

Introduction

On the whole, Osaka's comic storytellers are, in a word from that city, *mossari* (boorish). They're *abura koku* (importunate) and *shitsukko* (obstinate). They use polite language poorly and carry on with vulgar, indecent topics. From beginning to end, their stories are as good as cesspools. On top of this, most have voices that are *kanbashitte imasu* (awfully high-pitched). When a shop boy or the like appears [in a story], it sounds like a monkey getting its liver ripped out.¹

Japanese dramatist and critic En Tarō (1892–1934)

Rakugo is a popular comic storytelling art that developed during the course of the early modern (1600–1868) and Meiji (1868–1912) periods.² It is one form of *engei*, which are Japanese variety arts, some of which bear a resemblance to vaudeville or music hall entertainment.³ Today, *rakugoka* (storytellers, also called *hanashika*) wear kimono and perform in halls called *yose* (short for *yoseba*) or *seki* (short for *jōseki*), usually for small audiences of 100 to 300 people.⁴ After kneeling on a *zabuton* (large cushion, placed downstage-center) and bowing head to floor, the rakugoka presents an introductory *makura* (lit. pillow), which contains topical material and ties into the *honday* (story

¹ En Tarō, “Mata Osaka no yose yori,” *Bungei kurabu*, January 1917, 314–15. All translations in this book are by the author, unless otherwise noted.

² In this book, early modern era refers to Japan's Edo (also Tokugawa) period, 1600–1868.

³ Representative *engei* arts include rakugo, *kōdan*, *Naniwabushi*, *manzai*, and various *irumono* (side-show acts), which are traditionally performed in *yose* and typically have connections to early modern forms of street performance.

⁴ Today rakugoka and hanashika are virtually synonymous, though usage is a matter of personal preference. In certain contexts, rakugoka and hanashika have different nuances, and this is linked to the fact that the word rakugoka did not exist prior to the Meiji period and hanashika did. Thus, some feel hanashika best represents dedication to the art and adherence to tradition. Some claim the opposite. I use rakugoka throughout this book to refer to modern storytellers because this word is more widely used in Japan, but readers should be aware that some of the storytellers discussed herein may take issue with being referred to as rakugoka. *Seki* was the common term for Kamigata yose until the influx of Tokyo rakugoka to Osaka following the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. In this book I use yose to refer to storytelling venues because it is used most often today.



Figure 0.1 Katsura Beichō III (1925–2015) performing the story *Kuchi ireya* (*Employment Agency*). Courtesy of Beichō Jimusho.

proper).⁵ The *hondai* (also *hanashi*, *neta*, or simply *rakugo*) usually lasts thirty minutes or less but may take up to an hour or more. *Rakugo* customarily ends with an *ochi* (lit. a drop, also *sage*, *otoshi*), similar to a punchline in that it is used to evoke laughter (or groans) or make the audience think. The *rakugo* repertoire includes hundreds of *koten* (classical, traditional) and a growing number of *shinsaku* (newly written, also called *sōsaku*) pieces.⁶

One *rakugoka* plays all characters, distinguishing gender, age, and social position through voice, posture, and gaze. Typically, just two stage properties are employed, a *sensu* (paper folding fan) and a *tenugui* (hand towel),

⁵ A *zabuton* is a floor cushion used for kneeling/sitting. In *rakugo* this is generally a large, plush cushion covered in silk or satin that allows *rakugoka* to be comfortable in *seiza* (kneeling Japanese style) for the length of a performance. Backstage at the Tenma Tenjin Hanjōtei, there are *zabuton* in a variety of colors that *rakugoka* can choose from, to complement their kimono.

⁶ Some prefer the term *denshō* (orally transmitted) *rakugo* to *koten rakugo*. *Koten rakugo* was originally used to refer to stories composed during the Meiji period and earlier, but it is increasingly used to refer to stories composed in the Taishō (1912–1926) and early Shōwa (1926–1989) eras.

