

Old Stories, Original Retellings: The Heike-related Tales in the Repertory of the Blind *Biwa* Players of Kyushu

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Abstract

While *higobiwa*, the blind *biwa* players' tradition of Kyushu, is regarded as a historically distinctive genre, its evolution has been influenced by interactions with other storytelling traditions. It is evident that *higobiwa* borrowed stories from other genres and adapted them to its own distinctive narrative style. The findings of this research focused on the Heike-related tales reveal significant similarities between the tales of *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* in the blind *biwa* players' tradition and *Ko-Atsumori* in the *kojōruri* tradition. These parallels suggest a shared narrative lineage between these two performance genres, prompting a reevaluation of our understanding of the transmission and evolution of oral narratives within the blind *biwa* players' tradition of Kyushu and shedding light on the dynamic nature and the interconnectedness of different performance traditions within Japan.

Keywords: *higobiwa*, the blind *biwa* players' tradition, *kojōruri*, *Ichi-no-Tani*, *Ko-Atsumori*

Introduction

The *Tale of the Heike* 平家物語, an epic account of the war between the Genji and the Heike in the twelfth century, stands as the most significant of all the Japanese performed narratives. Originating sometime in the thirteenth century, the *Tale of the Heike* has enjoyed widespread popularity and immense influence throughout history. Stories derived from the *Tale of the Heike* or associated with the events and characters described in the narrative can be found in a variety of storytelling genres, such as *nō*, *kōwakamai*, *jōruri*, etc. It is difficult to overestimate the role that the *Tale of the Heike* and the Heike-related tales played in the development of Japan's literary tradition and cultural identity.

This paper delves into the Heike-related tales within the repertory of the blind *biwa* players' tradition of Kyushu, focusing on narratives such as *Ichi-no-Tani* 一ノ谷 and *Ko-Atsumori* 小敦盛. Through an exploration of the tradition's repertory and an analysis of these specific tales, the paper aims to identify traditional and original elements while examining the relationship between *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* within the blind *biwa* players' tradition of Kyushu and other storytelling genres, commonly referred to as *katarimono*.

Overview of the tradition of blind *biwa* players

The blind *biwa* players' tradition of Kyushu is known as *higobiwa*. However, the term is relatively new and was coined not earlier than the Meiji period (1868-1912) to distinguish the *biwa* tradition of Higo, the present-day Kumamoto, from other storytelling traditions of Kyushu, such as *satsumabiwa* and *chikuzenbiwa*. While *higobiwa* is sometimes regarded as a historically distinctive genre, its evolution has been influenced by interactions with other storytelling traditions. It is evident that *higobiwa* borrowed stories from other genres and adapted them to its own

narrative style. Through its engagement with other genres, *higobiwa* has enriched its repertoire, contributing to the vibrant world of storytelling in Kyushu and beyond. Despite its distinctiveness, *higobiwa* remains interconnected with a broader category of Japanese storytelling traditions.

The standard account of the origin of the tradition of blind *biwa* players in the Higo region tells that in the second year of the Empō era (1674), Iwafune *Kengyō* 岩船検校 (Funahashi *Kengyō* 船橋検校) came to Kumamoto from Kyoto at the request of Lord Hosokawa 細川.⁽¹⁾ In Kumamoto, he performed the *Heike* and then composed several tales on local historical themes, such as *Kikuchi Kuzure* 菊池くずれ and *Miyako Gassen Chikushi Kudari* 都合戦筑紫下り. He then taught these tales to the local blind *biwa* players. However, no reliable documentary evidence exists for this account of origin.⁽²⁾

Not much is known about the activities of blind *biwa* players of Kyushu in the past. During the twentieth century, many researchers and folklorists, such as Tanabe Hisao 田辺尚雄, Kimura Yūshō 木村祐章, Kimura Rirō 木村理郎, Nomura (Ga) Machiko 野村 (何) 眞知子, Narita Mamoru 成田守, Hyōdō Hiromi 兵藤裕己, and Hugh de Ferranti, collected data about blind *biwa* players of Kyushu, made recordings of their performances and conducted detailed research on the history and nature of the tradition. Even though some efforts to preserve the tradition of blind *biwa* players were undertaken, it ceased to exist at the end of the twentieth century.

Yamashika Yoshiyuki 山鹿良之 (1901-1996) became one of the best known representatives of the tradition of blind *biwa* players among researchers and the popular media. Yamashika was even called *saigo no biwa hōshi* ('the last *biwa hōshi*') for his ability to perform and for the abundance of his repertory.⁽³⁾ Much of the available audio and video material featuring performances and interviews with blind *biwa* players was recorded by Hyōdō Hiromi during his multiple field trips to Kyushu from Yamashika. Alongside recordings made by other researchers, including performances by blind *biwa* players, such as Ōkawa Susumu 大川進 and Hashiguchi Keisuke 橋口桂介, these materials constitute the core of the collection of blind *biwa* narratives "The Hyōdō Collection of Blind *Biwa* Narratives" 盲僧琵琶の語り物・兵藤コレクション and are currently kept and managed by the Institute of Folklore Studies at Seijo University.

