It is often pointed out that Japanese religion centers on “worldly benefits” (genze riyaku) and on practices allowing a petitioner to attain divine boons. Since high and low, rich and poor, young and old have always pined for such benefits, religious practice is easily viewed as a force unifying all social classes and strata. This article questions such a notion by examining the religious activities and performances of blind women (goze) of Echigo province (present-day Niigata prefecture). Like other itinerant performers, goze often performed songs linked to the procurement of this-worldly or practical benefits. One favorite was called harugoma, and was intimately linked to silk production; another was manzai, which ushered in good luck, health, and wealth during the New Year’s season. This article presents annotated translations of these two goze songs and analyzes the social meanings of performances, both for performers and listeners. It demonstrates that the pursuit of this-worldly benefits through religious practice contributed just as much to the identification, maintenance, and reproduction of social differences as to social harmony and unification.

KEYWORDS: Goze—manzai—harugoma—folk religion—folk music—genze riyaku—blind women

Gerald Groemer is professor of Japanese music history and ethnomusicology at University of Yamanashi.
It has often been remarked that Japanese religious life concerns itself far more with sacred practice than with dogma, belief, and theological orthodoxy. Throughout history countless Japanese turned to local and imported gods to supply themselves with material or immaterial “worldly benefits” (*genze riyaku* 現世利益). Since even the shogun could not fully control the will of heaven, he prayed just as fervently for good luck and superior health as the ruined merchant. In the countryside, the village head and the village outcaste alike took talismans to be useful and effective. Both rich and poor offered what support they could afford to local temples, shrines, and festivals. Men and women appealed together to the tutelary god protecting kith and kin. Such evidence suggests that Japanese religious practice transcended barriers of political status, economic class, gender, age, and other social differences.

The seeming homogeneity and harmony fostered by Japanese religious practice led Yanagita Kunio to spend his life arguing for a unique religiosity of the “Japanese people.” In the 1970s the same notions motivated folklorists, including Miyata Noboru and others, to find in “folk beliefs” (*minkan shinkō*) a “traditional religion cultivated from the time of the birth of an ethnic group” (Miyata 1970). More recently, the universality of the pursuit of “worldly benefits” has inspired descriptions of Japanese religion as “common to all classes and groups in society, including the elites (aristocratic, economic, religious) and ordinary people” (Reader and Tanabe 1998, 29). To many observers the practices defining much of Japanese religion exemplify a national or ethnic spirit transcending time and place and the “wisdom of everyday life that emerged from the sincere activities of the Japanese people” (MiyaKe 2001, 213). Despite their dissimilar perspectives and arguments, such writers share the view that Japanese religious practice has served primarily as a force generating social unity, community, and harmony.

Religious practice, particularly forms of it generating “worldly benefits,” has, however, also served to establish and reinforce qualitative social differences since ancient times. Japanese women, for example, were more likely to pray for safe birth then men and usually played smaller public roles in *matsuri*. The villager engaging in silkworm rearing commissioned the local priest or traveling

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religionist to enact different rituals from those desired by the tenant who grew only rice. The landowner who thrived on saké brewing contributed lavishly to the local temple, while the “water-drinking” peasant could afford to donate but a penny. Even the fears, needs, and aspirations inspiring appeals, prayers, donations, purchases, commissions, or other sorts of ritual practice were conditioned by social disparities. One was more prone to be injured as a coolie than a courtier, more likely to be buried by an earthquake if one lived in a rickety hovel than a well-built palace, and more exposed to malnutrition if one subsisted on boiled weeds rather than on fish, tofu, and rice. For good reason, some people were motivated to beg for one kind of windfall or turned to one class of deities for succor, while others asked for different sorts of practical benefits and even pleaded to different gods and spirits. What held true for petitioners or other receivers of secular or sacred benefits was of course also the case for the providers of holy services. Social differences, not degrees of divine efficacy in bringing about desired ends, determined that the child of a bankrupt farmer would end up a mendicant religious itinerant performing exorcisms or benedictions at doorsteps, while the local intendant’s son who had “forsaken the world” would busy himself reading sutras and climbing the ladder of the Buddhist ecclesiastical order.

Once these simple insights are taken seriously, new strategies for studying Japanese religion begin to emerge. Rather than turning “practice” into a bland abstraction that permits “the Japanese people” to be mashed into a homogeneous unity, practice becomes a means for highlighting difference and multiplicity. When thought and practice turn out to exhibit performative contradictions, analysis may reveal how ideals become ideology. The performance of a holy song, the mumbling of a prayer, or the purchase of a talisman can then be interpreted as products of differentiated, often antagonistic social realities rather than the embodiment of the unities in which religion trucks.

As a model of such an analysis, I shall examine the religious activities of Japanese women commonly known as goze 曙女. Goze were visually disabled (usually fully blind), usually rural, and more often than not impoverished itinerant performers of secular and sacred songs. From at least the start of the Edo period (1600–1868) goze in various areas of Japan banded together to aid one another in daily life, pursue their vocation as roving bards, and transmit literary and musical traditions to the students who would support them in old age. The best known goze were those of Echigo (Niigata prefecture), a handful of whom remained active until the prewar era. The Echigo goze repertory included “folk religious” songs called harugoma and manzai. These songs, I shall argue, cannot be properly understood so long as one insists that Japanese religious practice is simply “common to all classes and groups in society.”
Goze Religious Life

Most Echigo goze households comprised a fictive family of women in which a teacher (often called the “mother”) surrounded herself with pupils, guides, and other auxiliaries. Ritualized religious observances structured the day, the year, and even the life span of the inhabitants. Sugimoto Kikue 杉本キクエ (1898–1983), a goze from Takada (present-day Joetsu-shi in Niigata prefecture) who faithfully transmitted habits and modes of thought dating from a far earlier age, never forgot to articulate a brief entreaty to the Buddha immediately after rising at six o’clock in the morning. On most days she sought only the most qu-
tidian “worldly benefits”: a day’s worth of safety and well-being. On memorial
days, however, she intoned more prolix sutra-like invocations associated with
the death of a teacher or a family member (Ōyama 1977, 216–17).

Even on tour goze strove to fulfill their devotions. They never missed an
opportunity to pay their respects to roadside stone statues of divinities, espe-
cially of Jizō (地蔵; Skt. Kṣitigarbha), a bodhisattva who saved the suffering,
cured eye diseases, protected travelers, and lurked behind some of the plots
of the long Echigo goze songs known as saimon matsuzaka 祭文松坂. When
encountering images of this deity, goze always halted, folded their hands, and
uttered a concise orison to prevent them from going astray (Fukushima 1976,
26; see figure 1).

Many other gods and spirits were also judged by goze to embody a broad range
of apotropaic powers. Among the most revered ranked Fudō Myō-ō (不動明王;
Skt. Acalanātha), believed to heal eye diseases and restore visual abilities. Goze
from central and northern Niigata, as well as blind men and visually impaired
shamans of the region, repeatedly pilgrimaged to the Fudō enshrined at the
Kankokuji 坂倉寺 (popularly known as Sugatani Fudōson 坂谷不動尊), a famous
Shingon-sect temple supposedly established in 1185 and located in the coun-
tryside near Shibata (Suzuki 1996, 27–28).4

The variety of divinities worshiped in a typical goze household is revealed by
Sugimoto Kikue and her pupil Sugimoto Shizu 杉本シズ (1916–2000). These two
women shared the same domicile for decades:

**Sugimoto Shizu**: “We take our Benten 弁天 (a short name for Benzaiten 弁財天
or Myōon-Benzaiten 妙音弁財天; Skt. Sarasvatī) out at New Year’s. At the start
of the year we hang a scroll with her image over there. Then, when February
comes around we roll it up again and store it. The deity (kami-sama) over there
now, she who’s up there, above the dresser, on the left, that’s the Sugitsubo
Yakushi 杉壺薬師 (Skt. Vaiduryanirbhasa, the god of healing and medicine)
from East Kubiki County. [Sugimoto] Kikue put it up. And then, the one over
there is the Kannon 観音 (short for Kanzeon 観世音; Skt. Avalokiteśvara) from
Bessho in Nagano prefecture, who drives out misfortune. Kikue went to wor-
ship the Yakushi, the god of eyes, from the time she was a child.”

**Sugimoto Kikue**: “Since Benten is the [tutelary] god of our profession, we set
her up at the turn of the year, at New Year’s, and make oblations and serve

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3. On literary elements of such songs see Itagaki 2009, 42–43; on musical characteristics
see Groemer 2007, kenkyū-hen, 407–38. In Kyoto, for example, the “eye disease Jizō” ("meyami
[n]o Jizō") at the Keikyōji 桂橋寺, a Kannon temple, was visited by many blind people. See Kyō
warabe (pub. 1658), 10–11. Today this Jizō is housed at the nearby Pure Land sect temple Chūgenji
仲源寺. In Edo the “Nabekaburi jizō” (Jizō who wears a pot on his head), moved several times but
located today at the Shukugenji 祝音寺 at Matsugaya, was believed to cure eye diseases.

