

## Rethinking Nature in Post-Fukushima Japan

Facing the Crisis

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and Silvia Vesco

# The Music Culture after the Great Kantō Earthquake (1923)

Shūhei Hosokawa

(International Research Center for Japanese Studies – Nichibunken,  
Kyōto, Japan)

**Abstract** This essay intends to overview the destruction and reconstruction of music life, discussing the topical songs and musicals, the special concerts, the widely-acclaimed notion of Heavenly Punishment (*tenken* 天譴), and the official ceremony of reconstruction organised by the Tokyo City and the State in 1930. The paper will be concerned with questions such as how the street singers reacted to the metropolitan misfortune, what kind of concerts were offered and what kind of music was played, how the people interpreted natural and human-made disaster and sang it, how the reconstruction was musically celebrated and what kind of political message was implied.

**Summary** 1 Introduction. – 2 The Active *Enka* Singers. – 3 Singing the “Heavenly Punishment”. – 4 The Post-Quake Concerts. – 5 The Destruction and Reconstruction of Music Industry. – 6 Sassa Kōka’s Operetta, *The Reconstruction*. – 7 Celebrating the Reconstruction. – 8 Conclusion.

**Keywords** Japanese Music. Enka. Street singers. Tokyo. Great Kantō Earthquake (1923).

## 1 Introduction

The Great Kantō Earthquake hit the capital of Japan on September 1, 1923, and changed the shapes of such areas as art, design, literature, film, and theatre as have been widely studied. Music was no exception, although it has been still understudied. This essay intends to overview the destruction and reconstruction of music life, discussing the topical songs and musicals, the special concerts, the widely-acclaimed notion of Heavenly Punishment (*tenken* 天譴), and the official ceremony of reconstruction organised by the Tokyo City and the State in 1930. The paper will be concerned with questions such as how the street singers reacted to the metropolitan misfortune, what kind of concerts were offered and what kind of music was played, how the people interpreted natural and human-made disaster and sang it, how the reconstruction was musically celebrated and what kind of political message was implied.

The Earthquake took place precisely in the middle of 1920s, the decade of threshold line in the world music culture as noticed in the inventions of the electric recording, the radio broadcast, the talkie system and jazz music and dancing. All of them reached Japan in the period of “reconstruction” with the label of “post-earthquake”. The Jazz Age in other countries can be the Post-quake Age since the new era seemed to be born out of the dust. The reconstruction work was realised in part with the overwhelming state budget, which boosted the centralisation of power and bureaucracy. Japan and its capital became nearly synonymous as were sung in a few songs. This article will argue an outline for the further discussions.

## 2 The Active *Enka* Singers

Several autobiographies of composers and musicians report on the confusions caused by the disaster. The classic composer Yamada Kōsaku 山田耕筰 (1886-1965) tried to return from Manchuria with difficulty, while the popular composer Hattori Ryōichi 服部良一 (1907-93) felt the trembling of floor in Ōsaka on the day of opening ceremony of restaurant band he had participated in. Some singers and composers were interrupted their return tour to Tokyo. However, none of them were serious. The most damaged was undoubtedly the street singer-songwriter (*enkashi*) Soeda Azenbō 添田唾蟬坊 (1872-1944). His house in downtown area of Shitaya ward was destructed completely as he himself described in *Minshū goraku* 民衆娯楽 (People’s recreation, 1924), pamphlet-like magazine he was editing with his son, Satsuki 添田さつき (1902-80), two months later:

The rumbling and the quake, the falling tiles, and the things falling from the shelves. The shelves were destroyed totally. The things were falling on the head, the shoulders, the rice bowl, and the dishes [the Earthquake occurred at 11:58, lunch time], making harsh noises. Soon a half of the house was destroyed. I was watching this happening astonishingly without moving. My legs were buckling and I was frozen (though I didn’t jump out of my skin). Shortly, I stood up and looked up from the inclined window of the back of house. I found that the neighboring guest house fell down on my house. My house was destroyed by it. Making a stepstool by piling up the magazines, I stepped out from my house and climbed up from the fallen roof of guest house to the roof of my house. Then came the second quake.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Soeda Azenbō 添田唾蟬坊 (1923). “Yakedasare Nikki” 焼け出され日記 (Diary of Evacuation). *Minshū goraku* 民衆娯楽 (People’s Recreation), November, 1-2.

From the broken rooftop, he witnessed the flames everywhere. Then, he prepared for peril, eat the last watermelon he believed in his life, and went rushing into the massive confusions with his son and the other street singers, and their families.

