as a performer myself. Thus, while I was primarily based in Tokyo for a total of four months and Osaka for about a year, I was constantly traveling to other cities. I rode in the same van or train with chindon-ya troupes to Gifu, Nagoya, Kyoto, Toyama, Kobe; I traveled to Okinawa to observe festivals; I traveled to Hokkaido and London to perform with chindon-inspired musicians on their tour. As chindon-ya and chindon-inspired musicians traveled — within a neighborhood, between cities, or between countries—, the movement itself became the site of my research.

## Chapter Outline

In this chapter, I have provided a historical analysis of chindon-ya, which has been considered uniquely Japan, to reveal its inherently transnational musical roots, and associations with the notion of the popular mass, or taishû. Taking the polyvalence of its meanings and sound, I introduced an analytic of “resonance” and discussed some of the methodological challenges in my fieldwork.

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<sup>29</sup> The word “genba” was used among chindon-ya quite often as well. Most often, the term was used in occasions when money was made for advertisement business. There was a distinction between other “raibu” (live) performances for bands, contests, or festivals, and “genba” – advertisement practices of streets.

In chapter 2, I examine how chindon-ya's advertisement practice, taken as a performance of enticement based on hearing and sounding, makes something resonant with the body, memory, and history. By weaving historiographical analyses of street performance practices that have informed chindon-ya's emergence with ethnographic analyses of contemporary chindon-ya's performances, I show how contemporary chindon-ya practices sound out often contradictory discourse of class and ethnic homogeneity and histories of social marginalization that have been sedimented and made silent and invisible in the performance and reception of chindon-ya today. By showing the multiple temporalities embodied by chindon-ya, I locate chindon-ya within the problematic tension between the silenced histories of caste-based marginalization, the postwar discourse of class homogeneity, and the widening socioeconomic gaps in the contemporary age of neoliberal capitalism. As such, chapter 2 serves as a historical background to understand the particular conjunctures in which I situate the analysis of contemporary chindon-ya practices in chapter 3.

Chapter 3 explores the notion of "imaginative empathy." By analyzing chindon-ya's performance tactics through this notion, I discuss how affective human relationships and capitalist commerce, often pitted against each other as the latter subsumes the former, are in fact in a productive feedback loop in chindon-ya's practice. Taking chindon-ya's focus on listening to the sound, timbre, resonance rather than music as a starting point, I analyze some of the social and discursive practices of "listening" and "hearing" that are considered distinctly Japanese, and how their musical practices and sonic sensitivities have changed due to the shift in everyday soundscapes. By extension, I also show how "imaginative empathy" highlights the shifting notion of who constitutes the listening public. Furthermore, I elucidate how chindon-ya's economic enterprise is rearticulating sedimented histories of marginalization with contemporary social differences in today's neoliberal capitalist economy, while simultaneously being implicated in the dominant discourse of Japanese class and ethnic homogeneity grounded in capitalist modernity.

Chapter 4 offers a brief look at how chindon-ya has inspired musical projects and bands among contemporary musicians that are not about advertisement. Taking a political protest against US military base construction plan in Okinawa as a case study, I explore how discourses and cultural imaginaries of chindon-ya among contemporary writers, musicians, and organizers have enabled an emergent form of political critique in contemporary Japan.

In the last chapter, I highlight the significance of improvisation in both chindon-ya and chindon-inspired practices. I argue that individual musicians' improvisational strategies that are essential in the aesthetics and entrepreneurial moves they make. I conclude by providing reflections and suggesting future research possibilities.

## CHAPTER 2

### PERFORMING GENEALOGIES: HISTORICAL RESONANCES OF DIFFERENCE

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Chindon-ya's performance is not necessarily cheerful and loud. There's something oddly sentimental too. Just like the Piper of Hammeln, it inexplicably attracts children. I have a memory of following behind chindon-ya as a child. I remember very well the nervousness after arriving in an unknown town.

— Shibusawa Tatsuhiko (1982: 240)

All advertisement is just a variation of a phrase: "follow me."

— Amano Hiroyoshi (1997:28)

#### Introduction: Ethnographic Fairytales

After his performance on a warm spring night in 2007, the *zainichi*<sup>30</sup> Korean singer Cho Paggie and I were enjoying midnight snacks and *shôchû* drinks at a hole-in-a-wall bar in Imazato, a predominantly Korean neighborhood of Osaka. A largely built man in his early 50's, Cho was dressed in a casual Korean-style shirt, and switched between English and Japanese while talking with me in his open, well-projected voice. When I asked him about how he came to incorporate chindon sounds in his fourth album "Garlic Chindon" (Cho Paggie: 2000), Cho started to recount his childhood memories of chindon-ya in the late 1950s. He said of chindon-ya: "Street music as advertisement. Chindon-ya was very popular, and at the same time very discriminated against." I asked why. "I don't know... When chindon-ya came to my street, I ran to them, and followed. I had no feeling of discrimination, but my parents said they were polluted." Then he continued:

Yeah, it was very common back in the day that a kid would follow chindon-ya and get lost. My sister got lost many times. So my mom sewed a name tag onto my sister's clothing. Just like during the war, when they sewed a tag with a name, address, age, and blood type on children's clothing, so that they could be easily recognized whenever and wherever they died. I didn't follow them [chindon-ya]. I didn't have the courage. My sister was five years younger than me – I was eight or ten, my sister was two or three years old. Now that I look back, they went far— from Nishinari Ward to Taisho Ward [about 4km]. My sister would just walk along all the way. One time, chindon-ya even brought her back to our home after she followed them all day.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> *Zainichi* generally means foreigners living in Japan, but usually refers to people of Korean descent and their descendants living in Japan as permanent residents.

<sup>31</sup> Cho Paggie, personal communication, March 30, 2007.

When asking people in their 50's and 60's about what they know about chindon-ya, I repeatedly heard variations of this story – including a parallel story told by my mother about her youngest sister, who was notorious for following chindon-ya and getting lost. Inexplicable senses of bewilderment, fascination, and enticement are common sentiments associated with their memories of chindon-ya in the 1950's.

Now an uncommon sight, the image of children following chindon-ya evokes a sense of nostalgia, as a sense of longing not only for the times past but also for childlike innocence. Within both Cho's and my mother's stories of their childhood memories, there is a sense of temporal distance between themselves and their younger siblings. In their narratives, they acknowledge the age gap between themselves and their younger sisters, who surrendered themselves to chindon-ya's enticement and followed them beyond the familiar boundaries of their own neighborhoods, as if to say that they themselves lacked the innocence necessary to follow chindon-ya.

The trope of children enchanted by magical sounds of a street musical band dates back further than the accounts of chindon-ya cited above. In 1936, a music writer Horiuchi Keizo wrote a nostalgic homage piece to *jinta* (ジンタ). Acknowledged as a precursor of chindon-ya, *jinta* refers to the civilian brass bands that became popular around the 1900s. While civilian brass bands at large were referred to as *shichū ongaku tai* (市中音楽隊, inner city musical bands), *jinta* was a subcategory among them. *Jinta* was a small brass band hired by an advertising agent, which paraded through the streets with banners bearing store or product names, or performed to entertain audiences at circus shows and festivals (Hosokawa 1989a: 130). Writing in the late 1930s when *jinta* was no longer a familiar sight on the streets, Horiuchi reminisces about *jinta*'s golden age between the early 1900's and the 1920's and characterizes *jinta* as the “uniquely Japanese artistic genre” deserving an obituary of sort. His description of the *jinta* players, dressed in various military uniforms and marching through the streets, captures the strong affective reaction it incited in him as a boy:

The music scattered the terrifying stimulation. The stirring rhythm of the big drum and the snare drum, the bloody scream of the clarinet, the pointed cynical laughter of the cornet, the inebriated silly songs of the baritone [saxophone]— a vivid, throbbing sensation boiled up in me like the blood pouring out of the fingertip cut with a sharp knife. Yet still, the *jinta* players marched on with calm, even with faint, transcendental smiles. They were Mephistos of the city. They were the magicians of sound.<sup>32</sup>

As evident in the anecdotes above, discourses of how chindon-ya's sounds affect listeners frequently carry strongly visceral and emotional, or even magical, overtones. Enticed by chindon-ya's sounds, the listener came out of their apartments, followed the sounds with their ears and eyes, or followed the chindon-ya themselves, even following them until they were lost. An element of enticement prevails among these accounts. The recurring Piper-of-Hammeln-like imagery of magical street musicians and enticed followers, accompanied by both nostalgia for times past and childlike innocence, provides an insight into understanding chindon-ya's renewed appeal as an advertising

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<sup>32</sup> Horiuchi 1936: 5-6

medium today. I suggest that we transpose this trope of enticed listener/follower to the market place: what more ideal subjects can an advertising enterprise hope for than enticed followers? Chindon-ya's advertisement practice can be understood as a performance of enticement, based on hearing and sounding.

In addition, in both accounts, the magically enticing presence of the street performers carries a curious undertone: the musicians are somehow considered "contaminated," in Cho's mother's word, and depicted as derelict, amoral, castigated, otherworldly, or different. In the same conversation, Cho continued:

Do you know this (starts singing)? "Fool, stupid, chindon-ya. Your mother has an outie!" (I sing along.) ... In a sense, chindon-ya is always made fun of. But then, when they come to town, everyone is excited and applauds. I don't really get it. It's a mystery. Somewhat strange. I recognized chindon-ya as people from a strange place. They can't stay long; they shouldn't be common [i.e. they should not be the same with the rest]. They should be always strange to us.

While they are welcome as the familiar, ubiquitous presence in the everyday lives and on the streets, a clear sense of marginalized difference is evident in the popular perception of chindon-ya. What kind of "difference" is chindon-ya embodying, and how has it shifted over time? How does its marginalized difference or Otherness play into chindon-ya's performance of enticement?

In this chapter, I explore the various histories of Otherness and differences that have been sedimented and made silent or invisible in today's reception and performance of chindon-ya. It is my contention that chindon-ya's performance of enticement stems from the oscillation between the tensions between the mutually constitutive and yet contradictory forces that inform the histories of chindon-ya, to be discussed at length below.

I investigate the various histories of the production of Otherness and difference by weaving together archival and historiographical writings with ethnographic observations of the contemporary practitioners' performative interpretations of chindon-ya's histories, which I call genealogical projects.<sup>33</sup> Taking the lack of discourse on chindon-ya as a point of entry, contemporary musicians and music critics took on various projects in order to show the interconnections between histories of various street performance practices and issues of class, caste, and power. They write, publish, and perform selectively what they consider relevant and resonant with their understandings of chindon-ya in the present context. Acknowledging the changes and disjunctures in the historical knowledge, genealogical projects in the case of chindon-ya resurgence therefore reactivate and resuscitate forgotten or ignored knowledge of chindon-ya by "playing local, discontinuous, disqualified, or non-legitimized knowledges against the unitary theoretical instance" from the contemporary point of view (Foucault 2003: 9). By analyzing what historical relations and moments are privileged in the contemporary performance of the genealogies of chindon-ya, this chapter aims both to provide a historical background of

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<sup>33</sup> Genealogy, according to Michel Foucault, is "the coupling together of scholarly erudition and local memories, which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics" (Foucault 2003: 8).



chindon-ya and to explore how chindon-ya lends itself to be an effective means of producing various enticing resonances.

I take three interrelated angles to shed light on the difference and Otherness embodied by the contemporary discourse about and performance of chindon-ya. First, I examine how the precursors of chindon-ya—namely military brass bands and offshoot practices— allow us to understand how through colonial relations chindon-ya is inextricably positioned in relation to the Western Otherness. Secondly, I examine the social status of the itinerant street performers, which historically have informed chindon-ya. Genealogical projects that tell these stories unveil the histories of discriminations and how contemporary practitioners capitalize upon the tension between fascination and contempt, or marginalization and contestation, that underscore such social marginalization. In the third section, I focus on the notion of nostalgia in order to trace the tension between these sedimented histories of differences and the contradicting association of chindon-ya with “sameness,” or the “mass” or the homogeneous society at large.

## **PART I: MAGICIANS OF SOUND: FROM BRASS BANDS TO CHINDON-YA**

Rhythm appears as regulated time, governed by rational laws,  
but in contact with what is least rational in human being:  
the lived, the carnal, the body.  
— Henri Lefebvre (1992: 9)

### **Brass Bands: Disciplining the National Body through Military Music**

When hearing that I was back in Japan to conduct fieldwork on chindon-ya, my aunt, who was notorious for following chindon-ya as a little girl, reminisced about her childhood memories. She said: “chindon-ya would wear a long, bright colored and striped kimono, and have this showy walking style where they would kick up one foot a little bit to flare up the bottom of the kimono...” With a mischievous smile, she demonstrated the walk – a zigzagging, playful, affected gait with a little bit of humorous hopping gesture accentuating the turns.<sup>34</sup>

This movement of chindon-ya as remembered and reenacted by my aunt struck me for two reasons. First, compared to what I have observed in the field, her demonstration of chindon-ya’s performance from decades ago seemed much more exaggerated in gesture. Nonetheless, secondly, this realization allowed me to pay attention to what I took for granted for a while: the free-flowing body movements of chindon-ya practitioners and the lack of synchronicity among them. Despite chindon-ya’s historical relation to the military brass band (chapter 1), chindon-ya’s body movement today shows no trace of such disciplined body movements to the music as typically seen in marches. How did the musical and embodied discipline of military brass bands inform the formation of chindon-ya, and how did they transform into the free-flowing, non-synchronized, playful movements that we see today? To investigate these questions, I trace the shifting relationship between the West, the Other in relation to which Japan is

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<sup>34</sup> Popular performance arts researcher Fujii Sôtetsu also provides a similar description of his memory of chindon-ya’s movements: “... with a mincing gait, they walked in the shape of the letter S; looking back, that was probably a typical chindon-ya walking pattern.” (Fujii 1977: 173)

constitutively positioned, and Japan within the context of how European military brass bands gave way to the formation of chindon-ya as we know it today, with a particular focus on musical sounds and the body.

Brass bands were first introduced to Japan by European militaries in the 1850s. As the central government was actively incorporating European-style military systems,<sup>35</sup> including drumming and music in the training, *Satsuma Han* (today's Kagoshima prefecture) was the first in the country to introduce the brass band into their military training program in 1869.<sup>36</sup> After the overhaul of the *shogunate* feudal system, the independent feudal domains had been unified to build a modern nation under the new Meiji government. Incorporating music into military training was one of the crucial technologies for the Meiji central government to produce the bodies of the national subjects (国民 *kokumin*). In its effort to militarize and unify the nation-in-building, the government used military bands (軍樂隊, *gungakutai*), which were strategically incorporated into public spectacles of imperial parades and other important military functions as a spectacle to inspire awe in the public.<sup>37</sup>

Drumming and marching were introduced also as a technology of disciplining, orchestrating, and synchronizing national bodies through sounds. The disciplining of bodies by synchronizing movements to a steady beat was a fundamentally new concept to the Japanese at the time. Until the introduction of European music, playing music in synchronicity with others (合奏, *gassô*) and marching to a recurrent pulse in a regular meter, were absent in Japanese music, from courtly to popular forms (Hosokawa, 1989). Although there had been forms of parades of *samurai* warriors in the Edo period, synchronizing one's footsteps with others according to the regular pulse provided by music was an entirely new concept.<sup>38</sup>

The brass bands disciplined the erstwhile un-metered, un-synchronized bodies through dance as well. Amidst the national fascination with European civilization during the Meiji period (1868-1912), brass bands also provided musical accompaniment at dance parties, balls, and sports festivals for the aristocrats and politicians (Horie 1986: 39-42, Horiuchi 1936:10-13). The aristocrats' ardent and awkward attempts to learn to dance —

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<sup>35</sup> France, Holland, and the Great Britain were the main European countries to introduce their military systems to Japan at this time.

<sup>36</sup> Han (藩) refers to a feudal domain. During the Edo period, Japan was divided into regional territories. The Satsuma domain officials ordered instruments, including flute, clarinet, cornet, trumpet, euphonium, trombone, double bass, bass drum, and snare drums from Besson Company in London and hired John William Fenton as an instructor to form their own military band.

<sup>37</sup> Historical musicologist Tanaka Yasuko discusses how European music was a crucial component in public rituals and events where the emperor's authority was to be established and recognized in public in the early Meiji period (Tanaka, quoted in Hosokawa 1989b). Once a feminized figure wearing women's attire, shaved face and with make up, the feminized figure of the emperor was quickly transformed by the government into a beard-bearing military commander. Military music was a crucial sonic accompaniment in this masculinization and militarization of both the nation and the public imagery of the emperor, which was the symbolic parallel of the nation.

<sup>38</sup> This narrative of a rhythm-deficient national body is still manifest in the contemporary popular culture in Japan. See Kaneda, Miki. Forthcoming. "Rhythm Heaven: Video Games, Idols, and Other Experiences of Play" in *The Oxford Handbook of Mobile Music Studies*, edited by Sumanth Gopinath and Jason Stanyek (forthcoming.)

that is, to embody the European concept of synchronizing one's body to others' and to a musical pulse — are humorously depicted by Baron Ôkura Kihachirô:

There were a couple of dancers on the dance floor that stood out. Both were men; one was a huge man like a wrestler, the other was a very thin twig... The big man was the minister of the Army and the small man was the senator of Tokyo. The former in a stoic military uniform, the latter in kimono, they were determinedly trying to do the dance at which they were not so great.<sup>39</sup>

The dancing figures of the senator in traditional kimono and the minister of the army in European military uniform appear to symbolize Japan's attempt to modernize and masculinize itself through militaristic efforts. The account shows the awkward process of embodying the new, musically synchronized disciplined national subjects.<sup>40</sup>

While the brass bands were initially considered a novelty and a form of cultural capital for the upper class indexing their alignment with Western civilization, their sonic presence in the cultural landscape became more familiar and accessible in the popular sphere at the time of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5). The war increased the demand for brass bands and occasions for the general public to be exposed to military songs. With the growing demands for brass band music at various ceremonies among civilians, brass bands that were independent of the military developed around 1886.<sup>41</sup> Now a commercial enterprise, civilian brass bands (*gakutai* 楽隊) proliferated in Tokyo and Osaka, performing at silent cinema theaters, sports festivals, send-off ceremonies for soldiers, outdoor social functions, and circuses.<sup>42</sup> Garbed in European military uniforms, *gakutai*'s sounds — from European waltzes and marches to Japanese popular tunes, traditional *ohayasi* tunes, and military marches — were closely associated with everything fashionable (ハイカラ, *haikara*).

Growing popularity and demand for commercial brass bands led to downsizing the bands to cater to different needs and budgets. What was first a twelve-to-eighteen-person band was gradually reduced to five or six members. The repertoire became smaller as well. For a group going around town, there was no necessity to have a large selection of tunes to perform. By 1906, there was even a report of a civilian brass band

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<sup>39</sup> Quoted in Horiuchi 1936: 11

<sup>40</sup> The gendered notion of Japan's modernizing efforts and aristocrats are also discussed in Hosokawa's analysis of the shifting representations of the emperor. While the emperor had a pale complexion, kept inside the court and was clad in female kimono for the previous 300 years, the Meiji government's effort to create a modern nation under the emperor as a unifying symbol led to a masculinized image of the emperor, wearing a military uniform and a beard. (Hosokawa 1989b: 122)

<sup>41</sup> The Navy band officer Kayama Tsutomu was the first to form a civilian brass band in 1886, named *Tokyo Shichû Ongakukai* (東京市中音楽会). He saw that there were too many demands for a military band to meet, and decided to form a band exclusively to cater to those demands. Based in Tokyo, they performed actively at hotels, horse races, celebratory ceremonies and garden parties. (Hosokawa 1989c: 81)

<sup>42</sup> Later, after the Russo-Japanese War, a new wave of civilian brass bands surfaced. Large department stores, such as Nihonbashi Mitsukoshi (Tokyo) and Ito Gofuku Ten (Nagoya) formed children's brass bands (少年音楽隊 *shônen ongaku tai*) to perform for publicity and concerts (Hosokawa February 1989a: 133).

that could only play one tune.<sup>43</sup> The term “jinta” came into place around this time to refer to these “downgraded,” “pseudo brass bands” played by civilians for commercial purposes. In his 1927 retrospective account of jinta, a writer and radio journalist Tokugawa Musei writes of the “magical power of jinta” for its immediate ability to invoke visceral childlike curiosity and adoration, which makes him thrilled and shiver with joy.

The mystery of jinta lies in that self-destructive, tired, nihilistic, decadent manner of playing. There is a rhythm that would make the listener imagine that the all of the players are lacking filial devotion, ex-convicts, outlaws, womanizers, and patients of some sexually transmitted disease.<sup>44</sup>

The characters evoked by the rhythm of jinta are marginal, otherworldly, subversive, and unethical; however this rhythm actually sounded, one can only imagine that it must have been far from the orderly, orchestrated, synchronized beats of the military brass bands intended to discipline the governable national bodies. It is perhaps this transgressive, marginalized sounds that emerged in the process in which the military band as “musical weapon” transformed into a civilian commercial band as a “musical spectacle” that enticed young Horiuchi and Tokugawa’s minds (Okuma 2001: 32).

### ***Jinta as Japanized Brass Band: Accidental Heterophony***

Advertisement was a crucial force that popularized jinta, as entrepreneurship of advertising agents who hired brass bands propelled the rapid popularization of jinta bands around this time (Horiuchi 1936: 25-6). For many contemporary chindon-ya practitioners, the introduction of the elements of commercial entrepreneurship and advertisement that transformed military brass bands into jinta is considered a significant point of convergence between jinta and chindon-ya.<sup>45</sup> Jinta’s wide popularity among the townspeople lasted only a few years, however; by the late 1910s to the 1920s, jinta gradually ceased to be the ubiquitous sight and sound on the street, and chindon-ya came to take its place.<sup>46</sup> Commenting on the chindon-ya marching through the town, Horiuchi

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<sup>43</sup> In a magazine *Ongaku Zasshi* (Music Magazine) volume 50 (January 20, 1906), there is a description of a band called “*Genkan Gakutai*” – named after the only song that the members can perform, who were all expelled from a certain military unit. In the same magazine, volume 55, a criticism was made against many civilian brass bands that sacrificed musical quality and work ethics for financial pursuit (Quoted in Hosokawa 1989c: 83.)

<sup>44</sup> Tokugawa, quoted in Horiuchi 1936: 29

<sup>45</sup> In his historical analysis of brass bands and jinta, the chindon-ya clarinet player and writer Ôkuma Wataru characterized this transition of brass bands as a shift from “ ‘musical weapon’ (音楽兵器)” to a ‘spectacle of resonance’ (音響スペクタクル)” to refer to the shift from the band as a Westernizing and disciplining technology to a commercial enterprise for local civilians (Ôkuma 2001: 32).

<sup>46</sup> Exactly how the transition from jinta to chindon-ya occurred, and what their relationship was, is a contested topic. Lamenting the disappearance of jinta bands from streets in 1936, Horiuchi attributes the fall of jinta to various factors. For example, after the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5), due to various rebellions and anti-government riots, the police recognized the danger of mass meetings and enforced a repressive law restricting activities on the street. Secondly, in 1909, the depression affected commerce, thereby lowering the demand for jinta. Concurrently, a strong current of internationalism led to a popular opinion that “already Japanized jinta, a supposed Western brass band” was no longer attractive as it lacked

writes: “This is no longer the revival of jinta. This is a conquest by chindon-ya” (Horiuchi 1936: 26-7).

During this transitional period, the distinction between jinta and chindon-ya around the late 1910s is quite ambiguous.<sup>47</sup> Rather than endorsing Horiuchi’s view that chindon-ya was an inferior derivative of jinta, Hosokawa suggests that we conceive of chindon-ya as another layer of “indigenization” in which the performance style of jinta (i.e. advertisement in public space) is combined with elements of traditional Japanese percussions and Western instruments (Hosokawa 1990: 107).<sup>48</sup> If Jinta is a Japanized European brass band, chindon-ya is a further indigenized practice of jinta informed by various other popular performance practices.

According to Horiuchi, the “Japanizing” process in which the European brass bands “deteriorated” into jinta was audible in musical sounds:

The quality of the civilian brass bands rapidly declined. Although there wasn’t much difference between them and the military bands at the beginning, they ended up being an entirely different entity. Meager bands that perform military songs and popular songs without harmony appeared one after another.<sup>49</sup>

This “downgrading” process, however, is a process in which the European music was indigenized, or Japanized. One musical feature where Horiuchi locates the “indigenization process” is the lack of harmonies in jinta. A 19<sup>th</sup> century European practice, harmony supported by low register instruments did not exist in Japanese music. As the military bands became jinta, the Japanized counterpart of the European military bands (日本化された西洋吹奏楽たるジンタ), harmonies and the bass instruments were eliminated (Horiuchi 1936: 25). The lack of the low register “bass” instruments and harmony persisted throughout the twentieth century as jinta gave way to chindon-ya. In the absence of harmony, however, jinta players played the melody with distinct improvisatory ornamentations, akin to the “jazz break” – which made Horiuchi exhilarated beyond words (Horiuchi 1936: 20).

Referring to the indigenized, or Japanized approach to the European military music audible in the recordings of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century jinta performance, Hosokawa

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Otherness (Horiuchi 1936: 25). Finally, around 1925, chindon-ya started to appear and took over the streets.

<sup>47</sup> There were some generalizations that could be made to distinguish them through material culture; broadly speaking, jinta tended to be associated with the European military uniform whereas chindon-ya wore traditional kimono as well as Western attire, and chindon-ya had additional instruments that were traditional Japanese percussion instruments. However, Hosokawa suggests that these are not necessarily conclusive distinctions. One significant difference, according to him, is that whereas jinta was a band in the era when there was no other media that transmitted music to the public, chindon-ya was a subsidiary “live media” in the era when mass transmission of music was made possible through recordings and radio. More than musicianship was asked of chindon-ya, such as eloquent and dramatic speeches and short theatrical performances.

<sup>48</sup> One way to make this case is that “chindon” refers to the sounds of Japanese instruments whereas “jinta” is said to come from the onomatopoeic sound of Western rhythm.

<sup>49</sup> Horiuchi 1936: 17

coins the term “accidental heterophony” (偶発的ヘテロフォニー).<sup>50</sup> Whereas a military brass band ordinarily strives for orderliness and consistency in intonation, timbre, rhythm, and volume, *jinta* players disregarded these principles altogether. For *jinta* players, “indigenous intonation, sound-form, ornamentation, and elastic sense of rhythm” felt natural to their bodies rather than the Western tuning and steady beats (Hosokawa, unpublished, 6). In this light, *jinta*’s musical sounds as well as body movements indexed what Hosokawa calls an “accent” (*namari*, 訛り) during the process in which Japanese musicians learned European music in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The resultant performance was that of heterophony by accident; namely, a musical texture in which variations of a single melody are simultaneously sounded, not as a composed structure but as an unintended consequence of multiple players performing with individual variations intact. This “embodied sense” of accidental heterophony thus highlights the value placed on the continuity and relationality among sounds over time, rather than simultaneity or synchronization of sounds at each moment. This is because among the performers, in Hosokawa’s words, “there are relations with a certain degree of elasticity, or flexibility” (*ibid*). The ornamentation of the saxophone player reminiscent of a “jazz break” that enchanted Horiuchi as a boy, then, resounded in this space created by an elastic sense of time and pitch that embraced particularities and variants, enabled by flexible relations among the musicians.

Despite the danger of reproducing an essentialized discourse of biologically and culturally unique Japaneseness in opposition to the West, the notion of the distinctly Japanese embodied sense of musical time provides an important window through which to understand how *chindon-ya* performances resonate with contemporary practitioners and listeners today. As *jinta* gave way to *chindon-ya* starting in the late 1910s, the musical characteristics — the emphasis on rhythm and melody, the rejection of bass instruments and harmony, and particular tunes, for instance — remained intact in *chindon-ya*’s sounds, even until today. In *chindon-ya*’s sounds today, one can hear what Hosokawa describes as accidental heterophony similar to *jinta*. I suggest that this accidental heterophony was manifest not only in sounds but also in the body of *chindon-ya* practitioners.

During the typical *chindon-ya*’s street routine called *machimawari* (町廻り), literally, “going around the town”), the body movements and footsteps of the *Chindon Tsûshinsha* members are seldom in synch with the music or among the troupe members. The *chindon-ya* practitioners stroll, casually, slowly, and leisurely; the slow pace allows them to visually scan 360 degrees for whoever may be noticing the *chindon-ya* so that they can deliver flyers to them, or strike up a conversation with them. At times, they run, backtrack, or look up and wave at people looking down from balconies and windows of the buildings. They walk at a much slower tempo than almost all of the pedestrians on the street, frequently stopping at a traffic light, when someone talks to them, or when other members of the troupe get held up in a chat with a passerby and need to catch up.