4. This temple is one of the “three great Fudō” temples of Japan.
her—until the end of the New Year’s season. Whenever we eat something ourselves, three times a day, we serve her too. But it would be unkind to leave her out all year long, so we do that only at New Year’s. Nevertheless, secretly, on days when, for instance, there is a festival, we say, ‘Please, Benten, protect us today.’ Benten is in the dresser on the second floor. That’s where we keep the scroll, but if she is in the dresser she can’t eat anything, so we open the dresser and carry offerings up to the second floor, and give them to her. And when I boil rice in the morning for our three daily meals, I think that disabled people (fujiyū na mono) [like us] might have an accident or something, so when I get up in the morning and cook, I make offerings of rice and saké to Konnichisama 今日様, (the sun or “god of the day”) and Daijingū-sama 大神宮様 (god of the great shrine), and then to the spirits of the dead (hotoke-sama), even though I’m not a special supporter of those deities (kami-san). Because everything that happens is a blessing of our teachers. So I make offerings.”

(Suzuki 1997, 44–45)

As these assertions indicate, goze practiced a good deal of ecumenical liberalism. Every divinity was good for something, though some deities were assessed as more precious than others in supplying specific benefits. Even on her deathbed a goze might derive comfort from the notion that after her demise she would turn into a star in the firmament, though this was hardly a matter of Shinto or Buddhist orthodoxy (Saitō 1978, 67).6

Religious fervor was also displayed when goze, despite their poverty, contributed to the established Buddhist order or to the poor. Either act was taken to increase one’s stock of beneficial karma and perhaps even lead to “worldly benefits” for the donor. A “mountain goze” named Tae from the village of Urada (today Tōkamachi), for instance, was remembered years after her death not just for possessing a fine voice, but also for making regular donations to the village temple. She also practiced munificence toward locals experiencing hardship, and generously funded a priest to discharge an edifying lecture once a week (Saitō 1972, 164). In provinces girdling Edo, names of local goze studded lists of donors to temple projects, a fact not lost on the other contributors or the priest who circulated the list (Shimōsa-machi shi 1987, 284, 286; Enomoto 1992, 185–86).

5. As a sign of reverence she was always served first, though what she did not partake was later reverentially devoured by goze. See Suzuki 1998, 51.

6. This belief was evidently held by Takada goze. Most others probably placed more faith in more orthodox Buddhist notions of life after death. Surprisingly, in the Timaeus (41d) Plato argues that God divided the whole into souls equal in number to the stars, and each soul is assigned a star.
Collective Practices and Benefits

In appealing to a pantheon of gods and spirits for the purpose of securing worldly advantages goze differed little from a typical farmer. On the surface of it, religious practice unified or harmonized goze with the rest of the Japanese populace.

Yet goze religious practice was based on meanings and functions of which the farmer knew nothing. The significance of goze appeals to the Buddhas or kami was not exhausted in the desire for individual blessings. Instead, religion served as a powerful means for combating the discrimination suffered by those with disabilities, by artists exposed to the jeopardy of earning a living on the road, and by women who audaciously sought to achieve a modicum of economic autonomy in a highly patriarchal, unequal society. Devout, orderly, and even ascetic practices steeled goze to what awaited them in the outside world. If goze wished to consolidate their organizations and fortify solidarity within their ranks they had little choice but to cultivate piety and orthopractical rigidity. Every time goze prayed before a Jizō on the road or uncurtained some other public display of religious zeal this projected an image at odds with the dubious morality so often imputed to itinerant women earning a living from singing songs and playing musical instruments. A reputation of spotless integrity was the sine qua non for goze, for no self-respecting farmer, not to mention his wife, would lodge a woman suspected of moonlighting as a hooker or associating with debauched riffraff. Any hint of impiety or immodesty would have ended a goze’s career on the spot. Far from establishing a bland unity with the “Japanese people,” goze religious practice permitted goze to differentiate themselves from social groups with which they, for right or wrong, wished not to be associated.

Judging from historical illustrations and literary works, late medieval goze of western Japan established ties to ecclesiastical institutions for much the same purpose. Goze organizations in eastern Japan soon followed suit. The goze association of Sunpu (Shizuoka-shi), for example, was firmly bound to the Hōdai’in 宝台院, a local Pure Land temple closely related to the Tokugawa family (Sunkoku zasshi 1: 245). In what is today Gifu prefecture, goze living near the redoubtable Tendai-sect Gankōji 天林寺 were even dubbed the “great temple goze” (ōdera goze 大寺瞽女; MIYOSHI 1978). Goze from Takada in Echigo turned to the Sōtō-sect Tenrinji 天林寺 at Teramachi, which during the first half of the Edo period had been brought here from nearby Naoetsu. At Tenrinji, goze celebrated their annual general meeting (myōon-kō) in honor of Benzaiten, whom the temple enshrined. At this ceremony a priest read out loud a document relating the origins of the goze (goze engi 瞽女縁起) and a list of rules (shikimoku 式目) that Benzaiten had commanded goze to follow to the letter.7

7. For details on foundation legends see FRITSCH 1991.
That Benzaiten, who also spread her shielding wings over the guild of blind men (tōdō 当道), was the favored object of worship among goze was no accident. As the “deity of mysterious tones” and one of the “seven lucky gods” of popular religion, she was swathed in an aura of benevolence, not unlike St. Cecilia, whose name, if Chaucer is to be awarded credence, happened to mean “the way for the blind.” Yet Benzaiten was neither a god of blindness nor of sight. Instead of offering the “worldly benefit” of restored vision, she supported goze by bequeathing them a valuable art. Even the musical instruments, strings, canes, and other items used by goze were saturated with her power. As Sugimoto Kikue relates in the interview cited above, Echigo goze worshiped her regularly at home. They also paid obeisance to her every time they returned home from their long tours (Sakuma 1973, 23). When they did so, they drew a line between themselves and those rural and urban residents on whom Benzaiten did not confer her favors. Benzaiten worship reinforced the notion that goze were different from fully sighted Japanese because goze relied more on the support of others.

Customs supported by the Buddhist virtue of charity and a belief in karma aided goze in gaining such support while touring far and wide. As Sekine Yasu関根ヤス (1893–?) from Nagaoka once explained,

In many areas people thought that if they let goze stay overnight, this was a Buddhist merit (kudoku 功徳). They’d beg you to stay if a dear child had died, or if the day was a memorial day for a grandfather or grandmother who had passed away. People in many parts thought that way, though in Middle Uonuma and South Uonuma counties they didn’t. But in Gunma prefecture people believed that too. They thought that letting goze spend the night profited the spirit of the deceased. When they let you stay for free, this became a virtue for them. And when we sang our songs on a memorial day, this pleased everyone. They said the performances were for the sake of the deceased.

(Suzuki 1996, 239)

Supplying a room to wayfaring strangers was generally taken as a virtue with religious implications, but it also separated the “insider” from the “outsider.” Goze and other wayfarers were usually welcomed in villages, but only so long as they remained guests. Even here religion encouraged social concord only while marking salient differences. Community and exclusion defined and depended on each other.

8. For a German-language book-length study of Benzaiten see Fritsch 1996.
9. This etymology is today regarded as spurious. It counts as one of five explanations of the word found in the “The Seconde Nonne’s Tale” from The Canterbury Tales.
“Worldly Benefits” and Magical Efficacy

Imputed magical powers attributed to goze accoutrements, songs, shamisen strings, and the very person of a goze starkly differentiated goze from other residents of the countryside. Ihira Take remembered that her listeners desired the pouch of her shamisen: “They’d make clothing for a newborn child out of it, so that the baby would get strong and not hurt itself” (Suzuki et al. 1976, 41–42).10 Even the rice that goze collected from “one-hundred people” (hyakunin-gome or hyakunin-mai) contained a mysterious spirit endowing it with a higher monetary value than more humdrum variety of the grain (Suzuki et al., 1976, 40; Sakuma 1973, 23; Suzuki 1996, 107–8).

