

Transition and Transformation: Cross-Cultural Interpretation of Song

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[Abstract]

The plethora of cross-cultural hybrid songs in Japan is not merely attributable to the modern, globalized music industry. Many 'Western' songs have been fully assimilated in Japan since the late 19th century. This paper gives a brief history of Western music in Japan, followed by two sets of case studies: it analyses three Japanese hybrids each of two popular old songs, 'Land of Hope and Glory' and 'My Grandfather's Clock', and explores the relative Japanese and Western interpretations. It finds evidence of active lyrical processes such as those historically observed in the oral tradition, as well as cultural processes reflecting current social and political dialectics. The common song repertoire, previously proven valuable in cross-cultural and cross-generational relations, is here found to address social issues at both local and global scales and thus to call into question some of the entrenched ideologies behind conventional ideas of cultural identity.

Keywords: song, cross-cultural, My Grandfather's Clock, Land of Hope and Glory, Japan

Introduction

The relentless soundtrack to life in Japan affords much that is melodically familiar to the foreign ear. Yet this is not simply the manifestation of a 'West to the rest' (Wang and Yeh: 176) influx via globalized culture and music industries. These melodies derive from songs with distinct Japanese language incarnations and, as such, resonate lyrically in the local ear as genuinely as for the expatriate. Indeed, many young Japanese are unaware that some of these melodies, such as *'Hotaru no Hikari'* (light of the fireflies),

did not originate in Japan but were adapted from Western songs, such as ‘Auld Lang Syne’.

This paper takes hybrid songs from various eras and genres, and analyses the respective Japanese and original foreign versions. It attempts to explore what a Japanese listener might derive from hearing these lyric works and compares this to the Western relative experience. It finds evidence of active, sometimes symbiotic, processes: bowdlerization (lyric expurgation), deculturalization, acculturalization, and reculturalization (terms coined by Wang and Yeh), as well as intra-cultural evolution (genesis of subsequent Japanese versions) involving relocalization (Lee), parody, and trans-genre reappropriation.

The recent authorship of these Japanese songs notwithstanding, the processes found are similar to those historically observed in the aural dissemination of traditional ballads and folk songs. In many cases, so entwined are these hybrids with their primary Japanese version that they challenge the very concept of cultures being represented by unique music. This in turn calls into question some of the introverted ideologies behind concepts of identity and belonging, romantic nationalism, racism, and cultural essentialism (Wang and Yeh: 176). On the other hand, extrapolation points to further relocalization of the cultural product and suggests a future of re-dissemination, both of which lead away from any predictions of a global, blended homogeneity.

Previous research by the same author suggests that a common international song repertoire is a valuable base for cross-cultural, multi-generational relationships, especially preceding linguistic fluency. Furthermore, that such a repertoire may serve to facilitate cultural interpretation of the layman’s canon as distinct from the higher culture of classical poetry and classical literature. This paper is by no means exhaustive but it is hoped that the documentation and preliminary analysis of these works makes some contribution to the wider field of research.

In this paper Japanese names are given in customary Japanese order, surname first. Song titles are presented in inverted commas, with Japanese titles in italics. To distinguish Japanese song titles from their translations, the translations are given in lower case only. Japanese songs with English titles are given in their English form, but would

be pronounced differently in Japanese, with a vowel after each consonant. English translations of the Japanese are given, as illustrations, on the basis that the full Japanese lyrics are available in the public domain.

Background

There is a constant stream of melodies in Japan that are familiar to the European and American ear (Williams). Many, though by no means all of them, are old. In Tokyo the Scottish air, 'Comin' Through the Rye', taught in Japanese schools as '*Kokyō no Sora*' (sky over my home town), is the signal to cross the road (Yano: 196). In a Kyoto hospital '*Senro wa Tsuzuku Yo Doko Made mo*' (the railroad is endless) ('I've Been Workin' on the Railroad') appears on the waiting room TV. Nationwide, '*Hotaru no Hikari*' (light of the fireflies) ('Auld Lang Syne') signifies the closing of business and calls shoppers to the checkout. Excepting some earlier importations by missionaries and the military, these three were among the first Western songs to be introduced to the Japanese population, via the education system. During the Meiji Restoration (1868-1911) the first national curriculum textbooks, issued from 1881 onwards, presented new Japanese lyrics to songs such as the above as well as 'Annie Laurie' (also called '*Annie Laurie*' in Japan), 'The Last Rose of Summer' ('*Niwa no Chigusa*' (a white garden flower)) and 'The Bluebells of Scotland' ('*Utsukushiki*' (beautiful)). This is extensively documented elsewhere (Eppstein). Besides the three situations given above, these old tunes still appear in toys, music boxes and telephone answering machines, beginners' instrument tutors and in the repertoires of social groups such as Tokyo Kodomo (kids') Club, *utagoe kissa* (song cafés) such as Tomoshihi, and bars with *nagashi* (buskers) or karaoke. Subsequently, injections and disseminations of Western music have continued with the expansion of radio, the record industry, TV, movies, theatre shows and latterly the internet, to be taken up particularly in karaoke, *utagoe kissa*, university clubs and circles as well as by the individual consumer.