Quite contrary to the strict rhythm and accompanying marching movement of the body expected in the military, *chindon-ya*’s music and body movements are malleable, flexible, elastic, and always changing – contingent upon the specific site and moment of

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<sup>50</sup> Hosokawa uses the term accidental heterophony to describe a concept that informed the Japanese musical practices prior to the introduction of European music to Japan.

the performance. This chindon-ya's unique sense of rhythm produced through music and body movement is described by Kamiya Kazuyoshi, the *off-note* label owner and producer of several Chindon Tsūshinsha's albums as well as the influential jinta-inspired album "Okinawa Jinta" by an Okinawan folk singer Daiku Tetsuhiro. While expressing his aesthetic disagreement with some of the contemporary chindon-inspired musicians for their rigidly executed groove, Kamiya said that chindon-ya rhythm as he appreciates it is a "rhythm that sways with the wind" (風に揺れるリズム).<sup>51</sup> For Kamiya, in invoking chindon-ya in name or in instrumentation, the elastic, loose sense of rhythm is crucial. Although there are many chindon-inspired musicians who invoke chindon-ya in name and in instrumentation in various ways, Kamiya finds it rare to feel this elastic, malleable sense of time, as if a tree branch were swinging in the air.<sup>52</sup>

Here, I bring back the trope of resonance. The embodied aesthetic of chindon-ya, informed by the histories of European colonial expansion and inflected by the bodies that do not easily conform to the synchronizing beats of Japan's Westernizing and nation-building efforts, lies precisely in the oscillation between the two modalities of embodiment: disciplined synchronicity and unconformed playfulness. Much like the way in which two different resonant frequencies combine to produce a new oscillation, I argue that the chindon-ya perform enticement by creating a resonance through the oscillation between the military influence, which was introduced to discipline the national body, and embodied heterophony emerging from bodies that did not conform. The two seemingly contrasting embodied senses of time are co-present in chindon-ya; as Henri Lefebvre insists in his last work *Rhythmanalysis* (1992), the "rational rhythms" — calculable, regulatory clock time, that trains and breaks-in humans — and the "lived" rhythms of the body co-exist simultaneously.<sup>53</sup> Chindon-ya, thus, highlights the multiplicity of rhythms and temporalities embodied within the lived body: simultaneously disciplined and childlike, national and individual, rational and "natural," European and indigenously Japanese, collectively synchronized and individually varied.

### **Performing Genealogies: Colonial Traces**

The traces of European colonial expansion and the resulting tensions and differences are embodied not only in the bodies of chindon-ya performances, but also in the contemporary practitioners' active reinterpretations of chindon-ya history. Now, I

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<sup>51</sup> Kamiya, Kazuyoshi. Interpersonal communication. Tokyo, January 5 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Wind is a metaphor that recurred during my fieldwork. For instance, when asking two clarinet players who both play for chindon-ya why they like to draw connections with and play repertoire of Balkan Roma (or gypsy, as they call them) and Klezmer music, Seto Kazuyuki mentioned that both chindon-ya and Gypsy music were music "exposed to the wind," referring to the outdoor street space as well as the hardships and the often "cold" social receptions of the itinerant musicians. Ōkuma Wataru also calls chindon-ya sound as a "music of wind" (Ōkuma 2001: 7)

<sup>53</sup> Lefebvre discusses the importance of dressage, as a way to physiologically condition humans through instituting a regulatory sense of time. "Military knowledge" is a prime example Lefebvre uses to illustrate this point. This discussion of disciplining bodies through militaristic training bears resemblance with Michel Foucault's work in *Discipline and Punish* (1977); Stuart Elden, in his introduction, also suggests a similarity between Lefebvre's discussion of time, body, and discipline and Karl Marx's *Capital*, which deals with "the mechanical repetition of the cycles of capitalist production is imposed over our circadian rhythms" (Elden 2004: xii). Much like his critique of the prevalent Cartesian understanding of space, Lefebvre also critiques the reductive understanding of time by emphasizing "the lived, the carnal, the body" that keep multiple rhythms that cannot only be measured against the "rational" rhythms (Lefebvre 2004: 9).

shift my subject from historiographical accounts to the genealogical projects performed by contemporary chindon-ya. Although, or perhaps because, there is no definitive historical explanation that accounts for the connection between jinta and chindon-ya, the imaginary of jinta has engendered various performative and discursive interpretations among the contemporary practitioners.<sup>54</sup> By analyzing such performances of genealogies of chindon-ya, I will examine how they strategically privilege certain historical moments in their rendering of the historical formation of jinta and chindon-ya, and what social differences, Otherness, and power relations are revealed through their practices. I suggest that not only do such performances allow them to situate chindon-ya aesthetically in a larger historical context, but they also enable the practitioners to re-activate the memories and histories of the colonial relations between Japan and the West as well as Japan's imperial advances into Asia.

The salient moment during my fieldwork in which the historical and aesthetic connections between jinta and chindon-ya were enunciated was the lecture-demonstration event in Ishinomaki, a small rural town in Sendai prefecture in northern Japan. The event took place in November 2007, and was titled "Jinta *no Yûbe* (ジンのタの夕べ an evening of jinta)." The event featured Hayashi Kôjirô, the leader of Osaka's Chindon Tsûshinsha, and Ôsawa Gakutai (大沢楽隊), the country's oldest (founded in 1926) and the only remaining jinta band that was recently "rediscovered" and recorded by an independent record label *off-note* in 2005. In a joint effort between the label and Hayashi, several Chindon Tsûshinsha members flew to Ishinomaki upon hearing about the band that they perceived to be a rare historical remnant. They collaborated with the members of Ôsawa Gakutai, most of whom are in their 80s and 90s, to record an album to document the sound of a jinta band. The album attracted attention from media and chindon enthusiasts, including the local amateur chindon group in Ishinomaki, "Strada Sendensha."

The members of Strada Sendensha organized this Jinta *no Yûbe* event to give an opportunity for the old jinta band to perform live. Hayashi was invited from Osaka to speak about the relationship between jinta and chindon-ya, and the off-note label owner and recording engineer also drove from Tokyo to record the performance. Hayashi informed me of this event as potentially a fascinating chance to hear what jinta actually sounded like in a live setting and invited me to come along. I booked a last minute flight to join him in Sendai. The event had three components: first, Hayashi gave a talk, lecturing on the history of jinta and chindon-ya. Secondly, the jinta band performed their standard repertoire, interspersed with the heavily-accented leader's humorous talks (80% of which I could not understand without asking the locals for translation due to his strong

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<sup>54</sup> Despite its short-lived musical presence on the streets almost a hundred years ago, jinta is evoked and referenced quite frequently among the contemporary chindon-inspired musicians and chindon-ya practitioners. For instance, the influential album by the Okinawan folk singer Daiku Tetsuhiro that subsequently gave rise to the chindon-inspired musical projects is titled *Uchinâ Jinta* (Okinawa Jinta) (1994). The album includes tunes popular in the early 1900s that must have been played by jinta, arranged for a unique combination of instruments including the traditional Okinawan lute-type instrument called *sanshin*, and chindon *daiko* (chindon drums.) Other examples include the clarinet player and writer Ôkuma Wataru's chindon-inspired band Cicala Mvta, which has a musical alter-ego which is called Jinta-la Mvta; and Osaka's Chindon Tsûshinsha has given historical performances of jinta wearing the historical military uniforms at a performance series at the Osaka History Museum.



northern dialect). Lastly, Hayashi interviewed the junta members on the stage. The audience seats were full, with sixty to seventy people in attendance, mostly local and older men and women. Shiogama Sendensha, the only professional chindon-ya in the region, also drove all the way to attend the event. As if to attest to the rarity and preservationist impulse that underscored the event, many audiences members videotaped the event: including my own, there were six video recorders on tripods, and a local TV crew was also documenting the event for later broadcasting.

Hayashi's lecture showed ways in which he situates chindon-ya in relation to earlier musical practices in Japan, as well as in relation to the brass band practices in other parts of the world. He showed two video clips: a documentary about an old trumpet player who was once a musician for silent cinema theaters and later became a chindon-ya, and another documentary about a brass band at a funeral march in New Orleans. Hayashi excitedly pointed out the similarities in the appearance (uniform) and the music (timbre, polyphonic texture, brass instruments and percussion instruments). Pointing to the ways brass instruments and percussion instruments are used, he also mentioned how he perceived Sri Lankan and Nepalese wedding bands to be in the same category as chindon-ya, as he considers them to be "indigenized" versions of the European military brass bands. In other words, through his recording projects and this lecture demonstration that illustrated the unseemly musical continuity between junta, chindon-ya, and brass bands in other parts of the world, Hayashi highlighted the historical resonances of the European military expansions.

Performances of genealogies of chindon-ya such as this event, in which contemporary practitioners discursively and performatively produce relations between historical practices such as junta and chindon-ya, allow us to see the privileged moment of emergence that inherently positions Japan in relation to European and American colonial powers and militaristic projects.<sup>55</sup> What distinguishes Hayashi's troupe in Osaka from the rest of the contemporary troupes is a high level of commitment and the creativity that he brings into performing genealogies of chindon-ya in relation not only to junta but also to

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<sup>55</sup> I must note that it is not simply the colonial histories of the West that contemporary genealogical projects of chindon-ya elucidate. Once a colonial power itself, Japan's militaristic past has been marked in chindon-ya's genealogical projects. Contemporary chindon repertoire provides a window to explore this. Many military songs (軍歌, *gunka*) that were popular during the 1930s and 1940s have made it into chindon-ya repertoire today. As they became instrumental songs, the militaristic or nationalistic messages in the lyrics receded into the background in the vast majority of the listeners' consciousness. Yet, the songs embrace the traces of Japan's wartime aggression and militaristic past.

Ôkuma Wataru, a writer and the clarinet player who started playing with chindon-ya over 20 years ago, provides a genealogical writing in which he illuminates how today's chindon-ya repertoire can provide a point of entry to examine Japan's wartime aggression and militaristic past as well as its complex and often-hidden historical relations with neighboring countries in Asia. Ôkuma mentions revelatory moment when he recognized a military song played by a Burmese military brass band on a TV news report. The Burmese band was playing "*Gotaiten Mâch* (御大典マーチ)," a popular military brass band tune written in 1926 to commemorate the new Showa Emperor's reign. Ôkuma notes that the song is hardly heard any more in Japan today, and has remained audible only in the form of chindon-ya repertoire. This experience allowed Ôkuma to then contextualize the song within the history of the Japanese government's involvement with the Burmese military government in the 1940s. His knowledge of the song through his experiences as a chindon-ya clarinet player, which is quite likely to be the only way in which the song has remained in performance today, allowed him to make an insightful connection between Japan's militaristic past and its embeddedness in the economic and political milieus of other Asian countries.

many other historical popular musical practices that Hayashi considers to have informed chindon-ya.<sup>56</sup> As described in chapter 1, due to the gap between the previous generation and the next generation, contemporary chindon-ya practitioners like Hayashi often go to the older generations, or historical archives, to understand how chindon-ya used to be practiced and what influences have informed chindon-ya. While many contemporary practitioners based in Tokyo assiduously collect oral histories from the older generation and apprentice with them, Hayashi's effort is not only to reproduce a tradition, but also to take creative license to "perform" his own vision of how various historical and artistic influences have come to form chindon-ya today. His understanding of tradition among chindon-ya practitioners is quite unique. While many contemporary chindon-ya practitioners based in Tokyo tend to treat chindon-ya as an independent art form to pursue through apprenticeship, Hayashi's historical curiosity positions chindon-ya as a nodal point where various historical forces, power relations, and productions of difference have converged.<sup>57</sup>

Genealogical performances of the contemporary chindon-ya practitioners, as seen in the analysis above, show the often forgotten, unacknowledged, or silenced histories of the legacies of colonialism and the tensions within Japan's relationship with its constitutive Other, the West. In the next section, I examine other types of genealogical performances by Chindon Tsûshinsha members and other contemporary chindon-ya practitioners in order to explore further histories of Otherness within Japan. I delve into the histories of various street performing arts that are articulated in contemporary chindon-inspired practitioners' genealogical performances and writings, in order to investigate what histories of marginalized differences have been sedimented in the genealogy of street performances, what cultural work their genealogical performances do today, and how they produce performances of enticement.

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<sup>56</sup> Chindon Tsûshinsha's inclusive and performatively genealogical approach is evident in the wide range of performances that the troupe puts on. In addition to the typical street routine, I attended and helped in the production and documentation of their performances in an old variety theater specifically built for itinerant theater popular theater (大衆劇場) in Osaka as well as in a village *kabuki* theater in Shirakawa (Gifu prefecture). Although they were billed as chindon-ya, they were not advertising for a client at these performances. Instead, they incorporated various theatrical and dance elements from various itinerant folkloric performing arts into their program. They invited non-chindon-ya performers including itinerant theater actors and itinerant singers (流しの演歌師) to perform with them as well. During acts, Hayashi explained that he has drawn upon these other performing arts, or collaborated with these guest performers from other performance practices, because he considered chindon-ya to be historically deeply informed by these itinerant folkloric performing arts. It was his way of creatively and imaginatively piecing together the disconnected pieces of what older generations of chindon-ya practitioners used to perform and were influenced by.

<sup>57</sup> Such a creative, speculative, and performative approach to chindon-ya is valued and shared by the troupe members. Kariyasaki Ikuko, often called by her stage name Pinkie, is one of the youngest members of the troupe. She joined Hayashi's chindon-ya group because of its historically attentive and unique approach. Speaking of her experience of choosing her career after university, she said:

When I was trying to figure out which chindon-ya troupe to join, I thought I had no other option but chindon-ya. Compared to groups that are incorporating new things, I liked Tôzaiya [another name for Chindon Tsûshinsha] for both being historically informed and respectful and challenging to do new things at the same time. Because there was a gap of almost thirty years between the previous generation and Hayashi-san's generation, we are no longer just continuing a practice... I think it's important to fill those gaps (Kariyasaki Ikuko. Personal communication, March 17, 2007.)

## PART II: Marginalized Otherness and Street Performances

In the fall of 2008 in an open-air city theater in the Osaka Castle Park, Chindon Tsûshinsha put on a theatrical show titled: “Autumn Colors, Bustles of the Wild Desert: A Rhapsody on the Origin of chindon-ya.” The theater piece explicitly portrayed Hayashi’s multifaceted vision of chindon-ya history. Despite the evocation of a linear origin story in the title, the performance imaginatively assembled historical and fictional characters to position chindon-ya in a constellation of various historical street performance acts and characters associated with the “street,” from a folk-religious procession in the middle ages to itinerant medicine merchant and candy hawker in the Edo period, and recyclable can-collectors living on the streets today.

The evocation of such divergent street performing arts in relation to chindon-ya’s history is not unique to Hayashi’s genealogical projects. Ôkuma Wataru, the author of the book *Chindon Punk Jazz* (2001), is also a clarinet player active in chindon-ya groups and a band leader of the chindon -informed band Cicala Mvta. Okuma starts his historical investigation of chindon by tracing the histories of various street performance practices in Japan. After having worked in the chindon-ya business for ten years, Okuma learns that “although it appears chaotic and nonsensical, there must be historical memory or culturally genetic work behind chindon.” He continues:

Of course, in terms of the name and instrumental structure, chindon is a rather modern art form, originating after the 1920’s with regard to form, 1850’s at the earliest. However, at the same time, it is certain that chindon carries the elements of various precedents of street performance practices. (Okuma 2001:148)

The list of such street performance practices is extensive and spans over 200 years: Chindon, *jinta* (ジンタ street brass band), *gakutai* (楽隊 street brass band), *naniwa bushi* (浪花節 popular story-telling songs of the 1900s), *enka* (演歌 politically satirical songs of the 1880s-90s), *ameuri* (飴売り candy vendor), *kamishibai* (紙芝居 street picture story show), *sumiyoshi odori* (住吉踊り homeless dance), *chobokure* (ちよぼくれ song and dance spread by itinerant beggars in the 1800’s), *goze uta* (瞽女唄 songs of itinerant blind women), and so on. It is out of the scope of this chapter to trace the musical connections among such practices in relation to chindon-ya. However, to understand the recurrent evocation of otherworldliness and difference in the representations and receptions of chindon-ya and why contemporary chindon-ya practitioners privilege these historical practices in their own renderings of chindon-ya history, I draw attention to the politics of inclusion and exclusion through these practices by focusing on the social position of the performers.

Under the strict hereditary social status system of the Edo period (1600-1868), Japanese society was divided into ruling *samurai* class and ruled class, which consisted of three groups: peasants, laborers, and merchants. Aside from these four groups, there were two classes positioned outside of this human society: the emperor and his clan, who were considered to be transcendent of human society, and the subhuman, below human society (Yamamoto 1989: 4-5). “The subhuman” are further categorized into two types. While *eta* is considered to be a hereditary class or different racial variety, *hinin* refers to

people who fell from the ruled class (1989: 7). Street performance, called *tsujigei* (辻芸) during Edo period, is one of the ways *eta* and *hinin* earned their livelihood, along with begging and other jobs that were considered too vulgar and low for the “human” classes. “The subhuman” caste members were often engaged by itinerant theater groups who spread the otherwise inaccessible *kabuki* theater of Tokyo to the rest of the country, as well as various kinds of storytelling, monkey shows, magic, stunts, street *no* theater, street *yoruri*, seasonal blessing performances, and so on. These performance practices often served as an opening act to attract people prior to the sales pitches of medicine vendors (Morita 1974: 72-77).

These *eta* and *hinin* underclasses which were considered to exist outside of the “human” domain are in fact necessary in the self-identification of the “subject” of the society who establish their dominant identity through the exclusion of Others. Judith Butler explicates the interdependency between the subject and the marginalized differences by using the term “abject,” designating those “unlivable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life that are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject.<sup>58</sup> Although Butler’s theorization was based on her discussion on gender and sex, I argue that her conceptualization of the interdependency between the “subjects” and those who are “not yet subjects” provides a useful lens through which to understand the changing “abject” Other in relation to the dominant Japanese society traced through the genealogy of street performances. I posit that, through the performance of genealogies, chindon-ya practitioners and chindon-inspired musicians today are re-articulating this Edo-period abjective constitutive outside with new, contemporary social differences through the trope of the simultaneously familiar and different, enticingly magical presence of chindon-ya.

The close association between street performers and the histories of marginalization and discrimination has continued into the twentieth century. The street performers are often described as the people suffering from poverty who survive by entertaining the lower classes on public streets (Yokoyama 1941: 45-47),<sup>59</sup> and often associated with *burakumin* (the underclass, or “subhuman” caste).<sup>60</sup> Historically,

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<sup>58</sup> Yet, those who are living under the sign of the “unlivable” are required circumscribing the domain of the subject. Butler continues:

This exclusionary matrix by which subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet “subjects,” but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of the subject... This zone of uninhabitability will constitute the defining limit of the subject’s domain... the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, “inside” the subject as its own founding repudiation (Butler 1993: 3).

<sup>59</sup> Many performance arts mentioned in the list above are mentioned as one of the main means of livelihood among the underclass population in *Nihon no Kaso Shakai (Japan’s Underclass Society)* (1941), written by newspaper reporter, Yokoyama Gennosuke. Yokoyama’s book is one of the first ethnographic journalistic writings on the slums in Tokyo. Based on his ethnographic research between 1940 and 1941, Yokoyama describes in detail the everyday lives of textile factory workers in Kiryû, industrial factory workers in Hanshin area, peasants, and the underclass population living in the big three slum neighborhoods in Tokyo, including street performers.

<sup>60</sup> Echoing Yokoyama, *Kinsei no Minsyu to Geino (Modern People and Performing Arts)* (1989), edited by the History of Kyoto Buraku Research Group, reinforces the close connection between *burakumin* (the underclass, or “subhuman” caste) and street performances. Commenting on the strictly enforced social

although there seemed to be magico-religious and Buddhist functions reported in the earliest records of itinerant street performers, these performers became considered underclass together with beggars by the 1130s (Yoshida 1969: 16-18). The Otherness of the “subhuman” quality of the street performers seems to be projected onto the performances themselves, Edo street performing arts are described as “grotesque,” “abnormal,” “mysterious,” “curious,” and “different.”

This curious connection between magico-religious otherworldliness, fascination for the grotesque and abnormal, and the marginalized social status of the street performers persisted through the Edo period and post-Meiji Japan, and to a certain extent up until the current period. For instance, in the popular reception, inexplicable feelings of idolization and yearning for the life of *hinin* street performers coexisted alongside contempt and discrimination against them. Yamamoto notes the presence of those who belonged to the “human classes” who voluntarily chose to live in the world of *hinin* by becoming street performers. Despite the harsh and miserable conditions in which *eta* and *hinin* lived, there are cases such as a rich merchant joining the street farce theater troupe, a brother of a Shinto priest who danced on the streets to beg for money, and the shogunate government loyalists at the end of Edo period who escaped from prosecution by joining *hinin* theaters (Yamamoto 1989: 119).<sup>61</sup>

### **The Social Position of Jinta and Chindon-ya Performers**

Even after the abolition of the strict feudal class system and the “liberation” of the *eta* and *hinin* in 1871, the pejorative and discriminatory attitude of the people towards street performers and their fascination with them persisted. Horiuchi and Tokugawa’s curiously fantastical commentaries on jinta that I have discussed earlier are examples of this. While the descriptions such as “mephistos of the town, magicians of the sounds” demonstrate Horiuchi’s fascination with the Otherness, magico-religiosity, and the grotesque represented by jinta, Tokugawa’s tone carries not only fascination but also contempt. Though affectionately written, his descriptions invoke amoral, castigated, marginalized characters such as ex-convicts, outsiders, womanizers, and sex-addicts. Horiuchi also comments that, as jinta’s popularity declined, the phrase “he’s only jinta” became a pejorative phrase used by orchestra musicians also to look down upon the jinta musicians as a group positioned socially and musically lower than they (Horiuchi 1936: 31).

Whether one regards jinta as the origin of chindon-ya or as one of the closely related practices preceding the rise of chindon-ya, the continuity between the two is

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hierarchy and resultant discrimination of the pre-Meiji era, Yamamoto Naotomo historically positions the politically and socially discriminated population.

<sup>61</sup> This discriminatory attitude juxtaposed with fascination with the grotesque/difference is also seen in the other street performance practices such as newspaper hawkers and *goze*. The birth of deformed babies was one of the most popular topics of newspaper hawkers and *saimon* singers who sang aloud the temporary topics of the news during the Edo era (Matsumiya 1968: 349). *Goze* are blind women who specialized in itinerant street performances, often singing and playing shamisen. Although the direct connection between *goze* and chindon is unclear, Oyama Masato wrote extensively about his relationship with *goze* singers as an introduction to his journalistic and biographical book on contemporary chindon performers *Chindon Kikunoya No Hitobito (People of the Chindon Kikunoya Family)* (1995). Not only is his interest in writing about this chindon group informed by his relationship to *goze* singers, but the chindon musicians in his book also draw upon and perform *goze* songs.

crucial for various genealogical understandings of chindon-ya among the practitioners today. I argue that one of the ways in which this continuity is created is in the realm of the social positions of the musicians, and how both practices embody close association with the oppressed, the discriminated against, the lower class, and contempt and fascination that accompany their difference. At various points in the history of chindon-ya narrated in chindon-ya *Shimatsu Ki* (1986), the only historiographic writing exclusively dealing with chindon, the author Horie Seiji notes that chindon performers are always connected to underclass, impoverished, discriminated against, or marginalized members of the society.

As noted above, Horie's narrative of the history of chindon starts with a candy hawker Amekatsu in 1845, as the first example of capitalization of one's own voice as an advertising agent in the public space. Requiring very little to start the business, with one's voice, body, and performance as the necessary capital, chindon-ya has historically appealed to those in desperate economic circumstances, freshly bankrupt, unemployed, or cast out from the society. For instance, discussing the earlier forms of chindon-ya (Hiromeya in Tokyo in 1886 and Tozaiya in Osaka during Meiji period), Horiuchi comments that these pioneers of chindon-ya all started with nothing. They had either failed in their previous businesses and were forced to live on the street, or were born into extreme poverty of the slum before starting chindon-ya practice which required almost no capital but only one's own wit, oral skills, and public relations ideas (Horie 1986: 85). It was also not unusual for a married couple who were suffering from poverty to start a chindon-ya business (Horie 1986: 106-7).

Furthermore, Horie's ethnographic accounts of the backgrounds of chindon-ya practitioners show that they tended to be of "marginalized" social positions for various reasons. Since the end of silent film created a surge of orchestra musicians joining chindon-ya in the 1930s, chindon-ya has been a hybridizing ground for various performers and musicians with different backgrounds. After World War II, a similar phenomenon took place in which economically deprived people rushed to the chindon business. Even without any performance skills, numerous people without jobs with a need to hide from society resorted to the chindon business. Horie's interviews with such marginalized characters included an alcoholic ex-train driver who lost his job, a tax collector who was fired for bribery, a murderer, ex-prostitutes who lost jobs after the prohibition in 1959, a traumatized war veteran, a transvestite, etc. Some of these people were those of abjected subhuman class lineages, while some others were driven out of their livelihood due to the rapid growth of industrialism and capitalism, and thus resorted to the chindon world as a means of survival.

Although there are no explicit and recognizable commonalities between many of these street performers and chindon-ya today, the members of Chindon Tsûshinsha, including the younger ones, share Hayashi's genealogical perspective. Although they do not necessarily embody the social or socio-economic Otherness that has been historically associated with chindon-ya themselves,<sup>62</sup> the younger members share Hayashi's widely

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<sup>62</sup> Members of Chindon Tsûshinsha today do not come from such backgrounds for the most part. The founding members of Hayashi, Kawaguchi Masaaki and Kobayashi Shinnosuke all come from middle-class backgrounds and met at a university to form a chindon-ya group together in their early twenties. Some of the younger members in their early thirties today also completed their university education before joining chindon-ya as a full-time career.

inclusive and genealogical perspective where they pursue connections between chindon-ya and other historical performance practices. For instance, at Hayashi's gentle urging, I attended a month-long lecture series at the community culture center in Osaka on the historical performing arts and discriminated groups, given by the aforementioned scholar Okiura Kazuteru. In attendance also was Yamaguchi Aki, a dancer and member of Hayashi's troupe in her late twenties. She voluntarily attended this course as she felt the necessity to understand chindon-ya in a larger context of itinerant performing arts and the social discriminations that accompanied them in order to be a better chindon-ya performer.<sup>63</sup>

The coupling of fascination and contempt towards the difference associated with historical itinerant folk performance practices has enabled today's younger chindon-ya practitioners to imagine a sense of solidarity at times. Uchino Makoto, a 31-year old member of Chindon Tsûshinsha, echoed this view. Although he gave a disclaimer that he could not speak with authority on the accuracy of historical information, he drew a parallel between chindon-ya and *hyottoko*, a typical mask worn for a comical folkloric performance act. He alleged that *hyottoko*, known for its asymmetrically placed pursed lips, symbolized the physically deformed, otherness, and minority that are discriminated against. He said he aspired to be *hyottoko*: for him, the oppressed, marginalized, and yet beloved "difference" popularized in the *hyottoko* mask resonated with the histories of marginalization embodied within chindon-ya.<sup>64</sup>

The marginality and Otherness associated with street music performers has persisted at least from the 12<sup>th</sup> century all the way up until today, despite the dramatic change in the class system, which supposedly liberated the "subhuman" classes and made all of the people of Japan equal. In other words, despite the alleged historical transformation of the Japanese feudal status system into a "modernized" society based on basic human equality, the "object constitutive outside" persisted (Butler 1993). The children's phrase at the beginning of this section — "stupid, fool, chindon-ya!" — might be explained through this long lineage of articulation between street music practices and performers, "otherness," "grotesque," and "lowness," which simultaneously bring forward disdain and fascination from the audience on the streets.

### **Marginalization and Contestation**

As I have shown, by performing genealogies of chindon-ya today, chindon-ya practitioners and chindon resurgence musicians are making audible the silenced histories of marginalization through caste system. Furthermore, I posit that they are simultaneously drawing on the histories of contestation that have taken place on the streets, through sounds. I now turn to the political articulation of class, power, and street performances.

In *Autoro no Geino: Misemono, Daidogei* (Outlaw and Performing Arts: Spectacles and Street Performances) (1969), Yoshida claims that this taste for the

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<sup>63</sup> I must note that, although a comprehensive genealogical study of women street performers warrants close analysis, it is out of the scope of this chapter to examine how gender figures into the genealogical performances of chindon-ya today. I will include the expressions and voices of female chindon-ya members whenever possible. For a journalistic account highlighting the role of women in the Showa era chindon-ya practices, see Ôkuma Wataru's "Onna tachi no Chindon (女達のちんどん)" (Ôkuma: 2005).

<sup>64</sup> Uchino Makoto. Personal communication, April 13, 2007

grotesque and abnormal is not simply decadence and curiosity but “something that emerged out of unique repressed feelings within the feudal order” (Yoshida 1969: 25). Yoshida argues that the persistence and popularity of the grotesque and the erotic, despite censorship, is a result of the repressive social order of the Edo feudal system. With the rise of commercialism during the Edo period, the values of the samurai ruling class declined, which also meant the weakening of the moral values that supported the class system itself. Instead, there was a marked rise in the “new system of popular performing arts which purely pursued amusement” under feudal oppression (1969: 23). Yoshida reads a strong oppositional power into such street performances, as he claims that the peak of the development of street performance art was met with the fall of the Edo shogunate. He concludes: “The street performances and exhibit shows were challenges against the system of order and rule centered around the samurai class, prompting the collapse of the system” (1969: 28). While Yoshida’s psychological analysis of the complex historical conjuncture seems more speculative than insightful, he points to the contestatory possibilities that the domain of amusement, entertainment, and pleasure provided for the otherwise socially marginalized and oppressed.<sup>65</sup>

Examples of the subversive potential of the street performers are found in the newspaper hawkers discussed by Matsumiya Saburo in *Edo no Monouri* (1968). In discussing the newspaper hawkers and *saimon uri* street performers who sang aloud the news of the time with *shamisen* (three-stringed lute type instrument) accompaniment, Matsumiya notes that there was constant pressure on and censorship of them by the government, as they often voiced satirical and critical views against the powerful (Matsumiya 1968: 349-351). Any writers, or street performers reading or singing satirical or critical commentaries about the government were arrested and often beheaded. These accounts show the oppositional quality of the street performers against governmental power, which enforced an extremely strict status system based on four classes and subhuman classes as discussed earlier.