The street singers singing political, comical and sentimental songs with Meiji melodies, appearing around 1888, were called *enka* 演歌. Singing with a violin accompanist since around 1910, they made their living by vending pamphlet music (or only lyrics in the first decades) like broadside balladeers in the UK and the US. Azenbō, while starting singing around 1890 and he became sympathising with the socialism movement blooming after the Japan-Russian War (1904-05). He was quick to adapt a popular *shamisen* piece to street-singing, setting laughable or ironical lyrics. He was also keen in publishing not only pamphlets as his competitors but also a magazine (1919-23?) as a medium for communicating his opinions on the politics and singing performance, and cultivating as well as enjoying the underclass readership.

Half a year after the Earthquake he retired from songwriting, moving to a small city north-east of Tokyo. One of his few writings after 1923 mentioned that:

On September 1 | Ear-th-qua-ke...The most horrible calamity in human history | Destructed totally the falseness of human life. | [It was] The deathbed of modern civilization. | On September 2 | Oh, the day breaks, | Look at the color of sun rising up from the raging flames! | They show the way mankind has to go. | They are the way of life. | We have to take a more serious way immediately. | Wake up brothers! | Do you yourselves rely on the mistaken boat of culture? Ah! (Soeda Azenbō 1923)

Instead of singing national and political issues and funny stories directly to street passengers, he now wrote words on modern civilisation literarily to silent readers. His grief echoed with the idea of “Heavenly Punishment” discussed later.

His son took over the work of his father as a songwriter and editor. Satsuki published an essay in their magazine *Minshū goraku* dated September 1 (that is to say, printed in late August) that proposed the establishment of recreation of the poor, by the poor and for the poor. Accidentally the calamity turned to a trial for his words. Shortly after the Earthquake, Satsuki and his paired musician started timidly singing for the evacuated people in the devastated area, while fearing that they could be refused:

We were immediately surrounded by the people gathering from here and there. No criticism. They listened to us silently. When we finished a news song on the reality damaged, they came close to us, requiring the broadside sheet eagerly. The song was sold very well. We felt

relieved. Then, we sang “The Reconstruction Song.” This had a light feeling. Then, refreshing laughter broke out. We felt totally relaxed. We learned how people wanted songs even in the most desperate time. (Soeda Tomomichi 1967)

“The Reconstruction Song” (*Fukkōbushi* 復興節) he mentioned was the most known song on the Earthquake written by the *enka* balladeers. Satsuki and his collaborator Shibuya Hakurui 渋谷白涙 adapted a Chinese melody titled *Sasō* 沙窓 (*Sha chuang* in Chinese) which had been performed in the community of amateur orchestra of Chinese instruments (*Minshin gaku* 明清樂, or music of Ming and Qing). It sounded rather exotic for the common people and the lyrics Satsuki put implied the positive message to people’s hard life with humour:

The houses were burned out/ Look at the spirit of our Edo people  
Yeah, astonishing (“*Arama, Oyama*”)  
From the barracks standing in rows/ We look at the moon lying down  
in the nights  
Oh, good, good (“*Eezo eezo*”), the reconstruction of imperial capital,  
oh, good, good

A wife told her husband, “Be strong!”  
Yeah, astonishing  
*Imagawayaki* sweet is now renamed *Fukkōyaki* (reconstruction bake)  
Oh, good, good, the reconstruction of imperial capital, oh, good, good

There were but two verses among numerous parodies. The moonlight seen through the broken roof was often a symbol for the barrack life. Instead of condemning the situation, the song communicates a hope for the future to the listeners. The second verse, in turn, illustrates how the word of *fukkō* (reconstruction) was abused just after the quake (*imagawayaki* is a baked sweet with stuffed red bean paste) in a similar way that another verse laughs at the naming of new born children after *jishin* 地震 (earthquake) like Shintarō, Shinsaku and Shinko (here the ideogram for “shin” means “quake”). Such humorous words must be great fun for the street audiences. In other verses the authors narrate the fall of upper-class woman and girl to low-class life, the obsession for sushi among the Edo people and other daily topics. As a costume of street ballad, new countless verses were set and sung by the non-authors according to the situations. Any funny or miserable verse was followed positively by the informal refrain of “*Eezo eezo*” (here I translated “Oh, good, good”). Then the song was sometimes called “*Eezobushi*” (Eezo Song). The song became so modish that an educated author disdained it, writing that “There is no such stupid, meaningless and unpleasant fad” (*Tōkyō Nichinichi Shinbun*, November 15, 1923).

