



THE RISING ASIA REVIEW OF BOOKS

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MUSIC FOR COEXISTENCE IN JAPANESE DOMESTIC AND DIASPORIC SOCIETIES Race, Tolerance, and Xenophobic Barriers

Unsilent Strangers: Music, Minorities, Coexistence, Japan, Edited by Hugh de Ferranti, Masaya Shishikura, and Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes. Singapore: NUS Press, National University of Singapore, 2023, 314 pages, SGD42.

After the ultra-conservative Sanae Takaichi was elected as Japan's Prime Minister on October 21, 2025, she went on to announce that policies on foreigners would be one of her government's priorities. Numerous surveys conducted since then point to heightened levels of xenophobia, perhaps reinforced by the new government's policy announcements. It is a fact that the number of immigrants in Japan has reached a record high of 4 million, or about 3.2 percent of the total population and 10 percent of the population in 27 Japanese municipalities. But according to the scholars Peter Chai and Willy Jou, Japan's declining population makes foreign workers more indispensable than ever, especially in agriculture, elder-care facilities, and other blue-collar sectors. Yet, "in a country long accustomed to ethnic homogeneity, even those who recognize the importance of foreign labor to address workforce shortages feel pressured by social norms and the current

political climate, preventing them from expressing their support openly.”¹

In the current political climate, the book *Unsilent Strangers* looks at the experiences of Japanese emigrants and immigrants through ethnomusicology studies, with implications not just in Japan but also in Southeast Asia and the rest of the world. Ethnomusicology was known as comparative musicology until 1950, and is, as the Society for Ethnomusicology explains, “an interdisciplinary study of music in its social and cultural contexts. Ethnomusicologists examine music as a social process in order to understand what music is and what it means to its practitioners and audiences.”²

Ethnomusicology developed significantly in Japan both in scope as well as quality of research in the 1970s, when “Japanese scholars began to conduct research in Japanese music taking into consideration indigenous viewpoints, instead of only Western-oriented ones. One indication of this trend lies in the fact that the examination of traditional prescriptive notation systems of Japanese music has gained importance during this period.”³

The book under review is a collection of ten essays by academics, beginning with a foreword by Shūhei Hosokawa, Professor Emeritus, Musicology, Japanese-Brazilian cultural history, International Research

¹ Peter Chai and Willy Jou, “The Paradox of Japan’s Anti-immigrant Sentiments and Demand for Foreign Labor,” *The Diplomat*, January 19, 2026, <https://thediplomat.com/2026/01/the-paradox-of-japans-anti-immigrant-sentiments-and-demand-for-foreign-labor/>

² The Society for Ethnomusicology, “About Ethnomusicology,” <https://www.ethnomusicology.org/page/AboutEthnomusicol>

³ Kimiko Ohtani and Tokumaru Yoshihiko, “Ethnomusicology in Japan since 1970,” *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, vol. 15, 1983, pp. 155–62, *JSTOR*, <https://doi.org/10.2307/768650>



Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto, Japan—a useful read before diving into the main body of the book, as it explains a few terms and sets the context. Professor Hosokawa clarifies, “The word ‘unsilent’ in the title of this book denotes voicing and musicking.” Also that “‘strangers’ refers to Japanese emigrants before 1945 and newcomer and Indigenous minorities in today’s Japan. This unprecedented collection explores the musical experiences of groups moving out from and into Japan questioning migration cross-cultural encounter and inter-ethnic experiences” (p. 13). The foreword then goes on to explain that the four words constituting the subtitle, “Music, Minorities, Coexistence and Japan,” are the common ground in the case studies presented in the book.