The crucial turn in the political significance of street performance happened when the Edo shogunate handed power over to the emperor, thus in principle ending almost 700 years of feudal order based on a specific status system. During the Meiji era when Japan was faced with social, political, and cultural structural changes, street performances became the means of articulating class issues which the government aimed to address under the guise of the “equality law” even though, in actuality, the previously considered low-class and sub human classes still continued to be discriminated against, disadvantaged, and suppressed.

New street performance practices which addressed this issue during the Meiji era were *enka* (演歌) and *naniwa bushi* (浪花節). *Enka*, political and social satire songs sung by young activists called *sôshi* (壮士), were popular between 1885 and 1890 and closely connected to the Freedom and Democracy Movement in Japan, and *naniwabushi* was a lower-class entertainment that consisted of story-telling street performance by singers. Although they are mainly vocal categories that are not musically close to *chindon-ya* in instrumentation, many of the *enka* and *naniwabushi* tunes entered *chindon-ya* repertoires. Okuma Wataru, the aforementioned *chindon* clarinet player and the band

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<sup>65</sup> In discussions of the political subversive possibilities in historical street performances, Bakhtinian politics are often evoked, although this has also been critiqued by more contemporary writers (DeMusik Inter 2004: 208-210.)



leader of Cicala Mvta, writes extensively about both genres, particularly on Soeda Azembô who is considered to have been the father of *enka*. In fact, although Okuma does not write so explicitly in his writings, the name of his chindon -informed band, Cicala Mvta, comes from a poem in Italian that is carved on Soeda's tomb stone:

A CICALA-MVTA CHE CANTAVA  
E LA SVA MOGLIE CHE L'AMAVA

(To the mute cicada  
That used to sing  
And his wife that loved him)<sup>66</sup>

Cicala Mvta: a mute cicada. It stands for the name “A(mute)zen(cicada)bo(kid)” of the father of *enka*. Why dedicate the band name to an *enka* artist? What makes *enka* and *naniwabushi*, both hardly heard on the streets today, relevant for the musician who is trying to draw upon chindon music today?

Hyôdo Hiromi's *Koe no Kokumin Kokka Nihon* (Japan: Nation State of Voice) (2000) provides an insightful genealogy of Japanese oral literacy, focusing particularly on *enka* and *naniwabushi* as influential vocal performance practices which shaped the consciousness of the Meiji- to Taisho- era Japanese nation-state, centered around the imperial “family” while suppressing socialism. Although of great interest, unfolding his argument is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, the connections between *enka*, *Naniwabushi*, democracy movement, labor union organization, and “lower classes” of Japan during Meiji era offer some keys to understand the contemporary relevance of *enka* and *naniwabushi* to the chindon resurgence.

*Enka* was a product of the movement for liberty and democracy during the Meiji era, political public speech turned into a song form. Soeda Azembô (1872-1944), an important *enka* writer and singer who almost single-handedly contributed to establishing *enka* as a genre, defined *enka* as “songs of the street, born on the side walk, that flowed from the bottom of society” (Soeda 1963: 1). *Enka* were also called *Sôshi-bushi* (activist songs). After the fall of the Edo government and shogunate, the Meiji era saw dramatic political turmoil. Under the repressive measures of the government, which prohibited any public speeches and meetings against the government, the Meiji liberal democratic movement activists resorted to songs as a means of public political expression and circulation. Soeda wrote:

Every public speech gathering was crushed by the police. Thus the alternative was to go out to the streets and sing. Also, there was an idea that it would be more appropriate to use songs and storytelling that are more accessible to the people rather than formal speech, in the spirit that the principle of democracy needed to take root within the masses.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Kimura 1987: 9

<sup>67</sup> Soeda, Azembô, quoted in Kimura 1987: 26

Activists wrote songs that were social satire critical of the government and often informed by socialist ideologies.<sup>68</sup> Soeda, too, was involved with the socialist movement, becoming a city councilor for the socialist party in 1908, albeit temporarily. Soon he went back to the life of a poet and a song writer, prolifically producing more songs written from a critical viewpoint of the lower class on the issues of class and union organization in a language familiar to the working-class masses. Kimura argues that this had a direct relationship with Soeda's background: Soeda lived in poverty and on the street throughout his life, and the only stable residence he had with his son was in one of the terrace houses in Shinami, one of the biggest slums of Tokyo.

Like Azembô, *naniwabushi* singers around 1878 were all from the extremely segregated and impoverished "three big slums" districts of Tokyo (Hyôdo 2000: 22-23). Many of them were descendants of the *hinin* or *eta* class from the Edo era (2000: 108-109). They were unionized once *naniwabushi* gained popularity. Due to their extreme popularity thwarted by police who prohibited street performances, *naniwabushi* eventually became an indoor performance category, and spread widely throughout Japan via radio.

Like *Enka*, *Naniwabushi* also had an association with the socialist movement in common with *enka*, although in a different way. The socialist parties and activist groups such as *Genyosha* and *Kokuryu Kai* dedicated themselves to "freeing Asia from Euro-American imperialism, advocating strong diplomatic policies against Russia, and relief activities in the slums" (Hyôdo 2000:124). The socialist intellectuals tried to reach out to the urban underclass workers, and did have a strong relationship with urban underclass, the poor, and the proletariat. However, according to Hyôdo, the newspaper journalists and Christian intellectuals, who comprised the core of the socialist movement at the beginning of 1900's, failed to mobilize the underclass, working class, and the unemployed because they overlooked the significance of *naniwabushi*.

Both *enka* and *naniwabushi* were not only performed by the "people of inferior origin" (Hyôdo 2000: 44) or people from the Tokyo's "Big Three Slums," but also served as medium through which anti-governmental sentiments as well as class issues were expressed and circulated. The recurring censorship including laws prohibiting street performances and mass meetings show how *enka* and *naniwabushi* were perceived to be a threat by the government (2000: 67-8).<sup>69</sup> Therefore, through their long historical

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<sup>68</sup> Hosokawa notes that *enka* was screamed rather than sung, and suggests a similarity to punk (Hosokawa, 1989d, 91).

<sup>69</sup> Hyôdô also describes how *naniwabushi* offered not only subversive but also oppressive possibilities. Once looked down upon by intellectuals and journalists, *Naniwabushi* lost its exclusive association with the working class and became a popular art form for the upper classes as well. Although *naniwabushi* started out as a social satire expressed by or for the underclass, it was later appropriated by those in power to repress socialism and labor organizing. It was further reappropriated to lead the Japanese public to conceive of the nation as a unified, homogeneous family under one father: the emperor. In other words, a street performance, which initially expressed and critiqued social and political class differentiation, ironically was put to work to foreground a monolithic notion of a homogeneous Japanese nation state based on the imperial system. Hyôdo summarizes:

The pseudo-family morality of the underclass street performers from the slums absorbed and deconstructed socialist logic. The melodious voice of *naniwabushi*, along with the national crisis and war, dissolved the senses of difference, discrimination and class, and instead created homogeneous and unitary community and consciousness of the "Japanese Nation" (Hyôdô 2000:221).

associations, street performance practices today lend themselves as expressive media through which the “abject constitutive outside” can make visible and audible their own existence, which has been naturalized and silenced. Through street performances, the “not-yet-subjects” who are necessary for the Japanese “subjects” to establish their own power and national identity express the uneven power dynamics. This may offer a key to begin to understand why Cho Paggie, a *zainichi* Korean singer based in Osaka, or Daiku Tetsuhiro, an Okinawan folk singer who often collaborates with musicians who are active in chindon resurgence, chooses to sing many of *enka* songs in their projects dealing with anti-US military politics. I will address further their chindon-inspired projects and re-articulations of historical caste-based difference with ethnicity-based difference in contemporary Japan in chapter 4.

### **PART III: Chindon-ya and the Ordinary *Taishû* and Nostalgia**

So far, I have examined the difference and Otherness embodied by chindon-ya performance and sounds through historical analysis. However, as I mentioned in chapter 1, chindon-ya has a strong association with the notion of the popular mass, the people, or “taishû.” I now examine the notion of “taishû,” to understand whom chindon-ya’s sounds and images have historically interpellated, and the contradictory tension between this notion of the mass and the histories of discrimination and difference that is embodied by chindon-ya.

Originally, the term taishû was used in the Buddhist context (Sekiguchi 2001; Robertson 1998; Yokoi 1979). The term, originally pronounced *daishu*, initially referred to those who embraced Buddhism, then later referred to a body of monks-in-learning who have not yet attained positions, and who are thus “ruled” by other powerful monks. This use of the term was adopted by the townspeople of Tokyo, which resulted in the use of “taishû” to mean many people who are ruled, governed, or oppressed.

While many Japanese scholars have analyzed taishû through English language literature and the universalizing perspectives on industrialization, capitalist economy, urbanization, and mass media,<sup>70</sup> Jennifer Robertson offers a synthesis in which she focuses on how some Japanese scholars have conceptually analyzed popular culture in their own right (Robertson 1998). Among some other competing notions,<sup>71</sup> Robertson suggests that taishû is the most popularly used term but is highly contested; it is laced

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<sup>70</sup> Some Japanese writers assert that taishû emerged as a translation of the English term “mass” in the 1950s (Sekiguchi 2001, Itô 1983). Drawing on the English language scholarship on mass culture, Sekiguchi and Ito attribute the emergence of the word “mass/taishû” in Japan to the universalizing discourse on the of industrialization, capitalist economy, urbanization, and mass media and assert that the idea of “crowd, public, mass” emerged as capitalist modernity increasingly homogenized culture (Sekiguchi 2001: 8-9). He seems to equate the emergence of the “new middle class” or “the working class mass” to the notion of “new mass.” The Tokyo earthquake of 1926 was an impetus for various levels of transformation: “from imitating to groping for something new, crafts to industry, individual to mass” (Itô1983: 203) that turned Tokyo from city to metropolis. For Ito, urbanization and its accompanying contradictory forces of standardization and creativity were instrumental to shaping Japan’s taishû culture.

<sup>71</sup> Robertson shows how competing notions of “the popular” exist in different terminologies such as taishû, *minshu* 民衆, and *jômin* 常民, which are all entangled in the notions of class, region, difference, and power relations. *Jômin* used by Yanagida is an essentialized reservoir of Japanese past, customs, and authenticity. *Minshu* is often used in opposition to the aristocrat, and to class- and region-bound categories (e.g., 民謡).

with “nostalgic references to ‘folk’ and ‘traditional’ ways of life in addition to less sanguine associations with nationalism, mass consumption, and citizen’s movements” (1998: 72).

Indeed, the term *taishû* is caught within the tension between nativist view of Japanese popular culture and the West, compounded by various nationalist claims, thus creating a wide array of conflicting interpretations of the term.<sup>72</sup> Among such inconsistencies and contested meanings ascribed to the notion of *taishû*, Robertson draws on a sociologist Kawazoe Noboru to assert that *taishû* is a transcendent category that can be used to refer to the national popular culture. For Robertson, *taishû* emerged due to industrialization and modernization and is a category synonymous with the nation in its superclass, supreregional orientation. It encompasses and affects all peoples within the borders of Japan, and it is popular because it is familiar or experientially available to all Japanese.<sup>73</sup>

Such an assumption of popular culture permeating through all classes seems to run against Ukai Masaaki’s analysis of the fragmentation of the contemporary *taishû* culture.<sup>74</sup> Based on the assumption that there was once a “homogeneous culture” that then disappeared, Ukai focuses on the creative agency of the “audiences” in both the production and consumption of popular culture since the Pacific War up to today. Ukai points out that the qualities that were once associated with mass culture before the 50s – mass in opposition to educated elites, mass as homogenized culture, mass as majority, mass as passive and subordinate, etc – are now obsolete. Instead, the new forces, such as rapid economic development from the 1950s through the 1970s, the forces of Americanization, changes in media technology that allow more participatory forms of consumption, higher education levels, and the subdivision of the market through the creation of niche markets, urge for a newly conceptualized post-war mass culture that is “compressed, dense, multi-layered and multi-dimensional” (Ukai 2000: 6).

Although *taishû* has multiple connotations and conflicting definitions, I highlight that most accounts agree that the term *taishû* is tied to the particular historical period of the 1950s to the 1970s, when the notion of the nation as a homogeneous “new middle class” emerged as Japan entered the post-war period of rapid economic growth. This was

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<sup>72</sup> A survey of the term among various Japanese scholars shows the two competing ideology of Japaneseness: the nativist view of Japanese culture as unique and authentic on one hand, and that of a newly formed culture created through selected Western and Japanese elements and institutions. Sociologist Kato Hidetoshi uses *taishû bunka* (popular culture) as an egalitarian notion of “the national culture” that erases the boundary between hegemonic and popular culture (Kato 1980). *Kôgengaku* sociologists Gonda Yosunosuke and Kon Wajiro emphasize the gender and class difference among the *taishû*, although later they conflate the term with *Kokumin* and *Jômin* to designate the hegemonic national culture as a whole. Continuity with the Edo *tsûzoku bunka* (culture of people without pedigree) has been denied by a sociologist Kurihara Akira, who defines *taishû* as a whole new formation occasioned by the high-growth industrialization of the postwar period (Kurihara 1997).

<sup>73</sup> After examining these contested meanings, Robertson claims to use both “popular” and “mass” to refer to *taishû*, differentiating the popular (generic, sense of agency) from mass (hegemonic or homogenizing, object of technological developments and social actions). Perhaps this tactic to use both “popular” and “mass” to refer to *taishû* culture was a necessary tactic (even though she does not address it so) to give more nuanced meanings to her rather all-encompassing definition of *taishû bunka* (culture).

<sup>74</sup> A practicing public intellectual, Ukai Masaaki is not only a sociologist but also an active *taishû* *engeki* actor. He was one of the invited guest performers for the theatrical performances *Chindon Tsûshinsha* gave in theaters that I described above.

also the most active period in chindon-ya's history: 2500 chindon-ya were said to be active in the country, and their bright colored costumes and sounds were ubiquitous to the everyday sight and soundscape. Chindon-ya's sounds indexed the ordinary: it was the sound of the everyday, of the neighborhood streets, of the ordinary people — taishû.

However, discussing the subject of who taishû are, and how to perform for the general public, one of the founding members of Chindon Tsûshinsha, Kawaguchi Masaaki asserted that taishû no longer exists in contemporary Japan. He said:

It [chindon-ya] used to be for taishû. *The situation has changed. I think there isn't a concept of taishû these days... After the war, from the bottom of things, the whole nation unified to reconstruct the country. Everyone was poor, and that was taishû. Taishû means everyone's the same. But it's not like that any more today. People don't say it explicitly, but I think what they call 'gap society' (格差社会) today is compared to taishû.*<sup>75</sup>

Hayashi also echoed Kawaguchi by discussing “the so-called demise of taishû” through an example of a local, large taishû shokudô (taishû restaurant 大衆食堂) called Sennichidô (千日堂).

Taishû *shokudô* was a place where the entire family and followers would gather. Same as Kuidaore [another large and famous taishû restaurant in Osaka.] The energy of taishû disappeared. In front of Sennichidô restaurant, there was a weird papier-mâché statue of a soft-shell turtle that was a mascot for the restaurant. They would serve anything from turtle to *ramen* and pudding. They used to be around until ten years ago... It was a common custom in the 1950s, when today's baby boom generation used to be children.<sup>76</sup>

While Kawaguchi discussed the disappearance of taishû as the fragmentation of the once homogeneously depicted mono-class nation into class differences, Hayashi emphasized the generational fragmentation today. Hayashi reminisced about the taishû shokudô as a place that could cater to all generations; pudding for children, soba noodle for the grandmother, and beer for the father. The fall of *Sennichidô*, and the demise of taishû, meant the disappearance of a common denominator across generations in cultural production. This had a tangible consequence for chindon-ya performance. Kawaguchi argues that the choice of repertoire had to change as the super-generational, super-class, super-regional notion of homogenous national subjecthood of taishû disintegrated. He told me: “There is no so-called taishû any more, so we change our expressions depending on who we are playing to. For this person, for that person... we didn't have to change [songs] back in the day.” In a separate conversation, Hayashi also spoke of the same issue by asserting that taishû ongaku, or taishû music, came to an end along with the demise of taishû.

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<sup>75</sup> Kawaguchi Masaaki, personal Communication, February 17, 2007

<sup>76</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, January 25, 2007

Taishû *ongaku* (music) ended with the song “Naniwabushi dayo Jinsei Wa.” Whether you like it or not, everyone ended up memorizing that song. Even if you don’t like, whether you are a kid or grandpa, it lingered in your ears. Since that song, there’s nothing like it any more... we still do play *ryûkôka* (流行歌、popular songs), but just songs that are limited to certain generations. Back in the day, chindon-ya was a replacement for top 40. But now, it’s almost like an original repertoire; the song doesn’t matter, as long as you integrate well the kane (gong chime) and *taiko* (drums).

The oldest and most revered clarinet player, the third founder of Chindon Tsûshinsha, Kobayashi Shinnosuke confirmed Hayashi’s view. Although Kobayashi only had three to four songs to repeat all day when he started in the mid 1980s, now he claims to have 1500 Japanese popular tunes, 100 Dixieland jazz tunes, and Western popular tunes not yet counted under his belt. Choosing what tune to perform is crucial, as the goal of the chindon-ya performer is to marshal the listeners’ attention, to invite them to come and talk to the chindon-ya to find out what is being advertised. Kobayashi explained how he chose tunes at a given moment during the street routine:

It’s best if the bystanders start to hum along... For those under age fifty, everyone knows *Nagaragawa Enka* [the name of a song]. Under 30, they know the Doraemon theme song [a popular TV cartoon theme]. There are actually many of those *natsumero* tunes (nostalgic melodies), not today’s pop songs and *enka* songs. You have to think about people of different generations than your own to get this. Hit songs don’t necessarily work.<sup>77</sup>

Together with the widening socioeconomic gaps and disintegration of the population into generation groups, Sennichidô’s popularity declined, and eventually closed in 2001. Half-humorously and half-seriously, Hayashi called the fall of Sennichidô a “tragedy.” What made Sennichidô’s fall tragic for Hayashi, I suggest, was its relentless and at times awkward attempts to continuously “modernize” itself by incorporating Western dishes and aesthetics while sustaining its appeal to the general public through familiar, Japanese styles. The resultant mish-mash of Western and Japanese dishes and interior decorations targeting multiple generations, for Hayashi, was bizarre and awkward — manifest in the strangeness of the papier-mâché statue of a soft-shell turtle.

Hayashi seems to read chindon-ya into the tragedy of Sennichidô. Both were commercially packaged amalgams of the Japanese taishû that grew along with the emergence of the notion of taishû as a mono-class nation in the 1950s, but which quickly became obsolete and an object of mockery. Precisely because there was no framework of tradition that bounded Sennichidô, just like chindon-ya, they did not sustain themselves, falling behind the time as taishû fragmented through the era of the bubble economy and the subsequent recession era. However, as Sennichidô closed, chindon-ya is regaining its

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<sup>77</sup> Personal communication, August 27, 2007

cultural and economic currency; Hayashi's troupe now has over 25 members, the majority in their late 20s to 30s, generating up to one million dollars in annual income, performing abroad at festivals, and appearing on various popular media. The question is, then: in the face of the demise of the taishû that chindon-ya was once closely associated with, how does it entice listeners today?

Hayashi said that one of the factors that changed the reception of chindon-ya and saved chindon-ya from the "tragedy of Sennichi Dô" was the young generation of today.

Lately, young people travel to Asia and enjoy digesting different cultures. Back in the day, people used to mock Asia, Southeast Asia. An ugly person would be asked whether she came from Cambodia, or told to go back to Vietnam. Or, if you got tanned, people would make fun of you and call you an Indian. This is when taishû was popular... What changed [the anachronistic reception of chindon-ya] was not the ministry of culture and science, but the youngsters who are interested in things "ethnic." So it became easier to do chindon-ya. Traditional Japanese things are starting to be viewed as something ethnic.<sup>78</sup>

Struck by Hayashi's comment that there is an ethnic othering of the Japanese practice of chindon-ya, I asked the same question of Aya, a twenty eight-year old chindon-ya clarinet player who was working with him then. She concurred, asserting that she feels the gaze from younger generations that made her feel as part of the "ethnic" trends. The parallel Hayashi draws between the ethnicized depictions of Asia and chindon-ya underscores that they both were the byproduct of the nationalist project of creating a monolithic, homogeneous Japanese subject; they were both abject "differences" necessary to produce the notion of the sameness of Japaneseness. Although in the 1950s and 60s Asia was racially coded in Japanese popular discourse and became an object of mockery based on Eurocentric values and forces of Americanization, now "Asia" is exoticized and popularized among the young generation. And chindon, according to Hayashi and other members I spoke with, is starting to be viewed with the same gaze. Not only is chindon-ya no longer the sound of the ordinary people, but also for the younger generations who grew up after the age of taishû, chindon's sounds are listened to in the register of neither class or generation, but imaginary "ethnicity."<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Personal communication, January 25, 2007.

<sup>79</sup> The narratives of "the demise of taishû" shows that both Kawaguchi portray the fragmentation of the unitary mass (read: nation state) into class and generation gaps based on the assumption that there was such a thing as a "homogeneous, mono-class" taishû. While highlighting the new class/generational differences, this narrative elides the historical caste-based differences that their performance of genealogy highlights. This points to the complex and overlapping matrix of various registers of difference (class, caste, generation, ethnicity, race, and gender) in the analysis of "difference" in Japan. For instance, there is an overlap between caste-based difference and the notion of "ethnicity" today; also the word *minzoku* has both ethnic and racial overtones, and its meanings have shifted as Japanese imperial/colonial power changed its racial rhetoric (Doak 2007). What's interesting here is that Hayashi and Aya use the word "*esunikku*" – transliteration of "ethnic" instead of the Japanese word *minzoku*. This demands a thorough analysis through more ethnographic and historiographical data, which is out of scope for this chapter; I will discuss this further in coda.

## Nostalgia and Sameness

These shifting alignments of chindon-ya with various notions of difference and sameness pose a question with regard to the common assumption that chindon-ya's appeal today is simply its nostalgic appeal. Nostalgia, understood as a sensory experience of yearning for the past, is indeed essential for chindon-ya practitioners.<sup>80</sup> As Kobayashi's quote on tune selection above shows, creating resonance in the listener's memory is at the heart of chindon-ya's musical work. Sounds can be a powerful process to stir up memories, lift up sedimented histories, both collective and personal. With careful and effective tune selection, chindon-ya's soundings resonate with sedimented memories, both collective and personal, imagined and real – lifting them up, moving them, stirring them up and resounding them in the listeners. On one hand, chindon-ya's strong association with the postwar discourse of the national subjecthood in terms of ordinary time, place, and people indeed does produce a strong sense of longing, a sense of nostalgic enticement among the listeners whose childhood memories are rooted during the 1950s and the 60s. What is the yearning for, then? Is it for the imagined homogeneous, unfragmented taishû?

Anthropologist Marilyn Ivy formulates nostalgia for various “vanishing” marginal cultural practices as constitutive of the cultural-national imaginary of “Japaneseness” (Ivy 1995.) Many other studies on nostalgia in Japan have similarly tended to focus on nostalgia as a technology of producing “national cultural identity” (Fritch 2001; Kelly 1986; Robertson 1998.) Jennifer Robertson and William Kelly analyze nostalgia in their studies to account for the hegemonic processes of national identity formation in postwar Japan. Robertson argues that paternalistic discourses of nostalgia inherent in the “native place-making” projects in cultural tourism are central to the “containment of multicultural differences” (Robertson 1998: 115) and the formation of “Japanese national cultural identity” (op. cit.: 128). Kelly also argues that nostalgia was deployed by mass media and the state alongside the notion of rationalization in rural Japan as part of the cultural construction of Japan as a “New Middle Class” society. Viewing nostalgia as a tool to “deny the past,” Kelly warns of the risks and dilemmas nostalgia poses for people who are associated with the imagined past: “nostalgia's dangers are as much that it misrepresents the present as that it misrepresents the past” (Kelly 1986: 614).

Although chindon-ya has the strongest tie to the post-war reconstruction period and the notion of homogeneous, monolithic popular mass, it is not simply signaling the fondly remembered bygone past; it is important to recognize the changed terrain in which chindon-ya's sounds echo in the contemporary urban life in Japan. The popular assumption of homogeneous postwar class unity under the notion of taishû has disintegrated into generation gaps and widening socioeconomic gaps, and instead, chindon-ya not only invokes nostalgia but also stirs up the histories of European colonialism, Japanese colonial expansion, and pre-modern production of caste-based differences. While chindon-ya does recall the constructed monolithic notion of “national identity,” it also simultaneously bodies, stirs up, and sounds out the sedimented histories of differences in terms of caste, class, ethnicity, or imagined magico-religiosity.

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<sup>80</sup> See Nadia Seremetakis's *The Senses, Still* (Seremetaki 1994) for a theorization of nostalgia and sensory experience, and Esra Ozyrurek's *Nostalgia for the Modern* (Ozyrurek 2006) for an analysis of nostalgia and the modern state/public.



Thus, I argue that nostalgia associated with chindon-ya can be a process of unsettling the very notion of “Japaneseness” by making audible the various historical and social relations constitutive of “multicultural” Japan. Drawing on Shuhei Hosokawa’s analysis of nostalgia,<sup>81</sup> I suggest that contemporary chindon-ya practitioners also have opened up the possibilities to produce the “nostalgic” or obsolescent sounds of chindon as a way to mark themselves as belonging to a “different” class, which then are re-articulated with other differences — historical, racial, or ongoing struggles resulting from contemporary social differences in the contemporary urban life in Japan.<sup>82</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter, through ethnographic moments and historiographical analyses, I have shown numerous differences and temporalities that are embodied and sounded by chindon-ya: pre-modern production of caste-based difference, modern European military influences, the post-war notion of the homogeneous new middle class, and ethnicized Otherness aligned with Asian countries.

I argue that these genealogical projects allow contemporary chindon-ya and chindon resurgence practitioners to effectively capitalize upon the power of street performance practices to simultaneously appall and fascinate the public, and to oppose, to subvert, and to make visible the repressive practices based on the status system deeply rooted in the history of Japan. While *eta* and *hinin* were the abject differences embodied by street performers in the past, such performances have engaged other class, racial, and ethnic demarcations at different points in history. Now those abject, constitutive outsiders include Okinawans, the Ainu, the descendants of *eta* and *hinin*, and the third- and fourth-generation North/South Korean and Chinese living in Japan. I suggest that, part of what makes chindon-ya relevant today, despite its apparently anachronistic way of advertising, is this possibility for chindon-ya practice to sound out histories of silenced production of caste-based difference, and rearticulate them with the contemporary differences in the register of generation, class, and ethnicity.

Although written out of histories as neither folk nor traditional musical practice, chindon-ya’s hybridity and fluidity, and its close relationships to other street performances allowed itself to be remade into a medium through which musicians and writers today can performatively address various social issues that present-day Japan faces. Genealogical and performative projects by such artists and writers therefore challenge the prevalent belief in the monolithic, monoethnic, and homogeneous national

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<sup>81</sup> Shuhei Hosokawa’s analysis of a Japanese blackface DooWop group from the 1980s argues that the group’s nostalgic use of the 50’s aesthetics of DooWop can be understood as a tool for the working-class youth to deviate from the musical preferences of the elitist and educated student youth (Hosokawa, 1999). Such a view of nostalgia as a strategic tool of “obsolescence” to mark one’s class difference provides a productive lens through which to understand the contemporary neo-chindon musicians’ deployment of the obsolescent practice.

<sup>82</sup> Nostalgia as a marketing strategy already exists as evident in the popularity of Shōwa-period goods and retro items. Ivy notes that between 1970 and 1984, there is a shift from nostalgia as recuperation of the past to “neo-nostalgia,” “nostalgia as style” or “the notion of the (ever)-new as nothing more than the repetitive insistence of the (re) marketed commodity body” – emergent forms of Japanese modernity and its mass culture (Ivy 1995: 58.) Although chindon-ya certainly does have the nostalgic appeal of referencing a particular historical period, unlike Ivy’s case studies, chindon-ya has not been traditionalized, mass-commodified, or disciplined, and demands analysis from a different perspective.

subjecthood by highlighting the ongoing class struggles, ethnic and racial discriminations which are often made invisible and silenced from the public discourses, both academic and popular. Recent chindon resurgence and ongoing literary and musical projects inspired by chindon-ya thus unravel the power relations existent in the streets through both practice (musical performance) and theory (writings). I will examine this in chapter 4.

As I have shown, multiple histories of differences and sameness embodied within chindon-ya's sonic and material culture produce historical resonances, creating enticement through the oscillations between difference and sameness, between fascination and contempt, and between marginalization and contestation. In the next chapter, I will pursue further how chindon-ya practitioners perform enticement by sounding in ways to resonate with not only memories and histories, but also the listeners' affect as well as the geography of the city streets through which they walk.