Distinctions between goze and their audiences also became glaringly evident in the mysterious efficacy attributed to goze performances. Some farmers implored goze to play before the box of seed-rice for the ensuing year’s crop. Other cultivators brought such seed rice along with them when they went to hear a goze performance at someone’s house, or importuned goze to stay at their home on the first day of the rice-planting season (Suzuki 1996, 103–4). Sekine Yasu well remembered when she was asked to sing for a variety of crops:

We were also asked to sing to the hemp—what were the words? It must have been around the bon season (that is, mid-summer), after the hemp was harvested. They’d take the hemp, strip the skin, and boil it in a kettle or something. That’s when we went there. I didn’t go regularly, but two or three of my younger colleagues came from hemp-growing areas. So they went to those villages. When you made the rounds from door to door the inhabitants would give you hemp. It didn’t have anything to do with religion. But others would say, ‘Can’t we have someone like you sing, someone with nice white skin, young and healthy?’ You didn’t know if it was a joke or if they were serious. They’d say that if you sang, it was simpler to strip off the skin, or that it would turn more white, or whatever….

I also went to cotton-producing areas. But the people there didn’t ask us to sing for the cotton. Or, come to think of it, some actually did, in the cotton areas. They’d ask us to sing so that next year’s cotton crop would be better. People say what they will. Cotton has seeds. They’d dry it in the arcades before the houses, under the snow. And they’d say, “Won’t you sing a song so that we’ll have a good harvest?”

Then there was wheat. In the Kanto area they grew lots of wheat. When we arrived there from October or November they were planting the wheat. They called that “wheat stamping” (mugifumi). We’d be commissioned to sing

10. Since the pouch contained an instrument with magical powers and had heard the music of the shamisen for months or years, it had absorbed its strength. This efficacy could be transferred to a child wrapped with such material (see Suzuki 1996, 105).
“wheat-sowing songs” (mugimaki-uta) and we'd sing some kind of wheat-related song, even if we hadn't properly learned it. Come to think of it, on one occasion two people put the wheat in a bag—it was funny—they had a cloth bag and they put the wheat in it. Several quarts of it. They said that cloth lets the sound through! And then they held it up and said, “Hey you, can you sing for it a bit? This is the wheat we use for seeds!” That happened twice. To me, and some of my friends, too…. In Kanto nobody asked us to sing for the rice seedlings, though. But oftentimes we were told, “Sing a song with all your might to make the wheat come up strong.” Lots of similar things happened.

I didn't go much to areas by the ocean. But you could count on fishermen begging you to sing for a more bountiful catch. It was just that I didn't go to areas with fishermen regularly. Only to Izumosaki. I did go to Izumosaki once and was told to sing so that they'd catch more fish. That happened once in a while. For what reasons, I don't know. (Suzuki 1996, 232–34)

By catering to the demands of the farmers to have their rice serenaded or their houses blessed by an auspicious song, goze supplied “worldly benefits” to others while gaining certain advantages, particularly pecuniary ones, for themselves. As Sekine Yasu's incredulous attitude regarding the efficacy of her song for producing better hemp suggests, not all goze were fully convinced of their own thaumaturgical powers. It did not much matter. A definitive judgment on such questions could be left to others or to the gods themselves. For goze the point was to use an ascribed social difference—that of possessing or lacking magical powers—into a useful resource for gaining specific advantages here and now.

Harugoma: Social Status and Religious Differences

The performance of Buddhist songs, behind which stood the authority of a religion whose fundamental tenets and sociopolitical legitimacy hardly anyone questioned, enveloped all performers, goze included, with a sacred aura. Singers harnessed this power to establish a useful distance or difference between themselves and their audiences, usually for the sake of earning some extra cash. Sugimoto Kikue, for example, could reproduce a Buddhist hymn in praise of Jizō (Jizō wasan 地蔵和讃) and had learned two kudoki ballads (“Go-honzan kudoki” 御本山口説 and “Goshō kudoki” 後生口説) strongly tinged with Jōdo-shinshū Buddhism (Itagaki 2009, 171–72). Both were performed mostly on commission and for a set fee.

Larger and more secure rewards could be reaped from the far more popular genres of harugoma (春駒 “Spring pony”) and manzai (万歳 “Ten-thousand years [of good fortune]”). These pieces, which Echigo goze had borrowed from specialists of the respective genres, thrived on the perception of a significant dif-
herence between the “sacred” performer who embodied “folk religious” or magical energies and the less spiritually endowed “lay” listener or secular performer.

During the Edo period the best known form of harugoma featured performers cavorting about with a diminutive figure of a horse (see Figure 2, left panel). The dancers intoned a text connecting the auspicious pony to the raising of silkworms.11 The roots of this odd relationship were ancient. The same connection informed the o-shirasama saimon, a genre often performed in the Japanese north by female shamans.12 In the saimon narrative a horse and a girl marry and the latter eventually descends from heaven in the shape of a silkworm. Harugoma, too, endows the silk industry and those participating in it, particularly the women, with a religious significance.

By the late Muromachi period harugoma performers appear in screen paintings of sights in and around Kyoto. In one such screen two men wearing white headbands stand on a thoroughfare before shops and houses during what is plainly the New Year’s season. The neck and head of a brown horse-figure are strapped to each performer’s waist; the tail of a horse tail is attached in back. Since one player is dressed in red and one in white, the two may be representing

male and female equine specimens. During this era such performers, probably classified as outcasts (hinin, literally “non-humans”) still commonly served as temple and shrine menials.

During the Edo period harugoma was still routinely performed by hinin, who were gradually forced to accept a caste-like social status from which escape was nearly impossible (Kokkei zōdan 1: 112). Early nineteenth-century records speak of well-dressed “beggar” girls of twelve to thirteen years old, probably of hinin status, presenting the art at Kyoto doorsteps. These children accompanied their songs on shamisen, kokyū (a bowed fiddle), and drums (Nenjū gyōji tai-sei, 17 [1806]). As late as 1867, when an official mourning period was declared for the court, hinin were still witnessed illegally continuing their harugoma performances (town officials did not arrest them for this offense but later suffered reprimands) (Kyōto machibure shūsei 13: 127, no. 300). In some areas of the land outcastes of eta status also performed harugoma, an act soon interdicted by the authorities. In Kanazawa, nighttime harugoma performances by similar parish known as tōnai were banned in 1826, but continued to be seen until at least the Meiji period (1868–1912) (Iburaku ikkan, 541; Ishikawa-ken Kanazawa shiyakusho 1929, 543). Again in Shizuoka prefecture the genre was associated with hinin-like outcastes locally known as banta.

Since Edo-period Echigo goze did not number among outcastes—indeed they did not even permit the latter to join their associations and shunned hinin houses when touring—they could not exploit the officially authorized monopolies maintained by such status groups. Echigo goze probably did not perform harugoma until the Meiji era, after hinin status and outcaste monopolies had been abolished. When they did sing this song, they transformed what had been a clear difference in social status into a more subtle one of magical or religious power. This difference could, in turn, be grafted onto the social distinction of goze vs. non-goze. Harugoma did not simply unite goze and audiences in a pursuit of identical “worldly benefits,” but rather also set the two sides apart so that they might pursue dissimilar aims.

The text of harugoma transmitted by Echigo goze, considerably shorter than many other versions, is reproduced and translated in full below.

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14. See for example the 1799 ban in Hanpō-shū 2: 319 (law no. 302), which prohibits eta both from performing harugoma and playing the shamisen in the Tottori domain. The law was repealed in 1858.

15. For texts, illustrations, and explanations see Sunkoku zasshi 2: 241 (fascicle 15); and the illustration in supplement (fuzu 附図) vol. 1, n.p. (no. 59).

16. For a far longer text recorded in 1713 see Kokkei zōdan 1: 112–13.
Harugoma text. Based on a performance by Sugimoto Kikue (song), Sugimoto Shizu, and Nanba Kotomi (vocables) recorded on Echigo goze no uta, Columbia FZ-7011-14 (1975). See also Echigo goze uta and Mukei bunka-zai: Echigo Takada goze-uta. Nihon shomin sekatsu shiryō shūsei 17: 586, presents a slightly abbreviated printed version of the text. For several versions by various performers see Taishū geinō shiryō shūsei 3: 237–48. Early twentieth-century texts collected in Niigata prefecture (Sado County) can also be found in Riyōshū (92). Vocables, not included in the translation, are indicated below by underlined italics in the Japanese text. For grammatical reasons some lines are translated in reverse order. The English-language order has been indicated by numbers preceding the Japanese original. For a transcription of the music see Groemer 2007, kenkyū-hen, 222–23.17

A “spring pony” at the start of spring:

1. haru no hajime ni harugoma nanzo sorya
   It’s lucky just to dream of it!

2. yume ni mite sae yoi to wa mōsu
   Twelve ponies, borne and brought here.

3. mushite18 utsusu wa jūni no koma yo a haido haido
   This month is lucky, this day is lucky,

4. tsuki mo yoshi hi mo yoshi kogai mo yoshi sorya
   The province of Mino is for silkworms!

5. kogai ni torite wa Mino no kuni yo
   The provinces of Mino and Owari!

