Paper Title:

KŌDAN

ORAL TRADITION TO MODERN MASS MEDIA, 1100s – 1930s

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Proposed Program Stream:
With Catherine Hallett who is to speak on rakugo; classical culture in Osaka.

Abstract
Abstract text  (no more than 500 words with no figures or tables)

The oral tradition of kōdan (classical storytelling) has received relatively little scholarship in the English-speaking world compared to other theatrical forms from Japan. However, kōdan contributed much to Japanese mass media at the turn of the 20th century. Kōdan influenced film via the benshi (film narrators)\(^1\) and radio via Naniwa-bushi (the musical élégies of Osaka).\(^2\) Notwithstanding, the greatest legacy of kōdan was to accessible print media and literacy in Japan.\(^3\) In support of the argument that kōdan be afforded more scholarly attention this presentation will describe in brief the history of the oral art form from its religious origins in Buddhism during the 12th century to the early days of radio in the

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1930s. Themes and selected works from the popular tradition will serve to illustrate the core values of *kōdan* and its significance to Japanese culture. This presentation will also touch on the personal feuds\(^4\) within the professional *kōdan* community at the start of the 20\(^{th}\) century that saw the establishment of Japan’s largest publishing company Kodansha.

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