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which are used to represent objects that characters take in their hands. Sensu are typically white so as to be a blank slate for the audience's imagination. Closed, a sensu can represent a pipe, sword, writing brush, even a telephone; open part way, it can be a bottle of *sake*, rice scoop, or abacus; wide open, it can be a dish, sedge hat, or letter, among other things. Tenugui can become a letter, coin purse, hat, tobacco pouch, even a roasted sweet potato. They are often dyed with vibrant colors, *geimei* (stage names), crests, patterns, or caricatures – marks of rakugoka individuality. Rakugoka regularly present tenugui to supporters and colleagues, to mark special occasions or give thanks. Some rakugoka carry two tenugui – one to represent the objects that characters take in their hands, the other to wipe away sweat if needed.

Rakugo is a *denshō geinō* (orally transmitted art). *Shishō* (masters) teach stories to *deshi* (pupils, apprentices) without the use of scripts. All rakugoka are grouped in *ichimon* (artistic schools) such as Hayashiya, Katsura, Shōfukutei, Tsukitei, and Tsuyu (no), and generally belong to a professional rakugo guild. Deshi have to be formally accepted into an *ichimon*; this is called *nyūmon* (lit. entering the gate). While rakugo is traditionally an all-male art, women are now included among the most respected artists. The first woman to be accepted as a formal deshi and thrive was Tsuyu no Miyako (b. 1956, see Figure 5.1) in 1974, followed by Katsura Ayame III (b. 1964) and a few others in the 1980s, a handful in the 1990s, then a good deal more after television shows and movies – particularly NHK's *Chiri-tote-chin* (*Twing-a-Twang*, 2007), a drama about a young woman who undergoes rakugo *shugyō* (apprenticeship) – made the art appealing to a younger generation.

Rakugo is no longer – and may have never been – a true oral culture, as comic storytellers have been literate for centuries and texts existed in various forms (perhaps Walter Ong would refer to Kamigata rakugo as a literate culture that retains massive oral residue),⁷ but rakugoka continue to undergo arduous *shugyō* full of demeaning domestic chores and learn stories in the traditional *kuchi utsushi* (mouth-to-mouth) method that artists have used for generations.⁸ The teaching method has always been and remains traditional in the sense that *shishō* orally transmit stories to *deshi* by presenting and repeating standardized formulas and themes.

⁷ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the World* (online ed., New York: Routledge, 2001 [1982]), 36. Proquest EBook Central. Accessed 8 February 2021. Ong discusses oral residue in literate cultures at multiple points in this book.

⁸ The *kuchi utsushi* method is also used in other Japanese performing arts, such as *nō* and *kyōgen*. A *shishō* recites a line and a *deshi* does her/his best to emulate the model given.

A shishō tells a story and a deshi recites it back, memorizing it after a few practice sessions, which can take place in a single week or be spread over several months. No formal scripts are used in the art, so stories constantly undergo change. Of course, the shishō must approve the way the deshi performs a story before it can be performed in public.

Formal yose hold shows on most days, and often more than once a day. Yose-goers are drawn in by *ichibandaiko* (first drum), generally played on the *ōdaiko* (large drum) at the entrance by a *zenza* (lower-level rakugoka).⁹ *Nibandaiko* (second drum) is played on *shimedaiko* (small tension drum), *ōdaiko*, and *nōkan* (nō flute) inside the yose, out of audience view, and tells the audience that the performers are in the *gakuya* (dressing room) and the show will soon start.¹⁰ Rakugoka perform in order of seniority. *Zenza* start the show, and traditionally they would begin performing as the audience entered the yose and settled in. Shows typically have a *naka iri* (intermission, interval). The rakugoka who performs in the slot just prior to the *naka iri* is called the *naka tori*. S/he should be entertaining enough to make the audience want to return after the interval – the *naka tori* slot is sometimes given to the highest-ranking rakugoka, so they can leave the yose early if desired or needed. The last rakugoka to perform is called the *tori*. Fans often attend shows to hear the *tori* perform, so having the *tori* appear in the final slot gives the audience incentive to stay until the end. It also (in theory) ends the show on a high note, making the audience want to come back again.¹¹ Live *yosebayashi* (yose music) is played throughout the show, for performers' entrances and exits as well as for some rakugo stories and other acts.