6. Mino no kuni ya Owari no kuni yo a haido haido
   Onoyama county and Owari province!

7. Owari no kuni ya Onoyama-gōri19 sorya

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17. Immediately before and after line 12, and again before line 37 the pitch of the performance suddenly changes, probably the result of electronic manipulation (splicing of different takes?). This has also altered the normal three-line pattern of vocables: the first line ending with the vocables “a haido haido,” the second concluding with “sorya,” and the third terminating with no vocables. Thus line 13 should correctly probably end with “sorya.”

18. Meaning unclear. Ōtaki 1973 (389), 13 (Echigo goze song) gives mutsu de, “from six,” which also makes little sense. Takano 1942, 499–500 (harugoma from Shinano province) gives mashite utsutsui jōba no koma ni (“an even more beautiful pony for riding”), which is easiest to understand. Kokkei zōdan contains no similar line of text. Texts reproduced in Kawamoto 1998 supply yet other possibilities: mawashite (move around), mōshite mawaseba (to say and move around), and the like. None of these alternatives appear any better than the others.

19. Nihon shomin sekatsu shiryō shūsei 17: 586, gives ono ya gōri, perhaps “sickles and baskets,” which, assuming that gōri signifies kōri, may make more sense than “Onoyama county,” which seems not to have existed. Ōtaki 1973 (389), 13, gives the most unlikely kono yo no owari, “the end
Put together the eggs from the three areas:
8. *midoko* no tane o ba ichido ni awase

hand them to girls who raise them!
9. *kaime no joroshū* ni owatashi mōsu a haido haido

The girls who raise them will receive them
10. *kaime no joroshū* ga uketorimashite sorya

and praise them happily, saying “what wonderful eggs!”
11. *sate mo yoi tane da to home yorokonde*

On the left, give them three days and nights,
12. *hidari no kowaki* ni sannichi san’ya a haido haido

on the right, give them three days and nights,
13. *migiri no kowaki* ni sannichi san’ya a haido haido

add it up for six days and nights!
14. *ryōhō awasete rokunichi rokuya*

On the third day sprinkle water, on the fourth let it stand
15. *mikka ni mizuhiki yokka ni yodome a haido haido*

on the fifth day line them up, oh so gently,
16. *itsuka ni sorori to mina irisoroe sorya*

feeling as tense as a bird perched for flight.
17. *kokoro wa kinchō no kyō tatsu tori yo*

Eighth, place flight feathers on both sides
18. *yatsu wa kazakiri-bana ryōte ni suete a haido haido*

sweep them once, a thousand silkworms!
19. *hitohaki haite wa sengo ga kaiko sorya*

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20. *Midoko* is sometimes taken to mean “honorable growing-bed” rather than “three areas.”

21. Takano 1942, 500, gives *mikka ni yodomu*.

22. Sugimoto Kikue also sings the same line in other performances. Takano 1942, 499–500, gives *yattsu no kazakiri te ni mochi-soroe te* (hold together eight flight-feathers). Perhaps Sugimoto’s *kazakiri-bana* (literally “wind-cutting flower”) should be *kazakiri-bane* (flight-feathers of a bird’s wing), which would relate the meaning to that of the previous line, *Kokkei zōdan* gives kazakiri te de nuki-motte, an abbreviation for *kazakiri-bane*. In some versions of the song more feathers are then enumerated.

23. This means to sweep the just-hatched silkworms from the egg cards into the silkworm basket.
sweep them twice, ten-thousand silkworms!
20. futahaki haite wa mango ga kaiko
sweep them three and four times, all of them!
21. mihaki yohaki to mina haki-otoshi a haido haido ..............................
And now what shall we feed them?
22. saraba kono ko ni nani ka o kuwasho sorya .................................
There's a hill to the south,
23. kore yori minami ni koyama ga gozaru 
a hill with mulberry fields on all sides.
24. koyama gururi wa mina kuwa-batake a haido haido ............................
Let the young girl of the inn wear small clogs,
25. yado no komusume ni koashida o hakase sorya ..............................
dress her in a gold apron, brocade sleeve cords,
26. kin no maekake nishiki no tasuki                               
let her dangle a flower basket from her hand
27. hana no mikago o te ni burasagete a haido haido ..............................
and collect budding banches from the northwest side!
28. inui no høre to saitaru eda o sorya ........................................
Take off the new leaves, strip them all,
29. shinba otoshite24 mina koki-oroshi                               
stuff them all into a lucky floral basket
30. hana no mikago ni mina tsumekonde a haido haido ..............................
and cover it lightly with a bellflower towel!
31. kikyō no tenugui fuwari to kakete sorya ..............................
Now let’s feed the silkworms mulberry leaves!
32. saraba kono ko ni kuwa kuremasho to 
A little for this one, a little for that one,
33. kono ko ni chirari kono ko ni barari a haido haido ............................
here and there, the same for all.
34. chirari barari to mina kure-soroe sorya ..............................
The sound of the silkworms eating
35. ano ko kono ko no kuwa mesu oto wa 
resembles Genji’s pony-stables of yore,
36. mukashi Genji no umaya no gotoku a haido haido ..............................

24. Some versions give nokoshite, “retaining the new leaves.”
a thousand stones being stacked on the bank
38. sen tsumu ishi ni mo otori wa senai

no less impressive than the sound of a thousand stones,
37. Sai no kawara no sen tsumu ishi no 25 sorya

of the River of Three Fords.

Owari people are good at making thread,
39. Owari no kuni no ito tori jōzu a haido haido

Mino people are good at carding cotton,
40. Mino no kuni no wata muki jōzu sorya

the good and the good harmonize:
41. jōzu to jōzu ga chōshi o soroe

Seventy-five layers loaded into a ship! 26
42. fune ni tsukete mo nanajūgo-sō a haido haido

Seventy-five tiers loaded on a horse!
43. uma ni tsukete mo nanajūgo-dan sorya

The tortoise lives for a thousand years,
the crane for ten-thousand!
44. tsuru wa sennen kame wa mannen.

That Echigo goze, who lacked hinin credentials and had played no role in the establishment of the harugoma tradition, were nevertheless granted spiritual authority to turn the song into a religiously charged, auspicious performance, relied on the common perception that nearly anything related to goze advanced the cultivation of silkworms. Even the mere presence of a goze in a house was taken to impart a favorable effect on the growth of the worms. The leader of a goze group might even be asked to sleep among the silkworm cases for maximum effect (Sakuma 1973, 22). Worm-handling chopsticks, too, went up in value if blessed by goze. On the day of their myōon-kō Nagaoka goze procured chopsticks at booths appearing on the road leading to the goze headquarters. These utensils were treated to a summary benediction by Benzaiten and distributed to supporters who awarded goze lunch or snacks while on tour. When handled with such chopsticks, the worms supposedly produced better cocoons (Sakuma 1973, 22; Suzuki 1996, 101–2).

Residents of the silk-producing regions of Gunma, Nagano, Niigata, and the Yonezawa area of Yamagata prefecture believed that silken shamisen strings

25. “Sai no kawara” is the bank of the “River of Three Fords” in the underworld. Here the souls of children who have died are condemned to build small towers of rocks as a holy memorial that will save their parents. These towers are destroyed by the devil, but the god Jizō steps in to save children from their endless ordeal.

26. These quantities evidently refer to the amount of silk to be transported to the capital. Dan in the following line may be tan, a measure of cloth.
sounded by goze delighted the worms. Sugimoto Shizu and Kikue, too, were quite sure of the fact:

**Sugimoto Shizu:** “In Nagano prefecture the precious silkworms loved the tones of the *shamisen*.

When we went from door to door, the silkworms stopped chewing their mulberry leaves, even if they were busy eating them, as soon as they heard the sound of the *shamisen*. They’d raise their heads to listen. When you went to Nagano you’d be told, ‘Please give us your broken strings when you have some. If you gave people your broken strings they’d attach them to the silkworm cases, tie them there. That made the silkworms happy, they said.’

**Sugimoto Kikue:** “Lots of people did that.”

**Sugimoto Shizu:** “If you had a broken third string (that is, the uppermost string) or second (middle) string, they’d ask if they could have it.”

**Sugimoto Kikue:** “Silkworms are happy about broken strings, the ones you’ve worn out.” (Suzuki 1999, 124–25)

Just as in Noh plays beating a fox-skin drum summoned foxes from the forest, vibrating silk strings resonated with the spirit of the silkworm and caused the worms or even their eggs to flourish. Growers beseeched Nagaoka goze touring the relatively balmy Kanto region from December to March to perform in the room used for storing egg cards. At New Year’s, growers often set up a silkworm case in the alcove in the main room of the house. Egg cards were placed on this case, and goze entertained the nascent creatures (Suzuki 1996, 101).