## CHAPTER 3

### IMAGINATIVE EMPATHY: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF AFFECT AND SOUND

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We are chindon-ya, a ludicrous roadside advertisement business with musical instruments (鳴り物入り滑稽路傍広告業). We've been in this form since the Meiji period (1868-1912), letting grow Shiseidō, Lion, and Asahi Beer [corporate companies] to what they are today. But we have remained as we were, quite modest.<sup>83</sup>

A chindon-ya troupe-leader, Hayashi Kōjirō, began a performance with two of his troupe members with a melodious and eloquent speech, introducing the troupe with a rather lengthy and humorous definition of chindon-ya. They were performing for visitors in a performance space in central Osaka, in an indoor entertainment theme park that styled itself after the shōtengai (商店街、shopping street). Instead of advertising for a client, they were entertaining an audience who were mostly young domestic tourists, and were publicizing themselves as a chindon-ya to them, who did not seem to know much about chindon-ya.

The first thing to notice is the fact that chindon-ya is first and foremost considered a business, rather than a musical genre of folk performance arts. The understanding of chindon-ya as a live entrepreneurial practice is evident today in the fact that chindon practitioners refer to their practice as a distinct *gyōkai* (業界), “industry” or “trade.” As such, they perceive themselves to be firmly positioned outside the music industry; chindon-ya troupes are not selling their music per se, but are using music in the commercial interest of their clients' businesses. Indeed, Hayashi, on behalf of chindon-ya as a whole, rather unabashedly and humorously takes credit for Japan's economic success. Claiming responsibility for nurturing a few of the largest corporate companies that have expanded globally in the past hundred years, Hayashi situates chindon-ya at the root of the development of Japan's capitalist modernity.

While he boasted of chindon-ya's contribution to the corporations that lead and support the nations' economy today, Hayashi set chindon-ya apart from corporate conglomerates, as if to take the side of the “people,” implicitly drawing a social division between the “people” and the capitalist hegemony. His rhetoric, combining humorous overconfidence and modesty, together with the self-effacing label “ludicrous,” created an air of familiarity and feelings of affinity between chindon-ya and the audience, assuring that the chindon-ya performers are on “their side” of the capitalist corporate world-proletariat divide. Thus having established a sense of shared alliance and intimacy, the troupe performed tricks and short songs with the banjo, accordion, and trumpet to entertain the audience for small tips.

Although this indoor performance is atypical of what chindon-ya normally does (namely advertising for clients on the streets), Hayashi's self-introduction highlights the

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<sup>83</sup> Hayashi, Kōjirō. Performance at Ebisuza, Osaka. January 25, 2007. Here, Hayashi is referring the phrase “ludicrous roadside advertisement business with musical instruments” which was coined by an innovative precursor of chindon-ya, Tanba Kurimaru, around the 1890s (Horie 1986:70).

alleged dilemma within which chindon-ya seems to be positioned: its inextricable embeddedness within capitalist modernity, and the affective intimacy it strives to create with the “people” who are often pitted against the capitalist economy.

In this chapter, I examine the nexus of political economies and economies of sentiment through an ethnographic analysis of chindon-ya’s street routines, and particularly the spatial politics within which commerce and affect intersect. In chapter 2 I discussed in the ways in which chindon-ya tune into the past social relations and histories that have formed the site of performance at given times and places. In this chapter, I shift my focus to the affective aspects of chindon-ya’s sounding practices, in order to explore the various musical and spatial negotiations they make, how they incite sentiments, and how they interpellate particular subjectivities.

I will first examine how the circulation of money in chindon-ya practice enables interpersonal relationships beyond the confines of business transactions. Then, I will explore how sensitivity to listeners’ sentiments informs chindon-ya’s improvisatory and creative musical practices. In so doing, I am specifically paying attention to the notion of the street as public space that is heard, seen, sounded, and imagined through chindon-ya’s advertisement enterprise. Through ethnographic analysis, I will examine the kind of space chindon-ya moves through and produces in their business routines. Finally, I focus on the particularities of chindon-ya’s sound in order to contextualize chindon-ya’s emphasis on the relationship between affect and resonance within distinctly Japanese ways of understanding sounds, space, and social difference.

## **PART I: FEEDBACK LOOP OF THE PECUNIARY AND THE SOCIAL**

Chindon’s not music. Music is only secondary, a means to an end.

It’s not about music, but it’s about sensation...

About making better resonance (よりいい響きを).<sup>84</sup>

One of the founding members of Hayashi’s troupe Chindon Tsûshinsha and an experienced chindon-ya clarinet player, Kobayashi Shinnosuke defined chindon-ya as a “sound business” rather than music business. He did so by persistently declining to identify himself as a musician: “I chose chindon-ya as work. So I don’t have the awareness [that I am a musician.] It’s not that either one is greater than the other. At all. I’m not a musician. I’m a *gakushi*.”<sup>85</sup> *Gakushi* is a term used among chindon-ya practitioners to refer to melody instrument players. In claiming that chindon-ya is labor, Kobayashi is not necessarily denying that being a musician is not professional. Rather, by claiming that he is a *gakushi*, he highlights the specificity of chindon-ya’s labor. While a musician is paid for his or her musical expressions, chindon-ya gets paid for advertising, for which musical sound is a predominant strategy. Implicit in Kobayashi’s comment is an assumption that music is an artistic practice of self-expression. His use of musical tunes as a way to marshal attention for advertisement, therefore, is not “music” making.

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<sup>84</sup> Kawaguchi Masaaki, personal communication, April 22, 2007.

<sup>85</sup> Kobayashi Shinnosuke, personal communication. August 26, 2007

In other words, the focus of the chindon-ya profession lies more in forging social and economic relations with and among listeners rather than in expressing oneself.<sup>86</sup>

In one of the last interviews I did with Hayashi during my fieldwork, he evoked an unusual word to describe how he perceives his profession: *Yûgyôshô*. (遊行商). *Yûgyô*, a Buddhist term, refers to journeys taken by itinerant monks. In non-religious contexts, the word also means wandering for pleasure (*yû* is to “play” and *gyô* is “to go”), or aimless meandering. Combining both spiritual and worldly meanings of the word with the word “*shô*” (business), Hayashi’s play of word highlights the complex and overlapping forces that inform chindon-ya’s practice; it is a business that makes money by “providing emotional satisfaction to others and self.”<sup>87</sup>

Ethnomusicologist Martin Stokes maintains that ethnomusicology has not paid enough attention to the concrete material lives of the musicians and how they negotiate the monetary economy. Within this larger critique, Stokes problematizes the simplistic reading of Marx which assumes that capital and the cash economy erode the bonds of sociality, and instead argues that ethnomusicologists should consider how “relationships between sentiment and commodity form in a rather more sympathetic and productive manner than that habitually associated with Marxian cultural theory” (Stokes 2002: 139).<sup>88</sup> As a musical practice whose commercial enterprise is inextricably linked with the production of sentiments and enticement, chindon-ya presents a compelling case through which to analyze the relation between the capitalist economy and what Stokes calls “social warmth,” or a sense of collective intimacy forged through social encounters and relations. Lauren Berlant calls this sentiment “public intimacy,” and poses critical questions that span the issues of the private and the public, spatialized politics of the institution and the “street,” and the individual “differences” and the discourses of the collective, the State.

How can we think about the ways attachments make people public, producing trans-personal identities and subjectivities, when those attachments come from within spaces as varied as those of domestic intimacy, state policy, and mass-mediated experiences of intensely disruptive crises? And what have those formative encounters to do with the effects of other, less institutionalized events, which might take place on the street, on the phone, in fantasy, at work, but rarely register as anything but residue? Intimacy names the enigma of this range of attachments, and more; and it poses a question of scale that links the instability of individual lives to the trajectories of the collective.<sup>89</sup>

Focusing on the ability of sound to elicit affective responses and forge public intimacy, individually and collectively, I explore some of these questions through chindon-ya’s

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<sup>86</sup> There are three members in Chindon Tsûshinsha who have a side career as “musicians,” whereby they perform music as band members at “live houses (music venues)” and charge admission fee to audience members.

<sup>87</sup> Hayashi, personal communication. August 24 2008

<sup>88</sup> For a discussion on affect and capitalism, see Nancy Ettliger. “Whose capitalism? Mean discourse and/or actions of the heart” in *Emotion, Space and Society* 2 (2009) 92–97

<sup>89</sup> Lauren Berlant 1988: 283

sonic practices of their advertisement business. First, I provide an ethnographic account of Chindon Tsûshinsha's everyday business practices to examine the intersection of commerce and affect.<sup>90</sup>

Among the troupe Chindon Tsûshinsha's a wide range of activities, which range from entertaining foreign guests at receptions to workshops for school children, dinner shows, festival performances, and TV commercials, the most common form of business practice remains the street routine, called *machimawari* (町廻り)— or “going around town.” The troupe usually starts their day at the store, then walks through nearby neighborhoods for several hours, playing music, delivering fliers, and conversing with passersby to inform them about whatever client they are advertising that day.

Chindon Tsûshinsha does not have a set price for their performances. Potential clients, storeowners, and larger advertisement and event organizing companies call their office to negotiate the business deal. Many factors determine the final cost: the hours, the length of campaign if it is for more than one day, the size of the troupe, the distance of travel, the type of performance, and the relationship between the troupe and the client. That said, on an average street routine gig, the troupe charges a flat fee of approximately 20,000yen (210 dollars) per member, which is usually paid in cash at the end of the day. The pay comes from their clients, not from the potential customers on the street with whom they interact, and for whom they are performing.

With no direct financial transaction taking place, the chindon-ya troupe is free to orient its performance around developing social connections with the listeners outside of the business relations. It is precisely this mediated relationship between chindon-ya practitioners and passersby that allows chindon-ya to be both closely embedded within the commercial enterprise of advertisement and able to develop social warmth with people around them. This twin goal of chindon-ya's business practice takes careful balancing; Hayashi explains that “chindon-ya has two aspects – to bring joy and pleasure to people we've never met before, and to publicize the client's business. It's difficult [to achieve the balance].”<sup>91</sup> The trick, according to Hayashi, in this twin-goal business is establishing neutrality with humor and performance. He said:

We are irresponsible. If we identify ourselves completely with the client, the potential customers will drift away. So we have to be somewhat random and neutral. If you follow the manual, then the audience will not even be interested in having conversations with us. So we would sometimes deliberately mispronounce the name of the shop, or pretend not to know exactly where the shop is when somebody asks us where it is. Instead we ask the local people to tell us where exactly it is. That kind of irresponsibility would elicit the

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<sup>90</sup> While the first record of advertisement goes back to Heian period (794-1185) and “sonic advertisement” filled the streets of Edo in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century, business of advertising on behalf of other business emerged at the end of the 1800s. An entrepreneurial practice, chindon-ya was certainly one of the first to specialize their business in this “proxy” advertisement enterprise. Its emergence was closely linked to the rise of industrial capitalism driven by imperial projects during Meiji period (see chapter 2.)

<sup>91</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, January 25, 2007

agency of the audience; they would be interested in engaging with us.<sup>92</sup>

The lack of financial transaction between chindon-ya and potential customers and intentional and humorous “irresponsible” performance thus invite listeners to engage in social relations in which they did not expect to participate.

What complicates this picture of economic expectation and sociality is the practice of *goshûgi* (ご祝儀): a type of voluntary audience tipping practice in recognition of good performance. While it is an expected gesture from the audience in *taishû engeki* (大衆演劇, itinerant popular theater), *goshûgi* is much more subtle and complex for chindon-ya. For chindon-ya, although tipping is hoped for, it is not expected, and thus there is no pressure on the audience to tip unless they feel compelled to do so. *Goshûgi* is often given in small paper envelopes, and given secretly to the chindon-ya practitioners.<sup>93</sup> Since *goshûgi* is not compensation for their advertising work, the chindon-ya practitioners do not consider the tips income, but rather a rewarding sign of successfully reaching the heart of the audience and instilling sentiments of joy in them. Thus the money is pooled to fund celebratory occasions instead of distributed as salary. This form of non-obligatory and affectively motivated money-giving outside the consumerist business-customer relationship again shows the complex ways in which money and social warmth compliment each other in chindon-ya’s business practice.<sup>94</sup>

Interviews with both employers and chindon practitioners reveal how their economic success is inextricably linked with the production of affective interpersonal relations. For instance, the owner of a hair salon in a lower-income neighborhood in Higashi Osaka city explained to me that his primary motive in hiring the troupe for his store’s opening was to “enliven the neighborhood.” By hiring chindon-ya, he not only gained new customers, but he also created new alliances among neighboring shop owners, who all benefited from the chindon-ya’s presence as the troupe brought a sense of festive liveliness to stimulate local commerce. Similarly, a *pachinko* slot machine parlor owner who hired chindon-ya told me that he did so partly to create a friendlier façade for the local customers who may otherwise have a negative impression of the establishment, which is often associated with gamblers and organized crimes. Thus, while chindon-ya’s clients’ interests are primarily economic, they are equally invested in producing social warmth and creating relations with its surrounding businesses and residents by hiring chindon-ya.

On the part of chindon practitioners, interpersonal communication and social connection is privileged over masterful execution of performance, and gives them a sense of reward and success. Seto Nobuyuki, a clarinet player working with the troupe for the past twelve years, confirmed this for me: “You can get as much done during the break as while walking down the street, because that’s when the passersby come over to us to

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<sup>92</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, August 24, 2008

<sup>93</sup> Not everyone carries around the envelopes. The client often prepares separate *goshûgi* in advance, and audience members might run into their houses to get an appropriate envelope, or they might fold the money bill into a small square and wrap it in a piece of paper.

<sup>94</sup> Another example of Japanese articulations of play and work, business and pleasure can be found in Anne Allison’s *Night Work* (Allison 1994), which documents related examples through an ethnographic analysis of corporate male sociality in hostess clubs.

chat.” For Seto, how many people he gathers to have face-to-face conversations is a more tangible sign of accomplishment than the financial return brought to the employer: “It’s fine if I don’t get around to deliver the sales pitch and just listen to people’s life stories and gossips. It’s fun to connect with people. That’s the best part of being in the chindon-ya business.”<sup>95</sup> It is this conviviality that further draws the audience. This conveys another layer of productive feedback loop, where social warmth and pecuniary pursuits are mutually constitutive.<sup>96</sup>

### **Imaginative Empathy**

On one of my last days of my fieldwork, I sat down at a café with Hayashi near Chindon Tsûshinsha’s office to have a farewell meeting. We reminisced about the countless number of street routines and performances I went to see, and chatted for almost three hours. Having spent the previous two years with his troupe on an almost daily basis, I decided it was time to ask him a rather big question: what does he consider to be the most important value in being a chindon-ya? Without hesitation, Hayashi answered:

Definitely, the ability to imagine. To imagine the state of mind of people. Inside their heart – of people in front of us, of people inside their houses, or perhaps I might somehow intuitively feel them even though they might not even exist.<sup>97</sup>

“Reading the mind” (心を読み取る), “reading the ‘air’” [atmosphere] (空気を読む), “imagining the listeners’ emotional state:” these were recurrent phrases in the conversations I had with chindon-ya practitioners throughout the two years of my fieldwork. I was struck by how profoundly these entrepreneurial street performers cared about the sentiments of those their sounds reached – not only the passersby on the street but also shop owners, office workers indoors, and invisible inhabitants behind the walls in the residential areas they passed through. To be effective in their business meant cultivating sensitivities to be able to imagine who might be listening, caring about what the listeners’ sentiments might be, instilling joy or spirit in them through music, forging interpersonal connections with and among the audience, and navigating the urban public space accordingly. In other words, the production of affective interpersonal relationships is at the heart of chindon-ya’s musical advertisement enterprise.

I call this discourse and practice of caring about and imagining listeners’ sentiments *imaginative empathy*. Imaginative empathy informs the production of both affective and acoustic resonance; for the chindon-ya practitioners to feel that they had a successful performance, their playing must create sound that resound in, or resonate with, the listeners’ hearts (“心に響く、心にジーンとくる”). The notion of imaginative empathy allows for an examination of the nexus of political economies and economies of

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<sup>95</sup> Seto Nobuyuki, personal communication, July 20, 2007

<sup>96</sup> The metaphor of feedback loop has offered conceptually and acoustically productive lens for scholars who have spearheaded studies of sounds, or acoustemology, including Steven Feld, Charles Keil, as well as anthropology dealing with musical cultures. See Charles Keil and Steven Feld, *Music Grooves* (Fenestra Books, 1994), Charles Keil, “The Theory of Participatory Discrepancies: A Progress Report,” *Ethnomusicology* 39, no19 (1995): 1-19 (1995), and Condry (2008.)

<sup>97</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication. July 24, 2008



sentiment. Put another way, it foregrounds how advertisement is entangled with a performance of enticement. In the next section, I provide a historical contextualization of the streets where chindon-ya practitioners are emplaced and circulate, followed by an ethnographic analysis of how chindon-ya puts imaginative empathy into their everyday practice.

## II. Sounding Imaginative Empathy

It [chindon-ya] was not music that controlled space;  
the way the music co-existed with the landscape was refreshing to me.  
— Ôkuma Wataru (2001: 10)

### Shifting Geographies of Modernity: Streets, Public Space, and Sociality

The indoor theme park I described at the beginning of this chapter, named “Paradise Shopping Street (極楽商店街),” was designed as an imitation of a typical city street of Osaka in the late Taishô and early Shôwa period (1920-30s). Owned by Sega Corporation, one of the largest Japanese multinational video game software and hardware development companies, it opened in 2004 in one of Osaka’s most popular tourist destinations, Dôtonbori (道頓堀). A bustling shopping and entertainment quarter since the Edo Period (1603-1868), Dôtonbori was a host to five theaters for *kabuki* and *jôruri* (traditional puppet theater music), all of which closed as the economic bubble burst in the late 1980s. Today, many of the individually owned shops have been replaced by larger chain stores and pachinko parlors, which blast music and sales pitches from speakers projected outward onto the street. Famous for bright neon signs and gigantic billboards for various companies and restaurants, Dôtonbori is visually and sonically saturated, teeming with young shoppers and domestic tourists.

With its longstanding history of popular performing arts and commerce, one might assume that Dôtonbori makes a good ground for chindon-ya’s street routine. However, members of Chindon Tsûshinsha gave me evidence to the contrary. Due to the tight surveillance of foot traffic by the police and the local shop association’s policy, chindon-ya are not allowed in this area. Chindon-ya practitioners have found themselves banned from the streets outside and, instead, performing in the imitation streets indoor, in an enclosed site commercially designated for “entertainment.” The long-term economic recession further impacted the Dôtonbori area, as if following the closing of the famous popular restaurant Kuidaore just a few feet away on the same main riverside street. Paradise Shopping Street went bankrupt in 2008, only four years after its opening.<sup>98</sup>

At a first glance, this can be read as a story of how the “street” where chindon-ya thrived in the 1930s became abstracted, commodified, regulated, and eventually eradicated as Japan’s capitalist economy developed. Significant shifts in the Japanese urban landscape indeed did take place since the 1930s, changing the conditions and understanding of the public space in which chindon-ya did their business. Urban planning and zoning reorganized the physical layout of neighborhoods; the material makeup of the physical environment and architecture changed, affecting the acoustic environment for

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<sup>98</sup> Only a few months prior, the most famous taishû restaurant Kuidaore, known for the mechanic doll “kuidaore taro” that became one of the symbols of Osaka, also closed its doors. After Sennichi do’s closure (discussed in chapter 2), it marked the end of taishû restaurants remaining in the area.

chindon-ya; and regulation of activities on the streets became tightened. These changes have in turn brought changes in the sense of sociality on the streets and the cultural understanding of public space. All of these shifts informed and inflected chindon-ya practices over the last several decades. Although each of the shifts warrants more detailed analysis, for the purpose of this chapter, I only briefly outline the general changes relevant to the analysis of chindon-ya's street routines.

With the forces of modernization and capital accumulation that propelled the economy in Japan, the physical makeup of the urban landscape shifted drastically in the past several decades. Postwar city planning and zoning policies transformed small side alleyways and old wooden houses called *nagaya* (長屋) into concrete housing complexes and paved roads, and open-air black markets into regulated and enclosed shopping venues. Typical housing for the lower and middle class population shifted from *nagaya* (long wooden one-story houses shared by multiple households, divided by thin walls) to *apâto* (アパート, apartment) around the 1930s; after the postwar reconstruction and during the economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s, *danchi* (団地), or multi-story concrete housing complexes proliferated across cities and suburbia (Sugiura and Shimizu 1986: 73; Moroi 1991). As I will discuss later, these physical changes have had tangible consequences on the ways in which chindon-ya listen to and perform their own sounds, as the permeability of sounds through porous wood decreased and the reflection and reverberation of sounds increased in the concrete landscape.

Such urban development not only changed the acoustic environment for chindon-ya, but also the geography of sociality; namely, public space where collective intimacy is forged through social interactions. While there are several ways of saying “streets” in Japanese, the ones that have historically been closely associated with chindon-ya tend to be narrow, small foot-traffic streets, such as *yokochô* (横町) and *roji* (路地), roughly translated as “back streets” and “side alleyways.”<sup>99</sup> The majority of the photos of chindon-ya by Tsunashima Tôru (1992), the only visual historical documentation of chindon-ya, feature chindon-ya walking through small alleyways, with the neighborhood residents looking out or interacting with them. In other photography books of the Tokyo cityscape from the 1950s and 1960s, alleyways are always captured as a place of “human emotions,” trivial life happenings, children’s playgrounds, and social relations. One caption of a scene on a small alleyway with children at play, taken in 1957, reads: “*Roji* is a story of human sentiments. *Roji* ... is my favorite place that smells of people’s everyday life. However, at the peak of the bubble economy, *roji* was erased, and *nagaya* turned into apartments. There, the everyday life of warmth no longer exists” (Tanuma 1996: 41).<sup>100</sup> These side alleys, often formed by passageways between low-income

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<sup>99</sup> In “Seikatsu Kûkan to shite no *Roji*,” Mizuuchi, Katô, and Ôshiro discuss how the same word “*roji*” means a different space in Osaka and Kyoto (Mizuuchi, Katô, Ôshiro 2008: 167). While *roji* means alleyway or small side streets in standard Japanese, in Osaka and Kyoto it refers to the space that includes *nagaya* houses as well as small pathways that connects them and the small plaza space in the back of the house, away from the main street.

<sup>100</sup> Writing in 1998, Endô Tetsuo advocates a “*yokochô gaku*” (side-alley-ology) as a way to rethink urban sociology. He draws a parallel between the disappearance of *taishû shokudô* (popular restaurant)— like *Sennichi Dô* and *Kuidaore* discussed in chapter 2 — and the disappearance of *yokochô*, both locales where people who entered from the main streets gather and hang out...to meander, relax, chat. That’s where children play, where people display potted plants, merchandise. [It is a] space where subtleties of human

housing structures such as *nagaya*, were once the “place of everyday life (生活の場)” and a discursive site of everyday life for the lower class “public.” According to Tanuma, their disappearance reveals the abstraction of social relations, the alienation of public space.

Such shifting geographies of modernity and sociality have produced different discourses of public space and public intimacy. Increasingly tight police regulations on performance or commercial activities on the street and privatization of what was once “public” space add to the narrative of public space as increasingly abstracted and alienated.<sup>101</sup> In a similar manner, the socioeconomic currents such as 1980s economic downturn and neoliberal policy changes often produce discourses of the dissolution of public intimacy. The long-term economic downturn has persisted into the 1990s and the new millennium, and together with neoliberal policies put forward by Prime Minister Junichirō Koizumi in the mid 1990s and the shift from the industrial to consumer and information industry, the recession has brought an end to the lifetime employment system in Japan that supported its economic and moral stability. Instead, the Japanese market economy has become increasingly dependent upon flexible labor. Today, there are reportedly almost 500,000 *frîtâ*, which refers to people between the age of fifteen and thirty-four who lack full time employment or are unemployed or underemployed. Sabu Kohso describes the visibility of *frîtâ* on the streets with a marked sense of contempt: “Today’s young people...tend to hang out on the streets instead of shopping in fancy stores. More and more they are beginning to look like what they really are: street kids” (Kohso 2006: 416). Many of these *frîtâ* find themselves in the same turf as *chindon-ya* today, working odd jobs on the streets such as publicizing businesses by delivering flyers (in the form of tissue paper packets) and holding advertisement signs. Following a series of social events that were considered “national traumas” afflicting the national social psyche around the mid 1990s,<sup>102</sup> sensationalist media coverage of the crisis of public sentiment proliferated further, with descriptions ranging from increasing adolescent violence to extreme social withdrawal phenomena called *hikikomori* (引きこもり).

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emotions, movements of performance, talents, and emotions manifest themselves. Or space where one gains peace.” (Endō 1998: 2)

<sup>101</sup> Through an analysis of contemporary youth protest movements in public space, Sharon Hayashi and Anne McKnight assert that the public space in Japan shifted from being a heterogeneous space of resistance to a homogeneous space of political and social control. They argue that, during the 60s, when student protests against the renewal of US-Japan Security Treaty prevailed in urban streets, streets were perceived by the students as “forest into which they could disappear,” whereas the youth protesters today consider “street as a space of social control” that needs to be reclaimed (Hayashi and McKnight 2005:105). Such cultural understanding of streets in postwar Japan as space of alienation is evident in *fûkeiron* (風景論, landscape theory), a film theory that emerged in Japan in the late 1960s. Characterized by the propensity of human-less scenes of everyday urban landscape, this cinematic technique critiqued the increasing control over territorialized space and the consolidation of postwar state capitalism (Furuhata 2007: 353).

<sup>102</sup> The crisis of public sentiment deepened as the nation experienced a series of national traumas in the mid 1990s: the doomsday cult Oum’s sarin gas subway attack of 1995, the devastating Hanshin earthquake in 1995, the gang rape of a 15-year old girl by the US servicemen in Okinawa that led to major mass protests against the US army, and the Asian economic crisis in 1997 that initiated further decade-long economic downturn. See Paul Roquet “Ambient Literature and the Aesthetics of Calm: Mood Regulation in Contemporary Japanese Fiction” in *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 35:1 (2008): 87- 111. David Richard Leheny, *Think Global, Fear Local: Sex, Violence, and Anxiety in Contemporary Japan* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), pp. 27-48.

Deemed as the contemporary social illness, *hikikomori* is a term coined in the early 2000s to refer to the widespread phenomenon of school children and young adults who socially withdraw themselves, physically insulating themselves at home and cutting off contact from the outside world on a long-term basis.<sup>103</sup> *Hikikomori* has been deemed as the new neurosis of Japan resulting from rapid economic growth, technological advancement, and fulfillment of the national goal in the postwar reconstruction era that caused mass inertia and anomie.<sup>104</sup> While some of the *frîta* youths find themselves doing odd part time jobs such as passing the tissue-paper-packet-flyers to make money on the street, some barricade themselves behind the walls of their apartments and rooms, refusing any social contact.

While these narratives of the alienation of public space as well as sentiment offer insights into the larger historical shift that Japanese urban cities have undergone, I argue that the practice of listening to chindon-ya's soundings challenges the linear narrative that equates the development of a neoliberal capitalist economy to an abstract urban landscape and the dissolution of public intimacy. These teleological narratives assume space and sound to be an effect and mirror of economic and political power, thereby reducing space to material upon which power operates. Under this assumption, chindon-ya becomes simply nostalgia, indexing a vanishing "popular mass" with social warmth, on the verge of vanishing together with the dynamic sociality of side alleys. However, I posit that chindon-ya, as an ongoing sonic practice that has persisted and proven to be financially viable to this day, did not become "abstracted" into the commercial space, or labeled as simply a residual of the past, the vanishing remainder of the romanticized notion of social warmth that once existed in small alleys and neighborhoods. After all, Chindon Tsûshinsha has continued its usual advertising business on the streets throughout Osaka and beyond after the imitation side alleyways of the Paradise Shopping Streets disappeared.

### **Chindon-ya's Spatial Practices: Negotiating Space**

By listening to chindon-ya's sounds, and paying attention to how chindon-ya performers listen to their own sounds in order to perform, chindon-ya's practices highlight the significance of what Henri Lefebvre calls "spatial practices," which highlight the lived particularities and contradictions concealed within the homogenizing conception of abstract space. Contrary to the teleological narrative marked by ruptures in which capitalist modernity abstracts lived urban spaces through urban development, privatization, regulation, and gentrification, chindon-ya's sounds reveal the historical continuity in the understanding of streets as always heterogeneous and dynamic space

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<sup>103</sup> Reportedly there are 1,600,000 Japanese people who have barricaded themselves in their own rooms and apartments today, staying away from public space.

<sup>104</sup> Novelist and film director Murakami Ryû, whose 2001 novel about a *hikikomori* protagonist won a nationally acclaimed literary award. He said in the interview: "We had worked hard to restore the country from the ruins of World War II, develop the economy and build a modern technological state. When that great goal was attained, we lost much of the motivating force that had knit the nation so tightly together. Affluent Japanese do not know what kind of lifestyle to take up now. That uncertainty has pulled people further apart and caused a whole raft of social problems. Hikikomori is naturally one of them." Murakami, Ryû. May 1, 2002. *Times Asia*: "Japan's Lost Generation"

produced through social relations. In this section, through the notion of imaginative empathy, I examine how members of Chindon Tsûshinsha negotiate the multiple forces that inform the physical space of the street, and what kind of new space their sounding practices are producing.

Publicly emplaced in the urban streets of Osaka, chindon-ya practitioners are constantly gauging the geographical and emotional dynamics at each particular place they walk through. Imaginative empathy informs their creative skills and guides them to improvise their performances accordingly, determining where to go, how long to stay in one place, where to take a break, what to play, and how. Except for starting and ending the day in front of the store of their employers, the routes and schedule are never pre-determined; the itinerary is impromptu, always decided on the spot. During their street routine, chindon-ya practitioners walk down the streets while playing music and giving out flyers. This is called *nagasu*, meaning to make flow. Occasionally, they stay in one spot for anywhere between five to fifteen minutes. They do this often at an intersection; this is called “*itsuku*,” meaning to stick. While settling on a street corner, the troupe often delivers speeches about the employer’s products or services they are advertising. These activities are repeated in different neighborhoods throughout the day, with a short break every hour.