Following the Meiji adoption of Western songs in schools and the early 20th century spread of radios and record players, a further major infusion of Western music occurred with the post war reconstruction of occupied Japan. Western music accompanied many industrial revolutions worldwide and is a significant element of modern Japan, arguably both as contribution to, and product of, modernization. 1950s reconstruction dovetailed

smoothly with the dance hall boom and then The American folk revival and from the 1950s-70s Folk Revival material became well known, in particular Peter, Paul and Mary (known as PPM in Japan), Credence Clearwater Revival (CCR), and Pete Seeger, as well as the older but renewedly influential recordings of The Carter Family. New folk and acoustic groups toured Japan in tandem with a surge in guitar ownership and home music making. Emerging from the bluegrass scene in Japan, the folk singer-songwriter Takaishi Tomoya was a keen exponent of Western folk and traditional songs and with his band, Natarsher Seven, performed a considerable number to their own Japanese lyrics. The Natarsher Seven's single '*Yoki ni Yuko o*' (1974), for example, was a direct reworking of The Carter Family's 'Keep on the Sunny Side'.

The 'Bubble' era of the 1980s brought with it booms in travel, wealth, English language learning and immigration, and during that time karaoke and entertainment consumerism hungrily gobbled up Western material. Then came the internet which opened up the world wider, particularly when online CD shopping, music downloads and video-on-demand became available. In March 1999 the Irish dance spectacular 'Riverdance' made its first Japan tour with 16 performances in Tokyo and Osaka selling five million five thousand seats. This built higher on the enthusiasm for Irish music that had begun through Takaishi Tomoya and grown via his association with the Chieftains in 1994. The same swelling Irish music fan base then welcomed the 'Celtic Woman' tours which presented songs such 'The Last Rose of Summer' and 'Danny Boy', well known in Japan since the Meiji *shoka*. Irish and Scottish melodies (particularly the pentatonic ones whose scale mimicked old Japanese songs) had been especially well received: this type of song having been learned at school put them into the 'childhood nostalgia' bracket, much loved, and not foreign but homely.

Throughout all of this, Western pop flourished. The Beatles visited Japan in 1966 and their standards, bestowed with Japanese lyrics, continue to be covered to this day. Nostalgic country classics such as 'The Green Green Grass of Home' (by Claude Putman, 1964) found a firm place in the Japanese repertoire as '*Omoide no Green Grass*' (the green grass I remember) loosely translated (and stripped of its gloomy denouement where the singer finds that he has been dreaming in prison) by Yamagami Michio (1936-). Other standards such as 'Five Hundred Miles', 'Country Roads' and 'We Shall Overcome' were sung in English or macaronically in alternating English and Japanese.

Recently a trend towards traditional Japanese music has generated truly hybrid cover versions. Classic covers of Beatles songs in *min'yo* and *chindon* styles include 'Let It Be' (by Shang Shang Typhoon, 1992), and 'Yellow Submarine Ondo' (by Kanazawa Akiko, 1982). In 2007 the heavy rock standard 'Smoke on the Water' by Deep Purple was re-written to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Great Fire of Edo (1657) and performed in *gagaku* style by the Kabuki-za and house Orchestras at the Suntory Hall in Tokyo. The Kabuki-za Orchestra also covered Queen's 'We Will Rock You' (Brian May, 1977) in *gagaku* style at the same concert.

Case Studies

The following case studies explore a variety of manifestations of two Western songs in Japan: 'Land of Hope and Glory' and 'My Grandfather's Clock'. Since this paper is concerned with public perception it is noted that it is common for populations to be familiar not with all verses but rather with first verses, choruses and refrains. With this in mind the first verse only is given at the beginning of each section.