In the introductory chapter, “Music, Minorities and Scholarship in Japan’s ‘New Immigration Era,’” the editors of this book⁴ repudiate the long-held notion that Japan is a homogenous, monoethnic, monocultural East Asian society consisting of Japanese citizens, some international business travelers, and a few English teachers, for the country was never so. In fact, the third decade of the 21st century will witness the weakening, if not complete erasure of this stereotypic description. That is because Japan’s modern immigration era is underway with demographers predicting that residents with foreign roots will constitute 5 percent of the population by 2030 and keep increasing further to touch 12 percent by 2065. The migrant communities, now comprising diverse people in most cities as well as some rural regions,

⁴ The book is edited by Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes, Professor, School of International Relations, University of Shizuoka, Japan; Masaya Shishikura, Associate Professor, Huizhou University, Guangdong Province, China; and Hugh de Ferranti, Professor, Institute for Liberal Arts, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Meguro, Tokyo.

rely on expressive culture for sustaining their well-being. The editors explain that the migrant communities are offering their arts and cultural practices “to their so-called host society, and reshaping them in light of the dynamics of their interaction with the Japanese ethnic majority,” adding that “as in migratory experiences everywhere, music plays a central role in the ongoing adjustment, conciliation and transformation of newcomers and ‘hosts’ alike” (p. 1).

This first of its kind study of music juxtaposes the experience of immigrant communities in Japan with those of emigrant Japanese in other countries. The essays point out that the ideal of “multicultural existence” (*Tabunka kyōsei*), introduced by Japan’s Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications in 2006, is inadequate because in practice, the national government is seen to arbitrarily push its responsibilities to local governments. The authors instead examine the concept of “cohabitation” which refers to an ethical obligation to live with the “other” by all possible means, as reflective of the reality confronting immigrants.

This book comes at a time when the world has entered a period of geopolitical changes and uncertainty on many counts, including changes in immigration policies. A recent article in *Forbes* explains that the Trump Administration will reduce legal immigration, increase deportations and limit the hiring of H-1B visa holders in 2026. An order issued on December 16 will prevent U.S. citizens from sponsoring a spouse, child, parent or sibling from thirty-nine countries, which account for about 20 percent of the world’s nations.⁵ The OECD’s International Migration Outlook 2025 further states that in reaction to very high

⁵ Stuart Anderson, “The Outlook on H-IV Visas and Immigration in 2026,” *Forbes*, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/stuartanderson/2026/01/06/the-outlook-on-h-1b-visas-and-immigration-in-2026/>

migration inflows, a number of OECD countries have set explicit objectives to reduce migration, sometimes on overall migration or on specific categories.⁶

In the book under review, the nine chapters following the introductory chapter are organized in three parts, each with a separate focus: Part One: “Music in Japanese Migration Experiences”; Part Two: “Domestic Migration and Community-making through Music;” and Part Three: “Music and Japan’s Newcomer Migrants.”

Part One: Music in Japanese Migration Experiences

The first chapter of Part One, “Musical Activities of Japanese Migrants in Pre-World War II California: Implications for the Realisation of Multicultural Coexistence” (by Minako Waseda, Professor, Kunitachi College of Music, University of Bengkulu, Indonesia), studies the musical activities of Japanese migrants in California in the period before the Second World War for clues to improve multicultural coexistence in present-day Japan. But while there are similarities, the situation in California at that time was quite different from the situation in present-day Japan, as far as immigrant experiences are concerned. The author argues, “What is common is that the main push factor for migration is global economic disparity, while the main pull factor is labour shortage in the economically advantaged countries,” adding, “What is different is that in pre-war California, rapid increase of cheap Japanese labourers eventually became an economic threat for white American counterparts.” The author further explains that “in contemporary Japan foreign workers are not an economic threat but rather strongly needed to fill the shortage of Japanese labour in areas such as elderly care, construction and factory work” (p. 35).

⁶ OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2025*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/ae26c893-en>

Besides, in pre-war California, the laid down policy was for immigrants to assimilate into American society, while Japan until recently followed a policy of multiculturalism that respected cultural differences. With the new Sanae Takaichi government, the focus has shifted to restricting the number of immigrants, cracking down on foreigners overstaying their visas and instituting checks on land purchases. It is interesting to note that Japan has, for long, considered itself to be a homogenous society, despite the Ainu, Okinawan, and Korean people who settled there long ago. It is only since the 1990s that migrant numbers increased after the existing law on immigration and refugees was revised as industry called for effective steps to realize the ideals of multiculturalism, by learning from the past experience of Japanese migrants in pre-war California. It resulted in a good increase in immigrant population from China, Vietnam, South Korea, Philippines, Brazil, Nepal, and India.