*The Reconstruction Song* was recorded by Tottori Shun'yō 鳥取春陽 (1900-32), who moved to Ōsaka around 1924. He, collaborating with Satsuki as a singer-songwriter before it, was the only street musician who could arrange music. Different from the previous recordings by the *enka* singers (accompanied only with the violin), Tottori applied small band of piano, trumpet, clarinet and car horn (toy horn?) to the accompaniment to create cheerful feeling, fitting for the cheerful contents of lyrics. Especially the clarinetist seemed to play semi-improvisation. Tottori and his musicians (recruited from movie theatre?) might digest (and localise) their first impressions of latest American dance music for updating the sound of popular song. He was a leading popular musician in the post-quake Ōsaka who mixed jazz band, jazzy melodies into his recordings.<sup>2</sup> A year after the Earthquake, he composed a great hit song titled *Kago no tori* 籠の鳥 (Bird in the Cabin), theme from film produced by a Kansai studio, and two years later (1926) he concluded the first contract as a songwriter with Ōsaka record label, which was the first case in Japan. His post-quake work anticipated the coming of popular songs produced by record company and accompanied by small band. Though dying young (1900-32), he was an indispensable link between the Taishō (1912-26) street *enka* songs and the Shōwa (1926-89) *ryūkōka* 流行歌 (popular songs) which were much more industrialised.

In other *enka* ballads, Satsuki and other songwriters narrated well-known tragedies caused by the earthquake in a traditional epic style in 7-5 syllabic format (of *biwa* ballad, for example). He called them “news songs” 報道歌 (*hōdōka*) to emphasise that the stories sung were real (ex. the family suicide, the disaster). This type of songs clearly came from the historical roots of *enka*, street vendors (while reading loudly the text) of news pamphlet since the 18-19th century in urban setting (*yomiuri* 読売, or read-and-sell). They were, so to speak, street newspapers and *enka* originated from the aftermath of civil right movement.

One early example of news song on the Earthquake was Soeda Satsuki-Shibuya Hakurui's *Urami no hifukushō* 恨みの被服廠 (Resented Clothing Depot), which was published in pamphlet dated October 21, 1923, possibly the first publication by the *enka* group after the Earthquake. *Hifukushō* (clothing depot) was the military clothing depot recently demolished in the industrial area of Tokyo. Upon the earthquake, the working and resident people in the neighborhood refuged into the buildings but the location was flamed from all sides. The crowd had nowhere to run out and was killed in panic. The death were almost forty thousand people. It was considered as the most heartbreaking tragedy and reported meticulously in the newspapers and magazines. The tragedy was representative for Tokyo's

2 On the Ōsaka jazz scene after the Earthquake, see my essay, “Shōchiku Girls' Opera and 1920s Dōtonbori Jazz” (translated by Philip Flavin) (Shūhei Hosokawa 2013).

vulnerable downtown. Many noticed that the man-made errors (by the police and fire station, especially) might worsen the massacre, though not openly criticising. Shibuya's song deals with a father who lost his life in order to save an old woman in the flames from the viewpoint of his wife and daughter. The lyrics bemoaned them:

If our father-husband had been alive, | The barrack life looking the  
moonlight through the unrepaired roof | Could be enjoyable, how miser-  
erable we are

### 3 Singing the “Heavenly Punishment”

The unprecedented catastrophe was often interpreted as *tenken* 天譴, or the heavenly punishment for Japanese decadence and laxity. This special term came from Confucian morality and had been rarely used colloquially. Hence it had a strong and heavy sense. The word was often mentioned by the politicians and the moralistic writers. Historians today criticise that it led the people's concern from the social contradiction to the individual inner life, regarding the disaster as the heavenly punishment, the people tended to neglect how the human-made errors had caused part of the tragedy as well as how the politics of resurrection in progress alienated the underclass and the marginal areas of Tokyo City.<sup>3</sup> When one thought of the total damage on the mass level, the equality under the Heaven and the pettiness of human beings were summoned up for the spiritual consolation. The disaster became an excuse for criticising the frenzy life had enjoyed earlier. The discourse of spiritual reconstruction, however, was ironically welcomed by those who were marginalised by the national and metropolitan project of reconstruction.