⁹ *Zenza* (lit. “first seat”) refers to a rakugoka of the lowest level; the youngest (or least experienced) *zenza* are usually warm-up acts at shows and responsible for backstage tasks, such as making/serving tea, cleaning, dressing their shishō, folding kimono, and more. Before World War II, Kamigata rakugo had an official rank system – *zenza*, *nakaza* (lit. middle seat), *shin'uchi* (headliner) – but, since there were no formal yose in Osaka after the war until 2006, the system fell out of use. Tokyo rakugo still employs an official rank system in its yose: *minarai* (observing apprentice), *zenza*, *futatsume* (second [act]), *shin'uchi*.

¹⁰ *Shimedaiko* (also *shime*) has two drumheads bound together by hemp (or nylon) cords, vermillion in color, and is played with two sticks called *bachi*. The *ōdaiko* (large drum) used in yose is typically a *hiratsuridaiko* (flat hanging drum). *Ōdaiko* are hung on decorative hardwood stands and come in a range of sizes, the average being around two to three feet in diameter and six inches to one foot in depth. This drum is used in the yose to save space backstage, and because the sound it makes is more suitable for smaller venues. The *ōdaiko* of the kabuki theater (and taiko troupes) is much larger, typically three to four feet in diameter and depth, and rests on a stand. *Nōkan* is a transverse flute that produces a piercing timbre and imprecise pitches and is recognized as the flute of the nō theater. *Gakuya* in yose are typically small and shared by all performers, regardless of status or gender. Seating arrangements usually indicate performer seniority.

¹¹ The term *tori* literally means “taker” and originated in the yose. In years past, it was the final (most senior) rakugoka who took the total earnings for the day, and then distributed them among performers.

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Figure 0.2 The rakugoka's view from onstage at Osaka's premier yose, the Tenma Tenjin Hanjōtei. Courtesy of Kamigata Rakugo Kyōkai.

Many people are unaware that there are two distinct rakugo traditions. One reason for this is that they look similar on the surface. Both are one-person comic storytelling arts that have served the same function for generations: to provide inexpensive amusement for the common population. The traditions are regularly demarcated with the terms east and west, corresponding to Japan's broad division into *Higashi Nihon* (Eastern Japan) and *Nishi Nihon* (Western Japan), but in rakugo these refer more to the urban centers of Tokyo, and Kyoto and Osaka, respectively. "Western Japan" appears in the title of this book, but readers should not take this to mean the entire western half of the Japanese archipelago. Kamigata rakugo (commonly referred to as Osaka rakugo and Naniwa rakugo before 1950) shares basic conventions with Tokyo rakugo. In both, rakugoka wear kimono, kneel on a zabuton, and tell a story selected from the traditional repertoire, or newer pieces. The structure of Kamigata rakugo is the same as Tokyo rakugo in that it consists of makura, hondai, and ochi.¹² Kamigata rakugo and Tokyo rakugo also share themes such as life in the *nagaya* (wooden row houses), scheming to get free food or

¹² Makura often include *kobanashi* (short comical anecdotes/stories that end with an ochi), which generally help transport listeners from the present moment to the world of the hondai. Makura can

drinks, sneaking into women's rooms at night, pilgrimages, and more. As Howard Hibbett writes, "Sex, money, food, and drink continue to provide the basic elements for comic conflict; men are routinely duped or frustrated as they pursue the 'three pleasures' [*san dōraku*] of drinking, gambling, and buying (that is, paying for the company of women)."¹³ Considering the conventional similarities that Kamigata rakugo and Tokyo rakugo share, it is no wonder that many people today think of all rakugo as the same.

The epigraph above is excerpted from a critique written in 1917 by En Tarō, also known as Seto Eiichi. In the same article he lays bare his disgust for Osaka rakugoka by describing them as *shirōto* (amateurs), *muyami* (thoughtless), *shitsurei* (rude), and *nasakenai* (shameful), implying that this could hardly be helped because Osaka yose audiences were *kiki ni kuru yori asobi ni kuru hō* (not there to listen so much as they were there to fool around). He also derisively recounts an anecdote about a popular Tokyo performer who dashed off the following poem during a visit to Osaka:

Fuji Tsukuba sutete mi ni kuru Tenpōzan
*Konna tokoro ni iru wa baka nari*¹⁴

So long Mt. Fuji and Tsukuba too, to see Mt. Tenpō
 To stay in a place like this is ludicrous