At the time, although industry leaders kept pressing for opening up the labor market, the government refused to recognize the presence of, and need for, foreigners until 2018 when it revised the Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act so as to accept specific skilled workers. This marked the beginning of the New Immigration Era.

Japanese migrants originally landed in Hawai'i as laborers under a contract between the then kingdom of Hawai'i and the Meiji government of Japan. After the annexation of Hawai'i by the United States in 1898, contract labor became illegal in 1900, freeing the laborers from their contracts and offering them opportunities to move to California for higher wages. Their experience in California is examined by studying: (1) The Performing Arts as a means of cultural interaction and enhancement of understanding, (2) Experts on the musical culture of the Other as agents for bridging cultures, (3) Music as a means of



therapy for migrants, and (4) Maintenance of the migrants' heritage language and culture through performing arts.

The performing arts refers mainly to the initiative taken by Japanese migrants to learn social dancing so as to become better assimilated into American culture and participate in social dances and interact with upper-class white Americans.

Experts on the musical culture of the Other refers to the Japanese experts in Western music (like pianists and vocalists) playing a significant role through their performances in bridging the cultures and connecting Japanese and American mainstream societies.

Music played an important part as therapy for the migrants as they adjusted to the new country and dealt with racism and discrimination. The lyrics of the Japanese songs incorporated Hawai'ian and English words to make it relatable to their situation and provide comfort. The performing arts were popular, especially *engei-kai* "which can be likened to a talent show, consisting of a wide variety of performances, such as dance, drama, music and comedy" (p. 44). This was usually combined as an extension of a banquet and provided ample opportunities for socialization and relaxation. Most such events included Japanese dance and music by waitresses working at local Japanese restaurants. Besides stand-up comedy, sword dance and traditional Japanese instruments like koto, biwa, shamisen, and shakuhachi, some Western classical music was also added.

Maintenance of the migrants' heritage language was ensured in California because inter-racial marriages were banned until 1948. So the U.S. born children of Japanese migrants (*nisei*) were all of Japanese ancestry. They played a significant role, helping new Japanese migrants and their children sustain their ethnic pride and identity, and they acted "as cultural ambassadors, especially after the War, who could promote

interest in Japanese culture among Americans, taking advantage of their bi-lingual and bi-cultural attributes” (p. 48). It is interesting to contrast this with present-day Japanese policies to promote multiculturalism that do not provide sufficient support for migrants in Japan to maintain their parents’ heritage language and culture. Since the performing arts can help in cultural interaction and understanding, as well as act as therapy for migrants, there is scope for expanding it by adding hip hop and rap which seems to have wide acceptance among youth belonging to diverse cultures. Similarly, karaoke can be used as a medium for cultural interaction if the lyrics are provided in a common language.

The second chapter of Part 1 (Chapter Three), “Japanese Communities, Music and Intercultural Experience in Prewar Australia,” is authored by Hugh de Ferranti, Professor, Institute for Liberal Arts, Tokyo Institute of Technology, Meguro, Tokyo. Like the Japanese contract labor in Hawai’i, which subsequently shifted to California, the Japanese labor migration to pre-war Australia consisted of males from agrarian communities who intended to work for a few years and return to Japan with their savings. However, a good number ended up staying much longer, and by 1901 a few settlers became British subjects, as the first of a series of steps for Australia to become independent began in 1901. Besides Sydney, they settled down in many port cities, particularly Broome, Thursday Island, and Darwin as well as in Queensland for sugarcane cutting and milling.

In the case of pre-war Australia, the evidence of Japanese musicking falls into five categories of music and dance: (1) Exhibition and staged performances of song, music theatre, and dance (including bon dancing and singing), (2) Musical entertainment by sex workers, (3) Religious chanting, (4) Leisure-time singing, playing of instruments

(with and without song), and listening to popular song on records, and (5) Involvement with Western music.