The notion of heavenly punishment was sung in several post-quake songs. One of the most articulated was the non-academic scholar of Japanese classical literature Masuda Otsushirō 増田乙四郎's *Taishō gekishin mōka no shintaishi* 大正激震猛火の新体詩 (New-Styled Poetry of Taishō Great Quake and Roaring Flames), published in October 1923 in a nearly self-made pamphlet (quoted from Nishizawa Sō 1990, 3642-3). The melody was composed by Yamamoto Masao 山本正夫, music educator and editor-in-chief

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3 Ishizuka Hiromichi, Narita Ryūichi 1987, 166. On *tenken*, see Bates 2015, ch. 7. Bates argues the contemporary critique of *tenken* idea by Miyatake Gaikotsu and Kikuchi Kan (2015, 135-40) but I still have found no songs criticising the notion of *tenken* (it often conceals the faults of government and bureaucracy). Bates opens the chapter with the comment on divine punishment by the Tokyo Governor Ishihara Shintarō upon the great earthquake on March 11, 2011. The populism and militarisation after the catastrophe (and the coming of Tokyo Olympic Games in 1940 and 2020) reminds me of the repetition of history in the twenty-first century.

of *Gekkan gakufu* 月刊楽譜 (Monthly Music Notes/Scores), in an easy-to-sing style invented in the early twentieth century for school songs (obsolete in the 1920s. “Shintaishi,” 新体詩 or New-styled Poetry, was invented in the 1870s by the first generation of Meiji literates to separate their new literature from pre-restoration one. Hence obsolete in the 1920s, too). The lyrics, written in the traditional 7-5 syllabic structure, have sixty stanzas and might be aimed not at singing throughout (for over one hour?) but at reading. After the forty stanzas on the broken houses and raging flames, the author, known for his ultra-nationalistic philosophy, goes into the section of punishment:

The world has been changed totally within one day. | I am thinking of | The frivolous mood until yesterday, without preparing for the emergency. | Was only a dreaming road of laxity, one was wondering around. || How much the human knowledge has made progress and the technique is improved, | In front of the Great Nature | The primate [human beings] are but foolish babies. | They were all upset by the shake of only ten centimeters, What shall we do? || ...This Earthquake and flames are the Heavenly Punishment | For burning out the spoiled cultural evils for the purification, | For warning the boasted, the arrogant, the frivolous, and the greedy. || We understand it as the Heavenly Punishment, | Reflecting it over seriously. | Following the correct way, | If we live healthy and sound life, | Training ourselves steadily, | No earthquake and fire would be fearful.

Masuda’s lesson on Confucian moralism is obvious. On behalf of the Heaven, he warned against the decadence and the frivolity. This position was easily tied with the divine nation of Japan. In the next stanzas, he identifies the Tokyo citizens with Japanese nation, encouraging the idea of unification of Tokyo and Japanese people under the common goal of reconstruction:

Wake up, the citizens of imperial capital! | Stir up! The victims in the cities and towns! | Go ahead! *Kunitami* [nation] of Japan!...The future of our Japan | Must be full of hopes | Shines and guarantee.

He calls the nation not *kokumin* 国民 as is commonly translated but *kunitami*, literally country-people, to emphasise the inseparable link between these two concepts. In the very last stanza, he paid homage to the divine people of Japan, respecting the very basic of Meiji Nation-State:

Since her Foundation three thousand years before | The Imperial Divine Japan has been prosperous, | Though suffering from the heavenly trials earthquake and fires. | Japan took it as a fortune | To renew the lineup. | Achieve the great heavenly mission.

Thus the theory of Heavenly Punishment ends in that of Heavenly Mission. His ultimate lesson is not Confucian moralism but shintō nationalism. He jumps over a great gap between the human pettiness and the greatness of Japanese by medium of *kami*, the divine and the awful. The similar transcendentalism grew up visibly and dominated gradually the mind of people while going into the war situation in the 1930s. The earthquake-reconstruction-war seems to me an intimate triplet in Japanese modern history.

#### 4 The Post-Quake Concerts

“Musicking” (Christopher Small) is among the easiest comforts possible even in the hard circumstances. For the poet-lyricist Saijō Yaso 西條八十 (1892-1970), listening to the harmonica performed by a little boy in the evacuation place at Ueno was definitive for his eagerness to write for the people (not only for the elite) (Saijō Yaso [1956] 1997, 25). He eye- and ear-witnessed the crowd deeply touched by the simple harmonica sound. Above-mentioned enthusiasm for street singers by the downtown audiences must be of the similar kind, which, however, did not last long. On September 29, the Consultation of the Musical Reconstruction of Imperial Capital (Teito Ongaku Fukkō Kyōgikai 帝都音楽復興協議会) was launched by the Section of Social Education of Tokyo City together with the known music educators, critics and artists. They organised free concerts of Western music and instruments for several months. On October 7, the first official concert was presented by the Association of Traffic Moral, which had been working for refugees at the Koishikawa Botanical Garden. It was a free concert of small orchestra and Japan-made children’s songs, whereas five days later the Military Band organised a concert in the Open-air Music Hall at Hibiya Park, where they had usually bi-weekly concerts since 1906 (alternate with the Navy Band). The Hibiya Open-air Music Hall, located near the Imperial Palace, became a central venue for post-quake free concerts. Built in 1905, it presented the Sunday concerts by the military and navy bands since 1906 which had played an important role for popularising Western music among the young middle-class for two decades. Now it opened to other types of concerts such as that by mandolin and violin players authorised by the Metropolitan Police Department, that for the leaving American ambassador by one hundred and twenty members of Military and Navy bands.