1. 'Land of Hope and Glory'

*Land of Hope and Glory, Mother of the Free,
How shall we extol thee, who are born of thee?
Wider still and wider shall thy bounds be set;
God, who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet
God, who made thee mighty, make thee mightier yet*

'Land of Hope and Glory', whose melody is often heard in Japan, instrumentally or with Japanese lyrics, is a British patriotic song whose mood and first line, at least, is widely known in the UK. The melody is the trio from Elgar's 'Pomp and Circumstance March No. 1 in D Major, Op. 39' (1901) and the lyrics were written by A. C. Benson as part of a libretto for Elgar's 'Coronation Ode, Op. 44' (1902). The turning of the trio into a song was at the request of the king, Edward VII, himself. Due to its anthemic style this song has been a contender for the British national anthem, over 'God Save The Queen', on grounds of its emphasis on history, populace and national position rather than on the reigning monarch. However, it is now, arguably, 'old school' and 'un-PC' in its sentiment: colonial, imperialistic, right wing and non-inclusive of ethnic diversity. It is cus-

tomarily played at the last night of the Proms, although it was dropped in 2002 and reinstated as a custom, rather like bonfire night, whose habitude glosses conveniently and consensually over its original meaning. This by way of saying that to a Western ear this song arouses not only anthemic vigour but strong political sensitivities ranging from the patriotic and nostalgic to a Proustian uncanny scent of political or humanitarian anachronism. This section offers comments on three Japanese songs that take 'Land of Hope and Glory' as their melody.

a) 'Continue'

Are you gonna give up? Are you gonna go on? It's your decision.

Couldn't you have a wider map?

Don't keep thinking of failure; the further you seek for your dream,

The more brightly it will shine.

But it's not just a dream. Nor is it easy to chase.

But you aren't doing anything, just complaining,

Even though you want to chase your dream.

The most recent example, and to some extent the catalyst of this paper, is Seamo's single 'Continue' (the English word is used for the title), the first verse of which is translated above. A Japanese language rap to Elgar's melody, it was written and performed by the artist Takada Naoki, otherwise known as Seamo, and released on the BMG label in 2008. This and the two following Japanese lyrical manifestations to 'Land of Hope...' are all instances where context and style clearly eschew any pretense at direct translation, but rather recycle a tune, with varying degrees of reference to the original tone or intention.

Language barrier notwithstanding, the rap lyrics by Seamo appear at first to be acultural or *mukokuseki* (without nationality) pop. However, they are more a socio-political rallying cry than the introspective pop norm, and are symptomatic of the contemporary younger generation's position in a cleft stick between individualism and obligations (Zeilenziger). Seamo juxtaposes the rallying musicality with vernacular language to rouse the disillusioned youth into perseverance against societal and culturally-inculcated values, in favour of self expression and individual dreams: *Don't hide your tears; it's not a shame; It's a waste! Face-up, be confident; shout loud* (verse six). This conflicts

directly with the older ideals of stoicism and conformity held firm by elders and institutions. In his rap Seamo retains the march and power of the original, appropriating its religious-imperial musical politic for the counter-authority of individualism. This is a Youngian ‘moment of political change’ where values are negotiated and regenerated (Young 1995: 23).

However, the rap also reflects nuances of the original English lyrics. In the first verse, *Couldn't you have a wider map?* reflects the original's *Wider still and wider, Shall our bounds be set*, now stripped of its empire-building politic. In verse four, Seamo sings *Over suffering, over grief, you'll find you'll find your way lit up* and in the second verse of the English original we find, *Stars of solemn brightness, weave thy diadem. Tho' thy way be darkened...* to correspond. In Seamo's verse five we hear *once given such a precious opportunity to come out to live in this world*, reminiscent of *mother of the free*, and the song's overall sentiment smacks of the katakana terms *aggressive* and *fight (on)*, which are loanwords in contemporary Japanese parlance denoting vigor and determination. Such devices personalise the imperialistic *make thee mightier yet* of the original. Overall then, this song appears to make conscious use of the original in spite of seeming at first glance like gratuitous, even shocking, recycling of a loaded, and politically contentious, anthem.

b) ‘Pride—Ifūdōdō’

*The floating cloud, gently blown by the soft breeze,
Somewhere that special someone watches the same sky.
There is no rain that won't stop
We can be sure that the seasons will turn*

Another version of ‘Land of Hope...’ is ‘Pride-Ifūdōdō’ (pride) written by Matsui Gorō and released by classical tenor Akikawa Masafumi on the Teichiku label in 2005. In January 2007 this single reached number one in the Oricon chart. It is a love song of universal appeal with no exclusive Japanese cultural references although it does follow traditional Japanese literary convention in opening with poetics that position the piece in the cycle of nature. In it a beau laments his lack of strength to express himself to a significant other, and wrestles with his heart over his sincerity in the face of such difficulties.