Even when not vibrating, silken *shamisen* strings allegedly harbored beneficial magical properties. Ito Fusae 伊藤フサエ (1891–?), the last of the goze from Iida in Nagano prefecture, was so persistently pestered for broken *shamisen* strings that she resorted to buying new ones, cutting them into short segments with a scissors, and handing them out to those who craved them. Goze smitten with a bad conscience over such a godless ruse hacked strings to pieces with the edge of their plectrum (*bachi*, 撥 or バチ, a large implement made of wood, tortoise shell, or ivory; Mizuno 1960, 21; Suzuki 1996, 123).

Silkworm growers rarely purchased strings from non-goze. *Shamisen* sounds produced by performers of other social groups were seldom offered to silkworms. Peasants did not perform *harugoma* on their own, and did not sing to their worms. Had religious practice only supplied a “common religious denominator” (Reader and Tanabe 1998, 23) for goze and their listenership, *harugoma* would have lost nearly all of its meaning besides a purely aesthetic one. It would have turned into nothing more than a quaint poem and bouncy tune relating

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28. Sugimoto Shizu uses a highly deferential form for silkworms (*o-kaiko-san*).
to silk production. Precisely the gap separating goze and non-goze, a difference mediated by notions of magical or religious efficacy, allowed goze harugoma performances to function as something more than musical entertainment in Echigo society.

**Manzai: Social Differences and the Structure of a Performance**

Much like harugoma, manzai symbolized New Year’s and the start of spring. Extant recordings of Echigo goze manzai represent a tradition dating at least to the sunset years of the Edo period. The pedigree of manzai in general stretched to Chinese antiquity, but by the ninth or tenth centuries the art had already become thoroughly Japanized. Thereafter the genre developed further, but archaic features stubbornly persisted. Thus in recordings by goze in the 1970s the first two lines sung continue to replicate the declarations (kotodate 言立て) launching some of the oldest recorded medieval performances of Japanese court manzai.29

During the Edo period the best-known manzai performers were specialists stemming from the provinces of Mikawa and Owari (both today in Aichi prefecture). These professionals were closely linked to yin-yang diviners. Pairs of Mikawa manzai, consisting of a “master” (tayū 太夫) and a “wit” (saizō 才蔵), roamed throughout eastern and northern Japan, spreading their art wherever they went. By the late Edo period they had reached distant northern provinces, where local auditors described their appearance and art as follows:

The tayū wears a courtier’s hat [eboshi 鳩帽子] and robe [suikan 水干] dyed with the pattern of a lucky pine, bamboo, crane, and tortoise. The saizō cleverest in speech is chosen from those available and accompanies the tayū. The former usually wears a broad-sleeved garment thickly lined with cotton and a blue headcloth. The two enter the lord’s castle together and utter auspicious words. Then they make the rounds to warrior homes in town. Their recitations contain twelve pieces [dan 段]. The following six are known as the “six outer pieces”: “house-building manzai”; “religious-text manzai”; “divine-power manzai”; “entering-the-mountain manzai”; “the-lord’s-province manzai”; and

29. On early manzai see YAMAJI 1988. For translations of ancient blessings of a dwelling that resemble what goze sing (see below) see PHILIPPI 1990, 80; and ASTON 1972, book 1, 380–81 (from Nihon shoki, Kenzō Tennō, that is, late fifth century). During the Edo period the practice of praising a home or a building in song was also commonly found in manzai from other areas, as well as other genres of door-to-door performance, especially around New Year’s. For the kotodate and text of court manzai recorded during the Edo period see Kinchū senzu manzai uta (398). For examples of manzai from Aizu (Fukushima prefecture), Sendai (Miyagi prefecture), and Bungo (Fukuoka prefecture) see Taishū geinō shiryō shūsei 3: 169–219. Kotodate are sometimes called iitate and may feature long listings. See for example ORIKUCHI 1954, 152.
sugoroku [a board game] manzai.” The following six are known as the “six inner pieces”: “fan manzai”; “O-Edo manzai”; “priest-prince (monzeki) manzai”; “Yoshiwara manzai”; “cherry-blossom manzai”; and “list-of-puns manzai.” These verses, cast in sections, were created long ago and have not been revised since. The saizō sounds a small laced drum [ko-tsuzumi 小鼓]. At first the performers intone their words seated, but from the middle they perform standing up and dance.30

(Dewa no kuni Akita-ryō fūzoku toijō kotae, 495–96)

In 1803 a chronicler living in what is today Nakajō in Niigata prefecture also observed manzai duos from Mikawa and Owari touring the locale (Nakajō-machi shi, shiryō-hen 2: 318–19).31 Again in 1817 Mikawa manzai were spotted wandering about the Nagaoka domain, the tayū strumming a shamisen and the saizō banging on a small drum. As usual, happy locutions rolled from their tongues as they collected donations from charmed listeners (Echigo no kuni Nagaoka-ryō fūzoku toijō kotae, 544–45). Goze may have been taught by such itinerants; or else they assimilated their lines from cheap manzai texts printed and sold in Edo and the countryside.32

Takada goze apparently reproduced only the first “outer” number delivered by the tayū of Mikawa manzai. Sekine Yasu once explained that she and others performed manzai, apparently an abbreviated version, on their “spring tours” immediately after New Year’s. Since it was still chilly outside, goze usually clad themselves in a formal undergarment, long-sleeved kimono, and a cape; on their feet they wore leggings and straw sandals or special high “snow clogs” with metal fittings on the bottom to prevent slippage. Each goze bedecked herself

30. An illustration is provided on page 512 and the text reproduces a “house-building” manzai that in its general form resembles what goze performed. The interjections of the saizō are not reproduced (perhaps they were improvised or variable).


32. The manzai text entitled ”Hatsu-haru Mikawa manzai” (初春三河万ざい, author’s possession) and published in chapbook form by Yoshidaya [Kokichi] of Edo (probably during the last decades of the Edo period) contains a text whose first half reproduces almost exactly the goze version translated below. Another booklet, entitled Shinpan go-manzae 新ぱんごまんざへ, penned (in hiragana) and published by one Maruyama Kōzō 丸山広蔵 in 1891 of Shinmachii in Koshi County of Niigata prefecture (see Nihon kinsei kayō shiryō-shū, reel 26) also includes sections virtually identical to lines 1–13, 72–81, 91–107, 129–59, and 182–86 transcribed below. It also contains vocables such as kora kora koi and insertions of a saizō (though different texts than those below), suggesting that it was taken from oral sources. For another booklet of manzai from Niigata prefecture thematizing famed items of the locale (by Manzai Kinsui 万歳錦水; the date 1893 is mentioned), which also includes sections similar to those of goze versions, see “Jugen-shū,” 40–42. The role of written sources in goze renditions is suggested by the fact that the same Chinese characters were pronounced in different ways by different goze (for example, 年取 as either nen-toru or toshi-toru).
with a square cap-like head cloth. Performances tended to take place indoors
and required considerable time to accomplish, so the number of houses a goze
could visit in a day was limited (Sakuma 1973, 11; Suzuki 1996, 216). The goze
taking the part of the tayū first recited a felicitous invocation (lines 1–13, 31–57,
and 72–89 of the text below). This was followed by the blessing of a building
(lines 90–108, 129–65, 178–93) in which pillars were counted and auspiciously
described. Between segments of the tayū’s singing, the saizō (lines 14–30, and so
on) inserted comic banter known as hayashi kotoba or chari, often silly or racy,
and normally entirely unrelated to the tayū’s more sober verbiage. The saizō also
spurred on the tayū by interleaving approbatory vocables such as “a icha icha.”

Goze manzai text, based on the performance recorded in Goze-uta (Jōetsu-shi
hossoku ni-jusshūnen kinen).33 Performed by Sugimoto Kikue (tayū) and Sugi-
moto Shizu (saizō), 1979. Tayū and saizō alternate sections. The singer is indi-
cated in the italicized text in parentheses at the start of a section. Vocal insertions
in the tayū’s text by the saizō have also been placed in parentheses.

(tayū)
Ever young, for ten-thousand years,
1. on-tokowaka ni wa go-manzai to wa
shall you flourish!
2. kimi mo sakaete owashimasu
(a icha icha)
3. (a icha icha)
New and ever pleasing
4. aikyō arikeru aratama no
the tomorrow that follows the change of year.
5. toshi toru sono hi no ashita ni wa
All-renewing water, newly budding branches!
6. mizu mo wakayuru ki no me mo sasu
(a icha icha)
7. (a icha icha)
Lord Chiisō34 wears a crown on his head
8. Chiisō-kō wa atama no kanmuri kōbe ni mesu

33. For another version by the same performers see Echigo goze no uta. The text transcribed
below resembles the one reproduced in Ōyama 1977, 296–98. For other transcriptions of texts
see the liner notes of Echigo goze no uta; Suzuki 1979, 151–52; Sakuma 1986, 273–80; Suzuki et
al. 1976, 112–16; Nihon shomin seikatsu shiryō shūsei 17: 584–86. For a performance of manzai by
Ihira Take from 1973 see Shikatanashi no gokuraku.