In October and November several newspapers set up the music activities to present free concerts at schools and other public places. The musicians visiting barrack areas included the harmonica society and the mandolin one of Waseda University, as well as the graduates from the Tokyo Music School, the most authoritative institute for Western music education. When this last group, named themselves the Modern Music Study Group (Mōdan Ongaku Kenkyūkai モーダン音楽研究会), presented on October 13



a concert at the Hibiya Open-air Music Hall with candle lights (since electric equipment had not been recovered yet), eight hundred audiences gathered. Three days later they, in turn, presented a similar comfort concert at Yasukuni Shrine for three hundred people, performing the vocal solos, the harmonica solos, and the orchestra pieces (*Tōkyō Nichinichi Shinbun*, October 17, 1923). The titles included *La Paloma*, *Santa Lucia*, *Oriental Dance*, and *Over There*, which had been known by the middle-class public by sheet music, mandolin, harmonica and other easy forms (in addition, unidentifiable pieces titled in Japanese). It is presumed that the well-trained musicians played harmonica in public for the first time. The climax of post-quake concert was that held by the young Yasha Heifetz, at the Imperial Hotel (Teikoku Hotel), the most luxurious in Tokyo, on November 9 to 11. In September he had to cancel his Japan tour, changing the direction to Shanghai, and now returned to Japan.

The free concerts and the charity concerts diminished so quickly that one finds nearly no references to them in the next year (probably they continued on the grass-roots level, unnoticed by the journalism). The theatres, the cinema, and the vaudeville halls mostly restarted their ordinary business around November.

## 5 The Destruction and Reconstruction of Music Industry

A newspaper article reported that seventy shops of music instruments and four hundred ones of phonograph were destroyed by the earthquake and the resulting loss was estimated as one million and five hundred yen and three million yen respectively (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, October 11, 1923). The Nitchiku Label (Nihon Chikuonki Co.) transferred business to the Ōsaka headquarter for emergency while building the transitory barrack office at Kanda ward. Two principal music shops, Jūjiya and Yamano Gakki, moved their offices to other parts of Tokyo but returned to the original places at Ginza, Tokyo's most fashionable street, around November. As early as in December, the organ, the mandolin, the violin and the harmonica were sold well while the phonographs could be sold out (*Tōkyō Asahi Shinbun*, December 27, 1923). One client, the article says, asked the shop any type of ten records of Japanese music. He might have little time to choose the discs. One can imagine that he only wanted to recover his record collection from zero. Any Japanese music could console him like any music was welcomed in the post-quake days.

The earthquake divided the destiny of music journals. *Ongakukai* 音楽界 (The Music World), one of the chief magazines in music (especially Western music) society, closed its fifteen-year's life (1908-23) with the December issue. The editor Hirato Dai 平戸大 testified his unforgettable experience at Shibuya office as follows:

Suddenly the earth began trembling. Immediately the papers on the shelves fell on the floor. From the roof I saw the tiles falling and crashing with clouds of dust. The walls twisted and rolled, then a big crack came out. As I was cautiously standing in a corner, I felt that this was the end of my life.<sup>4</sup>

At night he could only see the star lights that made him imagine the bombing (which he might experience some twenty years later). He feared the attack of “lawless bunch”, too. Here he implicitly referred to the Korean workers. Under the total panic, a rumor was prevailed that the Korean workers transferred by force would attack Japanese. The armed vigilantes, grouped quickly on the neighborhood level, killed mercilessly the Koreans. Hirato was horrified by the fearful rumors.

*Ongakukai* lost all the manuscripts prepared for the September issue but managed to publish it by mimeography (hand-written letters). As early as in October, the Ongakusha, their publisher, reopened the barrack office at Kanda ward, selling the music sheets and books and even the new publications. The December issue was back to typography and named happily the resurrection issue. However, it was the end.

