

INTERPRETING *SHIMA* THROUGH SONG

Whaling songs in the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture, Japan

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ABSTRACT: In the south of Japan, 5 of the many islands in Nagasaki Prefecture are home to 27 traditional Japanese whaling songs. Mapping and thematic analysis of these songs in relation to the broader nationwide corpus of folksongs in general, and whaling songs in particular, reveals the importance, geographical spheres and character of the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture within Japanese whaling heritage as a whole. Relative to the rest of Japan, the islands have an abundance of whaling songs. These songs show signs of connectedness, having certain elements in common with (non-whaling) folksongs across the country and also have other elements in common with the songs of other whaling communities. Furthermore, a small number of unique elements are signs of local distinctions. Perhaps most significantly, the majority of themes present in the national corpus are also found in the Nagasaki Prefecture island songs, thus casting islands as an invaluable repository for this aspect of culture. In the Nagasaki case, islandness spawned a high density of whaling communities historically. More recently, the drive to nurture local and national culture has been faceted by differentiated contributions from these multiple communities. As a result, this study finds that small islands are not merely convenient units for research but that they play a central role in the holding of broader cultural phenomena.

KEYWORDS: Japan, Nagasaki Prefecture, whaling, folksong, island, heritage

Introduction

In the south of Japan, a total of 30 traditional whaling songs have been collected from Nagasaki Prefecture.¹ Of those 30 songs, 3 are from Nagasaki city itself.² The remaining 27 songs were collected from islands and are the focus of this study. Figure 1 identifies the song-source islands, of which there are 5. The largest is Tsushima (at c 696 square kilometres) and the smallest is Enoshima (c 2.6 square kilometres) and the others are Nakadori Island (situated in the Goto Islands archipelago), Ikitsuki Island and Iki Island. This study aims to interpret these islands' whaling songs within a wider context, illustrating connectedness, flow and uniqueness and the heritage value of both the islands and their songs.

¹ By Uemura (Uemura, 2016).

² From the Suwa Shrine *Kunchi* festival.

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This article first introduces the genre of Japanese whaling songs and outlines the research background. It then sets the Nagasaki island songs within the national corpus of whaling songs giving overall figures and patterns. It goes on to refer to specific examples to highlight commonalities and differentials within the corpuses of both whaling song and general folk song and discusses what these might suggest about the connectedness or isolation of these islands. Limitations and indications for future research are given and, finally, conclusions and implications.



Figure 1 - Whaling Song Sources, Nagasaki Prefecture (map by David Burles).

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Background

The songs in this study are traditional whaling songs called *kujira-uta* in Japanese – *kujira* meaning whale and *uta* meaning song – associated with the in-shore net and hand-harpoon whaling practiced in Japan until roughly the end of the Edo period (1603-1868). This was a sustained period of active whaling (as opposed to ‘passive’ use of beached whales) that was increasingly organised and refined until it was ousted in a piecemeal fashion by modern methods and competition for stocks.³ The known whaling songs of this period are, relative to other ‘folksongs’, few⁴ – a sparsely distributed subset of the Japanese primary *min’yō* (traditional folksongs of primary economy) genre as defined by Machida (Machida, 1971: 289). Appearing only infrequently in the 1970-80s’ regional ‘Emergency Folk Song Survey of Japan’ (*Min’yō Kinkyū Chōsa*), under Section A3: Work songs: Songs related to fishing⁵ (Groemer, 1994: 203), the *kujira-uta* are not widely known and often overlooked.⁶ In common with other folksongs, they are of unknown authorship, were passed on by oral tradition and are subject to local and personal variants.⁷

In previous research, I analysed the lyrics of 50 traditional Japanese whaling songs from 9 prefectures (Greenland, 2013), after the manner of Yano’s work on Japanese *enka* ballads as a key to national attitudes (Yano, 2002). Among the aims of these studies were: to investigate the Japanese recourse to cultural sentiments, such as tradition and community identity, in the international whaling controversy (Kalland, 1998: 8), and to examine potential heritage resources of depleted communities. The songs were found to elucidate the practices and attitudes prevailing in net and hand-harpoon whaling of the Edo period. In terms of historical whaling practices, the 50 songs yielded geography, personnel, techniques (methods, tools, industrial topography) and whale species (Greenland, 2011). As for attitudes, allusions to good fortune, celebration, prosperity and veneration of the whale afforded interpretations of historical attitudes towards whaling (Greenland, 2012). By means of these studies, 50 practice themes and 39 attitude themes were identified.

The *kujira-uta* are customarily divided into two types – celebration songs (*iwai-uta*) and work songs (*sangyo-uta*) – originally the former being sung before and after a catch, for luck and in gratitude, and the latter during the tasks of net-tying, raising (ie hauling the whale by means of a horizontal winch, or capstan) and flensing (ie dissection or

³ For a detailed history of Japanese whaling with other citations, see Greenland (2013: 53).