The story of Taira no Atsumori and his son Ko-Atsumori

Atsumori Saigo 敦盛最期 ('The Death of Atsumori') is among the most renowned and beloved episodes of the *Tale of the Heike*. The episode recounts the tragic encounter between the young Heike warrior Taira no Atsumori 平敦盛 and the seasoned Genji warrior Kumagae Jirō Naozane 熊谷次郎直実, ending in Atsumori's death. Adaptations of this story can be found in a number of literary and dramatic genres. The story of Atsumori is reenacted in *Atsumori* 敦盛, a *nō* play attributed to Zeami Motokiyo 世阿弥元清 (1363-1443). Another notable rendition is *Atsumori*, a *kōwakamai* play of unknown authorship. The tale of Atsumori in the repertory of blind *biwa* players of Kyushu, *Ichi-no-Tani*, can be summarized as follows.

Taira no Atsumori is married to a lady named Tamaorihime. One day, Taira no Tsunemori gives Taira no Kagekiyo an order to prepare ships to leave for Yashima. Atsumori has to say goodbye to his wife

Tamaorihime. During their last meeting, Atsumori discovers his wife is expecting a child. Atsumori leaves but, on the way, realizes that he forgot his flute and returns. The ship leaves without Atsumori. In a desperate attempt to reach the ship, Atsumori swims toward it on the back of his horse. Kumagae Jirō Naozane spots the young Atsumori and challenges him to a fight. Kumagae kills Atsumori but regrets taking the life of the young man. After this event, Kumagae becomes a monk and spends his days praying for the soul of Atsumori.

Ko-Atsumori, another Heike-related story from the repertory of blind *biwa* players, is a sequel to *Ichi-no-Tani*. It is an account of Atsumori's son, whom his grieving mother abandons in an attempt to save from the Genji, chasing and eliminating any survivors of the Heike clan. The *Tale of the Heike* does not mention Atsumori's son. Moreover, we don't find any references to the wife of Atsumori in the *Tale of the Heike*, except for a brief line in the *Shibu Kassen Jōhon* 四部合戦状本 version of the *Tale of the Heike*, mentioning that Atsumori was involved with the daughter of Taira no Norimori 平教盛.⁽⁴⁾ The story of *Ko-Atsumori* in the repertory of blind *biwa* players can be summarized as follows.

Tamaorihime finds out about the death of her husband, Atsumori. She gives birth to a boy, but being afraid that the Genji clan will kill her son, she decides to abandon him. Hōnen and Kumagae, who has become a monk and taken the Buddhist name Renshō, find the boy on returning from a pilgrimage to Kamo shrine. The boy grows up. One day, he falls sick. Hōnen decides to hold a sermon service. In his sermon, he talks about the sorrowful destiny of the boy. Tamaorihime, who hears the words of Hōnen, reveals her identity and meets her son. The boy finds out that Kumagae is the one who killed his father, Atsumori, and decides to get his revenge, but his mother stops him. The boy visits his father's grave and later becomes a monk.

Analysis of *Ko-Atsumori* performed by Yamashika Yoshiyuki

Understanding the nature of the oral tradition is an essential component of any comparative research involving oral narratives. Unlike many other oral traditions, which are either almost completely based on memorization or completely on improvisation, the repertory of blind *biwa* players of Kyushu consists of both memorized and orally composed narratives. In their research, both Hyōdō Hiromi and Hugh de Ferranti pointed to such characteristics of the narrative material composed by blind *biwa* players as instability and variability resulting from oral composition during performance: repetitions of expressions, lines, and even larger parts of the text can be found in multiple performances by the same blind *biwa* player and even in the case of multiple performances of the same piece by different blind *biwa* players.⁽⁵⁾

Among the blind *biwa* players active in the twentieth century, Yamashika Yoshiyuki was noted for the abundance of his repertory and his ability to improvise. His performances showed a high degree of flexibility and were often composed orally during the performance, depending on the situation and the audience. However, a comparative analysis of multiple performances by Yamashika of *Watamashi* ワタマシ, *Kikuchi Kuzure*, and *Shuntokumaru* 俊徳丸 conducted as a part of my doctoral dissertation has demonstrated that *Watamashi* and *Kikuchi Kuzure*, even though comparatively long, were on the whole reproduced from memory in a fixed or nearly fixed form, while the story of *Shuntokumaru* was clearly re-created or composed orally

during the performance. However, even in the case of *Shuntokumaru*, the general structure of the story and its smaller components, scenes, were still fixed, and some textual repetitions could be found in the description of the same scene in multiple performances.

In his performances, Yamashika used many fixed phrases and lines, and even larger sections of texts were strictly arranged and combined in a particular order from performance to performance. Many of Yamashika's lines and text sections were clearly memorized as a part of a specific story and kept in the memory as strictly structured entities faithfully reproduced each time the story was performed. Some expressions and lines were memorized verbatim as part of a specific narrative learned by Yamashika at the beginning of his performing life and then used in the composition of other stories to describe similar situations.