It is no simple task for chindon-ya to navigate the urban streets. One troupe member, Kawaguchi Masaaki, spoke of how seemingly wide enough shopping arcade streets are in fact filled with informal and complex territorial lines, leaving very little space available for them to walk through. The unspoken rule, according to Kawaguchi, is that in front of each shop, there is a one-meter radius semicircle that is felt to be the shop’s territory. Although legally a public road, overstepping such territorial boundaries would upset the shop owners – therefore hindering the relationships between them and chindon-ya’s employer as well as between the chindon-ya and those shops, who may be their potential clients in the future.

Physical space is negotiated through not only bodies, but also sounds. Chindon practitioners are attuned to the acoustics of the physical environment. How their soundings resonate with the physical environment that they walk through is of prime importance; the acoustics of each place they walk through – dirty road as opposed to concrete buildings, echoey residential area as opposed to crowded and loud train stations – affects their performance choices. With imaginative empathy, chindon-ya practitioners carefully listen to the lingering resonance of their sounds, or *zankyo* (残響), and the distance and volume with which the sounds travel. This careful listening to one’s sound is essential, since the degree to which chindon-ya’s soundings resonate, or might not resonate with the potential listeners, indoors and outdoors, has tangible consequences: to gain or lose a potential outreach. In other words, effective soundings are constituted through the feedback loop between acoustic *and* affective resonance.

Chindon practitioners’ attention to their own acoustic resonance in relation to the physical environment sheds lights on two key aspects of their performance of imaginative empathy: listening to one’s sounds as if through listeners’ ears, and the importance of unmediated, live sounds (*nama*, 生.) Geographical resonance is made through attentiveness to one’s sounds that requires real-time, unmediated listening. Commenting on the freelance part-time musicians who play for chindon-ya in Tokyo, Hayashi noted

that the part-time chindon-ya musicians' ears have been socialized differently from full-time chindon practitioners in his troupe in Osaka:

They [Tokyo-based musicians who do chindon-ya work part-time] are used to performing on stage, listening to their own sounds through the monitors. But they don't know how they are actually heard by the audience. It becomes the sound engineer's job to create the sound as delivered to the audience. This would feel really uncomfortable to us.<sup>105</sup>

Hayashi here hints at both the relevance of live sounds in the contemporary streets that are filled with technologically mediated sounds, and the importance of imaginative empathy grounded in the way chindon-ya practitioners listen to their own sounds as they resonate in each particular physical environment as both performers and listeners.

Such sensitivity to physical spatial dynamics is evident in the practitioners' constant scanning of the surroundings. While walking, they not only look to their immediate surroundings but also at a distance, above and behind: the tenth floor verandas of a huge apartment complex, the glass window two floors above street level where people poke their heads out and look down, a storefront thirty meters behind where they have passed, where their sales pitch sparked conversations among passersby. It is necessary for them to gauge who their sounds are reaching, how their presence and sounds may be affecting listeners, and how they might create relations with listeners by walking over to them to talk, or to make eye contact and wave. Chindon practitioners suddenly stop their drumming and playing when passing in front of the client's competitors, especially if they have been hired by the business in the past. When they are advertising for a pachinko parlor, they stop and quietly walk past other pachinko parlors in town to avoid inciting unpleasant feelings of competition and annoyance. In quiet residential areas or near hospitals, sometimes the troupe also stops sounding their instruments for the same reason.

Chindon-ya's soundings reflect, deflect, become amplified or absorbed while the sounds disperse through the surrounding acoustic space and seep through walls and doors to meet the ears of the listeners. In order to entice the listeners and to avoid being perceived as a sonic nuisance to them, Hayashi emphasizes the necessity to listen to one's own sounds carefully. This highlights how architecture and physical environment – walls, streets, and buildings – have an active role in the production of resonances in chindon-ya's sonic performance of enticement.

Acoustically, the changing landscape required chindon-ya to be even more sensitive to their own sounds in relation to the urban soundscape. Describing how he adjusted his sonic sensibilities to the shifting physical urban landscape, Hayashi noted that he needed to be more sensitive in listening to his own sounds in relation to the surroundings today than thirty years ago, as small sounds could easily be amplified since they reflect on concrete surfaces of the buildings and pavement. Although their sounds do not permeate as easily through the concrete walls as they used to when the houses were one story high and made of wood, in quiet areas, their sounds do reach the listeners inside the rooms, behind the walls.

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<sup>105</sup> Hayashi, personal communication, September 3, 2007

In addition to these unspoken social and acoustic dynamics that govern the urban streets, chindon-ya are constantly negotiating the official regulations enforced by the police. Since 1960s when the Road Traffic Law was instated, chindon-ya's activities became more and more strictly regulated and watched.<sup>106</sup> It is required by law to obtain permission from the local police to march through particular areas in groups, potentially obstructing traffic. However, in reality, they do not necessarily always follow this rule, with the implicit approval of the police. One of the Chindon Tsûshinsha members, Hanada Masashi, explained to me the ambiguous relationships chindon-ya has with the police.

The police have a permit application form for handing out flyers, and for carrying out demonstrations on the streets, but they don't have a form for us [chindon-ya]. We do both and more. Often the police prefer not to have these forms submitted at all – once they accept them, they are accountable for any trouble that might possibly arise from us. So they would often rather prefer to pretend not to see what they're seeing. Of course, this changes depending on who's on staff at each police station. It all depends.<sup>107</sup>

Due to the ambiguity in legal regulations, chindon-ya's activities do not neatly fit under the categories of street activity provided by the police. In many cases, law enforcement prefers not to enforce any regulations in the interest of time and potential complications; by covertly asking chindon-ya not to submit applications, the police will not be held responsible even when chindon-ya cause trouble, which is seldom the case. In turn, chindon-ya saves the bureaucratic process of going through the application form, and keeps their sonic and physical presence modest, particularly around police stations and officers on duty. Thus, chindon-ya's activities and their ever-shifting, clandestine relationships with the police and law show the porousness and contradictions of the public streets as conceived by city planners and law makers.<sup>108</sup>

### **Chindon-ya's Spatial Practice: Producing Resonance**

Urban space for chindon practitioners is not only a physically delineated field of forces to negotiate their way through, but also what they actively *produce* through their socio-musical practices. The importance of performing at crossroads provides a useful metaphor here. Placing themselves at the nexus of constantly shifting flows of bodies, sentiments, movements, and information, the troupe member Kawaguchi says that chindon practitioners must “create their own space first” in order to reach a wider pool of people at crossroads such as bus terminals, intersections, or train stations. In other words, creative improvisatory practices guided by imaginative empathy are needed not only to respond to a particular conjunctural intersection, in both the literal and figurative sense —

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<sup>106</sup> An essayist Tanuma notes: “The enemy [of chindon-ya] was once their own colleagues, now the Road Regulation Law.” (Tanuma 1970: 4)

<sup>107</sup> Hanada Masaru, personal communication, August 24, 2008

<sup>108</sup> Hanada noted that, with the recent privatization of simple police duties such as parking enforcement and safety patrol as part of the neoliberal restructuring since 2006, private street patrol officers have become obstacles for chindon-ya more than the police have been before.

of people, time, and place — but also to create a new “space” where they can forge affective relationships with and among potential customers.

In such improvisatory processes, imaginative empathy informs all facets of chindon-ya’s sounding practices. Choices of repertoire, dynamics, timbre, duration, location, costume, size of the group, members, are all decided based on how best to resonate with the sentiments of the audience. While some performative choices, such as the size of the troupe, gender balance in the group, costumes, and the like are made in advance based on the employer’s request, most of the performative aspects of their soundings are highly improvisatory. Their intimate knowledge of the demography, geography, and daily schedules of people (lunch break, when people go shopping, etc) inform much of their improvisational performance choices. For instance, in the Harinakano neighborhood, Hayashi mentioned that there has been an out-migration of youth; therefore, during the day on a weekday, they must perform tunes that would appeal to the elderly who have left behind in the neighborhood.

Referring to the importance of flexible and improvisatory performative moves that are grounded in imaginative empathy, Hayashi likened chindon-ya practices to other performance styles that require improvisatory flexibilities:

[Is chindon-ya a] self-expression? Maybe. But it’s more like film music. Adapting to each landscape and atmosphere, we think of what kind of sounds would resonate with [people’s] heart. Like a jazz improvisation session. You have to walk from *genba* (place where things happen) to *genba*, and decide [how to perform] based on inspirations you get right there and then. What you resound is based on what bubbles up in that spot.<sup>109</sup>

Successful chindon-ya performance, thus, requires well honed creative improvisatory skills to create multiple resonances at particular conjunctures. Such production of sound requires a constant feedback loop of listening, imagining, and sounding that is engaged simultaneously with the present, past, and in anticipation of the next moment, in order to create multiple resonances that reach listeners effectively. The spontaneity and sensitivity required to “listen” to the particular geographical, historical and social conjuncture was also likened to a DJ by Hayashi:

[When] playing chindon-ya drums, I have to keep the beat, but that’s going to sound boring to the listeners. So I have to think about how to complement the melody instruments. And I’m leading the troupe, too, so I have to be like a conductor. I’m also a DJ... Because you play so many different kind of songs. Whatever song you are playing, you need to cook it appropriately [for the occasion].<sup>110</sup>

The most experienced clarinet player of the troupe, Kobayashi Shinnosuke, elaborated extensively on how he determines what tunes to perform and how. Kobayashi looked back at his first days in chindon-ya when he only had three to four songs to repeat all day.

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<sup>109</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô. Personal Communication, March 22, 2007

<sup>110</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô. Personal Communication, March 22, 2007



With experience, however, Kobayashi has not only increased his repertoire size but also sensitivity to variables that determine what tunes to play at a given time and place. He maintained that the season, time of the day, type of business he is advertising, listeners' tastes, and whether the troupe is staying put in one place (*itsuki* 居着き) or marching down the street (*nagashi* 流し), are important factors to take into consideration. Taking these into consideration, Kobayashi chooses a tune that would appeal most widely and effectively to the listeners at a specific time and place.

While choosing an appropriate tune that would appeal to the targeted generation is a crucial skill in imaginative empathy, however, chindon-ya practitioners' focus was never on developing the largest repertoire, or acquiring mastery in the performance skills. In fact, although Kobayashi maintains that the choice of a tune to appeal to a particular generation can be an effective tool to reach the audience, he does not always prioritize the selection of the tune. Rather, nonchalantly, Kobayashi would sometimes play tunes to have fun for himself, even if they were tunes that most passersby might not recognize. For example, he once played tunes by ABBA and Earth, Wind and Fire. The inflection and ornamentation he used made the tunes not immediately recognizable, and the instrumentation of the clarinet, bass drum, and chindon drums made it even more challenging to figure out what he was playing. Later during the break, I asked him whether he played the tunes I thought he had played. Kobayashi smiled, and said: "well I thought I'd play a game and see if you'd recognize those tunes. Good ear!" Kobayashi was able to do this without risking the loss of audience, since "it actually doesn't really matter all that much what you play, it's more important to make good sound. As long as the sound blends well with the sound of chindon drums and kane (gong chime.)"<sup>111</sup> Rather than excellence and impressiveness of musical performance, a choice of tune, or text, chindon-ya's performance of imaginative empathy pivots around the production of *neiro*, or "sound colors" that capture people's heart.<sup>112</sup> Kobayashi humorously demonstrated how *neiro* is central to his performance in an interview:

Most people don't really know what a clarinet is. Some intellectual types over age fifty might know classical music and Benny Goodman, but regular people don't really listen to it. Even if they listen to it they won't think much of it. So, I want to make it an instrument that would make those regular people go "oh, that's a nice sound." I am doing an arrangement of sound-color (*neiro*, 音色). I am changing my breathing completely

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<sup>111</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, January 25 2007

<sup>112</sup> The primacy of "sound" or "sound color" in chindon-ya's values is further evidenced by another incident at the Great Chindon Expo in September 2007. In a public lesson format, a 98-year old veteran chindon practitioner Kikunoya Shimemaru demonstrated his *kôjo*, a sales speech, to a group of younger chindon practitioners in their 20's. In an impressively well-projected voice, Kikunoya gave an elaborate speech filled with puns with mellifluous delivery, punctuated by great pitch and volume dynamics. Following him, a few younger practitioners tried to imitate the same speech. Some stuttered and some recited without much tone, both of which stirred some chuckles in the audience. Hayashi later criticized them for simply replicating the text without accents or dynamics. Hayashi maintained that it's not so much the words but rather the delivery that perks listeners' ears; therefore, in trying to memorize and recite Kikunoya's sales pitch, the young practitioners missed a whole point – sounding out the text so as to resonate with the listeners. This highlights again the importance of sound color – Whether instrumental or vocal – over the content of the sales pitch or the actual text.

differently. When I am playing Dixieland, I change the way I blow. For Chindon, I play in such a way that would appeal to regular people. There is a “vertical” breathing system and “horizontal” breathing system. [He then sings to demonstrate the difference. Vertical style is operatic, and horizontal is nasal.] [For chindon,] I do *enka*-style vocal production. Namely, Japanese style. Clarinet is originally an indoor instrument, so it would sound nicely here [a café where I was interviewing him]. But it would be strange if I tried to play in the classical breathing style in the outdoor shopping arcade, by the fish store. I am most attentive to this. [Classical playing style] would be so inappropriate, and the sound wouldn’t cut through far enough.<sup>113</sup>

Kobayashi shows his preoccupation with both acoustic and affective resonances by drawing a dichotomy between a “Western” way of sound production that is appropriate for indoor space and a “Japanese” timbre that effectively travels far in the outdoor space. Besides the practicality of resonating better in the outdoor space of the streets, Kobayashi emphasizes the importance of the sound color, or timbre, that appeals to the “regular people,” who, according to Kobayashi, do not have the cultural capital to be familiar with the instrument in classical or swing genres. The understanding of the listening public as “regular people” that emerges from the resonance produced by Kobayashi’s soundings is based on class difference, cast in the similar framework that distinguishes indigenized *jinta* for the popular mass from the European military brass band for the aristocrats.

While speaking of the way he perceives sounds, space, customers, their sentiments, and his role in reaching out to them, Hayashi offered a lengthy comment that further highlighted the social “difference” audible in the social space produced through *chindon-ya*’s sounding practices. When *chindon* practitioners successfully elicited joy or contentment in the listeners, I often heard the bystanders saying: “*genki o moratta*” (they gave me good spirit, they lifted me up).” This is no simple cheerleading task, according to Hayashi:

After all, I am playing to the people at home. It took me 20 years to realize that. To make them want to come outside. To understand who is at home during the day on a weekday. Looking at the atmosphere of the town, and income. Happy healthy people are out at work. Those who are home are the sick, housewives, unemployed, physically disadvantaged, the elderly, grandchildren. It’s rare to find a happy full-time housewife. Heavy work, and the husband is busy and rarely home. Doing laundry sadly. So we take them outside and make them feel like something good could happen. It’s almost kind of a hospital club. Like visiting hospital rooms to cheer them up. It’s like a mental hospital of the town. It’s rare to find happy people around here... in quiet residential areas, you can hear small sounds. So if you play loudly, they won’t come out. You have to play it with sensitivity and delicacy. Otherwise you’ll be annoying them. If they’re depressed they won’t come out to happy loud sounds. We have to make sound that would make the depressed want to come out.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Kobayashi Shinnosuke, personal communication, August 26, 2007

<sup>114</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, March 22, 2007

Here, I note chindon practitioners' sensitivity to geographically delineated differences produced in the register of gender, class, physical ability, and age. Imaginative empathy allows chindon-ya, an enterprise inextricably embedded in consumerism, to make visible and audible those who are excluded from the production forces of the economy, and bounded within the physical confines of walls and segregated neighborhoods marked by gender and class. The listening public that chindon-ya's soundings cater to, in other words, reveal the socially and economically marginalized in contemporary Japanese urban life. Chindon-ya practitioners' creative and empathetic soundings bleed over such delineating lines, reaching across the physical boundaries in hopes that their sounded imaginative empathy might invite them outside of their rooms to the veranda or to the street to forge new social relations with chindon-ya, among themselves, and with local commerce.

Resonances created through chindon-ya's sounding practices grounded in imaginative empathy, therefore, make audible social differences that are often drowned in noises, hidden behind walls, or marginalized from the labor force. For example, the troupe members described the one-month long campaign to sell prepaid cell phones that was launched by NTT (Nippon Telegraph and Telephone Co.) in Kamagasaki. Kamagasaki is the largest day laborer's neighborhood in Japan with an estimated 30,000 homeless day laborers living in a fifty-acre area, and is known for its roughness. NTT specifically targeted the day laborers in Kamagasaki neighborhood, who do not have a registered address, bank account, or credit card number necessary for monthly plans. Every day, the troupe was given four hundred and twenty flyers and two thousands candies that had promotional material in the wrapping, and walked through the neighborhoods throughout the day to hold conversations with the locals. They spent most of their morning near a public unemployment office to engage with day laborers who did not leave the neighborhood for work. The candies were popular items, and many came up to the troupe to get the candies and start conversations. Many showed interest and asked detailed information about the cell phone plans, then moved onto other topics just to have conversations with the members, particularly female members. Hayashi said that chindon-ya would be the only advertisement medium by which large corporations might establish a physical presence in the socially segregated neighborhood. True enough, chindon-ya's ability to gain acceptance by the locals and relate to them was valorized by NTT not only to publicize their cell phone plan, but also to conduct a market survey among the day laborers on the potential customers' age, gender, and whether they previously knew about the particular prepaid cell phone plan. Chindon-ya's sounding practices invited conviviality with and among the Kamagasaki locals, forging a sense of affinity and intimacy through these unexpected encounters grounded in imaginative empathy.

The acoustic and affective permeability of chindon-ya sounds, therefore, allows us to listen to the politics of exclusion in contemporary Japanese urban life. Echoing Hayashi's remark quoted at length above, other Chindon Tsûshinsha members mentioned that the neighborhoods where they are well received tend to be lower-income neighborhoods in Osaka, such as Korean-Japanese neighborhoods in Ikuno Ward or the day laborers' district Kamagasaki. Particularly in Osaka, these spatialized differences are

often produced along ethnic and class lines.<sup>115</sup> Empathetic relations in these areas are particularly noted by the troupe members as strong and important, as well as rewarding when successfully established.

Imaginative empathy informs not only affective and acoustic resonances of chindon-ya practitioners, but also day laborers' empathy for chindon-ya, based on the popular imaginary of chindon-ya as a socially, historically, and geographically marginalized figure. Hearing chindon-ya's sounds, the listeners imagine a sense of affective alliance, through empathy, between their own social difference with the historically marginalized difference embodied by chindon-ya. The "irresponsibility" Hayashi mentioned insures this by creating distance between the corporate client and chindon-ya practitioners. In this sense, I posit that chindon-ya practitioners today are re-articulating the historically marginalized status of chindon-ya with the contemporary social differences in the register of class, age, and ethnicity to forge public intimacy.<sup>116</sup> I will return to this point by examining chindon-inspired projects in chapter 4.

Chindon-ya practitioners' attention to the forces that create the particular site of performance and their creative and flexible improvisatory practices make explicit the otherwise intangible sentiments, forces, and relations that are in fact palpable in what constitutes the everyday urban space of streets. As such, chindon-ya's practices of imaginative empathy challenge the physical separation of public and private space.<sup>117</sup> Streets become a site of social warmth and affection when home is considered a place of isolation. While studies on portable musical technologies such as car radios and the Walkman show that sounds transform public space into private space (Bull 2003, 2004), chindon-ya's sounds reframe the very location of "public space." Its sounds, when reaching listeners who have been excluded from the labor force and marginalized geographically in particular neighborhoods or behind apartment walls of *hikikomori*, extend the notion of "public space" from the physical streets to the domestic spaces behind apartment walls.

Chindon-ya's sonic production of imaginative empathy does the cultural work of creating sociality through drawing people into activities in which they did not intend to participate. In doing so, they usurp and blur the separation of the space of sociality and the space of alienation through sounds by negotiating invisible, unspoken rules of

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<sup>115</sup> With large influx of migrants from Okinawa and Korea into Osaka since the 1930s, there are numerous pockets of ethnically segregated neighborhoods in Osaka. Further, compared to Tokyo, Osaka has retained some of the historic neighborhoods that segregated people of different castes. See Mizuuchi, Toshio, Kato Masahiro, Ôshiro Naoki, *Mapping the Modern City: The Genealogy of Socio-Spatial Urban Configuration* (Mizuuchi, Katô, and Ôshiro 2008)

<sup>116</sup> In my fieldwork, I was not able to expand my inquiry on the "ethnic Others" in Osaka in Korean neighborhood, *burakumin* neighborhood. This was partly because I was not able to go to machimawari routines with the troupe to these areas due to scheduling issues, but also partly because it was precisely against their goal to explicitly single out their "ethnic difference" as such. Chindon-ya's production of public intimacy is grounded in forging an affective alliance in the listeners' imagination, and in recognizing that these listeners should not be marginalized in the account of distinct individuals/entity. The ethnicity discourse was more prevalent in the chindon-inspired practices, such as in the case of a zainichi Korean folk singer Cho Paggie who finds chindon-ya attractive and incorporates the sounds into his music, in which he expresses his sense of belonging as an "Osakan" that is inclusive of "zainichi Koreanness." I plan to expand on this in future research.

<sup>117</sup> This calls for reframing of space of public intimacy as Berlant calls for in the previously cited work (Berlant 1998).

territoriality shared by people who live or own businesses in the particular neighborhoods. As in the case of the elderly behind the walls or the day laborers in the segregated neighborhoods, chindon-ya sense and hear those who are invisible and silenced. Imagining their sentiment, chindon-ya practitioners make them audible and put them into social relations. In this way, the commercial enterprise of chindon-ya becomes the catalyst for the production of unexpected social relations spanning class, ethnic, and territorial boundaries. This could perhaps be one of the reasons why chindon-ya, an outdated advertisement medium in the age of internet and TV commercials, has garnered attention and financial viability today in the times of the crisis of public sentiments.

However, the question arises: what is the cost of selling their smiles? While this sonic production of sociality reveals the porousness and heterogeneity of social space and contradicts the notion of homogenizing abstract space, the fact that chindon-ya ultimately seeks profit through this production of sociality puts chindon-ya in a highly contested, ambiguous position. Just as chindon-ya's histories are pregnant with inherent contradictions between the history of marginalization and European and Japanese capitalist modernity driven by colonial efforts, its relationship oscillates between the marginalized population, to whom they appeal through imaginative empathy, and the very capitalist market force that alienates the day laborers and *frîta*. Chindon-ya's vested interest requires that, while chindon-ya's sounding practices enable the production of public intimacy and puts forward a dynamic understanding of social space, they are simultaneously luring their listeners into being the consumers in the capitalist economy. Perhaps it is this contradictory ambiguity that enables the contemporary chindon-ya practitioners to simultaneously contest the homogenizing discourse of abstract space through their resonances, and to stay relevant and financially sustainable in the very neoliberal capitalist economy that marginalized and produced spatialized social differences in the first place—*hikikomori*, *frîta*, day laborers, and chindon-ya themselves. Kawaguchi's comments highlight how chindon-ya practitioners both capitalize upon and struggle with this contradictory position in their everyday practices in order to make ends meet: "There are both positive and negative images [of chindon-ya]. It's a battle every day for us, figuring out how we navigate through them, and survive and sustain ourselves."<sup>118</sup>

### Part III: Hired to be Overheard

"You don't have to put on a good musical performance,  
but you have to make good sounds."<sup>119</sup>

Chindon-ya's business is first and foremost the production of spaces of sociality through sounds, and not the musical performance itself. As an advertisement enterprise on behalf of other businesses, chindon-ya's goal is not to sonically produce an immediate correlation between the sounds/voice and the product, service, or brand. Quite unlike jingles, which are designed to trigger an automatic "catchy" association between the sounds and products or brands in the listeners (Jackson 2003, Woodward 1982), chindon-

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<sup>118</sup> Kawaguchi Masaaki, personal communication, March 15, 2007

<sup>119</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, September 2, 2008

ya take their time to marshal listeners' attention through enticing sonic performances that do not directly signal a particular business or product that is being advertised. What, then, is a "good sound," that produces effective resonances in their advertisement enterprise? In this section, I focus particularly on the sonic aspects of chindon-ya practices. In doing so, I examine what particular aspects of chindon-ya's sounding practices enable them to produce historical, acoustic and affective resonances informed by imaginative empathy in their business practices.

### **Spatialized Sounds, Spatialized Listening**

Why do chindon-ya's sounds, in particular, have such immediate affective effect on the listeners? Why do they entice children to follow, what particular aspects of their sounds draw listeners outside of their houses? Here, I turn to the anecdotes of how Hayashi Kôjirô and Shinoda Masami — two influential figures who spearheaded the chindon resurgence in the late 1980s and early 1990s, respectively — became enticed by chindon-ya's sounds themselves, so much so that they became chindon-ya themselves. When answering the most-often asked questions "why did you start to get involved in chindon-ya?", they both recall their first encounter with the sound of chindon-ya and the strong, affective impressions chindon-ya left them.

Shinoda Masami, a saxophone player in Tokyo who contributed to the rise of the chindon-inspired music scene described his experience of hearing chindon-ya sounds for the first time. In 1983, on his afternoon walk through a small neighborhood in Tokyo, Shinoda came across the sound of chindon-ya:

Inexplicably awe-inspiring sound was being carried my way – it wasn't music, it wasn't anything soft and simple like that. Elderly people dressed up in flamboyant military band uniforms were making unidentifiable, flaccid music... although flaccid, everyone's vibration was in total synch, and I felt something so powerful I couldn't speak. It was something that never existed in the music that I had heard of or passed through before.<sup>120</sup>

Similarly, Hayashi Kôjirô shares a similar experience of strong and inexplicable emotional reaction to his first encounter with chindon-ya's sounds. One day, when he was a university student, he was feeling somewhat depressed about his own musical abilities at home. Then came a moment of recognition:

Then, the sounds of the raw trumpet came through the window – sound that I've never heard before. The melody bounced off the walls of my small apartment room as if they were mirrors, animating my heart. I couldn't help opening the window and leaned out of the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor window. Then I saw chindon-ya disappearing into a small alley right beneath me.<sup>121</sup>

Chindon-ya's sounds seeped through Hayashi's apartment window and walls, transformed his living space, intrigued his mind to find where the sound source was, and disappeared. In Hayashi's account, the ephemerality of sound and its directional nature

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<sup>120</sup> Okuma 2001: 104-5

<sup>121</sup> Hayashi, 2006: 9

triggered a strong and immediate affective response – so strong that Hayashi desired to create similar sounds himself.

Both Hayashi and Shinoda share rather unexpected, and powerfully emotional and visceral response to the first time they heard chindon-ya sounds. Note that it was not a particular repertoire or virtuosic skills that made a lasting impression on them. Rather, it is the unexpected, irresistible and captivating “sound” that both narratives highlight. In both narratives, there’s a moment of recognition, a moment in which their ways of listening shift.

There are several observations to make about the way sounds are described in these accounts. First, the listeners were almost caught off guard by the unexpected sounds; they were not attentively listening, but the sounds *came* their way without being anticipated. Second, they did not see the practitioners at first; they heard the sounds at a distance. Third, the intrigue came from knowing that there were actual live performers producing this sound. These unexpected, spatialized, disembodied, and live sounds of chindon-ya made Hayashi impulsively look out of the window to find out where the sound came from. Now I will unpack each of these specific soundings of chindon-ya to understand how chindon-ya’s soundings in particular elicit affective responses in today’s aurally oversaturated urban soundscape.

First, linguistic specificity might reveal certain ways of listening to chindon-ya sounds. When chindon’s sounds are described in conversations, one always uses the verb “*kikoeru* 聞こえる” — a special inflection of the verb “*kiku* 聞く,” to hear or to listen. Although one usually uses the standard form of the verb “*kiku*” to describe listening with intention, such as to an iPod or a concert performance, it is extremely rare, if not awkward, to use the same verb for chindon-ya sounds. Instead, one uses a passive conjugation “*kikoeru*” — to be heard. The subject here is no longer the listener but the sounds; the agency of the listener is surrendered to sounds. The direct translation would be “chindon-ya sounds can be heard.”<sup>122</sup> In addition, once inflected passively, a sense of spatiality emerges in the connotation of the verb. While “*kiku*” is simply “listening,” “*kikokeru*” carries a sense of “overhearing” — without the intentional, focused activity of listening, sounds are carried over space and pouring into one’s ears. The sound is evanescent and flowing, to be sensed by the ears of the listeners but without discerning attention.

One does not listen to chindon-ya sounds; one *overhears* chindon-ya sounds. This is telling of the ways the chindon-ya sounds are perceived. To perform as to entice listeners and marshal listeners’ attention involves sounding in ways that promotes this way of peripheral listening, where sounds are omnipresent and multidirectional. One does not need to intentionally listen to be touched by the sounds of imaginative empathy.