Articles of this kind appeared from time to time in *Bungei kurabu* and similar Tokyo magazines, telling readers loud and clear that Tokyo rakugo was better than the Osaka knock-off, which was cheap (or at least writers felt as if they paid too much for it), unpolished, loud, obnoxious, or a plain waste of time. These views were doubtless linked to the "epistemic rupture in the transcription of oratory, which brought about the reduction of *hanashi* 咄／噺 (storytelling) to *hanashi* 話 (literally 'speech') in a tightly scripted sense."¹⁵ But if Kamigata rakugo was so awful, why did Tokyo writers even feel as though they needed to defend Tokyo rakugo? After all,

be used to elucidate material that might prove difficult for listeners in the *hondai* or *ochi*. The *makura* also allows the rakugoka to get a feel for the audience and establish rapport. For more on *makura*, see M.W. Shores, "The *Makura* of Rakugo, Tradition and Modernity," in Jessica Milner Davis, ed., *Humour Ancient and Modern: Tradition and Context in Four Asian Cultures* (Singapore: Routledge, forthcoming).

¹³ Howard Hibbett, *The Chrysanthemum and the Fish: Japanese Humor since the Age of the Shoguns* (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 2002), 174.

¹⁴ En Tarō, "Mata Osaka no yose yori," 316. Mt. Tenpō is a manmade "mountain." Its elevation was about twenty meters in the Tenpō era (1830–1844) but is now about a quarter of that.

¹⁵ Seth Jacobowitz, *Writing Technology in Meiji Japan: A Media History of Modern Japanese Literature and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 179.

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their rakugo had been lauded by Tokyo's literary elite. The language of Tokyo yose inspired some Meiji writers who were struggling to find freedom from the old, tired tradition of *gabun* (refined elegant letters). This is true for Futabatei Shimei (1864–1909), Natsume Sōseki (1867–1916), Nagai Kafū (1879–1959), and others.¹⁶ Kamigata rakugo could not possibly compete with this, could it?

There is a common belief that rakugo is essentially a Tokyo art, or that the Tokyo variety is the better of the two. It is not difficult to see how this belief arose. As pointed out, men in the Meiji literary world placed value on Tokyo rakugo. This coincided with the 1884 introduction of, and subsequent boom in, rakugo *sokki* (stenographic transcriptions).¹⁷ Tokyo magazines, such as *Bungei kurabu*, *Hyakkaen*, *Azuma nishiki*, and *Hanagatami*, regularly featured sokki of rakugo and *kōdan* (another form of storytelling, more serious in nature). Articles about rakugo were saturated with Tokyo-centrism, and this extended to scholarship far into the twentieth century. Tokyo scholars began analyzing Tokyo rakugo soon after the first sokki appeared, one example being Tsuchiko Kinshirō's book *Wajutsu shinron, ichimei, kōdan rakugo no ron* (*A New Theory of Narrative Arts: One-Person Kōdan and Rakugo*, 1889). In fact, it was not until the 1890s that *rakugo* became the preferred term for comic storytelling in Tokyo. This new designation did not become standard throughout Japan until the age of radio broadcasting (1925–). Because there was a tendency to focus on the dominant center (i.e., Tokyo), a study on Kamigata rakugo would not appear for decades.

A few Kamigata rakugo sokki made it into Tokyo magazines, but most stories came from the Tokyo tradition. The Osaka magazine *Momochidori*, issued semi-monthly (1889–1891), was dedicated to *kōdan* and rakugo, but Osaka dialect was usually edited out of stories. This stripped the Osaka art of its identity and fueled the conception that Tokyo rakugo was better. Tokyo rakugoka went to Osaka to study the art – and make money – especially in the years following the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923, but they too contributed to Tokyo-centric discourse. Katsura Bunraku VIII (1892–1971) complained in 1926, “I went to Osaka but couldn't help

¹⁶ For more on this see Ueda Masayuki, “Futabatei Shimei to rakugo: Rakugoteki naru mono no jishitsu,” *Kokubungaku kaishaku to kanshō* 68, no. 4 (April 2003): 127–34; Mizukawa Takao, *Sōseki to rakugo: Edo shomin geinō no eikyō* (Tokyo: Sairyūsha, 1986); and Okitsu Kaname, *Nihon bungaku to rakugo* (Tokyo: Ōfūsha, 1970).