Exhibition and staged performances began with instrumental and dance performances during acrobatic and variety shows. These early shows, were followed by large exhibitions in all Australian cities and some regional centres, that were visited by one in eight Australians. The performers were tens of Japanese who displayed themselves and facets of daily life in Japan, presenting a range of dances, songs, and instrumental music (p. 68). There are numerous accounts of music performances, acrobatic and variety shows, and theatrical performances for special occasions like the June 1897 Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Musical entertainment by sex workers (*karayuki-san*) is substantiated by excerpts from Albert Calvert's accounts of his Western Australia tour in 1897. In the town of Marble Bar, he writes, "in the evening in their Oriental robes they take the air on the verandah, receive their friends and entertain them with solos on an instrument something like a mandolin. If the stranger should prefer it they will sing, play cards or chat with many coquettish airs in broken English" (p. 74). Other reports indicate that before 1941 some aboriginal men visited a Japanese brothel on Thursday Island, establishing thereby that the business was conducted without racial prejudice.

Religious chants allude to the Buddhist funerary rites carried out by priests at the large Japanese graveyards on Thursday Island and Broome. There are also accounts of regular memorial services that were conducted by Japanese priests.

Leisure time singing, playing of instruments and listening to popular songs on records was common. At Broome in 1910, the warehouses would transform at night with the sound of tomtoms and

shamisen as indentured workers would turn to singing Japanese folk and popular songs. Such singing and playing of instruments was common on luggers, a sailing boat with one or more lugsails, used off the coasts, as well as camps and boarding houses during the lay-up months. These songs were learned from older Japanese, or from prostitutes, or by listening to Japanese 78s that were played in some Thursday Island cafes.

Involvement with Western music is seen in the case of early Japanese settlers who became British subjects and attained proficiency in playing the piano and singing Western songs which facilitated better acceptance by Australian white communities. The author writes that while the middle-class Japanese of Sydney played both Japanese traditional and Western classical music in private, in public the women mainly sang British (including Australian), European and Western-styled Japanese songs, and played piano solos (p. 80).

The chapter concludes by pointing out that for Anglo-Celtic Australians, Japanese music and dance remained curiosities and failed to engage them. In fact, it only reinforced the belief that Japanese music was very different and difficult to be understood or appreciated. On the other hand, the mastery of Western classical music and display of their competence by the Japanese, evoked appreciation.

Part Two: Domestic Migration and Community-making through Music

The first essay in Part Two (Chapter 4), “Tokyo Ainu and Unexpected Musicking at the Charanke Festival: Going Beyond Multicultural Festivity” (by Kylie Martin, Learning Advisor, Education Portfolio, Monash University, Melbourne), looks at Ainu migrants who settled in Tokyo and the critical role of music in ensuring their well-being. Ainu refers to an indigenous ethnic group who were originally from Hokkaido

and Tohoko regions in northern Japan, some of whom migrated south to urban centres like Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. The Ainu perform and participate regularly at the annual Charanke festival, which is the largest Ainu music and cultural festival, making it a site of unexpected musicking for their social life.

To explain musicking, the authors quote Christopher Small (1998): “Musicking focuses on the performativity of music and how people socialise to build a sense of belonging through participation in music whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practising, by providing material for performance (what is called composing) or by dancing.”⁷ In this chapter the focus is on the surprising and novel musicking that takes place at the Charanke festival, flowing from the interactions of the Ainus at the festival. The study draws on fieldwork done over a ten-year period from 2004 to 2014, at the Charanke festivals and in Hokkaido. Even though Tokyo is the national capital, the Ainus have imagined it as a place of displacement and dispossession where their performances are considered to be that of the “Other.” Hence, the festival provides an opportunity for them to express their Ainu selves. At the same time, for many of the Ainus the sense of marginalization in Tokyo and other urban centres is so great that some of them try to forget their Ainu heritage and pass off as Wajin (mainland Japanese). The study points out that participation in these festivals by the young and old has made it possible for them to learn from each other about music and dance. In effect, “this intergenerational interaction through unexpected musicking has acted as a trigger to reactivate ‘forgotten’ knowledge of the ancestral ways, oral traditions, and cultural memory among the elders” (p. 108). As a result of these efforts, in May 2019 the Japanese

⁷ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

government finally recognized Ainu as indigenous people. The Charanke festival played an important role in helping the Ainu reclaim and showcase their traditional yet modern musical practices, thus working as a key decolonizing tool to subvert the narrative about Japanese homogeneity.