⁴ In total, 73 whaling songs and variants have been found by the leading collector Uemura (Uemura, 2016). In contrast, the ‘Emergency Folk Song Survey of Japan’ collected a total over 50,000 folksongs and variants nationwide (Groemer, 1994: 200).

⁵ Groemer actually gives A.c., but most published reports give A3.

⁶ Outside of the research field and song locations, I have yet to meet a Japanese person who is aware of the existence of these songs, in spite of their more general awareness of a ‘whaling history’ and ‘folksong’. In the major work in English on Japanese folk song, Hughes alludes only to one whaling-related song, stating, “the whalers of Taiji (Wakayama prefecture) celebrated a successful hunt with a powerful dance based loosely on work movements (see Nakai et al, 1972: 119). The lyrics of the *accompanying song* are not obviously religious” (Hughes, 2008: 75 – my italics).

⁷ Uemura gives three local variants of a Yamaguchi Prefecture song *Mishima Kujira Uta* (Uemura 2016: 35). Recordings made in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture on behalf of the Takarazuka dance company in 1958 (transcribed by the author of the present article from field recordings held at Ikeda Bunko Library, Osaka Prefecture, November 25th 2016) show slight variations between informants. During the course of this research it has been rare to find an exact match between any available rendering and a written source – the changing of order and cutting/adding/mixing of lines and is extremely common.

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partitioning of the whale). Sung mainly by whaling teams (*kujira-gumi*), and also by associated workers and community members, these songs were specific to the whaling locations of their time. The locations of sources to collectors all fall within 17th-19th Century net-whaling areas, such as are mapped in Akimichi et al (1988: 17). Traditional techniques demanded specific topographical combinations – a cliff- or hill-top lookout,⁸ a narrow inlet to drive a catch into, beaches suitable for launching numerous catcher boats simultaneously – and, of course, the necessity of location on a seasonal whale migration route. Islands featured largely in whaling, not only for the latter topography: an additional near-shore tiny island, such as Mukaijima in Taiji, Wakayama Prefecture or Aoshima in Ine, Kyoto Prefecture (Figure 2) could become a strategic net-fixing point,⁹ a well-removed flensing station, a secluded spot for a shrine to the souls of whales,¹⁰ or a head-start launch for boats.¹¹



Figure 2 - Aoshima viewed from the shore of Ine Bay (author's photo, 2016).

With their original in-shore whaling context now practically defunct, some *kujira-uta* songs are now deemed 'obsolete'¹² and remain only in documented form, while others are

⁸ Whaling at Taiji (in Wakayama) employed a sequence of these cliff-top lookouts. Tatami-type banners were raised, like beacons along the coast, to signal a sighting. (Source: Taiji Museum, visited May 1st 2013).

⁹ "When a whale comes into the inlet, they put a 367 metre net between Takanashi and Aoshima (called 'large façade') with 38 vessels, and a 156 metre net between Kameyama and Aoshima (called 'narrow façade') with 18 vessels. Beating the edges of ships, fishermen prevent a whale from getting out of the Ine Inlet" (Ine, 1990: 24 – my translation).

¹⁰ Aoshima at Ine was designated in 1898 as "an island having forests to be preserved for fishing". Its evergreen *shii* (chinquapin) forests overgrew the remnants of flensing there, as well as enclose the Hiruko Shrine and 'tombstones' of whales (Taki, 1996: 1).

¹¹ A shipbuilding family named Mukai operated on Mukaijima for several generations until the Taisho period. (Source: Taiji Museum, visited May 1st 2013).

¹² Referring to a whaling song from Nagato Shi in Yamaguchi Prefecture, where whaling took place from 1698-1909, Mr. Irie, head of the Kawashiri fishermen's union, stated, "Now the song has become

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sung at festivals and ceremonies as a homage to a traditional way of life.¹³ Those songs that are still given voice are typically performed, and passed on through teaching, by local preservation societies (*honzonkai*), a 20th Century phenomenon detailed by Hughes (2008: 212). Among the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture there are *kujira-uta honzonkai* (whaling song preservation societies) at Arikawa on Nakadori Island (Figure 3), and on Ikitsuki and Enoshima islands.¹⁴ The sources cited by the *honzonkai* include Edo period books and other documents, artefacts such as folding screens (*byōbu*) or picture scrolls (*emakimono*), and oral tradition.