¹⁷ Based on Western stenography, this was the first method of Japanese shorthand for simultaneous transcription. It was also employed for transcribing political debates and other proceedings. Books with sokki were dubbed *sokkibon*. For more on this see Jacobowitz, *Writing Technology in Meiji Japan*, and J. Scott Miller, “Japanese Shorthand and *Sokkibon*,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 49, no. 4 (winter 1994): 471–87.

wanting terribly to return to Tokyo . . . I was the only Tokyo native . . . it was horrible.”¹⁸

The harsh treatment that Kamigata rakugo received in the capital inspired some Osaka-based enthusiasts and scholars – and performers – of the art to publish rebuttals to Tokyo-centric detractors. They used the pages of (usually local) magazines and newspapers to defend Kamigata rakugo. A few eventually published formal studies. Some criticized Tokyo critics for lacking the basic ability to understand Osaka language while others aimed to persuade readers that Kamigata rakugo was an altogether distinct tradition not so easily compared with Tokyo rakugo. Advocates of the art presented the same basic argument: Kamigata rakugo has value. It is just as valuable and entertaining as Tokyo rakugo, if not more so. Kamigata rakugo is not, as En Tarō wrote, *doko made mo shirōto ke o hanarete inai* (bound in every way by the air of amateurism).¹⁹

Despite this and other challenges during the twentieth century, Kamigata rakugo is alive and well in 2021. In fact, Kamigata rakugoka numbers are higher than ever. Today most new rakugoka begin shugyō in their twenties, but women and men in their thirties and forties have recently been allowed to begin shugyō, including some high-profile television personalities, such as Tsukitei Hōsei (b. 1968, also known as Yamazaki Hōsei) and Katsura Sando (b. 1969, also known as Sekai no Nabeatsu, or Watanabe Atsumu). A growing number of rakugoka are giving performances abroad in second languages or with subtitles, and there are even some non-Japanese performing rakugo in their own languages and in Japanese. Kamigata rakugo, thus, is not an old, dying art struggling to find relevance in contemporary society. It remains an important form of live entertainment and is increasingly inclusive and international. Kamigata rakugo is therefore a topic that should be of interest to a range of specialists who focus on contemporary Japan, too.

Kamigata rakugo is distinct from Tokyo rakugo because the Kamigata-Osaka sociocultural milieu shaped the art’s development throughout the early modern era. Kabuki, *ningyō jōruri* (puppet theater, also referred to as *bunraku* or simply *jōruri*), *hayashi* music, and other arts were vibrant parts of the milieu and thus had an influence on Kamigata rakugo.²⁰ Kamigata

¹⁸ Katsura Bunraku VIII, “Suzumibanashi: Yoku no kawa,” *Nōryōgō: kōdan to rakugo*, September 1926, 14. This was a special forty-page issue sent to subscribers of the daily newspaper *Tokyo Nichi Nichi*.

¹⁹ This appears in En Tarō’s article “Mata Osaka no yose yori,” cited above.

²⁰ Hayashi is a generic term for music played in kabuki and other traditional Japanese theater and folk arts. Hayashi incorporates drums and flutes and more, including shamisen ([plucked lute] from the late sixteenth century). Rakugo stories that feature music are categorized as *ongyokubanashi*.

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rakugo would be practically unrecognizable if it were stripped of its music and countless shows within shows, which are similar to the “story within the story” literary device but employed for sheer entertainment.²¹ These shows within the show demonstrate the lively quality of the art and indicate that Kamigata stories were pieced together over time with shorter stories and formulas, which Walter Ong understands to be more or less exactly repeated set phrases or set expressions in verse or prose, and key to oral memorization.²² Kamigata rakugo is also heavily saturated with traditional Osaka merchant culture. Considering that Kamigata rakugo contains numerous elements absent in Tokyo rakugo, and that there are historical and cultural explanations for this, the art deserves to be both scrutinized and celebrated.