In this paper, extracts from two versions of *Ko-Atsumori* are analyzed. The first text is a transcription of the performance recorded and transcribed by Nomura (Ga) Machiko sometime between 1970 and 1972. This text is included in 2007 *Higobiwa katari shū* 肥後・琵琶語り集 and will be referred to as KA1. The second text is a transcription of an audio recording, partially transcribed for the purposes of this study. The recording was made in 1990 and is a part of the earlier mentioned "The Hyōdō Collection of Blind *Biwa* Narratives." Two scenes from these two versions of *Ko-Atsumori* ⁽⁶⁾ are introduced below in order to demonstrate the nature of changes taking place from performance to performance. ⁽⁷⁾

TABLE 1 SCENE A

KA1

KA2

平家の氏神賀茂の明神のお告げ

ある夜のことうに平家の氏神の宮、加茂の明神様は、玉織姫の枕上に立たせえ給う。「のうの如何に玉織よ、汝はこの子を育てても、末は源氏方より奪われえて水攻めえ一、火攻めにい遭う故に、

この子を何処へなりと捨てられえよ」、覚めてはあー玉織姫、「あー今は夢であらうか、現であらうか、たとえば神のうお告げかなあ。神のお告げに致しても、現在母親としてえ、我が産みしいこの子供をうなんの捨てたりょう」と捨てずうに、おけばあー

ある日のことに、平家の氏神明神は玉織の枕辺に立たせ給う。「玉織、玉織、よくも承れ。夢ではないぞ。目を覚ませ。目を覚ませ。汝はこの子を育てても、源氏方に奪われる。水攻め、火攻めに責苦にかかる。その子は源氏の敵から責め殺されてしまう。かわいそうにせっかく今生に生まれた。その子供を何処になりと捨てよ。そっちが手につけていても奪われる。子供もどころか、何でも諸共に奪われてしまう。捨てよう。○早く捨てよう。夢ではないぞ。早く捨て子を致せ」、そのまま立ち去る。

○また、翌晩になると、また時も変わらぬ、「捨てよ」と言うものになり、「捨て子を致さん。そっち諸共に、挙げ句の果てには腰元までも虐めにかかる。早く捨て子を致せ。生を守りて致す。必ずこの子供運命から守る。○早く捨て子を致せ」、○三夜重ねて、「玉織、まだ我

加茂の宮、明神は一夜ならず二夜ならずう、重ねて三夜の御告げ、「如何にも玉織我は夢ではないぞ、現でない。
汝が朝夕にい頼むう一我こそはあ平家の氏神、加茂の宮明神なるうぞ。疑いならばこれを見よう」、八方に光明の光をう煌々と照らし、行き方知れずう一、ご飛行なさあれえ給う。

が言うことを聞かぬか。○其方が人間の力で育てようと思っても叶わぬ。捨て子を致せ。我を如何なる者と思うか（思いしか）。平家の氏神賀茂の宮明神なるぞ。疑いあれば、玉織、私の姿を見られます」、八方に光明の光煌々と照らし、○ご飛行遊ばして...

KA1

KA2

The revelation from Myōjin of Kamo, the guardian deity of the Heike

One night, Myōjin of Kamo, the guardian deity of the Heike, appeared in the dream of Tamaorihime and announced: “Hey, Tamaori, even if you decide to raise this child, in the end, he will be taken away by the Genji and tortured with water or fire. Throw him somewhere!” When Tamaorihime woke up, she thought: “Is this a dream or a reality? Or was it some divine revelation? Even if it is a divine revelation, as a mother, how can I throw away the child I gave birth to?”

However, when she didn't throw her child, Myōjin of Kamo Shrine appeared in her dream with the message not one night, not two nights but three nights in a row, saying: “Hey, Tamaori, it is not a dream. I am the one you pray to every morning and evening.

I am Myōjin of Kamo Shrine, the guardian deity of the Heike. If you have any doubts, look at this!” And saying so, he starts shining a bright light in all directions and flies away in an unknown direction.

One day, Myōjin, the guardian deity of the Heike, appeared in the dream of Tamaorihime and announced: “Tamaori, Tamaori, listen to me carefully. It is not a dream. Wake up! Wake up! Even if you decide to raise this child, he will be taken away by the Genji. He will be tortured with water or fire and suffer the torments of hell. That child will be killed by the Genji enemy. The poor child was just born into this world. Throw that child somewhere! He will be taken away even if you have him in your hands. Not only the child but everything will be taken away. Throw him away! ○ Throw him away as soon as possible! It's not a dream! Hurry up and throw the child away!” With that, the deity disappeared.

○ The next night, around the same time, he started to say: “Throw him away! Throw the child away! In the end, you will all suffer, even your servants. Throw the child away as soon as possible! I will protect his life. I will save this child from his fate by all means. ○ Throw the child away as soon as possible! ○ Three nights in a row, he kept saying: “Tamaori, are you still not listening to me? ○ Even if you try to raise the child with all your might, you will not succeed. Throw the child away! What kind of being do you think I am?” I am Myōjin of Kamo Shrine, the guardian deity of the Heike. If you have any doubts, Tamaori, you can take a look at me!” And saying so, he starts shining a bright light in all directions and flies ○.