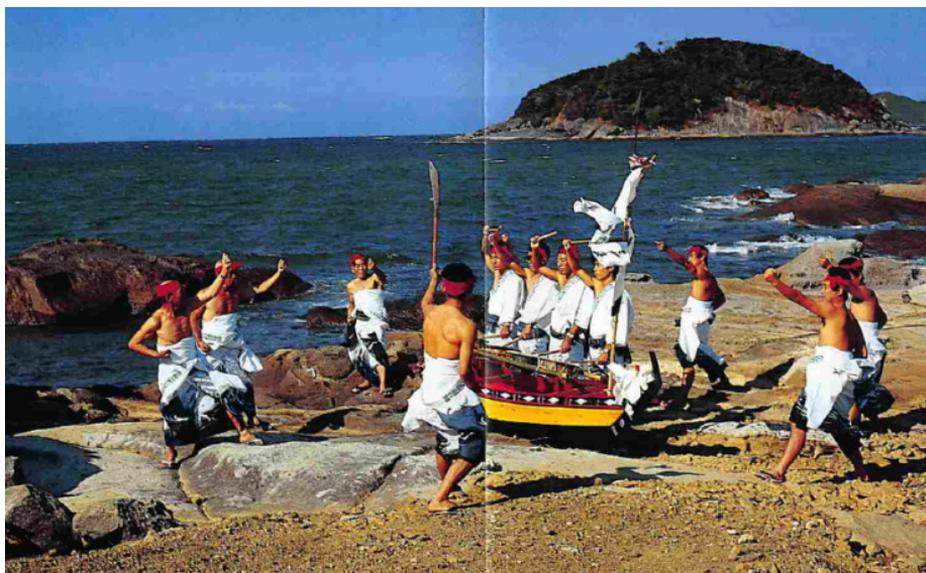


Figure 3 - Performance by the Arikawa Kujira Gumi of Nakadori Island, Nagasaki Prefecture (photo: Arikawa Kujira Gumi, reproduced with permission).

The *kujira-uta* are sung in a common *min'yō* call-and-response style with a leader, or leaders, delivering the main lyric and respondents chorusing vocable *kakegoe* or *hayashi* rejoinders (see Hughes, 2008: 31). A modern day *honzonkai* performance typically features several songs in series, variously accompanied – by hand-clapping, *taiko* drums, a *yokobue* transverse flute or bells – and a representative dance or kneeling, symbolic ‘acting out’ of

obsolete, although I am very happy to witness that the song was recorded according to the wishes of the old fishermen who have been engaged in whaling, for the purpose of conserving this song for the next generations.” (Source: undated document entitled *Kawashiri Hogeï no Rekishi - Yuya Shitei Bunkazai* obtained through correspondence with Nagato Board of Education, June 5th, 2012 – my translation.)

¹³ “Being deeply rooted in the daily lives of people in the local areas, whaling songs have been sung continuously and are still now sung as celebration songs that praise their ancestors’ glorious history” (Nagato, 1979: 1013 - my translation). There is some common ground with other communities using song to express depletion of industrial identity and the loss of a traditional way of life. Narváez (1997) noted new songwriting in Newfoundland in response to the Atlantic fisheries crisis as well as the re-commissioning of older songs as vehicles of social protest, whereas the whaling song *honzonkai* approach is to reinforce their community by re-enacting its past.

¹⁴ The Arikawa Kujirauta Honzonkai has its own website and appears at local and national events and on TV – their website lists events dating from 1968 (Arikawa, 2016).

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the lyrics may be performed in costume (Figure 4). There are various settings: stage, street, shore, shrine, on boats or floating platforms and, occasionally, a model whale.

In western traditional songs such as sea shanties, the call-and-response format with a single leader and any number of joiners-in has facilitated transmission and modification in fluctuating populations with the result that disparate locations are home to song variants and floating verses. It is accepted that Japanese whaling songs too, traveled and evolved by being adapted to task, being half-remembered and re-aggregated. Net-whaling innovations at Taiji, Wakayama in 1675 were diffused to other whaling areas and, even before such technical advances, the specialised equipment, physical skills and mental acuity required in such a seasonal industry had traditionally contributed to workforce mobility.¹⁵ Akimichi et al (1988: 17) map tentative routes of diffusion of net whaling methods from Taiji (Wakayama Prefecture) to Tsushima (Nagasaki Prefecture) via Muroto (Kochi Prefecture), and also from Kayoi (Yamaguchi Prefecture) to the north-eastern region of Tohoku, and from Noto Peninsula (Ishikawa Prefecture) to Hokkaido.



Figure 4 - Arikawa Kujira Gumi enacting a *rokuro maki uta* (capstan-winding song). A rope delineates the capstan shape; drums are beaten on a boat in the right-background (photo: Arikawa Kujira Gumi, reproduced with permission).

The *kujira-uta* songs form part of the intangible heritage of whaling. Although there are some whaling-related cultural properties designated at national, prefectural and local levels,¹⁶ there is no specific ministerial directorate for the overall preservation of Japanese whaling heritage – tangible or intangible. Thus, the compilation of a national corpus of Japanese traditional whaling songs is piecemeal and incomplete: the nationally directed ‘Emergency Folk Song Survey of Japan’ collected a number of whaling songs under Section

¹⁵ Also in the Nagasaki area according to Kaempfer cited in Hawley (1958: 16).

¹⁶ The Arikawa whaling songs of Nakadori Island in Nagasaki Prefecture are designated as *mukeminzokubunkazai* (intangible folk-cultural property) by the town of Shin Kamigoto-cho. The Taiji whaling dance-songs are similarly designated by the town of Taiji in Wakayama Prefecture (Taiji, 2015).