Western scholars – most notably Lorie Brau, Ian McArthur, J. Scott Miller, and Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki – have written about rakugo in English, but they tend to focus on the Tokyo tradition. One is bound to gather that Tokyo rakugo is the dominant, mainstream variety, or worse, the only form of rakugo. This, of course, is incorrect. Kamigata rakugo is a distinct tradition with an equally notable past. Why have Western scholars neglected Kamigata rakugo then? This is partly a reflection of Japanese scholarship. An increasing number of Japanese works on Kamigata rakugo appeared after World War II, particularly from the late 1960s on, but far more books cover Tokyo rakugo. To give a telling illustration, numerous annotated anthologies of Tokyo rakugo were published in hardcover during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but the first work of this nature to feature Kamigata rakugo did not appear until 1980, and consisted of just one rakugoka’s stories.²³ This is doubtless a result of scholars’ and publishers’ lack of interest in Kamigata rakugo as a subject for serious study and their strong identification of rakugo with Tokyo.

Regrettably, when Western scholars do mention Kamigata rakugo, they are occasionally misinformed. To give one example, Amin Sweeny claimed that there were still two yose in Osaka in 1979, but in reality there was not a formal yose from the end of World War II until 2006.²⁴ Morioka and

²¹ See William Nelles, “Embedding,” in David Herman, Manfred Jahn, and Marie-Laure Ryan, eds., *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 134–5.

²² Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 26, 56.

²³ Katsura Beichō, *Beichō rakugo zenshū*, 7 vols. (Osaka: Sōgensha, 1980–1982).

²⁴ Amin Sweeny, “Rakugo Professional Japanese Storytelling,” *Asian Folklore Studies* 38, no. 1 (1979): 29.

Sasaki differentiated the Kamigata and Tokyo traditions by highlighting that *tabi-neta mono* (travel stories, also *tabibanashi*) are an indispensable part of the Kamigata rakugo repertoire.²⁵ True, travel stories do make up an important genre in Kamigata rakugo; budding rakugoka often learn these stories first so they can practice presenting protagonists that are in constant motion and come into contact with any number of characters, all without having to explore character psychology in much depth.²⁶ Tabibanashi are significant, but, leaving it at this, Morioka and Sasaki mislead their readers. Tabibanashi are by no means the art's most remarkable genre. There is much more to Kamigata rakugo.²⁷

Kamigata rakugo stories that have made it into Japanese print and other media give one an idea of the stories that were/are most popular. Indeed, some stories appear in multiple collections. *Osaka rakugo meisaku sen* (*Selected Masterpieces of Osaka Rakugo*, 1948), published privately by Shōfukutei Shokaku V (1884–1950), is an important collection because it features sixteen classics that he handpicked from the sixty-eight stories originally published about a decade earlier in his magazine *Kamigata hanashi* (*Kamigata Story*). All of the stories in *Osaka rakugo meisaku sen* continue to be performed today, and they all exhibit distinctive Kamigata elements that make them stand out in contrast to Tokyo rakugo stories. I have for this study selected a group of Kamigata stories to analyze, one of the criteria for selection being that they are time-tested Kamigata rakugo classics. Of course, the stories analyzed in this book can be found in *Osaka rakugo meisaku sen*, *Kamigata hanashi*, and/or other collections.

One of the distinguishing features of Kamigata rakugo stories is that they are extraordinarily musical, loquacious, or *hade* (colorful, flamboyant – a term that will be used throughout this book because it sums up the art's lively nature), and, thus, geared toward Osaka audiences. Although En Tarō meant to deride Osaka audiences when he wrote that Osakans are *kiki ni kuru yori asobi ni kuru hō*, he could doubtless tell that Osakans feel at home in yose, that they revel in their rakugo. This is an upshot of Kamigata

²⁵ Heinz Morioka and Miyoko Sasaki, *Rakugo: The Popular Narrative Art of Japan* (Cambridge: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990), 124.

²⁶ M.W. Shores, "Jippensha Ikku, *Hizakurige*, and Comic Storytelling," *Early Modern Japan: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 20 (2012): 59.

²⁷ The twenty-plus stories that make up the series *Higashi no tabi* (*Journey to the East*) are classic examples of tabibanashi. Listeners are transported east, from Osaka to Nara and Ise, then back to Osaka via Kyoto and Fushimi. In the final segment, *Sanjukkoku yume no kayojiji* (*Thirty-Bushel Ferry and the Dream Route*, *Sanjukkoku* for short), protagonists Kiroku and Seihachi return to Osaka aboard a Yodo River ferry. Tabibanashi contain numerous facts about famous places, so they serve as oral guidebooks of sorts.