Their rival, *Gekkan Gakufu* (Monthly Music Notes), restarted with the December issue, while three issues from September till November could not be published, and continued its life until 1941 when the military government reformed the music journalism. The opening remark of December issue, “The Great Earthquake and Music”, declared clearly the definitive role of largest music magazine to redirect and reconstruct the “all-Japan music world.” Being self-confident enough, it also noted five principles of newborn magazine: the publication of music by purely artistic composers from the West and Japan; the promotion of new musicians; the presentation of refreshing didactic materials; the introduction of new critics and theorists; and the recommendation and presentation of composition.<sup>5</sup> This new policy was symptomatic not only for the new policy of *Gekkan Gakufu* but also for the new trend in music journalism in general after the Earthquake. Roughly the post-quake issues cared less about the education and more about the art music, compared to the pre-quake ones. The change of editor-in-chief a few months before the disaster was responsible for the editorial shift yet it also anticipated the rising consumerism of art music in the second half of the twenties with the coming of electric recordings, the expanding publishing society, the increasing number of public concerts by

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4 Hirato Dai (1923). “Shinsai no hi no tsuioku” (Reminiscence of the Day of Earthquake). *Ongakukai* 音楽界 (The Music World), October, 2-6.

5 “Shinsai to Ongaku” (The Great Earthquake and Music). *Gekkan Gakufu* (Monthly Music Notes), December 1923, 1.

Japanese and visiting musicians and other inter-related factors. Following the track of *Gekkan Gakufu*, the newly-launched music journals after 1925 were specialised nearly exclusively in Western classical music, whose major readership was the urban Western-oriented, educated youth. The new journals were generally more consumer-oriented than educator-oriented.

## 6 Sassa Kōka's Operetta, *The Reconstruction*

Until September 1, Asakusa, the entertainment quarter of downtown Tokyo since the nineteenth century, was thriving with mushrooming troupes and novelties. In the music history, it is known for the "Asakusa Opera", which inaugurated in 1917 with the performance of *Kafe no yoru* カフェーの夜 (A Night in Café), and *Jogun shussei* 女軍出征 (The Departure of Female Soldiers to the Front) by the Tōkyō Kageki Dan 東京歌劇団 (Tokyo Opera Troupe), led by the composer Sassa Kōka 佐々紅華 (1886-1961). Despite the name of "opera", the stage looked more like musical, or the popular drama with songs. In the later years they also presented shows and vaudevilles. Therefore the name of "opera" is mischievous (though they performed the digests of, say, *Aida* and *Carmen*). The success of Tōkyō Kageki Dan encouraged the boom of similar Western-like music dramas and their repertoire included the digests of European operetta/opera and the originals. The singers included trained and untrained and the dancing scenes (mainly with female dancers) were attractive points. In other words, the level of professional education at music school could be reached by self-trained singers.

The Earthquake entirely destroyed Asakusa area, which was symbolised by the break of landmark Jūnikai, Tokyo's tallest building before the Earthquake. Many members of Sassa Kōka's Negishi Kageki Dan 根岸歌劇団 (Negishi Opera Troupe) had to leave Tokyo for a while but from December 20 on the troupe restarted the activities out of Asakusa and managed to present almost regularly the adaptations of Western classical works they had played earlier.

The only new work the surviving troupe presented was Sassa's *Fukkō* 復興 (The Reconstruction), premiered on June 28, 1924, at the Opera Kan, rebuilt on their home place in Asakusa. Only its scenario survives while the score has been lost (Kiyoshima Toshisuke 1982, 243-81).

The Overture in quick tempo suggesting the earthquake is followed by the first song by the Princess of Capital of East (alluding Tokyo, literally East-capital) who evacuated from the Capital of East singing from backstage: "It must be a dream. | If it is a dream, wake up! | Is the trembling Earth | the anger of earthly ghost? | Are the red blazing flames | The sign of heavenly devil?..." She is alone, losing the whole family. Then appear three country men who sing that in the Capital of East there are novel things like electric stove, electric communication, automobile, and airplane. They

know that the project of subway became infeasible. The refrain of the song is: “So the most terrible is | The earthquake”.

The stage set of Second Act focuses on a large clock in the centre which indicates 11:58, the time of Earthquake. The female chorus opens the act, singing that “We wonder why the clock stopped | Just two minutes before the canon signal at noon.” The women confess with humor that they behave themselves unconsciously bizarre every day at 11:58, while the Minister of Justice sings that we have to invent clocks without 11:58. Then the Princess of Capital replies, singing about the Buddhist transiency of life, raging against the devil who massacred the whole family. When she sues the Catfish of Kurobei, who is supposed to cause the quake (in Japanese folk belief, the catfish is considered as a cause for earthquake), the Minister of Justice summons him up. When the accused fish confesses his crime, Jūnikai and Hifukushō testify what they experienced after the earthquake. The former is astonished by the absence of head when the quake blew his hat off, whereas the latter mourns her thirty thousand children who were surrounded by a sea of flames like the baked chestnuts. In the final scene the Prince of Reconstruction appear (like *deus ex machina*?) accompanying Barrack, Vigilantes and Brown Rice (*Genmai* 玄米), singing in chorus that:

Under the sky of the Capital of East, here comes the day of reconstruction. | The city dust is clouding everywhere. | The morale for progress is high. | The new houses are built closely. | The scent of recovery is full.