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A3: Work Songs in the 1970-80s (Groemer, 1994), yet greater local repertoires have been compiled by other means, for example Nomoto's collection from the Japan Sea coast (2003). The largest collection is that of Uemura who, in an ongoing project, has compiled, to date, a corpus of around 75 whaling songs from a total of 10 prefectures (Uemura, 2016). To this, I have been able to add one song in the course of my own research and fieldwork.¹⁷ ¹⁸ With my single addition to Uemura, the working corpus for the present study stands at 73 songs from 10 prefectures.¹⁹ Of those 73 songs, 30 songs are from Nagasaki Prefecture. Of the 30 Nagasaki Prefecture songs, 27 are from island sources and it is those 27 that inform the island focus of this study.²⁰

Nagasaki Whaling Songs in Relation to the National Corpus

Figure 5 maps the locations of all song sources in this study. The 73 songs in the corpus are derived from 10 prefectures in all. The locations for the corpus sources may be visualised as a hook shape from Ine on the Tango Peninsula on the western seaboard of Kyoto Prefecture, down past Nagasaki in the south of Kyushu, and up the eastern seaboard to Kyonan in Chiba Prefecture. Figure 6 shows the frequency of song sources by prefecture, divided by seaboard (the four bars on the left represent the western seaboard) and then arranged in this hook configuration. Island sources are differentiated in darker grey. As the chart shows, the western seaboard is dominant, with more than half of the *kujira-uta* in the corpus sourced from islands, all on the Western seaboard. Southernmost Nagasaki Prefecture shows the highest yield - a reflection of its prevalence of islands affording multiple whaling communities within a small geographical area. At a very simplistic level, one might imagine that each of 10 prefectures would be home to 10% of the corpus, whereas Nagasaki is clearly richest in songs with 41% of the total corpus.

Of the 30 songs collected in Nagasaki prefecture, 27 are from islands: Iki (9 songs), Nakadori (8), Ikitsuki (5), Enoshima (3), Tsushima (2) (Figure 7). The remaining 3 songs from Nagasaki Prefecture are associated with the Nagasaki Kunchi festival held at Suwa Shrine in Nagasaki city on Kyushu. Islands in the neighboring prefectures of Saga and Yamaguchi have also contributed songs to the corpus, though far fewer than the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture. No other prefectures' songs are from island sources.

¹⁷ Fieldwork in Ine-cho, Tango Peninsula, Kyoto Prefecture (11th-12th November 2016) yielded one whaling song. Field trips to Nakao Residence, Yobuko-cho, Saga Prefecture (October 2012), Ikitsukishima, Nagasaki Prefecture (October 2012), Taiji cho (May 2013), and telephone/mail correspondence with Nagato-shi Kyouiku linkai (Nagato City Board of Education) (July 2012) yielded much in the way of print, artifacts, film and field observation to inform my research but did not yield any songs not already included in Uemura's compilation.

¹⁸ Whaling histories suggest other regions that may have songs to be collected (Morikawa, 2009: 20; Akimichi, 1988: 17).

¹⁹ Uemura's Hokkaido Prefecture tranche is eschewed here as it pertains to whaling of a different era.

²⁰ Cross-referencing sources of different eras gives an indication of ongoing processes eg 6 songs in the Emergency Folk Song Survey (EFSS) report of Nagasaki appear together as a single sequence song in Uemura, sourced from a *hozonkai*. The EFSS report (Nagasaki 1988: 4) states that the decision to favour unaccompanied and 'older' versions of songs was a deliberate one.

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Figure 5 - Whaling Song Source Locations in 10 Prefectures (map by David Burles).

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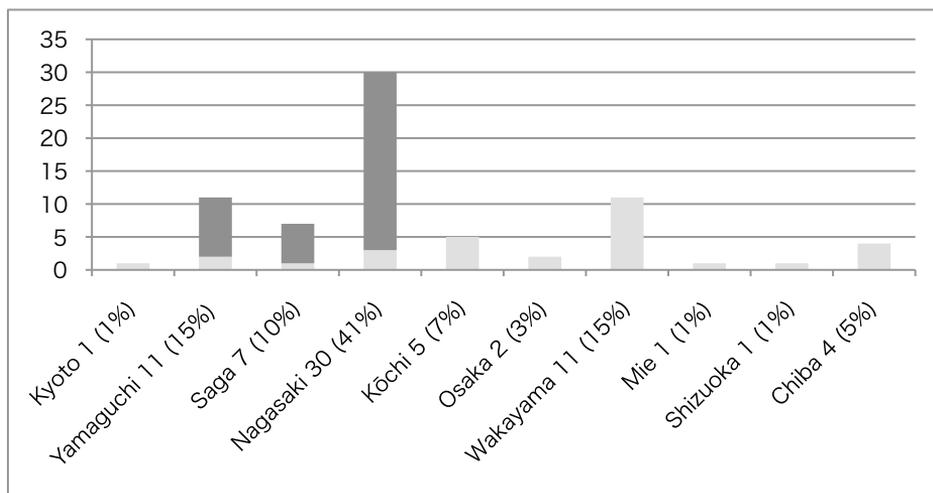


Figure 6 - Whaling Songs Frequency by Prefecture (n=73) (Dark grey denotes proportion of songs sourced from islands.²¹ Figures in brackets denote % of corpus.)