34. Probably Kisō (徽宗, Chi., Hui-Zong, 1082–1135), a Chinese emperor, the eighth of the
Northern Sung dynasty. The Edo period chapbook gives Risō-kō; the 1891 one, Chiisō-kō.
And has a magic sword forged by Gakuya.35
9. Gakuya ga uttaru tsurugi o ba
With his mouth he holds evergreen branches,36
10. yuzuri-ha o kuchi ni fukumase
in his hands, five-branched pine sprigs.37
11. goyō no matsu o ba on-te ni mochi
That all makes him auspicious!
12. kore nite medetō sōrai heru
And now it's saizō's turn!
13. mazu wa kokora de saizō ga ban da

(saizō)
I say, saa sa kora kora koi kora kora kora koi,
14. saa sa kora kora koi kora kora kora koi teba
What's this, hey, it's really something!
15. nanjai na kora nanjai dokoro ka taihen da
This year’s harvest is bountiful, kora!
16. kotoshiya hōnen da kora
So bountiful! What a great harvest, kora!
17. hōnen datteba mansaku da kora
The wife's secret fields hit it big!
18. okamisan no shingee saku attatta
Hey, tayū, kora, be quiet! be quiet!
19. ōsa tayū-san kora danmari danmari
Listen to this, kora!
20. kiite kure kora
Not just the secret fields, kora,
21. shingee saku to i te kora
but everything hit it big, oh so big!
22. nani ga nanbo attatta ōatta

35. Probably Bakuya 莫耶, as in the 1891 chapbook. In ancient China the sword smith Ganjiang (干将, Jp. Kanshō) was asked by the emperor to forge two magic swords (yin and yang). To make the yin sword he stoked the furnace with the hair of his wife Bakuya. In Japan kanshō-bakuya has come to mean a great sword. The Edo-period chapbook gives ayan ga tachi. Chūko zōshō-shū, providing what is apparently an archaic manzai text, gives aya ga tachi.
36. These are daphniphyllum macropodum, commonly used as New Year's decorations.
37. This is an auspicious Japanese white pine, Pinus pentaphylla var. himekomatsu.
Carrots, burdock, eggplant, kidney beans,
23. nenjin gonbo nasu ni ingen
sixteen-seed beans, yams, you name it, kora!
24. jūroku sasage imo nanzo attatta kora
Yams and all, wonderful things!
25. imo nanzo yoi mon de
Mom and dad eat them, kids eat them, kora!
26. oya kutte ko kutte kora
Eat the stalks of the taro, eat the leaves,
27. zuiki kutte ha kutte
the only thing left is
28. ato ni nokoru no wa
the shiny tiny little hairs, that’s it!
29. kinkirakin no ke bakari da to iuta no ga
And what do you say to that, tayū?
30. tayū-san ga dō ja

(tayū)
Yonder at the Imperial Palace
31. Seiryōden no konata ni wa
if you stand straight and take a look
32. tatase tamō mite yareba
you’ll see it is built so
33. tsukuri no kekkō
(aicha icha) beautifully, oh so beautifully!
34. (aicha icha) kirei ya kirei ya
The twill borders of the floor mats cost 500 ryō,
35. aya no heri mo gohyaku-ryō yo
the brocade borders cost 500 ryō,
36. nishiki no heri mo gohyaku-ryō yo
the white figured borders cost 500 ryō:
37. kōrai-beri mo gohyaku-ryō yo
(aicha icha)
38. (aicha icha)
add it up and it comes to 1500 ryō!
39. awashite sen to gohyaku-ryō no
Floor mats, deftly put in place, kora!

40. tatami sara sara sara to shikawase tamaikeru kora

People in the south are granted

41. minami no kata de wa shirokane no

(a icha icha)

42. (a icha icha)

a mountain of silver, kora!

43. yama o tsukawase tamaikeru kora

The Phoenix-bird dances in the sky!

44. hōō ga mai-asobu

Those in the west are granted

45. nishi e atatte sanjū-jū no

a thirty-tiered mountain of gold!

46. kogane no yama o tsukawase tamaikeru

The crane and tortoise dance together!

47. tsuru to kame to ga mai-asobu

(a icha icha)

48. (a icha icha)

Pavilions and towers built in a row, kora!

49. fūten dōkaku\textsuperscript{38} tatenarabe kora

From the thousand volumes of the Hannya sutra

50. Dai-hannya wa issen-kan\textsuperscript{39}

six-hundred volumes

51. awashite roppyaku-kan wa

(a icha icha)

52. (a icha icha)

are taken to Osaka castle,\textsuperscript{40} kora,

53. naga no jū ni torare tamaikeru kora

the remaining four-hundred are put

54. nokori shihyaku-kan wa

(a icha icha) into this temple hall.

55. (a icha icha) kono dō e

\textsuperscript{38} This is probably kūden rōkaku 宮殿楼閣.

\textsuperscript{39} Perhaps something here has been forgotten. In the 1891 chapbook and the version presented in Sakuma 1986, 275, various other sutras are listed.

\textsuperscript{40} The meaning of naga no jū is unclear. The text of the Edo-period chapbook gives “Nanba no jō” 難波の城, Osaka castle.
Let heaven come to earth!
56. ama kudarase tamaikeru
And now it's saizō's turn!
57. mazu wa kokora de saizō no ban

(saizō)
I say, saa sa kora kori kori kori kori kori koi,
58. saa sa kora kori kori kori kori kori teba

What's this, hey, it's really something!
59. nanjai na kora nanjai dokoro ka taihen da

There's a girl sitting next to my neighbor, kora
60. ora wa tonari kora
an innocent, unspoiled girl, kora!
61. sono mata tonari no hakoiri musume kora

Her face is like the crescent moon,
62. mikazuki-san yo
like a snow-white egg with eyes and a nose!
63. tamago ni me-hana

Her eyes are beautiful, kora!
64. metsukya yokaro kora
Her nose is beautiful, kora!
65. hanatsukya yokaro kora
Her mouth is beautiful, kora!
66. kuchitsukya yokaro kora
And again below that the twelve body parts!
67. sono mata shita no jū-ni no kikai de

A silly seventy-year-old man
68. shichijū baka no ojii san ni
embraces her and beds her,
69. dakashite nekashite

and is transported to heaven.
70. sue ni gokuraku e mairimasho

And what do you say to that, tayū?
71. to iutta no wa tayū-san ga dō ja

41. The exact meaning of kikai here is unclear.
(tayū)
Ha! The ancient capital was Nara
72. ha mukashi no kyō Nara no kyō yo
thereafter it was Nanba.
73. nakahodo wa Nanba no kyō yo
Today the capital is Kyoto!
74. ima naru kyō wa Miyako no kyō yo
(a icha icha)
75. (a icha icha)
How many words exist in the sutras?
76. okyō no mon wa to naraba
A million and six-thousand, and perhaps more!
77. ichioku ichiman rokusen yo mon to yara
There are eighty-thousand spirits,
78. kami no kazu wa happyaku banze
(a icha icha)
79. (a icha icha)
and thirty-three thousand three-hundred
80. hotoke no kazu wa sanman
thirty-three Buddhist deities.
81. sanzen sanbyaku sanjū san tai
In the earth ritual [ensuring building safety]
82. korera wa ji-matsuri nanzo
Abe no Seimei and likewise Dōman42
83. Abe no Seimei onajiku Dōman
invoke these gods.
84. nasashime tamaikeru
Takeza the carpenter makes Hida-no-Takumi43
85. daiku no Takeza wa Hida no Takumi o
sprinkle about some sacred water.
86. mizu o morase tamaikeru
(a icha icha)

42. Abe no Seimei 安倍晴明 is the renowned yin-yang diviner who also figures in the famous goze song "Kuzu no kowakare" (葛の葉子別れ, “The Arrowroot Princess Parts with her Child”). His rival was Ashiya Dōman 芦屋道満.