The next essay (Chapter 5), “Doing Music: Community Making through Music and Dance from the Ogaswara Islands,” by Masaya Shishikura (Associate Professor, Huizhou University, Guangdong Province, China), looks at the Ogaswara Islands, a UNESCO Natural World Heritage site, also known as Bonin Islands, an archipelago located approximately 1,000 kilometres south of Tokyo. Chichijima Island and Hahajima Island are the only islands in the archipelago that are now inhabited.

Until 1830 all these islands were uninhabited. It was only in 1830 that five Westerners and twenty Hawai’ians arrived for business opportunities as Ogaswara was a breeding place for whales. Later, people from Micronesia and other Western countries also joined to form a community on the island. In the 1870s the Japanese government began sending immigrants to occupy the island as part of its colonial expansion. The former residents of Ogaswara were forced to naturalize as Japanese, but were at the same time discriminated against for being naturalized Japanese. When the U.S. Navy took control of the island in 1946, it allowed only Western descendants to stay. The Japanese were forced to become refugees in mainland Japan, and return only in 1968 when Ogaswara island was returned to Japan. Under Japanese administration, the Western descendants were discriminated against. Clearly the island community consists only of migrants and descendants of migrants from many different places. The author explains that “the community reveals internal complexities, including the categorisation of



islanders as a product of alienation, discrimination and conflict,” adding that “the Ogaswara community shows another face when people ‘do music’ together,” and as a result the “music communities of Ogaswara easily change their shapes by including other peoples and cultures, and transcend people’s categorisation and conceptual barriers, so as to ‘enjoy music together’” (p. 120). Although Japanese policy supports multicultural coexistence—living together beyond differences—yet the same idealistic policy goes about highlighting differences and otherness between the community members. In Ogaswara doing music together ties people together and forms a web of relationships that fill the emptiness of their isolated lives.

This essay explores the musical activities in 2018, marking the 50th year of the reversion (return of the island to Japan from U.S. possession). The production of a CD titled *Bonin no Kaze II* (The Wind of Bonin II) was a major project to bring together several old songs of Ogaswara along with some contemporary songs. The author admits that it was not all utopian as conflict and antagonism could be witnessed in the preparation of the CD. But it is also true that people started committing to do music together in order to dispel the sense of boredom and loneliness on the distant island. The author argues that Ogaswara music communities “demonstrate the possibility of open, fluid and motley groups of people who are inclusive and capable of expansion to many other places,” adding, “those music communities can transcend the conventional and exclusionary concepts and shed light on the current global problems of mobility and encounter by ‘doing music’” (p. 136).

Part Three: Music and Japan's Newcomer Migrants

The first essay in Part Three (Chapter 6), “Musical Influences of Brazilians and Other Foreign Residents in Local Culture and Community formation in Ōizumi (by Shunsuke Saitō, affiliated researcher, Institute for Oriental Studies at Daito Bunka University, Tokyo), looks at Oizumi, an industrial town near Tokyo with a large number of foreign residents. As the title suggests, this chapter looks at the influence of Brazilian and other immigrants on the musical culture of the Oizumi community during the period 1990 to 2019. The author explains that owing to an increase of foreign residents, particularly Brazilians, Brazilian music and performance of samba grew in popularity in the town since the 1990s, becoming known throughout Japan since 2005 as an important element in the regional culture of Oizumi (p. 149).

Before 1990 the musical culture of Oizumi did not have any foreign influence. Then in 1989 the law was changed to allow immigration of *nikkei*, foreigners of Japanese descent to come along with their spouses as long-term residents. The vast majority that came to Japan were Brazilians of Japanese descent, a good number settling in Oizumi. The town had a century-old tradition of a music festival where traditional Japanese songs and dances were performed. In 1991, a drastic change took place when samba dances were introduced in the style of a Brazilian carnival. It got a good response, and by 1996 the samba parade in Oizumi was well known nationwide.

However, from the year 2000 the relationship between Brazilian and Japanese residents changed and the samba parade was halted. After some time, the town administration promoted the music of Brazilian residents as an element of the local culture and encouraged the growth of tourism focusing on the carnival. As a result, Oizumi became known as “Brazil Town” in Japan.