Figure 7 gives the five islands' song frequency, song index, land area and approximate current population. There is no immediate correlation between island size and the number of songs collected. (NB For song titles see Appendix 1, hosted on the author's page at <https://www.academia.edu>.)

Island	No. of songs	Song Index	Size Km ²	Population	Census
Iki	9	N ₁₃₋₂₀ , N ₂₇	133.8	28,008	2013
Nakadori	8	N ₅₋₁₂	168.34	20,167	2010
Ikitsuki	5	N ₁₋₄ , N ₂₆	16.57	7,014	2005
Enoshima	3	N ₂₈₋₃₀	2.6	169	2010
Tsushima (main island only)	2	N ₂₁₋₂₂ (N ₂₇ ²²)	696.1	39,716	2006
Total	27				

Figure 7 - Nagasaki Island Sources of Traditional Whaling Songs: frequency, index, area and population.

The more precise locations of song sources are mapped in Figure 8. Each song is represented by a rectangle and plotted at its source location.²³ The alphanumeric codes in the rectangles are the index for individual songs the letter denotes the prefecture, the number a simple identifier.²⁴

²¹ In the 'island nation' of Japan, strictly, every song is an island song. However, in Japanese convention the four main islands are *hondo*, 'mainland', or 'home' islands.

²² Song N₂₇, when sourced in Iki, was described as sung in both Iki and Tsushima.

²³ Source to the corpus: this cannot be presumed synonymous with 'origin' of a song.

²⁴ There is no significance in the order of numbers.

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The shaded rectangles indicate the number of themes or ‘richness’ of each song. 3 (38%) of the 8 ‘richest’ songs of the whole corpus (with more than 15 themes) are sourced from the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture: ie songs N12 (Nakadori Island), N22 (Tsushima), N27 (Iki and Tsushima). The islands also show a high frequency of songs with ‘low richness’ (5 themes or fewer) – 10 (59%) of the 17 in the whole corpus. These ‘thin’ songs tend to be shorter, having not been ‘subsumed’ into the longer sequences of festival songs, meaning that genuinely ‘old’ songs or song fragments may survive disproportionately in Nagasaki islands.

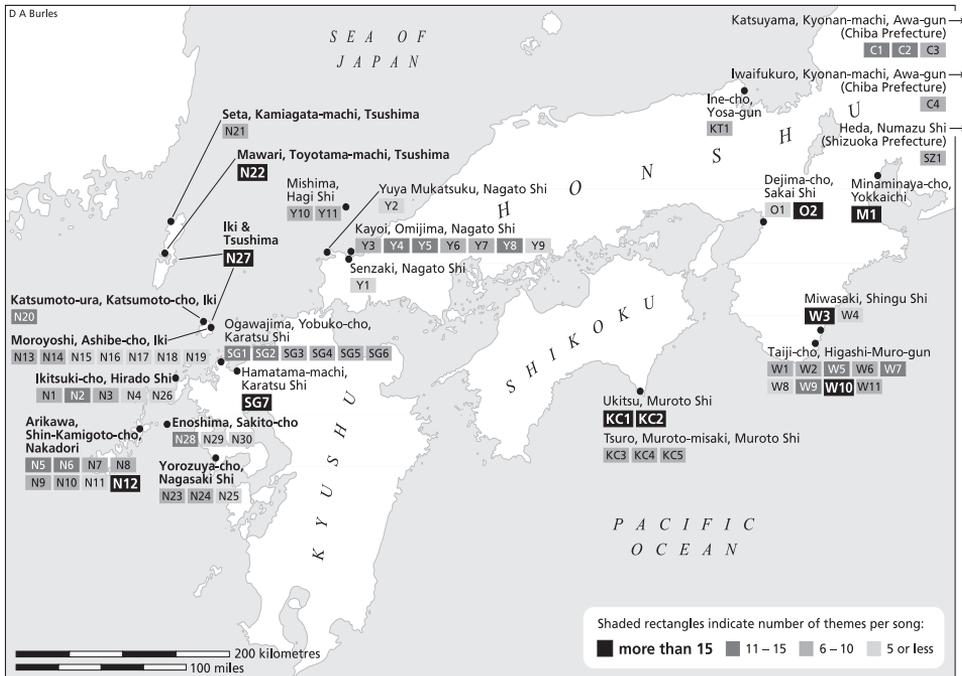


Figure 8 - Whaling Songs: source, location and number of themes²⁵ (map by David Burles).