43. Hida no Takumi 飛騨匠 was a legendary carpenter mentioned in the medieval Konjaku monogatari.
87. （あicha あicha）
The adze is displayed and a pile of earth
88. ちのうでたやちぎょうもりも
is well made!
89. あ-すみましごて
Now let us begin to bless the building:
90. まゞうわこれよりはひらたて
If you look at this pillar, you’ll see
91. こんかしらおながむれば
（あicha あicha）
92. （あicha あicha）
it’s the one Buddha, the god of health,
93. いちぶつやかしゅしや
gold and silver like a fountain:
94. いづみのけいじん
a protector god never to be exhausted!
95. つかへどつきせんももひがら
If you look at the second pillar, you’ll see
96. にほんかしらおながむれば
（あicha あicha）
97. （あicha あicha）
the two Niō avatars,44 and scrolls of brocade:
98. にいのごんしんにしきのまきもの
protector gods never to be cut off!
99. きろでつきせんももひがら
If you look at the third pillar, you’ll see
100. さんぼんかしらおながむれば
（あicha あicha）
101. （あicha あicha）
the mountain king,45 and fountains of wine:
102. さんおごんじょうざわいづみで

44. Following the Edo-period chapbook I take Nii to be Niō 仁王, a pair of powerful gods usually guarding the left and right sides of a temple gate.
45. Sannō Gongen 山王権現, a god enshrined at the Hie Shrine in Ōtsu (Shiga prefecture) and in numberless other places.
 protector gods never to be consumed!
103. namedo tsukisenu mamorigami
If you look at the fourth pillar, you’ll see,
104. shihon no hashira o nagamureba
(a icha icha)
105. (a icha icha)
the four heavenly gods and the four ranks of people:46
106. Shomizuten47 no shi-nō-kō-shō
protector gods for your flourishing progeny!
107. shison48 hanjō no mamorigami
And now it’s the saizō’s turn!
108. mazu wa kokora de saizō no ban da
(saizō)
I say, saasa kora kora koi kora kora kora koi,
109. saasa kora kora koi kora kora kora koi teba
What’s this, hey, it’s really something!
110. nanjai na kora nanjai tokoro wa taihen da
Oh! Skip the first house and the second—
111. a ikken oite niken oite
the daughter of Genbee in the third house
112. sangenme no Genbee-san no musume
turned thirteen this year, kora!
113. kotoshya jūsan da kora
Her breasts began to bud
114. chichi ya tsukkuri tsubonda
but her stupid parents
115. oya no baka-me ga
thought it was a tapeworm,

46. That is, warriors, peasants, artisans, and merchants.
47. There is no god named Shomizuten. The Edo-period chapbook gives Shumi no shi-tennō 四天王 (the four gods of Mt. Shumi who protect the four directions). SAKUMA 1986, 277, relying on a Nagaoka performer, gives shimeshi shiten しめし四天, perhaps “four gods who elucidate.” SUZUKI et al. 1976, 114, relying on Ihira Take, gives Sumiyoshi tennō 住吉天皇, the god at the Osaka Sumiyoshi shrine. Dewa no kuni Akitu-ryō fūzoku toijō kotae (1814) gives "Amaterasu ōmikami" (天照大神, the sun goddess).
48. The 1891 chapbook gives shimin hanjō, prosperity to the four social classes—status groups that had by 1891 long been abolished.
spent thirty-five cents on “five-vapor medicine”

made her drink it, kora! And when the drug
didn’t work, they wondered

“should we call a doctor? or a vet?”

But they didn’t need a doctor or a vet!

A boy from the village had snuck to her side at night, kora

That’s why her breasts began to bud!

a few months after they had “pounded miso”

her belly was swollen up,

she wanted to eat only sour things,

Oh my, isn’t she big!—

and what do you say to that, tayū?

(tayū)

Ah! If you look at the fifth pillar, you’ll see,

the Gozu King,49 and that five grains ripen:

protector gods, never to be consumed!

If you look at the sixth pillar, you’ll see

49. Gozu Tennō, with the head of a bull, is a god of the underworld who torments the dead.
(a icha icha)
133. (a icha icha)
the six Jizo:
134. roku Jizō roku o
protector gods who solidify the ground!
135. katame mamorigami
If you look at the seventh pillar, you’ll see
136. shichihon no hashira o nagamureba
the seven Buddhas,
137. shichibutsu daishite\textsuperscript{50}
and the “seven lucky gods”:\textsuperscript{51}
138. shichi-fukujin no
(a icha icha)
139. (a icha icha)
protector gods who bring us fortune!
140. fuku o sazukeru mamorigami
If you look at the eighth pillar, you’ll see
141. hachihon no hashira o nagamureba
the Kannon at the Hase Temple:\textsuperscript{52}
142. Hase no Kannon
For the people it means endless flourishing,
143. tami ni totte wa ipp’yaku banzei\textsuperscript{53}
the protector god of nuptial bliss!
144. fūfu yomose\textsuperscript{54} no mamorigami
If you look at the ninth pillar, you’ll see
145. kyūhon no hashira o nagamureba

\textsuperscript{50} Daishite is of unclear meaning. The “seven Buddhas” usually refers to the seven Yakushi (the “Buddhas of healing”). Dewa no kuni Akita-ryō fūzoku toijō kōtei (1814) gives Shichisha dai-shi 七社大師, the “Great holy masters of the Seven shrines,” perhaps the “seven Sannō shrines.” The Edo-period chapbook gives shichibutsu Yakushi, the seven Buddhas of healing.

\textsuperscript{51} There are “seven Buddhas” of the past and seven Yakushi Buddhas of healing, but the popular “seven lucky gods” (shichi fukujin 七福神) are a boatload of gods of Buddhist, Shinto, and Daoist origins. The Edo-period chapbook gives “seven Yakushi and seven lucky gods.” The 1891 chapbook gives only shichi fukujin. Sakuma 1986, 278, relying on another performer from Niigata prefecture, gives “Yakushi” instead of daishite.

\textsuperscript{52} Hasedera 長谷寺 is a famous Shingon-sect temple in Nara.

\textsuperscript{53} This is perhaps kami instead of tami and happyaku-man jin (=yaoyorozu kami) both as given in kanji in the Edo chapbook).

\textsuperscript{54} This is probably imose in standard speech.
the Kumano avatar and freight moved to storehouses:

147. Kumano no gongen kura e o-nibutsu

the protector god of ships coming and going!

148. irifune defune no mamorigami

If you look at the tenth pillar, you’ll see

149. juppon no hashira o nagamureba

the ten demons:

151. jū-rasetsu mono o jūbun ni

protector gods that endow us with plenty!

152. osazuke kudasaru mamorigami

If you look at this pillar, you’ll see

153. kono hashira o nagamureba

the Kannon of eleven faces:

155. jūichimen no Kanzeon

the protector god who bestows fertility!

156. kodane o sazukeru mamorigami

If you look at the twelfth pillar, you’ll see

157. jūnihon no hashira o nagamureba

twelve horary signs, the twelve months:

159. jūni-shi jūni-ka-tsuki no

protector gods that exorcise evil spirits!

160. akuma o oharai kudasaru mamorigami

55. Kumano, in what is today Wakayama prefecture, is the site of three holy mountains with many temples and shrines.

56. This is more likely o-nimotsu (お荷物, “freight” or “cargo”), as in the Edo-period chapbook. This relates to ships coming and going, and wealth in general. The liner notes to Echigo goze no uta give kuroi oni-butsu, (黒い鬼仏, “black devil-Buddha”), which makes little sense.

57. This is usually jū-rasetsu-nya, (rasetsu 羅刹; Skt. rākṣasa), ten feminine demon-deities, who protect believers of the Lotus Sutra.
If you look at the thirteenth pillar, you’ll see
161. jūsanbon no hashira o nagamureba

(a icha icha)
162. (a icha icha)

the great heavenly god and imperial shrine:
163. tenshō-kōdai-jingū

protector god who makes our houses flourish!
164. kanai hanjō no mamorigami

And now here it’s the saizō’s turn
165. mazu wa kokora de saizō no ban da

(saizō)
I say saasa kora kora koi kora kora koi koi
166. saasa kora kora koi kora kora koi-tteba

What’s this, hey, it’s really something!
167. nanjaina kora nanjai tokoro wa taihen da-a

Shall I recite a “list of impossibles?”, kora
168. nainai-zukushi de mōsō ka kora

Here goes a “list of impossibles”:
169. nainai-zukushi mōsō nara

A long-sleeved daytime kimono worn at night,
170. sakuya no furisode

or a triangular futon, there’s nothing like that!
171. futon no sankaku koitsu mo nai

The mute who recites jōruri, the handless one who plays the shamisen,
172. oshi no jōruri, tenbo no shamisen

the deaf one who listen to it, there’s nothing like that, kora!
173. tsunbo no kikite mo koitsu mo nai kora