### **Disembodied Sounds and Mass Intimacy**

The notion of sound “touching” a listener — a physical metaphor for the effect of sound on one’s affect — shows how sound can be a significant dimension through which a sense of public intimacy can be produced. R. Murray Schafer explains: “Hearing is a way of touching at a distance and the intimacy of the first sense is fused with sociability

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<sup>122</sup> In Japanese, “to see” and “to hear” are the only verbs that have this special conjugation.

whenever people gather together to hear something special” (Schafer 2003: 11).<sup>123</sup> This attention to sound’s ability to reach across physical boundaries and elicit embodied sociality across distance, between people as well as between the living and the inert underscores chindon-ya’s sound business “to be overheard.”

This becomes particularly relevant when listeners at a distance can be touched by chindon-ya sounds *without seeing* the chindon-ya performing. Overhearing and touched by the sounds of imaginative empathy, listeners are immediately taken by the urge to find and *see* the source of sounds. The primal hide-and-seek played by the sounds without visible sound source has been theorized by film theorist Michel Chion as *acousmêtre* (1994, 1999). Originally coined by Pierre Schaffer in 1950, it refers to a sound that is heard without its cause or source being seen. With the advanced technologies of telephone, radio, TV, or film (where one might hear sounds in the sound track that does not match with what is on screen), hearing sounds without seeing its sound source has become a common sensory phenomenon of modernity. Although this notion was coined and theorized in the context of technological mediation, it helps highlight the second sonic particularity of chindon-ya, as chindon-ya’s sounds are often heard at a distance, from a place where listeners do not see the performers.

The separation of sounds and visible sound source can have a powerful affective effect on the listener. Film editor and theorist Walter Murch argues that this gap between what one hears and what one sees can produce “mass intimacy,” highlighting the sounds’ ability to speak to a large number of people in a such a way that each viewer feels the filmmakers are talking to them alone, about things that only he or she knows. Murch explicates how sounds can achieve this effect:

... [T]he accommodating technology of cinema gives us the ability to loosen those chains [of images and literal sound directly associated with the images] and to re-associate the film’s images with other, carefully-chosen sounds which at first hearing may be “wrong” in the literal sense, but which can offer instead richly descriptive sonic metaphor. This metaphoric use of sound is one of the most flexible and productive means of opening up a conceptual gap into which the fertile imagination of the audience will reflexively rush, eager (even if unconsciously so) to complete circles that are only suggested, to answer questions that are only half-posed. What each person perceives on screen, then, will have entangled within it fragments of their own personal history, creating that paradoxical state of mass intimacy where—though the audience is being addressed as a whole—each individual feels the film is addressing things known only to him or her.<sup>124</sup>

In a similar way, chindon-ya’s sounds, overheard by a listener indoors who does not see the sound source, produce a sense of public intimacy that each listener simultaneously interprets in a personalized way. The analogy Hayashi draws between chindon-ya practices and live film-scoring might not be a coincidence, especially in light of the fact

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<sup>123</sup> Henri Lefebvre also writes of the effect of musical resonance to create sociality: “it is in this way, and at this level, in the non-visible, that bodies find each other” (Lefebvre 1991[1974]: 225).

<sup>124</sup> Murch 2004:1



that Hayashi reveres the older generation chindon-ya practitioners who had the experience of playing in silent cinema theaters. Elaborating on how Hayashi imagines the sentiments of the socially marginalized while performing, he evokes a similar effect of mass intimacy much like Murch's:

What moved me when I was playing the trumpet with an experienced older chindon drum player was how they arranged the dark, morbid song into an energetic tune with their drumming... it [performance] needs to be sad but we also need to bring it in a positive direction. That wins sympathy... people with a dark shadow need to be pulled towards the sound, but they want to be cheered up. It's just like taishû *engeki* [popular itinerant theater]. Often their stories are about tragic heroes. It's sad but there's something powerful behind them. But, if there's a happy ending, the audience won't be satisfied. They'll feel like 'oh it's just me who's unhappy and miserable.' I think that's the secret of taishû entertainment. We have to bring the audience to the state that's much more tragic than they are, then pull them out of it.<sup>125</sup>

Chindon-ya's sounds, sounded in public space to address listeners at large, resonate with individual listeners who overhear in ways that they imaginatively make relevant in their personal stories.

### **Allure of the Mobile and the Live**

The difference between the cinema and chindon-ya, of course, is that the sounds are not recorded, and the audience has the agency to close the cognitive gap by tracing the sounds to their sources: chindon-ya practitioners. Perhaps this guarantee that there are live bodies at the sound source is what makes chindon-ya's alluring force; the immediate desire to find the sound-source and follow it may come from the assumption that chindon-ya sounds, once recognized, are live (生, *nama*). Even when one only hears the chindon-ya sounds from afar, or behind the walls, there is a guarantee that there are live performers at the source of the sounds that are coming the listeners' way. The chindon-ya sounds arouse curiosity in the listeners and invite them to follow and find the sound source, thereby drawing them into unexpected social interactions with the troupe members or others who similarly have been allured by chindon-ya's soundings.

What makes chindon-ya's sounding practice more complex, and potentially more enticing for the listeners, is that the bodies that produce the soundings are constantly in motion, thereby making the search for the sounding source even more of a challenge, if not a mystery. Because the chindon-ya is constantly in motion, there is simultaneously a sense of vague directionality and ephemerality – it must be coming from somewhere and going elsewhere. The sounds might come closer to the hearer — or might not. Chindon-ya sounds thus come with unpredictability and resonate in the realm of possible perceptibility. The sounds disperse, echo against the alleyways and buildings, muffled through layers of structural walls, merging with other sounds present in daily life.

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<sup>125</sup> Hayashi, personal communications, March 22, 2007

This might help us understand the significance of such a deliberately non-digital media in today's advertising media sphere that is otherwise saturated with technologically mediated and digital media. Chindon-ya's spatialized, disembodied, and constantly in-motion sound that has the guarantee of a social body elicits affective responses in listeners. Catering to the listening public, many of whom the practitioners imagine to be marginalized, chindon-ya sounds out imaginative empathy to create a sense of intimacy that resonates across both the individual listener's personal history and public urban streetscape. Murch and Chion's insights offer us an analysis of how the particular ways in which chindon-ya sounds *and* is listened to affectively "touch" a large number of listeners at a distance, who then imaginatively forge personalized relations and attachments to the sounds that create a sense of intimacy.

### **Indexical Sound of Chindon-ya: *Kane***

While this analysis highlights how chindon-ya's sounds cater to individuals and address social differences, I also have noted a contradictory discourse in which chindon-ya's distinct sounds elicited a collective sense of belonging as a homogeneous public mass, interpellated by the sound of kane, the gong chime.

Kawaguchi Masaaki once mentioned that chindon sound was "*zatsuon*" – noise, or white noise. Yet, he also maintains that "chindon-ya is whatever people recognize as that." While chindon-ya's sounds are simply "overheard" in everyday soundscapes, chindon-ya's soundings become chindon-ya only when it is recognized and perceived as what it is. Unlike the use of recognizable voices or celebrities or jingles in contemporary radio and TV advertisement, sonic recognizability in chindon-ya's performance of enticement is rooted in the distinct sounds of "*chin*" – onomatopoeia for the high-pitched and piercing sound of bronze gong chime kane – and "*don*" – onomatopoeia for the small *daidou* drum.

In particular, the distinct timbre of kane is a clear sonic signal to shift the listeners' aural sensitivity from (over)hearing to listening; its piercing, high-register metallic sound carries itself through distance and other urban sounds, marshaling one's attention.<sup>126</sup> Among the Chindon Tsûshinsha members, the importance of kane as an instrument was evident in various discussions I heard concerning which the kane was said to sound best and how it could be made to sound better. Some passionately told me how the age of the instrument affects its sound quality,<sup>127</sup> or how one can easily distinguish who is playing by listening to the sound of the kane. Some claim that the slightly cracked kane sounds better, while Uchino Makoto experimented with putting tape on the rim of the kane to muffle the sound to make the instrument sound sweeter and better.

In addition to kane's sounds, its historical connections with other religious and folk practices were often a subject of discussion with the members. Kane has historically been used in religious and festival contexts, and today it is a familiar sound that automatically signals traditional festivals, parades and festival folk dances (盆踊り, *bon-odori*). The history of kane has fascinated several of Chindon Tsûshinsha members,

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<sup>126</sup> For discussions on the difference between hearing and listening, see Oliveros 2005; Carter 2004; Erlmann 2004; Schafer 1977; Atalli 2004.

<sup>127</sup> For example, Uchino Makoto argued older kane was made with different portions of metal material that is no longer available today.

particularly Hayashi. In the October 2008 theatrical production that distilled Hayashi's vision of chindon-ya history, kane figured prominently. It is a trope that threaded together time periods and historical characters that Hayashi considers to be important in tracing genealogies of chindon-ya practice. Sonically and symbolically, kane evoked the historical continuity with the feudal past, grounded in the notion of the "folk." While these historical associations are not necessarily common knowledge, many Japanese listeners have been socialized to associate the sound of kane with summer festivals.

This aural collective memory that associates the timbre of kane with festivals has been transposed to chindon-ya's sounds. Such collective association of the kane sound with festivals elicits immediate affective response in listeners. "Overhearing" the sound of kane from afar often invites immediate and inexplicable excitement, luring the listener to follow the sound to its source. During the fieldwork, I myself have experienced the immediacy of the kane sound coming from afar. On one summer day, the sound of kane came through my apartment window. I found myself jumping out of my apartment and running downstairs to the street without knowing exactly where it was or why I was in such a rush – soon, as I took a couple of turns walking towards the sound, I found Osaka's famous *danjiri* summer festival float that had a big kane on it.

Such immediate response to the sound of kane coming from afar is typical. I've heard multiple listeners describe their reactions as "*Chi ga sawagu* 血が騒ぐ" – literally, "It makes my blood noisy." Kawaguchi Masaaki also referred to the sound of kane as a trigger of an essentialist notion of *Japaneseness*: "Maybe an image of this kind of tool evokes 'Japanese DNA,' borrowing the word of the university student who wrote about chindon-ya."<sup>128</sup> Implied here is an almost biologically programmed notion of the kane sound simultaneously interpellating a "Japanese" subject, and inciting a festive and bacchanalian spirit in listeners.

Taken as a sonic emblem of the popular national cultural imaginary, kane's sound has been valorized to further the essentialist discourse of *Japaneseness*. Four members of Chindon Tsūshinsha performed with the famous Bosnian singer Jadranka Stojaković at Sekihōji temple in Kyoto in October 2006 as part of a curated concert series put on by the publisher SURE. Hayashi recounted his conversation with her to highlight the distinctly Japanese aural sensibility to the sound of kane:

She [Jadranka Stojaković] lives in Tokyo now, and she said that she occasionally runs into chindon-ya publicizing pachinko parlors. And apparently, she just runs away with her hands covering her ears. She never thought she would play together with that. What bothered her most was the kane. The pitch. Can't tell if it's *do* or *re*, but there's a pitch to it. The timpanis can be tuned, but you know, [kane cannot be tuned...]<sup>129</sup>

Here, Hayashi is implicitly asserting that the Japanese listening sensibility has been socialized in such a way that the pitched ring of kane, even if it is not "in tune" with the melody, is not registered as an irritable sound. In contrast, Jadranka, standing in for the

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<sup>128</sup> Kawaguchi Masaaki. Personal Communication, March 15, 2007

<sup>129</sup> Hayashi Kōjirō. Personal Communication, March 22, 2007

“West,” finds it unbearable. Underlining such a narrative is the echo of *nihonjinron*, the persistent essentialist discourse about Japanese cultural uniqueness, grounded in the assumption of class, cultural, racial, and ethnic homogeneity.<sup>130</sup> What defines chindon-ya sonically, then, is perceived by chindon-ya practitioners as a sonic emblem of a national cultural imaginary, grounded in the historical continuity with the “folk” and the feudal past and pitted against the “West.”

Referring to such cultural practices that are simultaneously marginalized and codified as cultural-national objects of longing, anthropologist Marilyn Ivy calls attention to the process in which the cultural anxiety of the “loss of tradition” that accompanies capitalist modernity drives representative survivals of “premodern” Japan. The discourses of kane sound and its centrality to chindon-ya among the practitioners as discussed above echoes Ivy’s discussion of an inherently modern project that generates “pre-modern, pre-western Japanese authenticity.”<sup>131</sup> By claiming kane’s roots in the religious folk practices during the feudal era and its affective power to invoke one’s Japaneseness, chindon-ya practitioners interpellate a monolithic and essentialized listening public through their discourse on the indexical sound of “kane,” in contradiction to the socially marginalized and differentiated listening public that their spatial practices otherwise produce.

### **Strategic Nostalgia: Making Money with Uncommodified Sounds?**

Chindon-ya’s discourse regarding the kane sounds produce a nostalgic longing for the pre-modern and pre-western; in addition, their insistence on the live, unmediated *nama* sounds has yielded a romanticized nostalgia for a pre-capitalist economy. In a conversation with me over drinks, Kawaguchi Masaaki passionately offered his analysis of what chindon-ya’s sounds do, and why chindon-ya is still in high demand today:

I think that people have privatized the act of “singing” too much... People have been singing without even thinking about it everyday, since we were born, where there’s nothing to do with economy. While everything tangible and intangible and arts are commodified, chindon-ya is at the very bottom. The act of expression – the most fundamental thing that people possess from the time immemorial. Stars have made them into privileges. Maybe we [chindon-ya] are appreciated because we evoke natural acts of dancing, talking, and singing that have existed from long time ago, before being commodified. Maybe we make them sense “the pastoral.” It’s innocent, and it gives energy. While everyone is progressing, we’re just casually floating. That’s chindon-ya. Otherwise we won’t be getting so many gigs. We have been offered more than a thousand gigs a year these past five to ten years.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> The deep-rooted belief in Japanese homogeneity has been traced among numerous prominent figures, including “National Learning” scholars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the popular *nihonjinron* writers of the 20<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>130</sup> and the present-day government officials and Japanese and non-Japanese journalists and scholars (Denoon et al, 1996; Komai 1994; Ishii and Yamauchi 1999; Lie 2001; McCormack, 2001, Oguma 1995, 1998; Weiner 1994).

<sup>131</sup> The prevalent assumption on Japanese modernity as necessarily marked by the presence of the West needs critical analysis.

<sup>132</sup> Kawaguchi Masaaki, personal communication, March 15, 2007

Kawaguchi positions himself and chindon-ya as a historical remnant of pre-industrial, pre-capitalist economy, where sound was an uncommodified primal act of expression. Kawaguchi's words suggest that the contemporary appeal of chindon-ya is in this romanticized notion of innocence—innocence lost through commodification. By distancing himself from the “progress” of contemporary society, Kawaguchi's discourse of chindon-ya as a sonic evocation of the primal and pastoral merges nostalgia for the pre-modern with nostalgia for the era before capitalism. I posit that the nostalgia for innocence, as seen in the trope of children following chindon-ya on the streets in chapter 2, can be extended to the marketplace; chindon-ya's performance of enticement today might come from a desire to recover an innocence that has been lost through commodification.

Thus, listening to chindon-ya's soundings produce and reveal multiple contradictions. On one hand, chindon-ya by necessity of their business needs to appeal to the marginalized; therefore in the resonance we hear the articulation of histories of marginalization and contemporary social differences, which simultaneously challenges the conception of space as homogeneous and abstracted. On the other hand, the indexical sound of kane invokes nostalgia for the “innocence” lost since the “pre-modern,” “pre-western,” and “pre-capitalist” past, thereby putting forward an essentialist discourse of Japanese homogeneity. In other words, the listening public as sounded out by chindon-ya is simultaneously differential *and* homogeneous.<sup>133</sup>

What is important to note in this complex web of contradictions of chindon-ya is Kawaguchi's comment at the end of the quote: “Otherwise we won't be getting so many gigs.” The desire for pre-capitalist, pre-modern, pre-western innocence that chindon-ya's sounds allegedly invoke *brings business*. Perhaps, chindon-ya practitioners' persistent refusal to label themselves as professional musicians, and their self-perception of chindon-ya as sounds rather than music (read: commodified sounds), are strategic moves needed to maintain their “innocence” in order to make money. By referring to “music” and “musicians” as notions embedded within capitalist discourse and by maintaining distance from them, chindon-ya themselves are capitalizing on the notion of their sounds as “uncommodified,” and dangerously flirt with the discourse of Japaneseness to gain profit. Chindon-ya in contemporary Japan, in other words, strategically valorizes the modern nostalgia for the innocence lost through capitalist modernity in order to carve out a space in their struggle to stay afloat in the contemporary economy that otherwise deems them obsolete.

## **Conclusion**

As I have shown in this chapter, chindon-ya's commercial practices put forth a conception of public space that is *not* physically delineated, officially regulated, or immediately visible. As chindon-ya's sounded imaginative empathy moves across the physical boundaries of apartment walls and segregated neighborhoods, their practices make audible and disrupt such boundaries that mark and contain social differences and delineate the public and private. In turn, by eliciting affective interpersonal relations and drawing sentiments and bodies into relations across such physically and socially demarcated boundaries, chindon-ya's sounding practices produce a new sense of space,

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<sup>133</sup> As Ivy points out, such disavowal of the “West” in itself is a modernist, “post-western” project, inherently implicated in the recursive relationship between Japan and the West.

showing how space is in fact actively produced through practice and social relations at each specific site of performance.

Chindon-ya's sounding practice of imaginative empathy compels us to question not only the incommensurability of money and sentiment, but also the notion of space as a physical enclosure onto which social differences are mapped. Listening carefully to chindon-ya's sounding practices, what we hear resonating in the streets, through the windows and into the living rooms is a sense of space that is actively produced through an articulation of social relations that are otherwise silenced, contained, and regulated within physical boundaries. This dynamic and inclusive sense of space is where we hear economies of sentiment and political economies in a productive feedback loop in chindon-ya's sound business of imaginative empathy.

## CHAPTER 4

### SHAKING BODIES ON SHAKY GROUND: CHINDON-INSPIRED MUSICS AND THE HENOKO PEACE MUSIC FESTA

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Space does not consist in the projection of an intellectual representation, does not arise from the visible-readable realm, but it is first of all heard (listened to) and enacted (through physical gestures and movements.)  
— Henri Lefebvre (1991: 200)

I was walking on the white-sand beach of Henoko, northern Okinawa, with the Osaka-native rock musician and chindon -drum player Itami Hideko and her then four-year old daughter Sora. Except for the coming and going of the boats of the local fishermen, the beach is usually empty and quiet. It wasn't an exception that day; we were the only ones on this remote and quiet beach, and I could only hear the sounds of the waves and wind.

Suddenly, a jarring sound startled me – a military trumpet. As I turned around, my eyes fixed on the moving surveillance camera by the barbed-wire fence on the beach, which divides the beach into the U.S. military territory and the public beach of Henoko. The sound of the military horn echoed indiscriminately across the boundary, acoustically extending the dominant presence of the US military beyond the border.

It was only six months prior that a wide array of musical sounds – from Okinawan folk music to reggae, hip hop, rock, free jazz, and many other hybrid sounds labeled *mixture* – resounded across the beach, as if to disrupt the quiet and to counteract the sonic expansion of the US military. In February 2007, a temporary stage was erected on the same beach for the *Henoko Peace Music Festa*, a music festival held to challenge the construction of a new offshore U.S. military base in Henoko. Itami was a central force in organizing the festival as well as a performer. The metallic ringing of the gong chime and rhythmic tum-tum of Itami's home-made chindon drum set was among those sounds; pitched as an *asyle* chindon band, her chindon-inspired group called Soul Flower Mononoke Summit was the headliner of the event.

Revisiting the once sound-filled and now quiet beach with Itami raised many questions about sound, space, the notion of the political, and chindon-ya. Listening simultaneously to the quiet sounds of the waves, the sudden piercing sound of the military horn, and my memory of the festival sounds while standing on the very same beach, I was struck by the multiple senses of space that these soundings created on Henoko beach. This reflection reminded me of another unusual sense of place that Itami's band invoked on the beach at the festival by describing their music as *asyle* chindon. *Asyle* is a French term meaning asylum – a sanctuary, place of refuge, a place exonerated from the dominant power. The notion of a space of asylum on the contested and divided beach is oxymoronic, if not ironic or utopian. How could musical sounds create a space immune from power, when they resound across the very place that is the subject of struggles over power? And last but not least – how did the chindon drum sounds become part of this unusual musical assemblage at the Peace Music Festa?

This chapter explores an instance of chindon-ya as it appears in a non-advertisement context: Henoko Peace Music Festa 2007. The Henoko Peace Festa was first organized in February 2006, by local reggae enthusiasts in hopes to “take action about the US army base issues in Okinawa through the power of music and art.” The following year, an Osaka-native rock musician-turned-chindon -player Itami Hideko and an Okinawan hip-hop artist Chibana Tatsumi joined a Tokyo-transplant reggae enthusiast Hirano Masaaki as the main festival organizers, expanding the festival not only in its size but also in the diversity of the music programming.<sup>134</sup> Consciously organized as a new mode of political expression, the festival marked a significant strategic departure from previous protest activities on the Henoko beach by bringing new bodies and sounds to the contested beach, and by foregrounding the musical sounds and festiveness instead of verbal expressions of political discontent.

My goal in this chapter is twofold. First, by examining the discourses on chindon-ya that have informed some of the chindon-inspired musicians who have organized and participated in the Peace Music Festa, I hope to show how popular discursive practices of chindon-ya have created the very possibilities for chindon-ya to produce resonances beyond the publicity purposes it was originally meant to serve. What is it about chindon-ya that has appealed to the organizers and performers of the Henoko Peace Music Festa, and what new possibilities have emerged from these interpretations of the practice?

Secondly, through the particular case study of the Henoko Peace Music Festa, I will examine how discourses and cultural imaginaries of chindon-ya create new possibilities for the acoustic politics of “sounding public space.” Among many chindon-inspired projects and events, I have chosen the Peace Music Festa because it encapsulates central themes I have examined in previous chapters: the forging of socialities through listening and sounding among and with listeners in public space; the creation of translocal affiliations and affective connections through imaginative empathy; the rearticulation of social differences; and how pleasure contributes to this process. Although many other chindon-inspired projects and events do highlight some of these central themes, I focus on the Henoko Peace Music Festa because, as a single event, it productively enables me to explore multiple aspects of chindon-ya’s cultural work. The Henoko Peace Music Festa highlights how the power of soundings, as I have examined through the analytics of imaginative empathy and resonance, can create tangible effects and direct interventions in socially and politically contested situations.

By weaving together discourse analysis and ethnographic analysis of the Peace Music Festa, I show how the organizers’ understandings of and experiences with chindon-ya have enabled them to assemble multiple social relations, political aspirations, translocal networks, and musical styles to produce resonances that are politically productive on Henoko Beach.

### **Neo-Chindon Phenomenon: Chindon-ya Inspired Practices**

Before describing the Peace Music Festa, a brief introduction to the chindon-inspired projects in contemporary Japan is necessary to understand who have organized and performed the event, and what their relationships are to chindon-ya practices. While I have almost exclusively focused on chindon-ya practitioners who perform for

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<sup>134</sup> Since then, the festival has continued on different sites; 2008 festival took place in Tokyo, and 2009 in Ginowan, Okinawa.



advertisement purposes as their profession in the earlier chapters, chindon-ya's musical sounds have reached beyond the realm of its original purposes today. Through the shopping arcades and back streets in Tokyo, at an anti-US military music festival in Okinawa, at a summer festival in a predominantly Korean neighborhood of Osaka, on a "Music of Japan" compilation CD distributed internationally, at London's Thames Festival — chindon-ya's musical sounds echo at the intersections of various musical styles, sentiments, social differences, and business enterprises. Since the early 1990s, various chindon-inspired projects have emerged in non-advertisement contexts throughout Japan. To distinguish the older style, which I simply call chindon-ya, from the offshoot practices since the early 1990s resurgence, I refer to these practices as chindon-inspired. While chindon-ya refers to the advertising street-performance practices that I have discussed in the previous chapters, chindon-inspired practices refer to the contemporary cultural production that draws on chindon-ya in some manner in hybridizing practices.<sup>135</sup> Among contemporary Japanese musicians,<sup>136</sup> intellectuals, artists, listeners, and activists, the cultural imaginary of chindon-ya has generated a wide variety of creative projects, from historical research to musical collaborations, new musical forms, and publications.

The sounds and trope of chindon-ya has yielded some unlikely collaborations between chindon-ya and other musicians, and unexpected relationships across places and times have been imagined and formed as a result. For instance, Osaka's Chindon Tsûshinsha chindon-ya has been invited to perform with a Bosnian singer Jadranka Stojaković, and to record and tour Okinawan singer Daiku Tetsuhiro. They also recorded an album with the brass band *Kitamura Gakutai* in the rural area of Sendai, northern Japan, where the last existing jinta band – the precursor of chindon-ya — was said to have been recently “discovered” as if frozen in time since 1925.<sup>137</sup>

Chindon-inspired musical projects did not only involve musical collaborations between chindon-ya and other musicians. Starting in the mid 1990s, many non-chindon practitioners started to build their own chindon drum sets and incorporate them into their music, resulting in new musical styles. Itami's group Soul Flower Mononoke Summit, a musical alter-ego of the successful and popular rock band Soul Flower Union, features an unusual hodge-podge of instruments including chindon drums, the Okinawan string

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<sup>135</sup> As part of the resurgence, there has been a remarkable increase in the number of “shirôto” chindon (amateur) groups throughout the country. Many university clubs have formed chindon groups, and there is not only an amateur section at Toyama's annual chindon contest (introduced since 1998), but also an independent amateur-only chindon contest in Kawagoe since 2004. Here, although the popular desire to become chindon-ya among these amateur practitioners deserves attention in itself, I have curtailed the presence of amateur chindon-ya groups as my research focuses on hybridized practices that depart from chindon-ya as an advertising practice.

<sup>136</sup> There is also a New York City-based group called Happy Fun Smile that is inspired by chindon-ya, founded by a Japanese American. Here, although chindon-ya has not been a signifier of Japaneseness within Japan, chindon drums and festival-like atmosphere invoked by them are in the forefront of “Japaneseness” expressed by the group. <http://www.happyfunsmile.com>

<sup>137</sup> Many of such collaborative projects are planned and organized by individuals; the Jadranka-Chindon Tsûshinsha show at a temple was organized by a small publisher SURE, and the Daiku-Chindon Tsûshinsha project was pitched by an independent record label owner and curator Kamiya Kazuyoshi. Ôsawa gakutai and Chindon Tsûshinsha's record was also distributed by Kamiya's label *off note*, although Hayashi himself schemed this collaboration as part of his genealogical project in which he traces historical forces and performance practices that have influenced the emergence and development of chindon-ya.

instrument *sanshin* and the Korean drum *changgo*.<sup>138</sup> In Tokyo, Okuma Wataru, an improviser, arranger, and virtuosic clarinet player trained in chindon-ya, founded a band Cicala Mvta in 1994. Self-described as “chindon, punk, jazz,” Cicala Mvta has developed a solid fan base through mostly grass-roots distribution and promotion, and their latest album *Ghost Circus* (2004) has climbed to the top of the Tokyo College Radio Chart. Along with other chindon -influenced bands such as Kabocha Shokai (founded in 1991) and Chindon Brass Kingyo (founded in 1999), these new groups depart from chindon-ya significantly not only stylistically but also in terms of performance sites. While chindon-ya is performed almost exclusively on the streets, chindon-inspired performance sites are not necessarily limited to the streets but also include various stage venues and recording studios. Furthermore, while chindon-ya troupes are first and foremost an advertisement for a business, chindon-inspired practitioners are almost never hired by establishments for the purpose of publicity.

Alongside these chindon-inspired collaborations and musical formations, popular publications on chindon-ya have proliferated since the mid 1990s. A report on the daily life of chindon-ya led by 92-year old Kikunoya Shimemaru, the oldest chindon practitioner until he passed away in March 2010, as well as a children’s book based on his troupe have been published by his disciples and journalists, while younger generations of chindon-ya such as Adachi Hideya in Kyūshū and Hayashi Kōjirō from Osaka’s Chindon Tsūshinsha have authored books on their own experiences as chindon-ya.<sup>139</sup> Hayashi has contributed numerous articles and essays to other publications as well, including the “音の力 (Power of Sounds)” book series dedicated to the theme, “street,” published by the cultural collective DeMusik Inter. DeMusik Inter is a group of cultural critics, writers, journalists, and musicians who have published many writings on street musical practices, including chindon-ya, in order to address various contemporary social issues. DeMusik Inter was founded in 1995 with a manifesto outlining their goals, some of which included the “creation of a counter-market in response to the necessity for a cultural industry that can challenge the overwhelmingly false reality of capitalism,” the “pursuit of counter-histories of popular music,” “highlighting the presence and creative input of the *zainichi* population (predominantly Korean, North Korean, Taiwanese, and Chinese) in Japan,” and “effectively interconnecting the musicians within and without Japan who are often restricted by small markets.”<sup>140</sup> Explicitly politically driven, DeMusik Inter’s publications seem to legitimate chindon-ya as distinctly Japanese street practice worthy of scholarly attention, amidst many other street-based musical practices from all corners of the world.

While the meanings invested and imagined through these contemporary musical and discursive renderings of chindon-ya warrant a thorough critical analysis, it is beyond the scope of this chapter to present a comprehensive survey of the wide variety of

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<sup>138</sup> Soul Flower Mononoke Summit explicitly acknowledge their musical indebtedness to Daiku Tetsuhiro’s first chindon -featuring album, “*Okinawa Jinta*” (1994.)

