



# Goze: Women, Musical Performance, and Visual Disability in Traditional Japan

*Gerald Groemer*

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In a tradition extending from the medieval era to the early twentieth century, visually disabled Japanese women known as *goze* toured the countryside as professional singers. An integral part of rural musical culture, the *goze* sang unique narratives of their own making and a significant repertoire of popular ballads and short songs. *Goze* activities peaked in the nineteenth century, and some women continued to tour well into the middle of the twentieth. The last active *goze* lived until 2005.

In *Goze: Women, Musical Performance, and Visual Disability in Traditional Japan*, Gerald Groemer examines the way of life, institutions, and songs of these itinerant performers. Groemer shows that the solidarity and success *goze* achieved with the rural public through narrative and music was based on the convergence of the *goze's* desire for a degree of social and economic autonomy with the audience's wish to mitigate the cultural deprivation it so often experienced. *Goze* recognized audiences as a stimulus for developing repertoires and careers; the public in turn recognized *goze* as masterful artisans who acted as powerful agents of widespread cultural development.

As the first full-length scholarly work on *goze* in English, this book is an invaluable resource to scholars and students of Japanese culture, Japanese music, ethnomusicology, and disability studies worldwide.

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