TABLE 2 SCENE B

KA1

KA2

法然上人が賀茂の宮に参拝する

変わる話はここにまた、新黒谷御寺法然上人、熊谷蓮生に打ち向かい、「はいや、蓮生、今

話は変わりて、○ここは黒谷御寺法然上人、蓮生坊「ああ、お師匠様」「おはようござ

日、拙僧は、平家の加茂の宮明神様宿願あつて参拝せん。また、手習い衆の一同も共に連れて参拝致さん。早く準備を致しておけ、手習いの者も皆集まって来るであろう。「心得て候」とそうこうする間に手習い衆の七十人が集まり、熊谷はじめとして七十五人が共致し、加茂の宮明神様にご参拝。嗽手水で身を清め、あなたの鰐口を打ち鳴らし、十の蓮華を揉み合わせて、「南無や申さん平家の氏神加茂の宮明神様、只今これに参りしは、新黒谷御寺の法然上人に候。願うところは、天下泰平国家安穩、護国成就守らせ給われがし。拙僧はじめ、熊谷、手習い衆、病難災難、または仲良く学問の上達致すよう、守らせ給われがし」と三度礼して五度拝し、数多の人々もう思い思いに伏し拝み三度礼して五度拝し十、三編の宮巡り、数の礼儀も相済めば、早下向なさりける。下向の道すがらあ一三条下がり松を下向なさる時にい、かねて耳近い上人様が、「はいや、蓮生皆の人暫く待て」「何かお師匠様、ご用でござりますか」「いやいや、別に用事はないがのう、これより東に渡って幼子の泣き声が聞こえた。

KA1

Hōnen Shōnin visits Kamo Shrine for worship

The scene changes again. Hōnen Shōnin of Shinkurodani Temple turned to Kumagae Renshō and said: “Hey, Renshō, today, I am thinking of visiting Myōjin of Kamo Shrine of the Heike for worship to fulfill my long-cherished wish. I will take all the apprentices with me to visit the shrine. Get ready quickly! All the apprentices will certainly come.” “Straight away!” Seventy of the apprentices gathered, and seventy-five people, including Kumagae, joined together to visit Myōjin of Kamo Shrine for worship. He purified himself by gargling and washing his hands, rang the waniguchi gong, and rubbed his ten fingers in supplication with the words: “I worship Myōjin of Kamo Shrine, the guardian deity of the Heike. The one standing here in front of you is Hōnen Shōnin of Shinkurodani Temple. I wish for the world to be peaceful, the lands to be tranquil, and the country to be safe. Please fulfill this wish! I am also praying for my protection, for the protection of Kumagae and the apprentices in the event of illness or disaster. I also wish for them to get along and

います」「おはよう」「今日は。昨夜手習いの者によく言っておいた。平家の氏神賀茂の宮様に今日は参拝する。早く用意を致せ」「早速用意を致します」

○手習い衆七十人も集まってくる。七十人も共にして賀茂の宮様に参拝する。嗽手水で身を清め、あなたの鰐口を打ち鳴らし、十の蓮華を揉み合わせ、「南無や申さん平家の氏神賀茂の宮様。只今これに参りしは、新黒谷御寺の法然でござります。この法然上人が願いは、よくお聞き悟りくださりませ。手習いの人々も仲良く学問の上達致すよう。仲良く手習いを致して、早く寺子屋を離るるよう。お願い致します」、三度礼して五度拝し、熊谷蓮生坊もそのまま思い思いの拝みを致し、手習い七十人の人も思い思いの拝みを致しましても、

早下向。下向の道すがら三条下り松近くになれば、法然上人、「蓮生坊、暫く待て」「お師匠様、何かご用でござりますか」「いや、別に用事という用事はないが、どうやら東に渡って幼子の泣き声が聞こえて...

KA2

The scene changes.○ Hōnen Shōnin of Shinkurodani Temple said: “Hey, Renshōbō!” “Yes, Master!” “Today, I told the apprentices last night that I am visiting the deity of Kamo Shrine, the guardian deity of the Heike, for worship. So, get ready quickly!” “Straight away!”

○ Seventy of the apprentices gathered, and with all seventy apprentices, Hōnen visited Kamo Shrine for worship. He purified himself by gargling and washing his hands, rang the waniguchi gong, and rubbed his ten fingers in supplication with the words: “I worship Myōjin of Kamo Shrine, the guardian deity of the Heike. The one standing here in front of you is Hōnen of Shinkurodani Temple. Please listen to the wish of Hōnen Shōnin! Please, make my apprentices get along and progress in their studies! Please, make them learn together and leave terakoya as soon as possible!” He bowed thrice, he bowed in reverence five times, and Kumagae Renshōbō bowed fervently as well. Seventy of

progress in their studies. Please fulfill my wish!" He bowed thrice, he bowed in veneration five times, and dozens of people each bowed fervently; they bowed thrice, they bowed in reverence five times. After they circled the temple thirteen times and all the due rituals were observed, they left the capital. On the way, while passing by the Sanjō Sagarimatsu, the priest who has had acute hearing, said: "Hey, Renshō, everyone, wait for a while!" "Master, is there anything you need?" "No, no. I do not need anything, but I have heard a baby crying to the east."

the apprentices bowed fervently. And they left the capital. On the way, near the Sanjō Sagarimatsu, Hōnen Shōnin said: "Renshōbō, wait for a while!" "Master, is there anything you need?" "No. I do not need anything special, but it seems I hear a baby crying to the east..."