Since 2017, the number of immigrants increased owing to new arrivals from Peru and Nepal, leading to a talk of a multi-ethnic, multicultural local culture. In 2018, the Oizumi Town Tourist Association changed its monicker from “Brazil Town” to “International Town Oizumi” on its tourist map. The restaurants, shops and businesses it listed had an international feel, with 33 Brazilian, 4 Peruvian, 9 Nepali, 3 Turkish, 3 Taiwanese and one each of Indonesian, Pakistani, Iranian, and Bangladeshi. The author concludes that “the contemporary culture of this regional industrial town has been formed by much groping and fumbling, trial and error on the part of the Japanese and the foreign residents alike” (p. 157).

The second essay of Part Three (Chapter 7) “Our Version of Coexistence: The Singing Contest of Filipinos in Japan” (by Michiyo Yoneno-Reyes, Professor, School of International Relations, University of Shizuoka, Japan), is a study of the musicking of Filipino residents in Japan, and focuses on the Utawit which is a singing contest organized by Filipinos nationwide. Utawit, a portmanteau combining *uta* (song) in Japanese with *awit* (song/sing) in Filipino, has been organized by Filipino residents since 2005 in Tokyo.

But this study is focused on the Grand Final held in 2018 and 2019 in Tokyo, as also the Regional Qualifying Rounds held in 2015 and 2018 in Kyoto and Tokyo. The author argues that “Utawit embodies in contemporary Japan the long history of Filipino diasporas’ engagement with music in colonial contexts, as well as the widespread popularity of karaoke singing both in households and nightclubs in the Philippines.” Both features are found more or less commonly in a large part of Southeast Asia (p. 173).

A large part of the Filipino diaspora to Japan came during or after the 1980s and, in that sense, they are the newcomers among the

immigrants, compared to the Chinese, South Koreans, and Vietnamese who are more in number. Filipino nightclub hostesses arrived in large numbers in the 1980s, initially working illegally in Japan, and later obtaining visas under the entertainment category. Later on in the 1990s, aged care workers, laborers, farmers, factory workers, IT engineers and English teachers came in large numbers.

When Utawit was initially organized, it was restricted to Japanese with Filipino heritage, but the very next year it was opened up for all Japanese participants to foster unity and cooperation. In 2009 it became a nationwide event with qualifying rounds in eight cities. This essay offers detailed descriptions of the events and discussions with the participants, concluding, first, that in such singing contests the Filipinos have shown some adjustment with Japanese society. Secondly, it shows that the Filipinos, through their personal connections, had access to U.S. Naval Force facilities in Japan on which they were dependent, having limited access to other public facilities as many were illegal workers. Thirdly, it was clear that the Filipinos, although citizens of Japan, retained their connections with the Philippines. They are neither fully integrated into Japan nor are they cut-off. Lastly America's shadow can be seen, forming a *ménage à trios* between the Philippines, Japan, and United States. But overall, the author explains "Utawit is able to bridge the socioeconomic and ethno linguistic gaps among Filipinos and unite them by means of the mediated popular music of the music industry" (p. 199).

The next essay (Chapter 8), "Mediating Between Musical Worlds: Musical Performance and Iranian Communities in Japan," looks at the musical mediation by the relatively small Iranian community in Japan, which is more dispersed and therefore well absorbed into Japanese social

structures.⁸ At the same time, they have also faced discrimination from parts of the Japanese population, especially after political tensions between Iran and United States and imposition of sanctions by the United States and other Western governments.

The focus here is primarily on the musical activities of Nahid Nikzad Yoshinari, an Iranian musician who is a co-author of this chapter. She is a broadcaster with NHK, as well as a performing musician of traditional and popular music, and a leader of many musical projects and Iranian cultural events through which she has contributed to build up a positive image of Iran. The article explains that she has interacted widely with Japanese musicians and other non-Iranian members of Japan's foreign community, and frequently includes Japanese pop songs, jazz, and other musical genres in her performance repertoire. Her repertoire changes frequently depending on the event or concert in which she is performing, and the perceived expectations of her various audiences, including mainstream Japanese society, the Iranian diaspora in Japan, and the wider foreign community in Japan (p. 205).