Lyrical Comparison and Contrast

I turn now to closer examination of the lyrics of Nagasaki songs. My previous studies of the overall corpus noted commonalities between songs and proposed 3 possible explanations: convention (composition to a standard pallet), revision (morphing to a standard pallet), and transmission (sharing through mobility) (Greenland, 2012: 98). Closer examination of the Nagasaki songs suggests that all of these may apply. In addition there are a number of unique points.

Certain phrases in the Nagasaki island songs follow the conventions of folksongs found all around Japan. The most common of these phrases are among the ‘attitude’ themes identified in previous studies: ‘celebration’ and ‘longevity’. Firstly, phrases of celebration (*iwai medetai / medeta*), auspicious pines (*Wakamatsu-sama* – the honorable young pine; *goyō no*

²⁵ *Shi* is given in Japanese in preference to its usual translation, ‘city’, in order to avoid giving the impression of an urban environment.

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matsu - five leaf pine; and *kadomatsu* - a pine decoration for New Year) and flourishing leaves and branches (*eda mo ha mo sakaeru*) occur in various permutations in 15 songs of the Nagasaki Prefecture islands: Ikitsuki (N₁ N₂ N₃), Nakadori (N₅ N₆ N₇ N₉ N₁₂), Iki (N₁₃ N₁₄ N₁₆ N₂₀), Enoshima (N₂₈ N₂₉ N₃₀), Tsushima excepted (Appendix 2.a).²⁶ These usually occur as an initial verse, and incorporate *kakegoe* interjections, as shown in the Ikitsuki Island celebration song below. The *kakegoe* vary, along with the melody, from song to song, although the lyrics may be more or less identical.

*Hurrah! The celebrated Wakamatsu-sama
May its boughs flourish; its leaves flourish.*

*Oh to be bamboo, mountain bamboo
The bamboo pennant for Master's prosperity.*

*At the capstan of the workshed [we] put the net over
Winding up right whales there is no respite*

*Best of three countries; celebrate this ship
Let's net a right whale with its cub in the morning. (N₂)*

The honorable young pine *wakamatsu-sama* appears in other Japanese sailor songs (Smith, 1888: 284) and in other folksongs well-distributed throughout Japan including the inland prefectures of Gifu and Yamanashi (Sakakibara, 1985: 608, 700).

Secondly, nationally popular symbols of longevity pepper the songs (Appendix 2.b). Cranes and turtles appear in Ikitsuki (N₃), Nakadori (N₇ N₉ N₁₂), Iki (N₁₄), and Enoshima (N₂₉) songs but, again, not in Tsushima. A widely popular *kotowaza* expression wishing for longevity (Tosho, 1883: 215) appears in songs from Nakadori Island (N₁₀) and Iki Island (N₁₉), as in the example below,

*[May] father [live] to 100 [years old]; child[ren] to 99 [years old]
Until their hair turns white
Until their hair turns white.²⁷ (N₁₉)*

Hughes noted a song combining all these emblems – *iwai-medeta*, *Wakamatsu-sama* etc, and the ‘white hair’ motif – at a New Year celebration in Iwate Prefecture in 1979 (2008: 78). With the exception of Tsushima (which is a subject for further investigation), ‘islandness’ clearly did not spell isolation from ‘mainstream’ Japanese culture. The presence of these phrases indicates exposure to/participation in conventions held throughout Japan. However, these expressions appear with less frequency in Nagasaki island songs than in the rest of the corpus. For example ‘flourishing boughs’ occurs in 17% of Nagasaki island songs versus 35% of the remaining corpus; *iwai-medeta* and other expressions of celebration appear in 37% of Nagasaki island songs versus 67% of the remaining corpus. This reflects proportionally fewer celebration songs and a higher proportion of work songs in the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture, and the presence of numerous short songs. My interpretation of this is that, compared to other prefectures, a

²⁶ For Appendix 2 see the author's page at: <https://www.academia.edu>

²⁷ This expression also travelled with Japanese workers to Hawai'i, appearing in songs sung in the canefields (Odo, 2013: 109).

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higher proportion of the Nagasaki songs remain lean in their original ‘work’ forms and have not been incorporated into celebration series.

Next, ‘locator’ nouns were investigated in the whole corpus in search of overt signs of belonging and mobility. ‘Locator’ nouns included the names of places (towns, beaches, shrines etc.), whaling teams, and persons who might be locatable (Appendix 2.c). In the Nagasaki island whaling songs 40% of songs name a specific town, 3% a shrine, 3% a whaling team, 7% a person. By contrast, in the remainder of the corpus these figures are 72%, 9%, 37% and 19% respectively. This highlights the relatively fewer lyrical locators in the Nagasaki island songs and, thus, a relative tendency away from geographical ‘anchoring’. 12 (44%) out of the 27 Nagasaki island songs were anchored in one of the ways above: among their repertoires, four of the five islands showed locally anchored songs: Ikitsuki (N₁ N₃ N₄* N₂₆) Nakadori (N₅* N₆ N₇ N₁₁) Iki (N₁₆* N₂₀) Tsushima (N₂₁ N₂₂) (* denotes songs containing a non-local locator). In this case it is tiny Enoshima that is the exception: none of the Enoshima songs are anchored in this manner.²⁸