The lyric tone of this song, a lone and silent struggle, is lent nobility by Elgar's melody. In the second verse, the long cold night tests the beau's sincerity and tempts him to tear up a letter he has written, whereby his lover would never know his feeling. In the last of three verses the lyrics, *I lay my hand on my heart, wondering how much strength I have in my mind*, reflect the perceived momentous nature of these inner wranglings in keeping with the classic grandeur of the orchestral backing.

On a recent TV variety show, another of Akikawa's hits, '*Sen no Kaze ni Natte*' (2006) was used along with an orchestral version of 'Land of Hope and Glory', as background music to an irreverent comic slide show of student doodling in Japanese history textbooks. The historical figures whose faces were defaced (rather gently, with 'eyeshadow', 'lipstick' and red noses) included Tokugawa Ieyasu (the first Shogun of the Edo era), Yosano Akiko (a female poet of the turn of the 20th century), Matthew Calbraith Perry (the American Naval Commander, who ended Japanese national isolation), Ito Hirobumi (the first Japanese Prime Minister), and Francis Xavier (the Spanish catholic missionary who introduced Christianity to Japan.) This usage suggests that in Japan there is at least a hint of awareness not only of the grandeur of the piece but also of the possible nuances of past glories, pomposity or obsolescence.

c) '*Atashinchi*'

After getting off at the station, cross the level crossing,

And come straight up the hill OK?

Then, at the end of the street, with flowers always blooming,

Is a white house.

Come, come to my house

Come, come to my house

Let's make tea

Let's have a chat

A second example of universalization, this time accompanied by genre transfer and denaturing of Elgar's theme is in its use for the closing titles of a Japanese children's animation. It was written by Akitarō Daichi and released on King Records in 2002 for the series '*Atashinchi*' (my house) which ran 2002-2004 on Asahi TV. Unlike the previous

examples, this song takes both the 'Land of Hope and Glory' melody (second stanza above), which is the trio of the opus, and the preceding more syncopated scherzo section, using the latter as a rap backing (first stanza). It is a simple, guileless lyric and, as such, a surprising ally to the melody. Elements of the imagery are more particular to Japan than certainly to the UK: someone is practising trumpet in the park, mother comes back from shopping on her bicycle, and younger brother is singing to a personal stereo. However, other, perhaps more subtle, Japanese references are to the beautiful sunset indicating a beautiful tomorrow, and a plane's vapour trail watching them. It is difficult to imagine such imagery appearing in English children's songs.

The above three examples reflect the fact that 'Land of Hope and Glory' has endured long popularity in Japan. The champion ice-skater Asada Mao famously performed to it in 2008, and it is common as a cell-phone ringtone (Richardson). Given its grandiose tone some would say it is bizarre to find it used as a children's cartoon theme or as an air to a love song. On the other hand it is such a popular and simple melody that it is perhaps not surprising after all. Whilst some artists employ the original sentiment in ingenious ways, others approach it with unfettered abandon. These latter contribute to its metamorphosis across genres, shedding established connotations and launching it far beyond its original audience. Although 'Land of Hope and Glory' has been referenced in British punk and pop, we have not yet seen anything as reductive as its Japanese manifestations.

2. 'My Grandfather's Clock'

My grandfather's clock was too large for the shelf

So it stood ninety years on the floor

It was taller by far than the old man himself

And it weighed not a pennyweight more

It was bought on the morn of the day that he was born

And was always his pleasure and his pride

But it stopped short never to go again when the old man died

Ninety years without slumbering, tick tock, tick tock. . .

To Western ears, 'My Grandfather's Clock' is a childhood song, though not childish. It

was not originally for children, but was a comic tale of universal appeal written in 1876 by American songwriter Henry Clay Work (1832-1884). The tale of an anthropomorphized clock that begins, ‘lives’ and ends its ‘life’ in empathy with its owner’s, it is an old standard of British brass bands especially the Yorkshire colliery bands, (possibly due to its purported origins in events at the George Inn at Piecebridge, Yorkshire) and in the US in bluegrass music. It is hugely popular and has been recorded by artists as diverse as Johnny Cash and George Formby.

a) ‘*Ōkina furu-dokei*’

A large, tall, old clock,

It is my grandfather’s clock.