The authors studied other Iranian singers and musical performers such as Amid Choghadi, Akbar Khatibi, Minah Saleh and Junzo Tateiwa. They have presented case studies of events where Nahid Nikzad Yoshinari has collaborated with other singers such as Nowruz 2019 (Iranian New Year), Yalda event (Winter Solstice) December 2019, and Earth Festa Kanagawa events from 2015 to 2019. The diverse attitudes of Iranian society towards the Islamic Government in Iran is brought out in the descriptions of a more exuberant side of Iranian culture on display at

⁸ This article is authored by Matt Gillan, Professor of Musicology, International Christian University, Tokyo; Sawako Ishii, Curator, Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments, Hamamatsu, Japan; and Nahid Nikzad, Translator and Announcer, Persian section of NHK World Japan.

the Nowruz festival, contrasting with the staid performances at the Yalda event. The manner in which the musicians negotiate these differences makes a fascinating study. The authors explain that all the case studies show that “Nahid and other members of the Iranian community in Japan exist musically in multiple subsets of Japanese society and use their musical activities proactively to mediate both their own identities and that of Iranian culture within Japan” (p. 221).

The fourth essay of Part Three (Chapter 9), “Musical Activities among South Indians around Tokyo: Forming a Cultural Cohort (by Takako Inoue, Professor, Faculty of International Relations, Daito Bunka University, Tokyo), shifts the focus to Indians in Japan, whose numbers have grown steadily since the end of the twentieth century, mainly on account of the growing demand for IT workers. The newcomer Indians established their own small “Little India” community in the eastern part of Tokyo, and are categorized mostly as “sojourners” and not “settlers” in this essay. Many of them typically come to Japan to work for an indefinite period, with no concrete plans of returning, while others with a cosmopolitan background move on after some time to other countries in the English-speaking world. The author explains that although their length of stay in Japan is undecided, Indian sojourners share a common feature in that almost all of them go to great lengths to maintain their ethnic culture and customs (p. 227). They hold cultural events featuring music and dance performances that are hosted by associations based on linguistic states, while a few cultural events present India as a unitary whole. The exclusiveness of these events causes people from other Indian states and Japan, as well as other countries, to be reluctant to attend. The author has been listening and performing in South Indian classical music concerts with the South Indian diaspora and therefore

considers himself to be a member of the cultural cohort of Carnatic music lovers.

Against this backdrop, this chapter looks at two events—Tyagaraja Aradhana (a memorial service for this Saint composer) and Paraiyattam (a Tamil Nadu group dance with parai drums). The author argues that “music-oriented cohorts do not always completely surpass language, caste, religious and ethnic differences (p. 246). Thus, in Japan, the Tyagaraja Aradhana is completely dominated by Tamil Brahmins and very few other non-Tamil South Indians or non-Brahmins involve themselves in the Aradhana although Tyagaraja wrote all his songs in Telugu. On the other hand, in the case of Paraiyattam, which is a folk tradition performed by Tamil non-Brahmins, not a single Brahmin participates. However, there are Japanese performers in this non-verbal drum dance, as it was brought to Japan by Kurokawa Tacko, a Japanese performer who taught Paraiyattam to Japanese and Tamil residents. Paraiyattam did not become exclusive to any resident group in Japan, although originally it was limited to the Dalits in Tamil Nadu. This is seen as an example of how collaboration by Japanese and local Indian residents can facilitate cohabitation by people of different ethnicities without fear of losing their individual identities. The author concludes that “we cannot choose with whom to cohabit the earth and it is impossible to live together without being involved with each other; thus we should form alliances instead of maintaining rather antagonistic relations and keeping distances between ‘us’ and ‘others’ in the spaces that we have to cohabit” (p. 247).

The last essay of Part Three (Chapter 10), “Nepali Migrant Communities in Tokyo: A Music-centred Perspective” (by Sawan Joshi, Sitar Teacher, Tokyo University of the Arts, Tokyo), explains that Nepalis have become an important minority community in the last decade on

account of the increasing numbers of students, skilled labor and dependents. There were 96,824 Nepalis as of December 2019 and more than half of them live in the Kanto region. As Nepal is a multi-ethnic country, those living in the Kanto region belong mainly to one of the following ethnic groups: Khas-Arya, Newar, Gurung, Magar, Tamang, Thakali and Rai. Consequently, many Nepali organizations have been formed based on these communities. These organizations conduct cultural programs with music and dance during various ethnic and pan-ethnic festivals.

