

# Cultural studies abstract



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Jun Kang Who Owns Popular Culture? The is engaged in research on the history of Japanese Kami-Shibai (picture plays; literally “ paperplays”) and Manga. This paper provides new insights into comparative studies on orality and literacy in the context of anthropological communication studies and ethnographic oral-literature studies by expanding considerations of interaction among visuals, parole, and écriture in expressions and thoughts based on media and representation studies. This paper also shows how the promotion of transition from orality to literacy, transformation of media technology, and commercialization (high-consumption society) are able to change the appropriation and ownership of popular culture.

Issues related to the original shape and authenticity of the tales of Kitaro in the graveyard are examined by comparing various forms of the story in Kami-Shibai and the variations generated during the transition from Kami-Shibai to rental Manga. These are based on researches on street Kami-Shibai and rental Manga.

Creation in Kami-Shibai, which has no prior story documented, depends mainly on sequencing of images with speech language and reaction from the audience. Therefore, as for street Kami-Shibai, the accumulation of various versions as one story must be put into consideration. Orality, a main feature of Kami-Shibai, is subject to fundamental and crucial transformations due to changes in representation techniques and authorship during its transition to Manga. The consciousness and analysis of Manga readers are centered primarily on words or text. The recipients of Manga and animation tend to be categorized as fanatics and this makes the issue of popular culture use and ownership even more complex.

This paper also tackles the authorship and ownership of popular culture in

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the age of technological media. The relationship between cultural likeness and transformation of media technology is discussed while the arguments of studies on “transmission” [densho] in Japanese folklore studies, anthropological resemblance, power in cultural studies, and creative similarities are examined in discussing actual copyright issues of Manga, digital copyright, and problems encountered in its creation on the Internet.