The Prince sentences the Catfish the commutation because the earthquake recollected the people the moral importance of modest life represented by the Brown Rice (reflecting the idea of Heavenly Punishment). He also scolds the Vigilantes not to own the arms any more in order not to repeat “the irrevocable mistakes”. The chorus in the finale scene celebrates the bright reconstruction to come.

Disguised in fairytale-like setting, Sassa’s musical narrates the post-quake traumas mixed up with the humour. It had repeats in the same year at Jurakuza 聚楽座 (Shibuya) in July and at Nihonbashi Theatre and Chitoseza 千歳座 (Nihonbashi) in November (*Miyako Shinbun*, July 2, November 2 and November 10). Because of its familiar topic (not the romance of European princess), *Fukkō* could appeal to the local public. Like Satsuki’s *The Reconstruction Song* mentioned above, the humorous devices must be a key for the popularity. As the collective memories of the Earthquake were fading off, such a fad product as *Fukkō* lost the public (as same as the topical *enka* songs). However, I want to stress Sassa’s willingness to create a special musical for the victims. A few years later, contracted by Japan Victor, he started releasing a number of hit songs. To see his carrier in retrospect, *Fukkō* was his farewell to the period of Asakusa Opera. It also marked the last chord for Asakusa Opera.

## 7 Celebrating the Reconstruction

The work of reconstruction was officially completed by the Celebration for Reconstruction of Imperial Capital on March 24-26, 1930. When the Shōwa Emperor patrolled the areas once devastated, a thousand collectives, and their five hundred thousand members were mobilised and general public of over two hundred thousand people lined the route, yelling “Banzai!” A newspaper reported the Emperor’s public appearance that “Here comes the day of glory! Be fascinated! The joy of reconstruction!” (*Yomiuri Shinbun*, March 24). The government and Tokyo City proposed a plan to make the date of ceremony a national holiday in order to remember the unprecedented achievement forever. The words of “forever” and “eternity” were often used in the official statements since the powers needed people’s fantasy of ever-lasting improvement to cover the “vague anxiety” (Akutagawa Ryūnosuke 芥川龍之介, in his testament in 1927) prevailing under the military reinforcement.

Various concerts were held in the ceremonies. The Hibiya Public Hall, newly constructed inside the Hibiya Park (1929), hosted the harmonica orchestra of several universities playing *The Reconstruction March*, an event for the children with piano, xylophone, fairytale-like musicals and others. Other public halls presented the amateur orchestras, brass bands, among others. The culmination of the music events was without doubt the pageant of approximately twenty bands on the last day including the Military and Navy ones from the Hibiya Park, marching to Ginza, the Place of Imperial Palace and back to the starting point. There was another march of hundred players of *chindonya* チンドン屋 street commercial band usually mixing the Western brass instruments with Japanese *taiko* percussions and *shamisen* string instrument as well as a costume jazz party at Imperial Hotel with four hundred elite participants. The public presence of Emperor impressed the crowd as if the reconstruction had been his work. Retrospectively the celebration ceremony was a rehearsal for the imperial pageant, the national mobilisation, the political and economic centralisation on the capital, and the unilateral control of public discourses.

On March 26, the last day of ceremony, the radio dedicated the whole day to the celebration (Japan had only one station by the state-run Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai 日本放送協会, today’s NHK). The program included the speech, the new songs, the new *shamisen* pieces and the drama, all of which praised the completion of great work. Among the new songs commissioned by the authorities were *Fukkō kōshinkyoku* 復興行進曲 (The Reconstruction March, lyrics by Kitahara Hakushū 北原白秋 (1885-1942), music by Yamada Kōsaku) and *Teito Fukkō Kōshinkyoku* 帝都復興行進曲 (The March of Reconstruction of Imperial Capital, lyrics by Saijō Yaso, music by Nakayama Shinpei 中山晋平 [1887-1952]). The word of “march” (*kōshinkyoku*) became fad since 1928-29 with such hit songs as *Ginza March* (*Ginza kōshinkyoku*)

銀座行進曲) and *Tōkyō March* (*Tōkyō kōshinkyoku* 東京行進曲), both of which sketched the romance of fashionable urbanites in Tokyo under reconstruction. The word of march then implied not only the military but also the progress and the modernity.