This chapter draws upon interviews with Nepali residents as well as field surveys conducted from 2017 to 2020. It is also based on the experiences of the author, himself a Nepali who came to Japan as a student in the year 2000 and continued studying until completion of his PhD from the Musicology Division of Tokyo University of the Arts. Since then, he has been living in Tokyo as a musician teaching and performing sitar.

As Nepalis are a multi-ethnic, multilingual, and multicultural nation, Nepalis living in Japan have two identities: a national identity as a Nepali citizen, and an ethnic identity which distinguishes them from other Nepalis. The cultural events are also of two kinds: ethnic festivals and national festivals. This essay first examines three events organized by single-ethnicity group organizations: Gurung or Tamu Losar (New Year of the Gurung people), Tamang or Sonam Losar (New Year of the Tamang people), and Teej (Ladies festival of Khas-Arya). Then, it studies the Hatemalo festival and Nepal festival which are organized along non-ethnic lines, involving collaboration by people belonging to different ethnic backgrounds and as well as Japanese participants.

Finally, the article looks at the music activities of two individual musicians: Sushma Omata, a sitar player who settled down in Japan and

has participated in many musical events, and the author of this chapter, Sawan Joshi, who is a sitar player who has performed for over twenty years and also taught music in Tokyo. What becomes clear from the study is that Nepalis who came initially in the 1990s were not many in number and therefore gathered together to share their problems and experiences without considering ethnic affiliations. But as the numbers grew, they started gathering with their ethnic group members, leading to the formation of single-ethnicity based associations. These ethnic groups/associations celebrate their own festivals with a lot of music and dance, in addition to the Nepali national festivals. Generally, the participation by the Japanese is more noticeable in events organized by non-ethnic associations like the Non-Resident Nepalis Association-Japan and the Hatemalo Association. The participation by Japanese as audience is greatest at concerts performed by individual musicians.

The author concludes that coexistence is difficult for Nepalis as newcomers in Japan, although different cultures and ethnicities have been living harmoniously in Nepal since unification of Nepal in 1769. According to the author, “a common problem in multicultural societies in most countries, including Japan, is that immigrants always assume a passive position, so they must learn to follow and concur with established practices of the society to which they have migrated” (p. 274). There is a need for more initiatives and greater effort to share and involve the other side by both, Nepali immigrants as well as Japanese hosts, to ensure that multicultural existence is felt and practiced.

The volume is a study of immigrants in Japan in the process of adjusting to their new environment, relying on music and dance to facilitate their well-being, as well as to mediate their engagement and connect with other members of the migrant community and also with the hosts. The experience of Japanese emigrants in other countries is

also juxtaposed for a better appreciation and understanding of this process. The authors hope that by the end of 2030, similar studies will show much more interaction and engagement between migrants and hosts as they strive towards cohabitation. The authors set the date of 2030 based on these studies and prevailing trends, anticipating that by the end of the third decade of this century a more positive situation would prevail. Obviously, they did not anticipate the change in the Japanese government that took place recently, taking a marked anti-immigration and right-wing turn. The study shows that understanding social engagement and cohabitation through musical activities offers important insights. The book will be useful to scholars, researchers, and students of ethnomusicology, musicians, policymakers, sociologists, diplomats, and cultural ambassadors involved with immigrants and immigration, and also the general reader interested in understanding the immigrant experience in modern Japan.

Note on the Reviewer

Vinod Kumar Pillai is an independent scholar with an interest in literary fiction, development studies, popular science and short-story writing. He regularly publishes book reviews in the *Rising Asia Journal* (www.rajraf.org) on topics related to the literatures and politics of Southeast Asia. His chapter has appeared in the edited book, *Between Homelands in Michael Ondaatje's Fiction*, published by Routledge in 2024. and is a reader for the Bengal Club Book Club. He holds a graduate degree in Agricultural Sciences, and worked for over thirty years in banking, specializing in industrial credit, training, behavioural science, and counseling. Besides literary fiction, development studies, popular science and training, he also devotes time to jyotish, podcasting and stock photography.