Comparative analysis of the two versions of *Ko-Atsumori* conducted for this study showed that the general structure of the two performances KA1 and KA2 is almost identical. The scenes' content was stable and didn't not change from performance to performance. Some scenes are more extended and contain more details in one of the versions, but the order of the events described and the central characters mentioned are the same. As we can see, the two texts introduced above contain only a few lines repeated word for word. For example, we find identical lines, such as *heike no ujigami myōjin wa tamaorihime no makurabe ni tatasetatamō* ('Myōjin, the guardian deity of the Heike, appeared in the dream of Tamaorihime') or *happō ni kōmyō no hikari wo kōkō to terashi* ('he starts shining a bright light in all directions') in SCENE A. Another example are the lines *tenaraishū no shichijūnin ga atsumari* ('seventy of the apprentices gathered'), *nakayoku gakumon no jōtatsu wo itasu yō* ('make (them) get along and progress in their studies'), or *higashi ni watatte osanago no nakigoe ga kikoeta* ('I have heard a baby crying to the east') in SCENE B. Apart from these few repeated lines, the texts of the two performances differ significantly, even though the content of KA1 and KA2 is very similar. We should note the presence of a section in SCENE B describing the visit to Kamo Shrine. The scene of ritual preparation before the prayer is a so-called theme, a situation or setting often described in tales. The lines repeated in SCENE B are used in similar situations in other stories. For example, some lines identical to those found in KA1 and KA2, such as *ugai chōzu de mi o kiyome anata no waniguchi wo narashi tō no rengo o momiawase namu* ('(he/she) purified (himself/herself) by gargling and washing (his/her) hands, rang the *waniguchi* gong, and rubbed (his/her) ten fingers in supplication with the words "Oh...") can also be found in such tales as *Ishidōmaru* 石童丸 and *Shuntokumaru*.

***Ko-Atsumori* in the tradition of blind *biwa* players and the *kojōruri* tradition**

The story of *Ko-Atsumori* is not unique to the tradition of blind *biwa* players of Kyushu and can be found in such genres as *otogizōshi* and *kojōruri*. Significant similarities in the content and the general structure of the tales in the *otogizōshi* and *kojōruri* genres suggest some relationship between the two, which can be attributed to the common source, an older tale about *Ko-Atsumori*, rather than a direct influence of one genre on another.⁽⁸⁾ Another work that deals with *Atsumori*'s son is the *nō* play *Ikuta Atsumori* 生田敦盛 written by Konparu Zenpō 金春禅鳳 (1454-1532?). However, *Ikuta Atsumori* significantly differs from the *otogizōshi* and *kojōruri* versions, both structurally and textually. Preliminary analysis of the story of *Ko-Atsumori* in the above-mentioned genres, *nō*,

otogizōshi, *kojōruri*, and the tradition of blind *biwa* players showed apparent structural similarities between the *kojōruri* and the blind *biwa* players' versions of the tale. The following table demonstrates the general structure and scene composition of the story of Ko-Atsumori in the *kojōruri* tradition and in the tradition of blind *biwa* players. Two versions of the story of Ko-Atsumori were analyzed to demonstrate the general structure and characteristics of *Ko-Atsumori* in the tradition of blind *biwa* players. As previously mentioned, the tradition of blind *biwa* players is characterized by its tendency for instability and variability, as narratives are often orally composed and subject to changes in performance. Therefore, analysis of multiple versions of the tales recorded or collected from several sources is crucial for identifying the elements shared by representatives of this tradition. The first version of the story of Ko-Atsumori, the Kunitake version, is a tale from the collection of manuscripts recorded by a sighted *biwa* player Kunitake Taijō 国武諦浄(1901-1984) in 1919. Kunitake was a son of a blind *biwa* player Kunitake Reijō 国武礼浄(1865-1917). He started learning storytelling from his father at an early age and wrote down some of the tales.⁽⁹⁾ One of these tales was *Ichi-no-Tani Ko-Atsumori*. The Kunitake family keeps the original manuscript, while its copy is preserved at the Fukuoka Prefectural Library. The second version, *Ko-Atsumori*, is the transcription of a performance by Yamashika Yoshiyuki recorded sometime between 1970 and 1972 and included in 2007 *Higobiwa katari shū*. In addition to *Ko-Atsumori*, *Ichi-no-Tani* from the same *Higobiwa katari shū* was analyzed to establish the relationship between the tales.