It always worked for a hundred years.

He was proud of his clock.

On the morning my grandpa was born,

It was bought and brought into home.

That clock doesn’t work anymore.

Without stopping for a hundred years, chiku taku, chiku taku

The Japanese translation ‘*Ōkina furu-dokei*’ (big old clock) above, made in the 1960s by Hotomi Kōgo (1930-1984), is the best known of several versions of ‘My Grandfather’s Clock’ in Japan and was a massive chart hit as recently as 2002, for the established pop star Hirai Ken. An older Japanese version, written with a Cinderella motif by Kadota Yutaka (1907-1975) and sung by Miyajima Mimi, was released on Columbia in 1940 but was less successful. Hotomi’s 1960s version may well be one of the most faithful translations in this type of song, excepting only for the refrains and the omission of a verse (translated but eschewed) changes which are nevertheless significant in trans-cultural analysis. Apart from these changes, the only narrative difference is that in the Japanese the clock lasts for 100 years (rather than 90 in the English), a change attributable to matters of metre. Nevertheless, the altered refrains and the omission of a verse are to be explained by cultural phenomena. In English, each verse ends with the refrain, *when the old man died*. In Japanese, there is no direct mention of the old man dying, rather, at the end of each verse, *ima wa mō ugokanai sono toke* (that clock doesn’t work anymore) and in the final verse, *tenkoku e noboru ojiisan, tokei tomo o wakare* (grandpa is

going up to heaven, time to part ways with the clock). Although the Japanese refrain is portentous and the final verse is overtly euphemistic, death is not mentioned explicitly, according to custom. Furthermore, the Japanese version is shorter, an English verse being dropped about the clock being the best of his workers - a good servant who never sulked: *My grandfather said that of those he could hire, not a servant so faithful he found; For it wasted no time, and it made no demands...* Both these alterations and omissions are made expressly to befit the song for the sensibilities of a Japanese audience, particularly children.

There are, in addition, a number of modern day versions of 'My Grandfather's Clock', including an Akita dialect version of the original Japanese and several parodies. The Akita rendition was made popular by NHK broadcast in 2009 and was received with great hilarity, incidentally giving rise to a national discussion as to whether Akita dialect sounded like French. Whilst Hotomi made some deculturalizing adjustments in order to acculturate the song, the following parodies are strong examples of reculturalization. The first features a reluctant gangster, and the second decries a news scandal of 2005.

b) 'Gōkana Kindokei'

Gorgeous, gorgeous gold watch, it's a villain's watch.

It costs more than 1 million yen - cumbersome watch.

It's been owned by various people, and flowed to me.

I can't even see its hands for all the jewels - cumbersome watch.

I wonder if I'd sell it for a million yen.

I'd sell it for two million yen, for sure.

This first example of a parody on 'My Grandfather's Clock' is 'Gōkana Kindokei' (gorgeous gold watch) by Tokoro George, a popular comic singer songwriter with an almost daily TV presence. It was released on the Avextrax label in 2006 on the album 'Anzen-daini' (safety second). Upon presenting his parody on TV, to a slightly altered version of the original tune, Tokoro remarked that he had written it because the original song was heard too often. This is the story of an opulent watch, dubiously acquired, perhaps in payment for dirty work. It is so jewel-encrusted that it is *lazy with jewels* (translated as 'cumbersome' above), difficult to tell the time by, so valuable and of such shady

provenance that the owner feels it is a huge weight on his mind. Unlike the original, which has a consistent chorus, this parody chorus runs variously, from *I wonder if I'd sell it* above, to *pink, yellow, diamond, platinum* as the second chorus, to *the villain is ringing the bell outside – ding dong, ding dong* as the third.

The structure of this parody takes a few liberties with the original form, but there are a number of references to, and word plays on, the Japanese original. Since the word for 'move', *ugoku*, is the same as the word for the working of mechanical objects it is not the clock (watch) that is not working by the end, but the subject himself who cannot work (move). The detachment of the phrase *cumbersome watch* leaves scope for several different interpretations throughout the song; sometimes it is an aside cursing the watch, finally he is finished *because of* the cursed watch. The first two and three words of the original's expression *ima wa mō ugokanai* (now it doesn't work anymore) appear several times in the parody, and the connection to the original is facilitated further by the Japanese word *tokei*, being the word for both 'clock' and 'watch'.