<sup>139</sup> The earliest book, “*チンドン屋です。[We are chindon-ya]*,” was co-authored by Hayashi Kōjirō and his then-wife Akae Mariko. (Hayashi and Akae 1993) In addition, Chindon Tsūshinsha published a monthly newsletter to circulate within families and friends, while a chindon -fan and other popular performance arts aficionado also published monthly magazine “*Usan Musan*” featuring not only chindon-ya but also chindon-inspired practitioners based in Osaka area.

<sup>140</sup> DeMusik Inter ed. 2002: 312-3.

practices inspired by chindon-ya in recent years. Instead, I examine selected discursive practices among these chindon-inspired contemporary writers and musicians in order to tease out the key themes that have enabled some of them to organize the Henoko Peace Music Festa.

### CRISIS OF PUBLIC SPACE?

The first central theme that inevitably arises in any description of chindon-ya is the issue of public space, often addressed through the notions of “the street”: ストリート (transliteration of street)、路上 (literally on the street)、道路 (street-path). In DeMusik Inter’s *Power of Sounds* publications, “the street” is seen both as a controlled public space and as a space with emancipatory possibilities. The first of their *Power of Sounds* series, subtitled ストリートを取り戻せ (Let’s reclaim the Street), opens with a quote of the manifesto by the Reclaim the Street (RTS) movement based in Canada:

Our goal is to reclaim what belonged to us originally. “Us” does not refer to a selected few, but all. We can be connected with one another beyond the “government” and “corporations”... By uniting, we aim to reclaim people’s power. Let’s reclaim the street.<sup>141</sup>

Echoing the global anxiety over dispossession, reterritorialization and occupation characterized by capital accumulation in the post-Fordist era, DeMusik Inter writers and musicians seek their way out of abstracted space through musical sounds.<sup>142</sup> Underlining their writings and interviews is a sense of crisis: a crisis of public space, propelled by forces of privatization, gentrification, and increasing legal regulations.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Quoted in DeMusik Inter, 2002: 6.

<sup>142</sup> I follow Henri Lefebvre’s notion of “abstract space” here to refer to the notion of space as alienated from the social processes of reproduction, much in the same way as Marxist’s notion of abstract labor. To put it more concretely, abstract space is a “repressive economic and political space of bourgeoisie, male space... formal, homogeneous, and quantitative, [abstract space] erases all differences that originate in the body (like sex and ethnicity) or else reifies them for its own quantitative ends (Merrifield 2001:176).” While David Harvey’s well-known notion of “time-space compression” points to similar “crisis of space” where capitalist production annihilates social time and space, I suggest that DeMusik Inter’s writing is more in line with the notion of “time-space colonialization” put forward by Lefebvre. As Derek Gregory points out in his comparative analyses of Harvey and Lefebvre’s theorization of space in relation to capitalism, Lefebvre eschews such an attempt to establish a homological relation between representations of space and modes of production. Lefebvre’s notion of “time-space colonization” highlights the superimposition and hyperextension of abstract space onto everyday life (concrete space), which often is violent processes of occupation, dispossession, and reterritorialization. While this is an outward movement that acknowledges processes of spreading, invading, and occupying, Harvey’s metaphor of time-space compression is an inward movement that implies “a world collapsing in on itself” (Gregory 1994: 414). Seen in this light, I suggest that DeMusik Inter’s attempt to critique the expansion of abstract space is more in line with Lefebvre’s understanding of space, whereby they seek possible openings through micro-practices of music-making on the street. Instead of offering an inward reflection of the homogenizing, undifferentiated space of the West as Harvey does, DeMusik inter might be looking into the contradictions inherent to abstract space as theorized by Lefebvre, in which lie the seeds of a new kind of space (Lefebvre 1991: 49).

<sup>143</sup> Sharon Hayashi and Anne McKnight have offered an insightful theorization of the shifting notion of “public space” through leftist activism in Japan. Comparatively analyzing the leftist activities in the 60s and 70s and the demonstrations today, Hayashi and McKnight show how “city streets” shifted from anonymity to hide within to public space to be reclaimed (Hayashi and McKnight 2005).

The writers grapple with this sense of crisis of public space through various incidents in the books: the 2003 eviction of the homeless and the make-shift open-air Karaoke space (青空カラオケ) from the public park in Tennôji by the Osaka City Planning Committee;<sup>144</sup> the 2003 corporatization of Miyashita Park in Shibuya, Tokyo by Nike, which dislocated many youth skaters;<sup>145</sup> and the tightening policing of street performers in Shibuya Park in Tokyo and Abeno Shopping District in Osaka. The imminent plan to construct a new US army on Henoko beach, a plan pushed forward by both the Japanese and US governments, is another instance of the crisis of public space in Japan today, whereby abstract space is expanding onto the concretely-lived, everyday social space.

From the perspective of the crisis of public space, the historical resilience and continuity of chindon-ya's playful and quotidian audio-visual presence might have captured the DeMusik Inter authors' and musicians' attention as a possible key to a way out of the crisis of public space. Among the musical practices examined in DeMusik Inter from all corners of the world, from Mexico to New York, Beijing, Jamaica, Germany, and Ghana, chindon-ya is positioned as a street-based musical practice distinct to Japan that has persisted throughout the shifting geographies of modernity. Could it be that chindon-inspired organizers and performers at the Henoko Peace Festa sought to reveal the crisis of the allegedly public, but fractured and dispossessed space of the Henoko beach?

The understanding of space that emerges from the sounding practices of chindon-ya practitioners sheds light on the discursive connection between chindon-ya and the crisis of public space. Chindon Tsûshinsha's leader Hayashi Kôjirô has contributed an essay to one of DeMusik Inter's *Power of Sounds* volumes, providing a voice as a practitioner to the collection. Titled "My Wanderings, Random Thoughts on Chindon Life (わが漂流のちんどん生活雑感)," Hayashi's writing sheds light on what the "street" is for chindon-ya:

Everyone, aren't you assuming that the street is public, clear and transparent space that doesn't belong to anyone? Quite the opposite. In reality, it's a space of complex ecological system, entangled organically with various human relations and relations of interest.<sup>146</sup>

Hayashi's conceptualization of public space, deeply rooted in his everyday street routine as a chindon-ya, challenges both the notion of "public" as anonymous, and "space" as a physically delineated lot that is innocent of social and political dynamics.<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Haraguchi Tsuyoshi, "Toshikukan no Dakkan [Reclaiming Urban Space: Reconsidering Open-Air Karaoke in Tennôji Park]" (DeMusik Inter 2005: 6-25); Yamakawa Munenori "Koenki[Park Documentary]" (DeMusik Inter 2005: 26-41).

<sup>145</sup> Hayashi and McKnight's piece mentioned above focuses on this incident, examining the role of sound demonstration against the backdrop of shifting spatial politics from the 70's to the contemporary ones (Hayashi and McKnight 2005).

<sup>146</sup> De Musik Inter 2002: 111.

<sup>147</sup> These contrasting conceptions of public space echo Lefebvre's notion of abstract space and differential space. What the DeMusik Inter writers are critiquing, to borrow Lefebvre's term, is the representations of space: a conceived, dominant space constructed by professionals and technocrats (Merrifield 2000: 177). In

Instead, Hayashi puts forward an understanding of public space as an embodiment of, or produced by, social relations.<sup>148</sup> It is this insight into public space provided by chindon-ya's soundings that informs much of the chindon-inspired practitioners' projects – including Henoko Peace Music Festa.<sup>149</sup>

### **CRISIS OF PUBLIC SPACE IN HENOKO: THE BORDERLINE**

The three organizers of the Peace Music Festa view the Henoko beach in similar ways, with a sense of crisis — like the “street,” the allegedly public space of the beach has been occupied, dispossessed, fractured, and abstracted. The barbed-wire borderline, and the sounds that bleed across it as if to accentuate both the artificiality and impenetrability of the border, are potent reminders that the beach is neither anonymous nor neatly delineated by a physical boundary. Here, I examine the layers of tension, power relations and fractures that are represented and produced by the barbed wire boundary on Henoko beach. It is not simply a demarcation of the territorial borderline. First, the boundary highlights Okinawa's difference as it is sedimented in a colonial past and neocolonial present. Once an independent kingdom, Okinawa was colonized by Japan in the 1870s and occupied by the US between 1945 and 1972. Even after the ostensible reversion of Okinawa to Japan, the US military has remained in Okinawa on an indefinite basis. The present-day Henoko controversy is best understood in light of this history of uneven power relations: Henoko was chosen as a relocation site to build a heliport as part of the 1996 military reorganization plan published by a joint committee of the Japanese and US governments. In 1996, The Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO), a joint committee established by the Governments of Japan and the United States, published its plan to close the airbase in the densely populated urban Futenma city, and instead construct a ‘joint-use military-civilian marine heliport’ on the rural Henoko beach as part of the military “reorganization” project. This proposal was made by the central government in the name of “reducing the burden on the people of Okinawa,”<sup>150</sup> who bear the disproportionate burden of hosting approximately 75% of U.S. military bases in Japan

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contrast, Lefebvre advocates a differential space produced through particularities, both bodily and experiential.

<sup>148</sup> This notion of space echoes with conceptions of space as actively produced through multiple social and historical relations, which stretch beyond its geographic boundaries (Hart 2004; Hesse 1993; Lefebvre 1991; Massey 1993, 1994; Smith and Katz 1993).

<sup>149</sup> A rather extreme example is a “sound demonstration” group called T.C.D.C (Transistor Connected Drum Collective), a group of about ten street political protesters based in Tokyo. Although they do not incorporate chindon instruments, costumes, or repertoire, the leader Oda Masanori explicitly acknowledges its embeddedness to chindon-ya in its genealogy, calling themselves as “anti-war chindon-ya” (Oda, quoted in DeMusik Inter 2005: 123). He claims the group is a “complex constituted by patchworks of cultural memories including chindon-ya.” The logo of their group from the TCDC website clearly shows a typical chindon drum player, again drawing on a rather conceptual (rather than visual or sonic) parallel to their perception of chindon-ya. This poster is also seen on the wall in Gaza, with a stenciled slogan “Our drum beats blast through this Apartheid Wall” (featured in a youtube video of a performance by Assalamu at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrcJI3RxxwZA>)

<sup>150</sup> The Special Action Committee on Okinawa (SACO) was established in November 1995 by the Governments of Japan and the United States. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan website, “the two Governments launched the SACO process to reduce the burden on the people of Okinawa and thereby strengthen the Japan-US alliance.” <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/96saco1.html> (accessed January 15, 2009)

on their island, which constitutes a mere 0.6% of the nation's land mass and is home to only 1% of its population (Johnson 1999: 110).

This striking statistic, along with Okinawa's status as the smallest and poorest prefecture, is indicative of the uneven power relations between the islands and the central power in mainland Japan, rooted in Japan's colonial past in Okinawa in the late 1870s. Summarizing Okinawa's independent past as its own kingdom until colonization by Japan in the 1870s, a pamphlet prepared by an anti-heliport organization reads: "If we let the burden be concentrated in Okinawa, then Okinawa still continues to be Japan's colony today." Seen in this light, the barbed wire on Henoko beach does not simply demarcate the territorial borderline between the US and Japanese political territories, but highlights Okinawa's difference sedimented in its colonial past, neocolonial present, and its doubly subjugated position to the US military and Japan.

The border also has fractured the local community, according to Itami. Itami sees Peace Music Festa as an extension of her chindon project in after-earthquake Kobe. "Although the situation is very different, the pain of having the community fractured is the same. Henoko's village was split into pro- and anti-base. They are in the weak position, about to be displaced and yet cannot afford to go anywhere." The political difference between supporters and protestors against the US military has seriously hindered relations and created schisms within families, the village, and Okinawa at large. As a result, it has become unspoken common sense among locals simply not to discuss the issue to avoid further schisms among family members and local communities. Speaking of this tension, the non-Okinawan organizers spoke of how their own subjectivity as "outsiders" was an enabling factor in this sensitive and complex local politics: "It's important to have a local Okinawan on the organizing team. But this festival wouldn't have been possible just by *uchinanchû* (local dialect for Okinawan locals.) Everyone in Okinawa, especially near the bases, is somehow all connected to the base, and it's really difficult to talk about it. You lose friends if you talk about the base politics. Some families don't talk to each other because of this."<sup>151</sup>

Lastly, the boundary on the beach highlights a generational gap among the Okinawans resistant to the US military presence. The local opposition was first organized in 2004 by a group of 80- and 90-year olds who experienced the deadly Battle of Okinawa in 1945, the bloody war fought in the Pacific Theater during WWI, which wiped out one third of the island population at the time. Every day, they set up a tent on the road that leads to the beach and practice non-violent sit-in protests on straw mattresses. They have been joined by Okinawans from other locales, mostly 40 years old and older. Occasionally, supporting political organizations and parties gather to host a rally, delivering speeches issuing statements of protest, and holding up fists and banners in solidarity. However, there has been a notable lack of youth participation in such demonstrations. Remembering the 2004 military helicopter crash in the Okinawa International University campus, which met no major protest, the organizers of the Henoko Peace Music Festa see that the military has become a normalized presence among younger generations, and are concerned with the deep-rooted indifference about Henoko among the Okinawan youth.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Itami Hideko, Personal communication, August 24, 2007.

<sup>152</sup> Chibana Tatsumi, the Okinawan native organizer and hip-hop artist by the alias of "DUTY FREE SHOPP", has collaborated with a Tokyo-native rapper Kakumakushaka to release a single called "民のト

## SOUNDING MULTIPLE GEOGRAPHIES

Despite the multiplicity of tension and schism marked by the boundary on the beach, Henoko is practically unknown in mainland Japan, as there is very little media coverage on the issue. Even within Okinawa, Henoko's remote location makes it only a name one hears in the local news. In public and popular discourses, the physical distance between Henoko and mainland Japan or other parts of Okinawa has rendered Henoko a mere place-name, making meaningful public debates irrelevant or impossible and its residents silent and invisible.

Drawing on Edward Said's work, geographer Derek Gregory coined the concept "imaginative geographies" to refer to this representational process whereby physical separation allows for the distancing and Othering of the lived realities of a given place. According to Gregory, imaginative geography is a dominant cultural rhetoric produced in unequal processes of colonial contact. It naturalizes differences in the register of distance, while reproducing and privileging the dominant power itself. This concept elucidates how media depoliticizes Henoko as space of faceless *them* as opposed to *us*, rendering the place void of lived specificity and multiplicity. This in turn enables and perpetuates the Japanese and US-military hegemonic presence in Henoko, or Okinawa at large.

Critiquing the technologies of depoliticization at work in imaginative geographies, Gregory advocates a strategic reversal: the production of counter-geographies, which allows the public to challenge the hegemonic imaginative geographies concealed in the collective unconscious. Here, I want to expand this notion by highlighting how musical sounds are integral to the production of not only a particular counter-geography but multiple, overlapping geographies.

To critically examine the acoustic politics on Henoko beach entails listening in on spaces produced by the articulation of social relations, cultural expressions, and political formations that are assembled through soundings. By conceiving the beach as not simply a pre-given site of territorial contestation but rather as a milieu that is always actively produced through material, discursive, and social or imagined relations, room for creative intervention opens up. In this light, soundings become a powerful force integral to, and productive of, geography. Thus, based on the broadly conceived notion of *soundings*,<sup>153</sup> my ethnographic analysis includes not only the festival but also the events and relations that have preceded and followed the festival, on site and elsewhere, as part of the sounding of Henoko as a space.

This conception of sound and space complicates the dominant-resistant framework implied by Gregory's notion of "counter geography." Rather than viewing counter-geography as an opposition to the dominant imaginative geography, I am

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ミノ [The People's Domino]" that addressed this helicopter accident. Criticizing the mainstream media that reported on the Athens Olympics rather than the helicopter accident in Okinawa, some of the lyrics are strong and provocative: "CH35D model; helicopter fallen from the sky; smell of the burned rubber; scattered remains of the helicopter...in the media Japan is all about Athens; Media doesn't even report on the battleground Okinawa... everything is casino, resort, corporation, heliport; life is too dangerously close to the base; equipped with missiles, surrounded by weapons, the order is lost, what aspects of this Island can ever be called peaceful?..." (Kakumakushaka, 2006)

<sup>153</sup> As I have introduced in chapter 1, I suggest that sounding is "an always ongoing, embodied and situated practice that bring together discursive and material resources, practices, and relations in order to produce musical sounds at a specific time and place."

interested in highlighting how sounding practices make audible the multiple, overlapping geographies of the beach – silenced space, concretely lived space, the space of “*asyle*,” as well as possibilities for alternative spaces and futures. Thus, instead of *counter-geographies*, I return to the analytic of *resonance*. Intrinsic both sonic and spatial, the trope of resonance effectively highlights the complex social, historical, and acoustic processes in which soundings produce, and become integral to, space. “Resonances” allows us to explore not only an oppositional sense of place that may have emerged as part of the political protest, but also the intertwined processes in which particular soundings incite different ways of listening, of conceiving space, place, and social difference; how such processes are integral to the specific physical environment; and how soundings joggle memories and histories. By examining these acoustic, historical, and social processes of creating resonances, I will examine how these resonances in turn reconstitute the particular social space at stake, in this case, Henoko beach. In the following sections, therefore, I analyze discursive practices of chindon-inspired writers and musicians side-by-side with Henoko Peace Music Festa in order to examine how the specific cultural work of chindon-ya has created multiple resonances on the beach of Henoko.

### 1. RESONANCE OF “*BACHIGAI*” (OUT OF PLACE)

Henoko Peace Festa’s soundings reconfigured spatial politics on the beach in three important ways. The first key to understanding how the chindon-inspired practitioners’ experiences and understandings of particular aspects of chindon-ya might offer a politically generative potential at the Peace Festa is the notion of being “out of place.” “Have you wondered why chindon-ya are always walking around?” In his essay, Hayashi poses the question. Of course, to publicize business — but in reality, Hayashi maintains that there’s really no place where chindon-ya are supposed to belong but in the act of walking. Describing the challenge of how chindon-ya must negotiate their physical and sonic presence where they are not meant to be, he continues:

Anyhow, in short, wherever we go, we are only odd-looking intruders from elsewhere. So there’s no space that we can confidently occupy... Originally, where chindon-ya is called [to go] tends to be absurdly “*bachigai*” (wrong place, out of place) for music and performances, such as living space in the residential area, financial district, and downtown area.<sup>154</sup>

The notion of *bachigai* (場違い), or “out-of-place,” was a recurring theme in my interviews with Hayashi. Chindon-ya is by definition constantly carving out a space to perform where there is no preexisting set-up or built-in expectations for chindon-ya. Many of the chindon-inspired musicians and writers seem to find inspiration in this social, spatial, and aural negotiation process inherent in chindon-ya’s profession in order to bring bodies, sounds, and materials where they are not expected or designed to be. In other words, through bringing in out-of-place bodies and soundings, chindon-ya creates a

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<sup>154</sup> Hayashi 2002: 110-111



new type of sociality by triggering a shift in the focus of listening, and a new way of relating.

This process is always dynamic and active. Because chindon-ya is always out-of-place, they must continuously and actively work with the contingencies of each particular place they walk through in order to *be there* temporarily. Discussing the political potentiality of “site-specific public art,” the prolific music critic and one of DeMusik Inter founders Higashi Takuma offers a critical analysis of how to conceive *space*, (空間), *place*, (場) and *site* (現場). Higashi quotes the American land art artist Robert Smithson highlighting the similar performative process of chindon-ya to “create space” when out of place: “site is a place that should be, but isn’t.”<sup>155</sup> The transformative process that turns a particular location that “isn’t” into a place that “should be” holds politically generative potential. Such a spatially transformative process not only requires specific attention to the geographical and historical specificities of each site (or, as Higashi translates, *genba*),<sup>156</sup> but also creatively assembles relations and materials. In turn, this performative process of transforming abstract space (*kûkan*) into a concretely lived place, a place of happenings, a place produced through social relations (*genba*), offers conditions of possibility to critique or challenge the political status quo. I argue that it is chindon-ya’s site-specific performative processes that assemble relations, materials, sounds, and practices that chindon-inspired practitioners find potentially generative for their political projects.

The relevance of the discourse of being out-of-place is evident in the main goal of Henoko Peace Music Festa: all three organizers emphasized repeatedly that their main goal was simply to bring bodies, and particularly the youth, to the beach. Chibana Tatsumi, one of the organizers, said: “Pro- or anti- heliport plan aside, we just wanted people who may not even have any opinions about Henoko just to be here, to see the place, the ocean. Music was essential in bringing these people here.” At the festival, a total of over 800 audience members, majority in their 20s, staff, and musicians from not only Okinawa but also from Osaka, Tokyo, Ireland, and Guinea gathered in Henoko, and collectively experienced the lived realities of the beach. In turn, the lived realities of the beach were further concretized by the participants’ own physical presence and their interactions with those who are normally separated from them by generational and geographical gaps. For instance, I witnessed twenty-something year old Tokyoites in conversation with the ninety-year old sit-in protesters, and a graffiti artist painting a profile of a symbolic *obâ* (a revered grandmother figure) on a canvas set up to the left of the stage. Thus, through people that were drawn by the festival music to the beach, Henoko became no longer a mere place name or location. Instead, the beach’s specific

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<sup>155</sup> Higashi quotes him from Nick Kaye, “Site Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation,” Routledge, 2000. Hirai translates site as *genba* in Japanese – see footnote 155.

<sup>156</sup> *Genba* is the overarching conceptual tool that guides Condry’s ethnographic methodology and analysis in his book *Hip Hop Japan: Rap and the Paths of Cultural Globalization* (2006). A Japanese term in circulation among the participants of the hip-hop scene, it refers to the actual sites of performance, such as clubs and recording studios, where participants collaborate and improvise. As a creative response to the calls for rethinking the notion of space in anthropology, Condry’s use of the *genba* concept redefines the field of his research by shifting the ethnographic focus from a geographically enclosed unit of analysis toward performative practices that unfold within the geographically dispersed but socially interrelated relations. (Condry: 2006)

and material realities were recognized and affirmed through the participants' lived experience. Although Henoko's hard-to-access location posed constraints on the number of participants, filling the beach with bodies that would not be there otherwise was politically meaningful, as these bodies and music produced spaces of new relations, conviviality, and intimacy on the otherwise abstracted and emptied beach.

## 2. RESONANCE OF IMAGINATIVE EMPATHY: REARTICULATING DIFFERENCES

While being out of place holds significance in chindon-ya practices and offers political potential to chindon-inspired practitioners, it also presents a challenge to chindon-ya: while chindon-ya must blend in well enough to the surroundings sonically and visually in order to be received by the audience, they simultaneously “need to be bachigai. It's meaningless if you become transparent (場違いなもの。透明になってしまうと意味がない。).”<sup>157</sup> In other words, chindon-ya's presence on the streets rests on the ambivalence between familiarity and difference, oscillating between being *in place* and being *out of place*. The sense of difference implicated in the discourses around chindon-ya's out-of-place-ness seems to be another key theme that enables chindon-inspired practitioners to draw on, re-invent, and incorporate chindon sounds in their musical projects in meaningful ways. For instance, in my interview with Cho Paggie,<sup>158</sup> a third-generation Korean folk singer born in Osaka who collaborates with chindon-ya practitioners, he emphasized his perception of chindon-ya as “somewhat strange,” and how he also longed to be “strange.”<sup>159</sup> When I asked him if that means he also wanted to go to this *strange place* when he started to make music with chindon-ya, he answered: “Yes, yes. Me too. I want to be strange.” For a Korean Japanese who has already been marked through his ethnic difference, musical re-articulation of his difference with that of chindon-ya's, I argue, is politically provocative and productive. Chindon-ya carries spatial difference as bachigai, but also historical difference; chindon-ya has historically been associated with socially castigated population in Japan. Aligning himself with chindon-ya, then, Cho's musical flirtation with chindon-ya sounds out multiple resonances; chindon-ya's difference creates sympathetic vibrations with the production of difference in Japan (and subsequent marking of Korean difference), and the always-already hybridized sounds of chindon-ya (the Western military bands and Japanese traditional percussions) reverberates with the inextricably linked colonial relations between Korea and Japan, of which Cho is a product. In playing with chindon-ya sounds, then, Cho marks his own difference as well as differences that are inherently constitutive of Japan.

Chindon-ya's historical association with the socially castigated and the out-of-place resonates with the personal history of how Itami Hideko, the organizer of the Peace

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<sup>157</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, Osaka. October 7, 2006

<sup>158</sup> Cho Paggie is a zainichi Korean singer with a talent for singing Korean folk songs, blues, and rock. In addition to performing, he works as a lecturer and writer to inform audiences about the issues of education, human rights, and Japan-Korea relations. He is an active performer, with more than one hundred shows a year, and has recorded and performed with chindon percussion instruments. Since his fourth live album *Garlic Chindon* (Pandora Records 2000), the majority of his recordings and performances have incorporated chindon instruments and neo-chindon performers.

<sup>159</sup> See quote on page 30.

Henoko Music Festa, came to play the chindon drums. She attributes her sensitivity and concern for ethnic differences and generational gaps to her upbringing. She described her house where she grew up in Yamasaki, Osaka, as “close to *buraku*,” areas where descendants of *burakumin* (descendants of the subhuman cast from the Edo era) have lived. Her grade school memory testifies to the environment that nurtured her sensitivity to ethnic differences; her third grade music teacher burned the government-issued music textbooks, and instead instructed his students, including Itami, to sing South Korean and North Korean songs from handmade music textbooks.<sup>160</sup> This was a radical act of condemning the homogenizing education system that promoted the imperial nationalism and monoethnic conception of the state. Furthermore, Itami recalled that she considered her teacher’s act to be appropriate to her diverse class that included not only *zainichi* Korean but also *buraku* students. Her imaginative empathy, developed through her early childhood interactions with difference, thus informed Itami’s later political projects to produce multiple affective resonances through her musical career.

Her first contact with chindon-ya came in 1995, when the Great Hanshin Earthquake of magnitude seven shook the areas surrounding Kobe prefecture. Itami was compelled to visit the earthquake-stricken areas with music. Noting how the impacted areas tended to be where ethnic minorities and immigrant workers were concentrated, and how they and the elderly did not have the means to move out of temporary housing even a few months after the earthquake, Itami contemplated what instruments would be appropriate. Without electricity, she needed to gather acoustic instruments that would cheer them up, and would appeal to those who felt hesitant to come out of the shelters. She had only been playing glam-rock, on electric guitar – but she gathered her band members and proposed to transform it into an acoustic, itinerant band with various ethnic instruments – Okinawan *sanshin* (三線 lute), Korean *changgo* (drums), chindon drums, accordion. Itami explained the appeal of the chindon drum set: “It’s hard to approach *minyô* [traditional folk] genres because of stylistic differences and hierarchies [between masters and disciplines, etc] – in contrast, chindon seemed cool. (民謡などは流派や上下のものがおおく入りにくいがかちんどんは “クールなものに見えた。)” Chindon drums, for Itami, bypassed various hierarchical limitations set in place for other traditional instruments, and instead, their malleability presented possibilities for Itami to create new resonances while retaining its historical, familiar, and popular sonorities and associations in the listeners’ ears. As discussed in chapter 3, the ability of chindon practitioners to imaginatively empathize with others at a distance and acoustically penetrate spatial and social divides through sounds is at the heart of Itami’s motivation to host the music festival on the beach marked with a borderline. Creatively, Itami has re-articulated her imaginary of chindon-ya with ethnic differences that have not been necessarily historically associated with chindon-ya before.

Cho and Itami’s interviews suggest that chindon-ya allows chindon-inspired musicians to highlight social differences and uneven relations that are often subsumed under the dominant discourse of Japan as a homogeneous nation, or the notion of space as an anonymous transparent milieu. As evident in Soul Flower Mononoke Summit’s post-earthquake project, the chindon-inspired practitioners are re-articulating historical differences (i.e. caste based difference) associated with chindon-ya with contemporary

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<sup>160</sup> Itami Hideko, Personal communication, Okinawa. August 13, 2005

social differences (class, ethnicity-based differences, often spatialized) through imaginative empathy. Furthermore, not only does chindon-ya enable them to highlight differences, but also chindon-ya's difference, marked by their out-of-place-ness, elicits new relations with and among the listeners. As argued above in relation to the new socialities elicited by out-of-place bodies and sounds, the forging of new social relations among people that didn't exist prior to the out-of-place soundings is a central theme in the discursive practices among contemporary chindon-ya practitioners.

This aspect of chindon-ya echoes with the second strategic shift in Peace Music Festa: to take a widely inclusive approach to who could participate in the organizing and attending the festival. In the process of assembling financial, personal, and material resources to make the festival possible, the Peace Festa elicited social relations that didn't exist before. At Henoko, the exclusionary politics that characterized the previous protests – set in the language of “us” Okinawans with shared politics against “them” in Japan and the US military – was replaced with an inclusive politics, sounding out the interconnectivity among diverse relations across social, geographical and historical borders.

For instance, instead of furthering the fracturing of the local community by engaging only with the protesters, the festival organizers went around the village of Henoko weeks before the Peace Festa and knocked on every door to talk about the upcoming event. Their effort to engage in dialogues with both pro- and anti-military villagers was a new one, and opened up possibilities for further conversations. Another moment that made audible the possibility of building alliances among the local community was when Ôshrio Misako, one of the most prominent and respected Okinawan folk singers, made a controversial decision to accept the offer to sing at the festival. Especially because her relatives are local to Henoko, some of whom are in favor of the new economy the base might bring, she went to discuss her decision with her family before appearing on stage. While most other Okinawan folk singers are paralyzed by the strong pressures to make no political statements, Ôshiro's idiosyncratic decision was an unusual and provocative one.