TABLE 3

KO-ATSUMORI	ICHI-NO-TANI KO-ATSUMORI	ICHI-NO-TANI and KO-ATSUMORI
The <i>kojōruri</i> version of <i>Ko-Atsumori</i> ⁽¹⁰⁾ (The tale is composed of six dan. ⁽¹¹⁾)	The Kunitake's version of <i>Ichi-no-Tani Ko-Atsumori</i> (The manuscript by Kunitake contains the tale composed of five dan. The tale is a combination of two tales <i>Ichi-no-Tani</i> and <i>Ko-Atsumori</i> .)	The Yamashika's version of <i>Ichi-no-Tani</i> and <i>Ko-Atsumori</i> tales. (<i>Ichi-no-Tani</i> is composed of two dan, and <i>Ko-Atsumori</i> is composed of three dan.)
DAN 1, 2	DAN 1, 2, 3	DAN 1, 2 (ICHI-NO-TANI)
The Genji army attacks the Heike at Ichi-no-Tani. Atsumori bids farewell to his wives who is pregnant, and heads for Yashima. Atsumori heads to the ship alone because he forgot his flute and had to return. Kumagae stops Atsumori and challenges him to a duel.	The Genji army attacks the Heike at Ichi-no-Tani. Atsumori bids farewell to his wives who is pregnant, and heads for Yashima. Atsumori heads to the ship alone because he forgot his flute and had to return. Kumagae stops Atsumori and challenges him to a duel.	The Genji army attacks the Heike at Ichi-no-Tani. Atsumori bids farewell to his wives who is pregnant, and heads for Yashima. Atsumori heads to the ship alone because he forgot his flute and had to return. Kumagae stops Atsumori and challenges him to a duel.

<p>However, during the fight, Kumagae remembers his son and tries to save Atsumori, but as the warriors from the Genji side approach, he ends Atsumori's life. Kumagae regrets taking the life of Atsumori and becomes a monk under Hōnen.</p>	<p>However, during the fight, Kumagae remembers his son and tries to save Atsumori, but as the warriors from the Genji side approach, he ends Atsumori's life. Kumagae regrets taking the life of Atsumori and becomes a monk under Hōnen.</p>	<p>However, during the fight, Kumagae remembers his son and tries to save Atsumori, but as the warriors from the Genji side approach, he ends Atsumori's life. Kumagae regrets taking the life of Atsumori and becomes a monk under Hōnen.</p>
DAN 2, 3	(CONTINUE)	DAN 1 (KO-ATSUMORI)
<p>(From the mid-second dan) Atsumori's wife gives birth to a boy.</p> <p>Atsumori's wife <u>thinks that Genji will find and kill him anyway, so she decides to abandon the child.</u></p>	<p>(From the mid-third dan) Tamaorihime gives birth to a boy. The boy is named Ko-Atsumori.⁽¹²⁾</p> <p><u>Myōjin of Kamo Shrine appears and orders Tamaorihime to abandon her child.</u></p>	<p>Tamaorihime gives birth to a boy. The boy is named Ko-Atsumori.</p> <p><u>Myōjin of Kamo Shrine appears and orders Tamaorihime to abandon her child.</u></p>
(CONTINUE)	DAN 4	(CONTINUE)
<p>Atsumori's wife abandons her son at Ichijō Sagarimatsu but keeps coming to the place every day for thirty days.</p> <p>Hōnen visits Kamo Shrine for worship with his apprentices.</p> <p><u>On the way back, Hōnen hears a child crying. He finds Ko-Atsumori and takes him back with him.</u></p>	<p>Atsumori's wife abandons her son at Ichijō Sagarimatsu but keeps coming to the place every day for thirty days.</p> <p>Hōnen visits Kamo Shrine for worship with his apprentices.</p> <p><u>On the way back, Hōnen hears a child crying. Renshō is sent to check what it is. Renshō finds a basket with the child. In the basket, he discovers a letter written by Atsumori's wife. He learns that the child was the son of Atsumori, whom Renshō (Kumagae) killed at Ichi-no-Tani.</u></p> <p><u>Renshō hesitates and considers leaving the child but then takes him back to the temple.</u></p>	<p>Atsumori's wife abandons her son at Ichijō Sagarimatsu but keeps coming to the place every day for thirty days.</p> <p>Hōnen visits Kamo Shrine for worship with his apprentices.</p> <p><u>On the way back, Hōnen hears a child crying. Renshō is sent to check what it is. Renshō finds a basket with the child. In the basket, he discovers a letter written by Atsumori's wife. He learns that the child was the son of Atsumori, whom Renshō (Kumagae) killed at Ichi-no-Tani.</u></p> <p><u>Renshō considers killing the child, thinking that the child will try to avenge the death of his father, Atsumori, in the future. Renshō hesitates to kill the child without telling Hōnen what happened. Hōnen suggests that Renshō bring up the child. Renshō takes him back to the temple.</u></p>