The former, *The Reconstruction March*, simply delights the modern life in progress after the earthquake, singing about the radio tower, tall building, clock tower, electric news board, new iron bridges, asphalt road, newly-made sidewalk, crane, and breakwater. These words could be implicitly associated with the new landmarks and the symbols of reconstruction such as the Marunouchi Building (“Marubiru” as was nicknamed), the nine-story business building (the tallest in Japan) inaugurated in 1923, the commercial spot of Ginza street widened after the earthquake, the Gaien Park of Meiji Shrine, new iron-framed Kiyosu Bridge and Eitai Bridge over Sumida River. Hakushū refers even to “rush hour” which symbolised the metropolitan life of “salarymen” living in the suburbs and working in the heart of Tokyo. Commuting became common to the middle class office workers, moving out from the centre, settled down in the newly-developed residential area. In the refrain, the poet openly praises that “The quick tempo is our speciality”. How the urban life was accelerated in the mind of people was expressed by the fad word of “the age of speed”. The word of “speed” and that of “modern” (*modan*) were nearly synonyms. If Soeda Satsuki’s *The Reconstruction Song* admired the strong spirit of Edokko (Edo-Tōkyō local people) facing the calamity and expecting the future, Hakushū’s “The Reconstruction March” applauded the achievement of reconstruction work (especially the civil engineering work and the building) led under the State and metropolitan bureaucracy. Hakushū and his collaborator Yamada Kōsaku were the most established pair who was commissioned the official hymns (of school, company, for example) throughout the 1920s-30s. This song was nothing but a routine for them and was not replayed afterward.

The latter song, *The March of Reconstruction of Imperial Capital*, illustrates the beauty of new Tokyo, comparing with that of old Edo, in a more playful way. The lyricist Saijō Yaso mentions the Diet Building, the iron bridge, the motor boat, the widened principal roads, the sycamore walks, and other items most of which are common with Hakushū’s song mentioned above. Knowledgeable of Edo poetics, he was good at applying the classic vocabulary to the modern settings as had been experimented in his groundbreaking success, *Tōkyō March*, released in 1929, composed by Nakayama Shinpei. The pair of Yaso and Shinpei was the most successful hit factory around that time but the march commissioned by Tokyo City was forgotten immediately.

## 8 Conclusion

The seven years between the Great Kantō Earthquake (1923) and the ceremony of reconstruction (1930) were crucial for the music history of Japan. Seven new points can be mentioned: the installation of electric loudspeakers in the public space (around 1924); the arrival of electric recording system (1927), the start of major foreign labels (1928), the radio broadcast (1926), the talkie system (1929), jazz boom (around 1928 on) and revue theatre (1927). They changed the basic conditions of production, reception and consumption of sound and music. The electric loudspeakers set in the stations, the parks, the shops, the rooms and other public and private spaces (radio, phonograph, talkie, announcement...) naturally changed the urban soundscape as well as the audio perception on the mass level. The similar could be noted in other countries since the electric technology had no borders.

Not all of them were in reality caused or brought about by the natural phenomenon. They were common characteristics of the music and sound culture in the 1920s around the world. Not all of them were caused or brought about by the natural phenomenon. Without the Earthquake they could have been imported or invented because Japan had been already part of world system on various levels. From technological inventions to fad songs, the peninsula was tightly linked with what was going on in Europe and North America.

What is specific to Japan is that such a revolutionary decade coincided with the catastrophe and that those novelties were often associated with the “post-quake” and interpreted as the icons of *modan*. In this borrowed word from *modern*, the users condensed the feeling of new age after the Earthquake. *Modan* meant the latest and continued to mean it until the “post-modern” (post-*modan*) became current. Therefore the word of *modan* (modern) and its common translation *kindai* have distinct meanings in colloquial Japanese, different from the definitions of historians. This condition was specific to Japan in a similar way that in Europe jazz (Americanism), radio and the electric recording (singing stars of new generation) were often related to the icons of “post-war” (the war was indeed called the “Great War” like “Great Earthquake”). In both cases, these novelties suddenly appeared in the devastated land and spread while the work of reconstruction was in progress.

On the opposite side of *modan*, the Earthquake farewelled to the street singers and Asakusa Opera. The former was replaced by the recording singers contracted with major labels, while the latter by more spectacular revue stage (with jazzy music and dancing). In the 1930s Tokyo could see the full versions of opera by Puccini and Bizet, for example, as the audience of Asakusa Opera might have dreamt of. In a word, music life was much more industrialised and formed by media after the quake. There were no

more spaces for street singers of semi-private management. Discussing a variety of music activities and genres in a specific period, this paper has estimated the enormous influence of Earthquake on modern/modan music culture in Japan.

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