For the overwhelming majority of the corpus, locations mentioned are in the immediate vicinity of the song source. There were no instances of songs that mentioned only ‘other’ places ie there were no songs purely about elsewhere.²⁹ Any songs that did mention elsewhere, also mentioned the source locale. For example, the following from Nakadori Island in the Goto Islands archipelago presents, alongside the distant Ise Shrine in Mie Prefecture on the western seaboard, three local locators – Nokubi Headland, Ogawahara bay, and the local whaling team name (namesake of the town),

*Hurrah! Celebrated beach of Meizaiten!
The beach of Meizaiten!
The beach is seven beaches, has seven Ebisu
By the grace of Ise [shrine].
Let’s net a humpback tomorrow
One with its calf as well
This too perchance by Ise’s grace.
At Nokubi Head, if you keep watch from the mount
If you keep watch from the mount
Humpbacks come, just off Ogawahara.
Oh to be bamboo, mountain bamboo
The bamboo pennant for Master’s prosperity.
We hauled and hauled it twixt twin mosso boats.
Arikawa Whaling Team!
Arikawa Whaling Team’s caught yet another!
Three cheers! (N₅)*

The Grand Shrine at Ise in Mie Prefecture is the only distant location mentioned in the Nagasaki island songs. Those instances are: N₅ N₆ (Nakadori Island) and N₁₆ (Iki Island). These Nagasaki references to Ise use expressions similar to those found in Wakayama songs (W₂ W₃ W₇ W₁₁) suggesting mobility between Nagasaki and Wakayama

²⁸ The “whaling songs from Ejima [Enoshima] in Sakido-cho...[had] been unknown among whale folk art researchers, and came to light when local people presented a report several years ago” (Nakazono, 2003: 3).

²⁹ In contrast to western sea shanties, the traditional Japanese whaling songs feature neither homesickness (Hugill, 1967: 105) nor longing (Yano, 2002: 168).

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Prefectures. One song names Mishima island in the nearby Yamaguchi Prefecture: N4 (Ikitsuki Island). The mobility that this suggests between Nagasaki and the islands of adjacent prefectures is reinforced by a song from Saga that mentions Nagasaki city (SG7).

Local place names might of course be added or substituted in to songs in order to plant them afresh in a locale or community. The relative lack of ‘anchoring’ or ‘possession’ in songs in Nagasaki island in comparison with other prefectures may be interpreted as reflecting functional mobility – the songs are ‘free’ to belong anywhere they are sung. Allusions to techniques further suggest particular connections between islands of Nagasaki Prefecture and those of Saga and Yamaguchi and with Wakayama. Nets (*ami/mito*), catcher boats (*mosso/sekko bune*) and hill-top lookout (*yamami*) are mentioned in songs of those prefectures only and not others (See Appendix 2.d).

Poetic expressions in certain work songs offer lyrical clues to labour connections, where very similar songs are distinguished mainly by task-specific elements (Appendix 2.e). For example, two Saga Prefecture work songs (SG1 and SG2) have very similar lyrics to a Nagasaki song (N12), as shown the examples below, which are differentiated largely by their *kakegoe* interjections that regulate working rhythms, and their respective expressions of winding (N12) or cutting (SG1).

In the offing [we] catch the whale, and on the strand [we] dissect the whale
YO! YO!
The master of the workshed NŌ counts the money
YO! TŌ SORA! [We] wind [it around]. SORA! [We have] wound [it around]
YATTO SĒ YATTO SĒ! (N12)

ĀH! In the offing [we] catch the whale, SŌ-RAI! on the beach [we] butcher
[divide] it
The master of the work shed SŌ-RAI! counts the money YO
ĀH! The master in the work shed YO
The master of the work shed SŌ-RAI! counts the money. YO
ĀH! We cut well. (SG1)

Another expression that stands out likens the brightening of the mountain slope by azalea and camellia to the brightening, by a whale, of the beach or work shed, as in the following example (N10). (This also contains the longevity couplet previously noted above.)

Ā! Azalea and camellia. NĀ-Ē!
HŌ-RA-Ē-YĀ-YA-Ē!
Light up the Nokubi sea.
HŌ-RA-Ē-YĀ-YA-Ē!
A humpback whale with its calf,
Lights up the workshed.
May our parents live to be a hundred years old.
HŌ-RA-Ē-YĀ-YA-Ē!
May our children live to be ninety-nine years old.
May our grandchildren live until their hair turns white.
HŌ-RA-Ē-YĀ-YA-Ē! (N10)

Such azalea and camellia expressions appear in Nagasaki city as well as in songs of Saga, Chiba and Mie Prefectures as exemplified by the second verse of following extract from a

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work song sourced in Saga Prefecture. (The first verse is in common with other Saga and Nagasaki work songs, N10 and SG1 above.)