<u>Hōnen finds a wet nurse and raises the child.</u>	<u>Renshō returns with the child. However, since the boy is too young, they send him to Muromachi until he turns five.</u>	<u>Renshō returns with the child. However, since the boy is too young, they send him to Muromachi, the house of a rice cake shop owner, until he turns four.</u>
(CONTINUE)	DAN 5	(CONTINUE)
Ko-Atsumori turns seven. He starts learning things and remembers everything fast. Hōnen names the boy Hōdōmaru.	Ko-Atsumori returns to the temple. He starts learning things and remembers everything fast. Hōnen names the boy Hōdōmaru.	Ko-Atsumori returns to the temple. He starts learning things and remembers everything fast. Hōnen names the boy Hōdōmaru.
(CONTINUE)	(CONTINUE)	DAN 2
<u>One day, Hōdōmaru laments that even a nightingale has parents, but he does not. Hōnen tells the boy that he was found near Sagarimatsu seven years ago.</u> <u>Hōdōmaru is longing for his parents. He stops eating and drinking.</u>	<u>One day, Hōnen promises to reward the apprentice who will succeed in the writing exercise. Hōdōmaru succeeds and gets the reward. Other apprentices envy Hōdōmaru and start bullying him, calling him a foundling.</u> <u>Hōdōmaru is longing for his parents. He stays in bed.</u> <u>Renshō tries to cure Hōdōmaru, but Hōdōmaru does not get better. Renshō talks to Hōdōmaru and learns about the bullying. Hōdōmaru asks Renshō about his parents.</u>	<u>One day, Hōnen promises to reward the apprentice who will succeed in the writing exercise. Hōdōmaru succeeds and gets the reward. Other apprentices envy Hōdōmaru and start bullying him, calling him a foundling.</u> <u>Hōdōmaru tries to reconcile with the apprentices. He begs them; he helps them, but the apprentices continue bullying him no matter what he does.</u> <u>Hōdōmaru is longing for his parents. He stays in bed and stops eating and drinking.</u> <u>Renshō tries to cure Hōdōmaru, but Hōdōmaru does not get better. Renshō talks to Hōdōmaru and learns about the bullying. Hōdōmaru asks Renshō about his parents.</u>

<u>Hōnen asks whether anyone knows anything about the mother of Hōdōmaru. Renshō tells Hōnen that he saw a young woman of around twenty during the sermon last year. She was crying and stroked Hōdōmaru's head. Hōnen decides to hold a sermon service.</u>	<u>Hōnen decides to hold a seven-day sermon service. He believes that Hōdōmaru's mother might come to the service.</u>	<u>Hōnen decides to hold a seven-day sermon service. He believes that Hōdōmaru's mother might come to the service.</u>
DAN 4	(CONTINUE)	(CONTINUE)
The sermon service is held at the temple. Atsumori's wife comes to the service and reveals her identity. <u>After that, she meets her son, Hōdōmaru.</u>	The sermon service is held at the temple. Tamaorihime comes to the service and reveals her identity. <u>After that, she meets her son, Hōdōmaru.</u>	The sermon service is held at the temple for seven days. <u>After the service, all the people who gathered leave, but Hōnen and Renshō hear someone crying.</u>
(CONTINUE)	(CONTINUE)	DAN 3
Atsumori's wife tells Hōdōmaru of Atsumori's death. Hōdōmaru learns that Renshō is the one who killed his father. He attacks Renshō in an attempt to avenge his father's death but is stopped by his mother.	Atsumori's wife tells Hōdōmaru of Atsumori's death. Hōdōmaru learns that Renshō is the one who killed his father. He attacks Renshō in an attempt to avenge his father's death but is stopped by his mother. (The story of Ko-Atsumori ends with this scene.)	<u>The sermon service is held at the temple for seven days. Tamaorihime doesn't reveal her identity during the service. Hōnen and Renshō hear someone crying. Renshō finds the crying person. After that, Tamaorihime reveals her identity and meets her son.</u> Atsumori's wife tells Hōdōmaru of Atsumori's death. Hōdōmaru learns that Renshō is the one who killed his father. He attacks Renshō in an attempt to avenge his father's death but is stopped by his mother.
DAN 5, 6		(CONTINUE)
<u>Hōdōmaru prays to Myōjin of Kamo Shrine. Myōjin appears, taking the shape of an older man, and tells Hōdōmaru that he should visit Ikuta. Hōdōmaru visits Ikuta and meets there a young warrior. The young warrior was a ghost of Atsumori.</u>		<u>Hōdōmaru, Renshō, and Tamaorihime visit Ichi-no-Tani. They meet a young warrior there and ask him about the Atsumori's grave. The young warrior was a ghost of Atsumori. Tamaorihime becomes a nun.</u>

<u>The two have a long conversation, and Hōdōmaru falls asleep. Hōdōmaru becomes a monk after he returns.</u>		<u>and Hōdōmaru becomes a monk after they return.</u>
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The table above illustrates the general structure of the story of Atsumori and his son Ko-Atsumori in the blind *biwa* players' tradition. Unlike the Yamashika version of *Ko-Atsumori*, the Kunitake version is a long tale in five dan, combining two tales, *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori*, into one. The comparison of the Yamashika versions of *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* and the Kunitake version of *Ichi-no-Tani Ko-Atsumori* offers valuable insights into the general characteristics of the structure and content of the story of Atsumori and his son in the blind *biwa* players' tradition. Though there are almost no identical expressions or lines, except for some, such as *genji ni ubaware mizuzeme* ('will be taken away by the Genji and tortured with water') or *kōmyō no hikari wo terashi (hanashi) hikō* ('shining a bright light and fly'), the overall order and content of scenes in the Yamashika and Kunitake versions exhibit striking similarities. A notable difference between the two versions lies in the absence of the final scene in the Kunitake version featuring Ko-Atsumori's encounter with his father's ghost. Overall, the comparative analysis of the Yamashika and Kunitake versions elucidates the enduring themes and narrative conventions present in the tale of Atsumori and his son Ko-Atsumori within the blind *biwa* players' tradition.