Peace Festa's inclusive politics created unusual and unexpected encounters between the US military and the festival attendees as well. At one point during the festival, a US serviceman climbed over the border without paying the admission fee. Instead of viewing him as an adversary, Hirano went to engage the American in a conversation, explaining the need for him to pay to participate in the festival. Itami commented: “They're all customers, and they can come and enjoy the music too. They may not really get the point of the festival, but that's okay.” Furthermore, Hirano said how struck he was by the soldier's confession that he did not support the violence of war. Through the inclusive politics of the Festa, Hirano's geographical imagination of the US military also became denaturalized, humanized, and became a specific concrete experience.

In addition to bridging the borders between the attendees, villagers, and the military, the festival sounded out imagined translocal connections. Leading up to the festival, Itami organized two fundraising concerts in Tokyo and Osaka in order to encourage the mainland Japanese audience to travel to Henoko. At the Osaka concert, the organizer Chibana, performing as a rapper, emphasized to the audience the importance of *sôzôryoku* (想像力), or the ability to imagine: “They say it's Okinawa's problem. But it's

not Okinawa's problem alone, it's also Japan's problem, individuals' problems. We have to start with knowing more about these places, so that we can put our imagination to work." Chibana's statement reveals the inextricable interrelations between Okinawa and other parts of Japan that are concealed by the imaginative geography of Henoko as an abstract and enclosed site. Note that Chibana's geographical imagination is radically different from Gregory's notion of imaginative geography as a dominant depoliticizing technology. Here, imagination is creatively "put to work" by individuals to sound out alternative possibilities and futures for the beach.

Creatively imagined relations with places beyond the physical border also occur on a transnational level. In conversation with the audience, some musicians on stage at the festival invoked the images of children abroad in places like Iraq and Afghanistan – who may be victims of violence brought by the US military trained in, and deployed from, Henoko. As such, while demarcating the political territory, the barbed wire boundary also embodies imagined and real transnational affective alliances that are constitutive of Henoko. Through these soundings, Henoko's spatiality is extended through "affective alliances"<sup>161</sup> with places beyond its boundaries, and transformed into a space produced through imagined translocal and transnational relations even without the collective bodily experiencing of the beach.

At one of the two fundraising concerts before the Henoko Peace Festa, at Banana Hall in Osaka, the Henoko activist leader and priest Taira Natsume gave a powerful speech highlighting the importance of the ability to imagine and empathize with places and people that are geographically separated and yet related to one's own place:

To build peace is to make friends. It's not about holding a big demonstration. To make real friends. To care about friends' friends. To strengthen one's own ability to imagine, through and through. That is the power of peace. You cannot build peace if you can't imagine what it's like to be in Iraq because you've never been there. To be able to imagine how it must feel for others when they go through something you didn't like. If your friend went to Iraq and made friends there, then you have to be able to feel as if that Iraqi friend is also your own. Such imagination creates and produces peace.<sup>162</sup>

As other hip-hop musicians also endorsed this importance of imagination through their MC-ing between their music and through their music, imaginative empathy was an essential capacity and necessary condition to create possibilities for change. In other words, imaginative empathy, which is central to chindon-ya's advertising practice, transferred effectively to the Peace Festa organizers and musicians to use chindon-ya in their political projects.

### **3. RESONANCE OF PLEASURE**

The third strategic shift at the Henoko Peace Music Fest lies in its emphasis on music and its affective power, which echoes the centrality of festivity, fun, and nonchalance in chindon-ya. Although chindon-ya is a commercial practice for profit, much of the

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<sup>161</sup> Grossberg 1984: 478

<sup>162</sup> Taira Natsume, at Banana Hall, Osaka January 21, 2007

practitioners' discourse revolves around "performing for the pleasure of performing." A member of Chindon Tsûshinsha and also a leader of Klezmer brass band Freylekh Jamboree, Seto Nobuyuki spoke of his attitude towards his band self-derisively and humorously. "It's bogus and irresponsibly mixed up, but regardless, let's just honestly have fun (インチキでちゃらんぽらんですがそれはそれで正直に楽しんじゃえ)." <sup>163</sup> On another occasion, after extensively philosophizing on the importance of listening to one's resonance after striking the chindon drum, Hayashi concluded: "besides, it's really not fun if you don't listen to that." <sup>164</sup> To keep playing for several hours at a time, Kawaguchi also mentioned the importance of keeping it fun for themselves. It is not simply providing conviviality and evoking pleasure in listeners that chindon-ya strives for. The use of pleasure, as Foucault would put it, is thus at the heart of chindon-ya practitioners' understanding of their cultural work; without sounding for one's pleasure, they cannot listen to, or produce, effective resonances that would achieve their commercial goals. <sup>165</sup>

Playfulness also makes chindon-ya and chindon-inspired practitioners somewhat immune to existing hierarchies or distinctions. Many of the hybridized musical projects are justified in a humorous, self-derisive framework phrased as "oh this is only chindon." Soul Flower Mononoke Summit's self-label, *asyle* chindon — evocative of a place exempt or excavated from power — might come from this nonchalant association with chindon-ya. However, DeMusik Inter's critics are careful not to quickly draw on the Bakhtinian interpretation of pleasure and festival as a reversal or transcendence of existing power relations; they consider such an interpretation too simplistic (DeMusik Inter 204: 208-210). Then, how does the principle of fun/pleasure contribute to the process of producing *effective* resonances, both in chindon-ya and chindon-inspired projects?

Itami speculates that the discursive demonstrations of discontent and anger, as practiced in the older modality of political expression, are not only ineffective but also turning the younger generation away. Instead, the organizers emphasized the importance of "dancing" "laughing" and "having fun" with music, instead of "shouting" and "giving speeches." In other words, performance and the embodiment of pleasure was in itself considered politically productive. Jocelyne Guilbault coins the term "politics of pleasure" to highlight the significance of pleasure as a crucial political force in her work on soca in Trinidad. She asserts that "[t]he political can be articulated not only through words or by being related to state politics...through pleasure critical cultural politics are performed" (Guilbault 2010: 57). Although not as centrally theorized as in Guilbault's work, the role of music-induced pleasure as a political force has been discussed in other works. Hayashi and McKnight, in their article on the contemporary sound-demonstrations in Japan, also mention how sound demonstration organizers "mobilize the political potential of the crowds by reintroducing elements of the pleasure principle of mass culture into ideologized political protest..." (Hayashi and McKnight 2005:89). Tim Taylor also points to how seemingly "apolitical" performance of Ladysmith Black Mambazo in apartheid South Africa is subversive, for it resists the binary framework of dominance

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<sup>163</sup> Seto Nobuyuki, personal communication. Tokyo. October 5, 2006

<sup>164</sup> Hayashi Kôjirô, personal communication, Osaka. March 2, 2008

<sup>165</sup> See Foucault 1992.

and resistance: “making your own music for your own pleasure under apartheid constitutes a triumph over apartheid, even as this victory is defined by apartheid” (Taylor 1997:82).

The leading figure of the peaceful sit-in movement, priest Taira Natsume echoed this view. Recalling the US military’s attempt to fence off a beach to obstruct a reggae festival one year, he said: “What scares the US army most is not people who throw around fists, but those who sing and dance... There are many of us activist types who raise fists, but I’m glad to see young people who swing their bodies, sing songs.” In this light, soundings produced a resonance of pleasure that evaded the dominance-resistance opposition atop the territorialized geography of the beach.

### **Conclusion**

As with many forms of cultural politics, the efficacy of events such as Peace Music Festa is subject to critique. After the event, the organizers were left with financial deficit and feelings of disappointment. Not only was the youth participation much lower than anticipated, but also the turnout was very small: eight-hundred people attended the event, drastically fewer than the ten thousand predicted. Despite this, the shift in the political strategy from protest to festival, from older generation to youth, from shouting to musicking, from exclusionary politics to an inclusive politics of multiplicity, and from verbalization of discontent to performance of pleasure, is significant. Although the event did not demonstrate efficacy quantitatively, this musical partying alongside boundaries has been taken up as a new modality of productive political engagement deployed elsewhere in Japan. Recently, some of the Peace Festa musicians participated in festive protest-parties near contested sites, such as at Mount Takao against the construction of a new tunnel, and in Tokyo’s Shimokitazawa neighborhood against the construction of a new highway.

Through corporeal and contextual geography, putting imagination to work not to distance Others but to explore alternative possibilities of intimacy and alliance, and a politics of pleasure, the Peace Festa participants created multiple resonances in the very process of rearticulating disparate relations across geographical, historical, and political borders. Through these resonances, Henoko is sounded as a place inextricably produced through interrelations with places beyond its geographical borders, such as Tokyo and Iraq. In the process, a kind of counter-geography, resisting the dominant homogenizing geography that abstracted Henoko as a nameless, faceless, self-contained location, emerged. Such spatial connectivity and juxtapositions revealed multiple connections and evocations of Okinawa, Jamaica, the US, and an imagined space of *asyle*, just to name a few.

In this chapter, by weaving together discursive practice on chindon-ya and ethnographic analysis of Henoko Peace Music Festa, I have tried to show the chindon-inspired musicians’ conceptions of space and difference via their experiences with chindon-ya have enabled them to create multiple affective and *effective* resonances. The cultural work of chindon-ya, as evident in the discursive practices of the chindon-inspired musicians and writers, is multifaceted: it brings together people and sounds at a specific place where they don’t necessarily belong; it highlights social differences that are otherwise subsumed under the alleged anonymity of public space; it forges socialities with and among listeners; it creates translocal affiliations and affective connections

through imaginative empathy; and it locates the intrinsic effectiveness of performance in the principle of pleasure, fun, and nonchalance. Much of these processes, through which soundings socially, acoustically, and affectively produce resonances and reconstitute space, was transposed to the Henoko beach by the chindon-inspired musicians and organizers, who sought to foster new kinds of spatial politics on the contested beach. While the immediate and quantitative efficacy of such an intervention remains open to question, chindon-inspired resonances nevertheless mark a productive shift in a mode of political expression in contemporary Japan. Among the multiple resonances that resounded across the barbed wire and various schisms and tensions marked by it, a certain political traction emerged: in their soundings, Itami and other festival organizers created *effective* resonances that achieved a new kind of politics — a bodily, site-specific, politics of pleasure. The assemblage of relations and bodies at a particular contested location for the purpose of pleasure in itself was a politically effective practice. Chindonya's cultural work, in other words, resonated with these chindon-inspired musicians, enabling the practitioners and participants to shift from the politics of indignation to the politics of pleasure at this particular contested site of Henoko beach.

Attuning to the sounds at the beach — from the sounds of power audible in a military horn to the sounds of pleasure through festival music —, soundings not only make audible the intersecting differences, histories, and spaces silenced by certain imaginative geographies, but also enable creative ways to conjure up and make real the possibilities of new geographies beyond delineations of existing power relations and physical boundaries.



### **Resonances and Improvisation**

In December 2007, almost four years after I first listened to the album *Horai-kô* by Daiku Tetsuhiro that sparked my interest in this research, I was sitting down at a café in Okinawa with the Yaemana-born folk singer Daiku himself. We talked about the first time we had met. It was only one week after I arrived in Japan in September 2006 that I went to his concert in Tokyo, where he performed with four members of Chindon Tsûshinsha — Hayashi on chindon drums, Kobayashi on the clarinet, Kawaguchi on the banjo, and Pinky on the accordion. That was also when I first met the troupe. After the show, I introduced myself to the performers, and they warmly and openly invited me to join them for a post-concert dinner. The dinner turned into a long and lively conversation, leading me to miss the train. They extended to me an open invitation to join them in the tour van to the next destination the next morning. Things happened so quickly. As soon as I got home in a taxi, I packed a small backpack, and a few hours later I was on an early morning train to share a ride in the van with Daiku and Chindon Tsûshinsha to the city of Nagoya. That was how my research began. Little did I know that I would spend the following year-and-a-half doing fieldwork with the troupe.

Reflecting on that particular tour, Daiku explained to me what enabled the unlikely pairing of Yaemana folk singing and chindon-ya: improvisation (*sokkyô*, 即興). Daiku praised the Chindon Tsûshinsha's flexibility and ability to spontaneously adapt to the particular moment and site of performance, which was enabled by both their wide repertoire and sensibility to listen to what is being sounded carefully in order to respond to it in creative ways. Successful chindon-ya performance, as I showed in chapter 3, requires well-honed creative improvisatory skills to create multiple resonances at particular conjunctures. Here, I take a detour through the composer and improviser Pauline Oliveros' concepts. For her, improvisation consists of four simultaneous and mutually constitutive processes: actively making sound, imagining sound, listening to present sound, and remembering past sound (Oliveros 1974; Von Gunden 1983).

I propose a parallelism here: chindon-ya, too, not only actively makes sound, but involves imagining the sound yet to be played, listening to the present sound through both performers' and listeners' ears, and remembering the sounds and meanings sedimented in the past. In other words, chindon-ya's performance of enticement is deeply rooted in the production of multiple resonances, echoing with the acoustic landscape, social space, affect, memories, and bodies of the listeners – both present and past, imagined and real, conscious and unconscious. Sounding in order to create a physical, affective, bodily, and remembered resonance is therefore contingent upon past, present, and anticipated sounds carefully listened to, and imagined, by the practitioners. Such production of sound, much like Pauline Oliveros' conception of improvisation, requires a constant feedback loop of listening, imagining, and sounding that is engaged simultaneously with the past, present, and the anticipated next moment, in order to create multiple resonances that reach listeners effectively. In Daiku's mind, then, perhaps it was this imaginative and improvisatory feedback loop that articulates various moments, relations, places, and aspirations that he shared with chindon-ya.

The relational nature of the improvisatory musical performance required of chindon-ya, whereby resonances are actively produced through musical, social, temporal, and geographical articulations, is aptly described by the Tokyo-based saxophone player Shinoda Masami. Shinoda has been widely recognized as the spearheading figure of the current resurgence of chindon-ya in Tokyo, and is particularly influential among many other free jazz improvisers in Tokyo who have followed suit and started performing with chindon-ya as freelance melody instrument players.<sup>166</sup> Although the resulting sounds are vastly different, — chindon-ya perform popular tonal tunes whereas free jazz musicians do not perform “tunes” or stay within the tonal system— the sensibilities and abilities cultivated through performing as a chindon-ya and as an improviser have a significant overlap. I return to Shinoda Masami’s quote that describes the kind of sounds he strived to produce in his playing as a chindon-ya this way:

There are many sounds that override noise. I don’t want to make such strong aggressive sounds, but rather sounds that can merge with other sounds, sound that can’t be overpowered but won’t overpower others. It’s not something an individual can do, but it can only be possible through collaboration, spatially and temporally. This is the kind of thing that I’ve thought about while playing with chindon-ya.<sup>167</sup>

For Shinoda, the increasingly oversaturated soundscape of the urban streets of Tokyo do not inherently impede the survival of chindon. Rather, what captivated him, especially as a free jazz improviser, was the challenge of creating sounds that can be simultaneously in place and out of place, without creating hierarchies amidst the competing “noise” on the streets. As his quote highlights, improvisatory performance required of chindon-ya is an inextricably relational process in which sound, history, sociality, and geography are creatively and imaginatively brought together. For Daiku and Shinoda and for many other contemporary musicians who have gravitated towards chindon-ya sounds, improvisation, in Oliveros’ sense, seems to offer another key to understanding the appeal and relevance of the allegedly outdated practice today as well as the unlikely musical pairings and collaborations between chindon-ya and various musical practices.

### **The Multicultural Question**

Having improvised my way through listening to the various resonances of chindon-ya while in Japan, I have unexpectedly come back to the notion of the multicultural and Japan that I initially sought to examine in my research — only now through a different perspective. My initial focus in exploring the issue of the multicultural in Japan was prolific chindon-inspired artists such as the Yaeyama folk singer Daiku

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<sup>166</sup> Many freelance chindon musicians in Tokyo are active in various scenes, such as free jazz and improvisation. Notable players include Yoshino Shigeru, Takada Yôsuke, Nakao Kanji, Hotta Hiroyuki, Kizzu-kun, among others. The first two have formed their own full-time chindon-ya troupes, while others remain part-time freelance musicians working with various chindon-ya troupes. As an evidence of the number of active musicians who work as chindon melody instrumentalists part-time, there are larger ensembles formed by musicians in the chindon-ya freelance circuit, such as Nikoniko Pinpin Shitsunai Gakudan and Nishiuchi Tai. The connection between free jazz and chindon-ya has been briefly discussed in an interview with Yoshino Shigeru and Takada Yôsuke as well (Ôba 2010: 23-24).

<sup>167</sup> Shinoda Masami, quoted in Ôkuma 2001: 106-107

Tetsuhiro, the Osaka-based singer-songwriter of Korean descent Cho Paggie, Nakagawa Takashi, and Itami Hideko. The former two challenged the politics of exclusion that is hidden behind the rhetoric of a class-less, ethnically homogeneous Japan by musically and verbally asserting their subjectivity as ethnically marked or socially marginalized. The latter two have explicitly questioned what *Japan* means through their choice of repertoire, publications, and interviews. Although I was not able to discuss them in-depth in this study, my interviews with these performers during my fieldwork were extremely provocative and insightful. These musicians' flirtations with chindon-ya warrant in-depth analysis and undoubtedly offer insights into the cultural politics of the multicultural in contemporary Japan and the role of music in it. Through an analysis of their practices, I sought to address the tension between the internal Others' particularist claim for recognition of difference on one hand, and the universalist notion of citizenship and liberty upon which the modern liberal state is founded, on the other.

The shift away from focusing on these ethnically marked or politically explicit chindon-inspired musicians and towards listening to the practices of chindon-ya practitioners and people who listen to or overhear their sounds allowed me to question the meaning of the multicultural question as an ethnic question, and instead reformulate the question and terms in which to ask the multicultural question. Put another way, by highlighting the everyday practices of listening and overhearing and chindon-ya's resonances instead of ethnically marked interlocutors, I redefine the multicultural as multiple social relations and positions rather than the plurality of ethnic categories. In using the term *multicultural*, I have drawn on Stuart Hall's notion of the "multicultural question," which he directs to the allegedly homogeneous British nation, in order to show how continuous interactions with difference at the heart of British colonization has framed the *other* as a constitutive element of British subjectivity (Hall, 2000; Stoler 1997). Hall's adjectival use of the term multicultural as a "general descriptor" resists an essentialized notion of ethnicity as a unit of segments comprising a society, and instead refers to the messiness of the process of "cultural pluralization" in which people are not formally fixed into groups (Hall 2000: 210).

This understanding of the multicultural is particularly pertinent to the Japanese case, as ethnicity and race have entirely different histories, meanings, and connotations.<sup>168</sup> The multicultural question, then, is not about the mere celebration of particularity and multiplicity within a given practice or geographical territory. Instead, it urges us to understand how the presumed homogeneity of the dominant power is in fact inextricably constituted through the silenced production of ethnic and racial difference (Hesse 1993: 172). While the recent increase in scholarship dealing with the multicultural question in Japan tends to focus on "ethnic differences,"<sup>169</sup> listening to the multiple resonances of chindon-ya allowed me to examine the everyday social-sonic space of Japan as the shifting and dynamic articulation of multiple forces and histories, including the European colonialism, Japan's militarism, caste-based discrimination, subversive street practices, the rise of capitalist consumer economy, and so on. The social differences produced

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<sup>168</sup> For the shifting matrix of the notions of race and ethnicity in Japan, see Kevin M Doak, "The Concept of Ethnic Nationality and its Role in Pan-Asianism in Imperial Japan," in *Pan-Asianism in Modern Japanese History: Colonialism, Regionalism and Borders*. Ed. Sven Saaler and J. Victor Koschmann. (London & New York: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>169</sup> See Hankins 2008.

through these forces and histories do not fit under the analytical category of difference commonly used in Anglo-American scholarship; namely, race, ethnicity, class, and gender. In this light, listening to multiple resonances of chindon-ya — from what makes chindon-ya rich with possibilities to resonate with various histories, places, and memories to what resonances it can produce — enabled me to examine Japan as not a repository of multiple ethnic groups but rather an actively socially and sonically produced space, which are constituted through histories and relations of overlapping and shifting matrix of social differences and power relations. The complex matrix of caste, class, ethnicity, and race that I have discussed in this dissertation warrant more in-depth and closer analyses.

Although far from the debates of the multicultural, the everyday practices of chindon-ya practitioners took me to sites and moments of articulations that have foregrounded not pre-existing categories of social differences but rather possibilities and improvisatory practices that create alliances, such as those between musicians activists, day laborers, musicians, zainichi Koreans, anti-US military activists in Okinawa— and the pleasure that often accompany such creative alliances. Broadly conceiving sound-space-sociality as *resonance*, through which listeners and performers are physically and imaginatively interrelated, this dissertation has presented an interdisciplinary mode of analysis of cultural practices that allows a more flexible, multiple, and provocative understanding of what is understood as a *multicultural* space.

### **Contradictions**

Throughout my analyses in the preceding chapters, I kept returning to the multiple contradictions that are inherently embodied by chindon-ya. The histories that are revealed through contemporary practitioners' genealogical practices show how chindon-ya is simultaneously Westernized and indigenously Japanese, modern and pre-modern, subversive and co-opted, of the “people” and of the marginalized, disciplined and playful. These contradictions bring to light both the constructed nature of such categories and the tangible effects on peoples' lives produced through these forces and categories. Chindon-ya's ability to produce various resonances derives from this rich sedimentation of contradictory forces and histories; chindon-ya's soundings can move, lift up, pick out, recall, and amplify previously sedimented meanings, practices, and memories in a particular location, or in people's sentiments. In turn, these resonances open up possibilities for new connections and alliances, as I have shown through the case of the Henoko Peace Music Festa. The relevance and appeal of chindon-ya today, however small and seemingly outdated, emerge from these multi-dimensional tensions and contradictions that chindon-ya embraces with a nonchalant smile and a playful skip.

I'd like to pause to ponder these contradictions. On one hand, cultural analyses of the contradictions inherent within chindon-ya elucidate how chindon-ya, despite the common perception of its anachronicity and irrelevance, provides possibilities and relevance for practitioners with varying aspirations, for example, to side with the marginalized while participating in the neoliberal capitalist economy, revealing the histories of caste-based marginalization while representing ostensibly “Japanese roots.” And yet, one might ask: what can one do with this knowledge, with these contradictions? Where can we, the researchers or the practitioners, go once we reveal the contradictions through ethnographic analyses? While I have tried to gesture towards these possibilities by studying contemporary practitioners with political aspirations to prevent the

construction of the US army base in Henoko, the political efficacy of these practices is not easy to assess. Are the sensibilities and perspectives cultivated through embodied experiences transposed into social spheres outside of the ludic realm, or the world of business transactions? How do the understandings and awareness of the contradictory forces that inform chindon-ya translate into social awareness at large or politically tangible outcomes? One humble response might be to say that ethnomusicology, especially when in conversation with other disciplines such as cultural geography and anthropology, has the capacity to produce more than textual analyses and audio-visual documentation; it can, based on knowledge and analyses, propel public discourse and make effective change in the structure of knowledge, feelings, and power.<sup>170</sup> Whether and how my analyses of the historical and social contradictions embodied within chindon-ya might achieve this has remained an unresolved question despite my constant struggle to find answers since the inception of the project, and will be an ongoing methodological, theoretical, and ethical question that will carry through my future research.

### **Future Directions**

The world of chindon-ya, as marginalized as it may be to today's advertisement business and popular reception, has much to offer researchers. This dissertation has offered a brief look into, or listening of, an understudied and rich practice. Here, I suggest several aspects, among many, of chindon-ya that provide possibilities for further study.

First, methodological challenges of reception studies posed a challenge of systematically analyzing the relation between the imaginative empathy of chindon-ya and the audience's reactions. Ethnographically examining the audience reception to understand the relations and discrepancies within imaginative empathies would increase the multidimensional understanding of chindon-ya.

The transnational circulation of the representation and sounds of chindon-ya and chindon-inspired practices is another topic that could be undertaken. As I started to develop relationships with chindon-inspired musical groups as a musician myself, I was given opportunities to perform with them at various festivals, including a tour to the United Kingdom. Organized by a Japan-based British record label owner Paul Fischer, Cicala Mvta made an appearance on a "Silk Road Stage" at the Thames Festival along the river in London. Flying to London and performing with them as part of the band has given me an insight into the strategic and entrepreneurial moves musicians make to make chindon-ya accessible, comprehensible, and appealing to the listeners who do not have the conventional means to contextualize them. Chindon-ya's sounds continue to be imbricated in the transnational circuit, often facilitated by grassroots network of individuals. Needless to say, I became implicated in the transnational connections made through chindon-ya. There is one known chindon-inspired band outside of Japan as well. Happy Fun Smile is a New York-based group founded by a Japanese American, and chindon-ya sounds and percussion instruments have been embraced as part of the audio-visual means through which they invoke and embody *Japan*. Investigating how chindon-ya embodies and mobilizes *Japaneseness* differently outside of Japan, by whom, and for

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<sup>170</sup> Among many ethnomusicologists who have engaged with the social, economic, and political issues at stake in their research and sought to bring change in the structure of power through means other than academic publications and through creative forms of expression include Steven Feld, Philip Bohlman, and Kay Shelemay.

whom would provide another dimension to the discussion of the contemporary perception of chindon-ya.

Creative articulation of chindon-ya with various musical genres and practices in contemporary chindon-inspired practices provides a fertile ground for social and musical analysis. My involvement with Chindon Tsûshinsha has taken me to unexpected places and moments where chindon-ya was imaginatively evoked and hybridized, and embraced where it would not normally be otherwise: at a Gôshû Ondo folk dance festival in a predominantly Korean neighborhood in Osaka; at an anti-globalization and anti-G7 Summit rally in Hokkaidô; at an anti-nuclear plant parade in Rokkô-mura, Aomori; on a TV commercial for the youth-fashion department store in Osaka; and at a sports banquet at the international field and track tournament in Osaka. Tracing the malleability and flexibility of chindon-ya's soundings both as entrepreneurial moves and as forms of strategic cultural politics in the wide array of chindon-inspired practices is a rich area of analysis.

Although it was beyond the scope of my study to compare the differences between the two major cities in which chindon-ya practices emerged and continue to thrive, Tokyo and Osaka, the regional differences and distinct business styles and historical trajectories that have developed also deserve closer attention. There are distinct differences between the two cities, and this study was almost exclusively based on Chindon Tsûshinsha, the only and most active chindon-ya troupe in Osaka. While they provided a productive lens to examine chindon-ya today, they are, as I mentioned, an exceptional figure. The comparisons between the two cities are recurrent amongst the practitioners, and the analysis of the discursive emphasis on the regional difference will illuminate further the dynamics of the contemporary chindon-ya scenes. Furthermore, although my dissertation's central question did not entail issues of gender as one of the registers of social differences, the presence of women in the history of itinerant performing arts as well as in contemporary chindon-ya practice also warrants careful research analysis.<sup>171</sup>

When speaking with contemporary practitioners, they often ardently urge researchers and journalists to turn to the older generation, now reaching their eighties and nineties. The sense of "disappearing history" of chindon-ya is a real and urgent one among those who are involved in chindon-ya practices.<sup>172</sup> While this is an immediate and important concern, I insist that the contemporary and younger practitioners, as much as they may humbly divert the researchers to their predecessors and historical research, have much to offer in order to understand what social and cultural forces enable chindon-ya to stay relevant and offer creative possibilities for many to realize their entrepreneurial, artistic, political aspirations.

## **Conclusion**

In this dissertation, I have traced multiple resonances as I heard them in chindon-ya's musical advertisement enterprise and their offshoot musical practices in contemporary

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<sup>171</sup> Ôkuma Wataru has dedicated a magazine article to the wives of veteran chindon-ya leaders in Tokyo, and also has written a short essay on the all-sisters troupe in Menu-ma, Saitama, just north of Tokyo (Okuma 2003).

<sup>172</sup> A Tokyo-based chindon practitioner Ôba's most recent publication (2010) consisting of oral histories of older chindon-ya practitioners in Tokyo, is a valuable addition to the study of chindon-ya.

Japan. In so doing, I have addressed issues of sound, sociality, and space in the changing terrain of the streets and histories of modern Japan. While the concept of resonance, an integral part of my approach to ethnographic material, emerged from the particularities of the chindon-ya practices and discourses, resonance as I have conceived it may serve as a portable analytic for other studies dealing with a particular sonic culture as a dynamically produced social-sonic space constituted through the articulation of the acoustic, material, social, imagined, affective, and historical dimensions.

As the expansive possibilities of future research indicate, this dissertation has offered a particular way of *listening* to the vastly complex and understudied practice of chindon-ya. Rather than a comprehensive documentation of chindon-ya, through ethnographic analyses, my study contributes a particular mode of analysis that allows us to think about space, sound, and history together. As the opening quote by ethnomusicologist Steven Feld suggested, my dissertation provides a conceptual and methodological mode of analysis to “imagine auditory cultures as historical formations of distinct sensibilities, as sonic geographies of difference” through chindon-ya sounds that fill the urban streets of contemporary Japan as well as the imagination and discourses of the listeners and performers (Feld 2003: 223). The political and economic efficacy and sustainability of chindon-ya practices remain to be seen as the economic, social, and geographical terrains continue to shift. Chindon-ya, imbued with traces of itinerant performing arts, modern nostalgia for the uncommodified, packaged in the self-fashioning entrepreneurship viable in the contemporary market, continues to entice those who overhear them or listen to them, resonating with their memories, sentiments places, and histories today.

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