In the offing [we] catch the whale, on the beach [we] butcher [divide] it YŌ-I-YOI!

The master of the workshed counts the money YŌ-I-YŌ-I YOI YA NA-DŌ-TO-O EN-YA Round and round EN-YA Round and round and round [we wound it]

The blossoms of azalea and camellia are shining on the land and hills YŌ-I-YOI!

The right whale-with-calf lights up the workshed YŌ-I-YŌ-I YOI YA NA-DŌ-TO-O EN-YA Round and round EN-YA Round and round and round [we wound it] (SG2)

The similarities between these work songs suggest that song sharing occurred as part of the sharing of techniques and labour.

While some song elements are clearly variations of others, there are some song elements that appear unique in Nagasaki island songs (Appendix 2.f). Firstly, there are products of whaling such as meat and bone. The only mentions of whale meat in the whole corpus are from Nagasaki island songs (N22 (Tsushima), N27 (Iki & Tsushima)). Secondly, there are motifs of opulence in the form of golden objects (N15 (Iki), N21 N22 (Tsushima)). Thirdly, there are certain religious allusions in the form of the named deity Benzaiten, one of the seven fortune gods (N5 N6 (Nakadori)), and reference to the whale as a 'monk' (*bōzu*) (N4 (Nakadori), N27 (Iki & Tsushima)). Fourthly, there are instances of local dialect or vocabulary: 'Meizaiten' (N5 N6 (Nakadori)) is a local name for the deity Benzaiten; certain names for ranks of master are also unique to Nagasaki island songs – *ōnushi* in N13 N14 (Iki), and *bettō* in N22 (Tsushima). These are, albeit small, indications of uniqueness in local identity and of inter-island links within that identity. On the other hand, certain themes are uniquely lacking in the Nagasaki songs, namely whale species present in other prefectures on both seaboards: Fin whales present in Wakayama and Saga songs, and Baird's beaked whales present in Chiba and Shizuoka are not evident in any Nagasaki songs. Finally, of the 39 attitude themes and 50 practice themes in total, 30 (77%) and 42 (84%) respectively appear in one or more Nagasaki island songs. On one hand this signifies that, overall, Nagasaki island songs are highly representative of Japanese whaling songs. On the other, viewed alongside some of the unique points and the high proportion of 'thin' and 'lean' songs, it suggests that the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture may be a 'holding net' for songs and song elements that have been lost elsewhere.

Limitations

The limitations of this study offer directions for future research. Firstly, the corpus compilation is an ongoing project. A larger corpus would further contribute to statistical analysis to strengthen or weaken the current interpretation. Secondly, it is based on lyrics alone – melodic analysis would obviously add another most informative dimension. Finally, a more detailed chronology, dating song emergence, continuation or obsolescence at each location, or an appraisal of overlapping sources (such as comparing the 'Emergency Folk Song Survey of Japan' to local documents) would provide further details

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not only of transmission processes and directions, but also of suspected resurgence or revival.

Conclusions

Nagasaki sources have contributed disproportionately to the 10 prefecture corpus of Japanese traditional whaling songs: by far the largest number of songs from a single prefecture at over 40% of the whole. From this we can interpret that the island nature of Nagasaki Prefecture contributes to some measure of industrial abundance and gives rise to a rich local culture, faceted by differentiated contributions from multiple, distinct, island communities. With many song elements in common with mainstream Japanese culture there is nothing to suggest that the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture were insular in the negative sense of the word. Connected by virtue of the mobility and industries afforded by their particular marine locations there is much in common between the prefectural islands' songs and those of neighbouring Saga and Yamaguchi, and the eastern seaboard, Wakayama in particular.

A small number of lyrical motifs unique to songs from the islands of Nagasaki Prefecture point to specific local identities, beliefs, dialects and vocabularies. However, more significantly, the greater part of themes in the national corpus also appear in Nagasaki songs. Insofar as this can be taken as an illustration of song mobility it suggests that the islands were a hub for the industrial context in which the songs originally functioned. From a heritage perspective, this relative breadth of themes also opens up the possibility that songs or song elements remain in Nagasaki that have been lost elsewhere. As there is relatively little in Japanese whaling songs that is not found in the islands, they may be a holding-net for whaling songs and other aspects of culture, by virtue of their islandness. In this sense, the Nagasaki islands may play a pre-eminent role in the national heritage of whaling. This study has a number of more general implications for island research. It offers an example of how insularity affords multiple units of identity - individuals and groups - in close proximity, each with their own autonomous motivations to document and nurture local culture. In terms of heritage, it shows that songs, even devoid of their original function, can contribute grass roots voices to articulate, verify and amplify community identity as a social and economic resource for islands. It demonstrates that small islands are not merely convenient units for research and that, although they may be geographically peripheral, their significance is far from marginal since they can play a central role in retention of broader cultural phenomena.

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³⁰ This source is currently not accessible due to closure of the Nifty web host in November 2016.

³¹ As footnote 30. above.