In its verse form this parody adheres precisely to the Japanese original's chronological sequence, with three verses respectively describing the clock's acquisition (*it flowed to me*, above), its intimate knowledge of the ups and downs of the life of its owner(s), (*It knows both happiness and tragedies*), and finally his impending doom, signified by a midnight chime:

*Come the middle of the night, and the doorbell rings,
I have a hunch that it's the villain,
He finally came to get me; it's the end of my life!
I'm going up to heaven, so I'll have to part ways with this gold watch.*

As if further proof were needed, the reference to 'heaven' indicates that the parody is indeed based on the older Japanese translation rather than the English original, since the English is without such euphemisms and simply spells out grandpa's death in its refrains.

c) '**Dai Usotsuki na Furudanuki**'

Arrogant old raccoons, Mr. O and X Inc.

Claimed that their constructions would last 100 years.

They were safety-scrimping designs

By X Inc. under Mr. O's instruction,

Now they have no escape, the trash!

No rest, even on weekends.

Chiku, taku, chiku, taku. . .

This second parody, '*Dai Usotsuki na Furudanuki*' (big, old lying racoons), was softly sung, ironically belying its scathing and sardonic lyrics. Written by Kobayashi Ryuta, otherwise known as Kobaryu, it was not released on CD but on the subversive internet forum '2channel'. It attacks the perpetrators of the 2005 *Kōzō Keisansho Gizō Mondai* (Architectural Forgery Scandal) in Japan. The version heard by the author censors the personal and company names with an electronic bleep, but complete lyrics were found to be available in the public domain. The 'old' and 'large' adjectives from the original title are here applied separately to the *furudanuki* (**old** raccoon dogs, viz. scoundrels) and their mendacity – *daiusotsuki* meaning 'great big liars'. The 100 years clause is employed in the falsely boasted durability of their buildings; the pair were bragging that the buildings they designed and built would last 100 years. *Tick, tock* is cleverly used since the Japanese words for buildings (*chiku*) and houses (*taku*), make the same onomatopoeic sound as the clock. Unlike the clock, they could not *stop* working anymore, and now have no rest even at weekends. In the second verse, which originally told that the clock knows all the ups and downs of its owner's life, *now everyone knows everything - both the shameful and the questionable*. In the final line, the refrain is the customary negative, in this case that *Now they have no escape, the trash!* The final verse, as in the original and Japanese versions, is the midnight scene: *midnight - time to go. In the middle of the night the phone rang, it was Mr. O's instructions*. He tells his accomplice that it is time to say good-bye: *Mr. O is escaping abroad, time to part ways with the company* bringing the song faithfully to its standard outcome.

Conclusion

There are hundreds more instances of Western hybrid songs in Japan, so many in fact that any examples are mere drops in the ocean. However, the cases studied in this paper do point to some of the various types of hybrid song in Japan and offer insights

into the literary, musical, social and cultural processes at work. As with any society, as changes take place so this is reflected in popular music. Clearly, in the Japanese case many layers and eras of metamorphosis may be observed. Songs that were once new and exotic have been bowdlerized, acculturalized and taken root. They then become native resources subjected to contemporary treatments, reculturalized or localized. For various reasons perhaps it is easier to be subversive with songs that are not sacrosanct like 'purer' Japanese songs might be. On the other hand, perhaps these foreign songs are already in a liminal position and cry out for creative reinterpretation. Further research would be required to shed more light on that.

By virtue of burgeoning technology and trade all societies are rapidly changing at present and only wider research would reveal whether the Japanese case is unique in any respect. Certainly what has come to light through these examples is the breadth of possibility in reappropriative songwriting and the extent to which it continues to be warmly received. After it has been first stripped of its original language barrier, smoothed (deculturalized), and primed (acculturalized), a song becomes a fresh canvas for the artist. The drive to localize and reculturalize material can then be unleashed, fuelled by creative liberty and consumer support for those who would transcend genre, shun conventions and disregard any former reverence a song might have accrued. For reasons the subject of ongoing research, Japanese artists demonstrate a particular propensity for such oeuvres.

There seems no danger that these processes will run out of steam, which points to two consequences: Firstly, that these songs will persist in the public consciousness in a host of forms, and often free of their original tone and trappings. Secondly, that there will be no stagnation, in spite of the ossifying effects that some fear may result from recording and publication. To boldly extrapolate the Japanese case to a wider global arena, it may be conjectured that, faced with inevitable globalization, in music at least, there is no need to imagine a spectre of homogeneity hovering over us all, but rather an ever-increasing mutual repertoire that invites and facilitates the sharing of song as a common and unifying instinct.

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