You can’t dig for clams in a field!
174. hatake ni hamaguri hotte mo nai

Nobody preaches to an earthworm!
175. mimizu ni sekkyō mo koitsu mo nai

There’s no lid on a cunt!
176. chanko ni futa aru tameshi ga nai

And what do you say to that, tayū?
177. to iu ta no wa tayū-san ga dōja
A thousand and ten-thousand pillars,
178. *senbon manbon no hashira o ba*
set them up right and ready!
179. *kiririn-shan to tate osame*
The Buddha of the future assures that in ten years
180. *Miroku jūnen tatsu no toshi*
(*a icha icha*)
181. *(a icha icha)*
the house the master has built
182. *shujin no tateta ie nareba*
will not leak no matter how much it rains.
183. *ame wa furedomo amamori sezu*
If the sun burns down on it, it won’t warp.
184. *hiyori yokeredo hiyori mo sezu*
(*a icha icha*)
185. *(a icha icha)*
When the wind blows, it will be a lucky wind!
186. *kaze wa fukedomo takarakaze*
Snow won’t sheet the roof no matter how much falls.
187. *yuki wa furedomo tsumori mo sezu*
Celebrate for eight-hundred years!
188. *oyoso happyaku-nen no go-iwai ni*
(*a icha icha*)
189. *(a icha icha)*
Up above, the crane; down below, the tortoise!
190. *ue ni wa tsuru shita ni wa kame*
Crane and tortoise dance and play,
191. *tsuru to kame to ga mai-asobu*
whilst *manzai* drive out demons.
192. *akuma hakidasu go-manzai*
How truly auspicious!
193. *makoto ni medetō sōraikeru*

The capacity of *goze* to bless or exorcise households through a performance of *manzai* relied chiefly on the authority cultivated over centuries by their predecessors, the Mikawa *manzai*. Unlike outcaste *harugoma*, Mikawa *manzai* counted as licensed religious practitioners authorized by the aristocratic Tsuchimikado...
house. Despite their official recognition, Mikawa manzai, in this regard resembling goze and hinin-class performers of harugoma, were positioned on the margins of the hegemonic sociopolitical order. Echigo goze could not simply take over the social status accorded to Mikawa manzai, but they could take over the religious distinction that allowed Mikawa manzai to bless a household. This distinction in turn could be used to fortify a new social difference: that of the goze professional and the non-goze layperson.

In this regard the social meanings of goze manzai resembled those of goze harugoma. But in manzai the meaning of social differences did not stop at the level of separating performers from listeners. It pervaded and shaped the form and content of the genre itself. In order to present universal utopian bounty—beneficent gods, revered traditions, mountains of food, rivers of saké, magnificent edifices, limitless wealth, health, and laughter for everyone—in a manner that resonated with the public, manzai could not resort to the sort of simple sanctification of labor that characterized harugoma. Instead, manzai drew its energy from the very impossibility of unifying wildly divergent discourses. To the tayū, clearly a representative of dominant religious and political ideologies, paradise on earth meant exquisite temples, Buddhist scriptures, Chinese brocade, and rare metals heaped to the firmament. To the saizō, who represented the commoner, sutras and ostentatious religious trappings were best sidelined in favor of the pleasures of the flesh. The former’s high-minded invocations, optimistic and temporally vague, were answered by the latter with unbounded jocularity and profanity referring to the here and now. Whereas the tayū set the standard far too high to be taken entirely seriously, the saizō placed the bar a good deal too low. Like their harugoma peers, both excelled in the practice of blessing, but the saizō was somebody to laugh with, while the tayū, with his overbearing gravity, was more likely to be laughed at. Musically speaking, too, heterogeneity prevailed. The tayū chanted through-composed melodies in a speech-like meter, while the saizō answered with sharply contoured rhythms and no melody at all. The former preferred sparse shamisen accompaniment inserted here and there; the latter simply repeated quasi-ostinato phrases from start to finish.

Manzai refused to paper over such oppositions in favor of a spurious otherworldly harmony. Instead, when the vulgar clashed with the elevated, the listener was presented with a picture of a thoroughly bifurcated whole. Everyone not soundly asleep saw that the tayū’s mountains of gold, heaps of brocade, imposing pavilions, and soaring towers faithfully reflected the conspicuous consumption

58. Senjakō, 518, mentions that hinin performed manzai in what is today Wakayama prefecture during the late Edo period.

59. For a transcription of the music see Groemer 2007, kenkyū-hen, 210–13 (numbered from the back).
of a social class whose boundless craving for material goods was counterbalanced only by its insistence on the “proper” frugality of others. Contrariwise, the saizō’s apparently liberated sexual promiscuity represented little more than a sarcastic inversion of the hegemonic morality, one that turned the “proper” relation of the sexes into a matter of strategic domestic calculation. Even the saizō’s invocation of a bountiful harvest received its full significance only when interpreted against the background of the famines the gods had inexplicably allowed to occur and that the upper-class luxury extolled by the tayū only exacerbated.

Thus the holy harmony of the two players caricatured true social solidarity. No amount of religious practice could unite the two so long as society was based on rigid, status-based, economically fortified social distinctions. It would take until the twentieth century, when the legal guarantee of nominal social equality of every citizen finally became a reality, for tayū and saizō to see the world in the same way. Unity in modern manzai, a genre sharing almost nothing with its Edo-period or goze variant, was only achieved by turning both performers into de-facto saizō.60

Conclusion

Social differences, often antagonistic in nature, informed every dimension of Echigo goze religious practice, from the most private to the most public. Without such differences goze could have neither conferred nor reaped “worldly benefits” through religious practice. But were Echigo goze perhaps exceptional? After all, goze, unlike the average farmer, both begged for “worldly benefits” and supplied such advantages to others.

The attribute of serving both as a recipient and supplier of “worldly benefits” was, however, far more common in Japan than is usually assumed. Every time people bought a “sacred lot” (o-mikuji) for someone else, set up a domestic shrine for family use, taught a child or friend a prayer, commissioned a priest to offer a blessing, helped stage a festival, or engaged in any number of other religious practices not entirely solitary in nature, they supplied others with the possibility of harvesting “worldly benefits.”

Efforts to furnish fellow human beings with “worldly benefits” accruing from religious practice extended to the highest levels of the political elite. Besides engaging in personal prayers and private rituals the Tokugawa bakufu, daimyō, and other warrior class functionaries supplied their subjects with ample opportunities for pursuing “worldly benefits.” The main difference between the shogun and the goze was that the former funded impressive temples and paid choruses to

60. On the commercialization and other developments of twentieth-century manzai, see Stocker 2006. As usual, various “preservation societies” seek to keep alive the original form of the genre. Some older forms of manzai are also occasionally presented in variety halls. Neither type is today well known to the Japanese public.
howl Buddhist chants into the cosmos, whereas the latter only fabricated blessed shamisen strings and offered benedictions and incantations to small audiences.

When the mere presentation of an opportunity to secure religious benefits proved insufficiently inspiring, the political elite might intervene more directly and forcefully in social reality. In 1839, for example, the law-enforcement bureau of the Kanto region resolved to promote Buddhist and Confucian virtue by distributing a “Buddhist hymn of filial piety” (“Kōkō wasan” 孝行和讃) to the public. This text was to be duly copied by village headmen, circulated throughout each hamlet, and driven into the skulls of children by their schoolmasters (see Takahashi-ke “goyō-dome” 1995, 134–35). Readers, singers, or audiences of this text were catechized to respect parents, officials, and elders, refrain from gambling, whoring, or consorting with outlaws, to obey all laws of the land, and to content themselves with clothing, housing, and furnishings “proper” to their social station. Needless to say, the social meaning of such injunctions remains incomprehensible if the interests of the warrior class and the impoverished farmer are considered to be at one from the start, thanks to the universality of “Japanese religious practice.”

Even if a lord and his subjects worshiped a god by the same name and patronized the same institutions, “religious practice” for the sake of “worldly benefits” did not ensure unity any more than “economic practice” for the purpose of “material benefits” guaranteed the harmony of masters and slaves. If generalizations concerning Japanese religion are not to conceal the heterogeneous interests structuring the society in which certain forms of homogenizing religious practice took hold and were reproduced, the notion of a universal pursuit of “worldly benefits” through religious practice must be treated with great care. The emphasis on practice can no doubt serve as a wholesome antidote to forms of mentalism seeking to derive practice from concepts, intentions, beliefs, or rules. But just as the meaning of hammering depends on whether one is speaking of a mallet in the hands of a Black Forest peasant or a gavel in the hand of a judge at the Volksgerichtshof, the meaning of practice, religious or otherwise, never represents a primordial unity transcending all social differences and antagonisms. Forms of practice, just like forms of thought, foster both social unity and social difference, and each side of this dyad cannot be understood without reference to the other. Neither the practice of performing harugoma and manzai, nor even the content of what was performed, can properly be grasped unless one takes into account both the power of religious practice to forge harmony and solidarity, as well as its capacity to create distinctions, reinforce discrimination, and mark the fault lines of class tensions and antagonisms. The question to be asked is thus not merely how Buddhas, kami, and other divinities inspired princes and paupers alike to seek “worldly benefits,” but how certain forms of religious practice were used by various social groups or classes, who benefitted to what degree from what sort of practice, and why it was so.
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HARDACRE, Helen

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