Ko-Atsumori in the *kojōruri* tradition starts with a lengthy episode describing the tragic encounter between Atsumori and Kumagae that ends with Atsumori's death. This part corresponds to the content of *Ichi-no-Tani* in the blind *biwa* players' tradition. Interestingly, we find some common features in the content and structure of this episode in the *kojōruri* tradition and the tradition of blind *biwa* players, which are not seen in the *Tale of the Heike*. These similarities suggest a potential relationship between the two. One notable example is the mention of an event where Atsumori and his wife performed music together: Atsumori played the flute while his wife played the *koto* instrument. Additionally, both narratives provide detailed accounts of Atsumori's marriage to his wife and the poignant scene of their separation, during which Atsumori bids farewell to his pregnant wife. This episode in the *kojōruri* tradition is a part of the *Ko-Atsumori* tale. The introduction of Atsumori's wife and the emphasis on the relationship between the spouses naturally complement the overall storyline and serve to enhance the narrative coherence of the tale of *Ko-Atsumori*. Researchers of the blind *biwa* tradition of Kyushu have treated *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* as two separate tales.⁽¹³⁾ This is probably due to the fact that most blind *biwa* players mastered and performed *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* separately. However, the results of comparative analysis of *Ko-Atsumori* in the *kojōruri* tradition and the blind *biwa* tradition suggest that *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* in the blind *biwa* tradition were originally parts of one long tale *Ko-Atsumori*, a tale similar to *Ko-Atsumori* in the *kojōruri* tradition. The manuscript by Kunitake in which the two stories are combined into one long tale under the title *Ichi-no-Tani Ko-Atsumori* further supports the notion of their original unity. The division of the older *Ko-Atsumori* narrative into two separate tales, *Ichi-no-Tani*, the story of the encounter between Atsumori and Kumagae, and *Ko-Atsumori*, the tale about the subsequent fate of Atsumori's son raised by Kumagae, could have occurred due to a

variety of reasons. Perhaps blind *biwa* players or audiences found certain aspects of one of the narratives particularly compelling, leading to a desire to explore them in greater depth. Alternatively, practical considerations, such as the length of performances, may have contributed to the division.

While the analysis of *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* in the *kojōruri* tradition and the blind *biwa* players' tradition has revealed significant similarities, it is possible that these narratives evolved from an older tale that circulated widely in medieval Japan. In the absence of direct evidence of influence between the *kojōruri* version and the blind *biwa* players' version, it is reasonable to consider the existence of a common source for the tales in both traditions. Musicians and storytellers throughout Japan would have come across this older tale, which they later adapted to suit their own purposes, audiences, and performance styles. And over time, these adaptations gave rise to distinct yet interconnected versions of the *Ko-Atsumori* tale.

Conclusion

The comparative analyses conducted for this paper have yielded intriguing findings, revealing significant similarities between *Ko-Atsumori* in the *kojōruri* tradition and the tales of *Ichi-no-Tani* and *Ko-Atsumori* in the blind *biwa* players' tradition. These parallels suggest a shared narrative lineage between these two performance traditions, prompting a reevaluation of our understanding of the transmission and evolution of oral narratives within the blind *biwa* players' tradition of Kyushu. The findings of this research open up new perspectives for scholars, offering insights into the dynamic nature of oral storytelling and the interconnectedness of different performance traditions within Japan and shedding light on the rich history of exchange and interaction among various groups of storytellers across different regions and historical and cultural contexts.

Notes

- (1) HIRAKAWA 1978: 6.
- (2) DE FERRANTI 2009: 95-96.
- (3) HYŌDŌ 2009; DE FERRANTI 2009.
- (4) SAYA 2002: 17.
- (5) HYŌDŌ 2009; DE FERRANTI 2009.
- (6) The scenes were selected to demonstrate such aspects of the tradition as variability and fixity. SCENE A and SCENE B contain phrases and lines that repeat from performance to performance. These phrases and lines are clearly memorized as a part of this specific tale *Ko-Atsumori*. In addition, SCENE B includes a longer section that can be found in other tales in almost identical form.
- (7) Parts of the text of KA1 and KA2 repeated word-for-word or in nearly identical form in both performances are underlined. The sign ○ indicates the parts of the recording that were difficult to distinguish. Highlighted parts indicate that this part of the text in almost identical form can be found in a different part of the same version or in performances of other tales. We should take into consideration, though, that in some cases, differences may arise due to mistakes or different approaches during the transcription process.

- (8) MUROKI 1992: 347-354.
(9) HYŌDŌ 1999: 125.
(10) The version in *Kojōruri shōhon shū* was used for the analysis.
(11) A *dan* is a section of a narrative piece presenting a major episode in the tale, within which there are usually a number of scenes. A *dan* lasts from thirty to ninety minutes.
(12) The content of underlined parts differs slightly between the versions or between the *kojōruri* tradition and the tradition of blind *biwa* players.
(13) NOMURA (GA) 1972, HYŌDŌ 2009.

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