Any reader of one of the major Japanese newspapers, The Asahi, along with the readers of two sports papers, Sankei Sports and Tokyo Chunichi Sports, must have had their attention drawn more or less to a huge warning against the violation of the music copyright law, in the morning on 18 February, 2003.

One whole page advertisement is visually characterised firstly by its red background and secondly by two phrases in English, “LOVE MUSIC?” at the top and “SAVE MUSIC!” at the bottom in the same outsized letters. These two minimal phrases in English, which could easily be comprehended by the general Japanese, sandwich, under an entreaty, “Please listen to our music with care” in Japanese, the enumeration of the names of the most popular domestic pop/rock artists and groups, which amount to ninety, along with the names of thirty-two marketable overseas artists/groups, including Celine Dion, Backstreet Boys, Phil Collins, Madonna, the Red Hot Chilli Peppers and the Rolling Stones. It was historically for the first time, as far as I know, that such a large advertisement concerning copyright as one whole page of a newspaper appeared in Japan at least, while small-scale joint advertisements by the same two organizations, the Recording Industry Association of Japan (RIAJ) and the Japanese Society for the Rights of Authors, Composers and Publishers (JASRAC), have appeared, several times in major newspapers so far (Kitaura 2003). This advertisement was also reproduced as a poster to be put up in record shops and record-rental shops, and, in a year later, it appeared again, similarly occupying a whole page, in The Asahi on 14 March, 2004, in a different version with an indistinctive white background.

Four lines make clear that the warning is significant. These follow the names of artists/groups: making a copy of music from a marketed CD for other persons without permission and uploading music on the internet without permission are acts against the copyright law and are subject to severe punishment. This advertisement, obviously aimed at the audience of popular music, publicly announces, so to speak, that these particular aspects of copyright infringement caused by the latest development of technology, which enables anyone to make a clone copy of a CD, are what noticeably inflict pain on the record industry nowadays. The name of RIAJ is juxtaposed with the name of JASRAC as the advertisers, but the anguished cry is palpably uttered by RIAJ as is
evident from the fact that only the telephone number of the publicity department of RIAJ is given as a place to make inquiries.¹

While RIAJ, one of the two associations that put this abrupt and flashy appeal, faces a crisis, JASRAC, the other association, has congratulated itself since 2000 on the amazing popularity of downloaded ring tone music. It was after having felt reassured about collecting performing right fees from karaoke stores. That strenuous efforts were made to establish the membership system for the stores all over Japan was reported from time to time in JASRAC Now, a monthly newsletter.

At the annual conference of JASRAC in May 2004, it was announced that copyright fees for ring tone music for mobile telephones paid to JASRAC in the fiscal year of 2003 amounted to as much as nearly 7.58 billion yen (¥7,580,000,000, which is approximately £37,500,000 or US$67,678.000), while the total sum of copyright fees collected by JASRAC totalled 109.4 billion yen (JASRAC Now 2004: 2).

This amount does not conspicuously exceed the amount for the fiscal year of 2002, which was 7.3 billion yen (“JASRAC Press Release” 2003). However, this 7.3 billion was astonishingly almost twice (192%) as much as the amount, 3.8 billion yen, in the preceding fiscal year, 2001 (“ASCII24 News Topics” 2002), when the sum of copyright royalties on compact discs was 37.7 billion yen (“JASRAC Press Release” 2002). Besides, 3.8 billion yen in the fiscal year of 2001 was three times (315%) as much as the 1.27 billion yen of the preceding fiscal year, 2000, reflecting the increasing availability of a variety of innumerable pieces of ring tone music through the internet as well as the astonishing spread of the keitai denwa (portable telephone), the mobile or cellular telephone. The rapidity can be furthermore confirmed by the fact that this 1.27 billion yen in fiscal 2000 was in turn nearly four times (377.7%) as much as that in fiscal 1999 (“Keitai Watch” 2001). It should also be noted that these incomes were specifically from the fees for “download type usages of musical works” in “interactive transmission”, apart from copyright fees for the use of pre-recorded ring tone music in the mobile telephone, which amounted, for example in fiscal 2000, to be about 2 billion yen (“Keitai Watch” 2001).

The diffusion of the mobile telephone gathered noticeable momentum in 1995 with the number of subscribers exceeding 10 million (9.3 % of the Japanese population). It was after the weight of the digitalised mobile telephone became as light as 200 grammes or so in 1991 (now it weighs a little less than 100 grammes) and the mobile communication section of NTT (Nippon Telephone & Telegram) became independent from NTT as NTT DoCoMo in 1992 (Nakamura 2001: 47-48). The first president of NTT DoCoMo increased the number of base stations, around 1993 and 1994, so that communication was possible at formerly out-of-the-way places while making efforts in reducing the price of the mobile telephone as well as its charges (Nojima 2000: 61).

Historically, the first mobile telephone emerged as an expensive motorcar telephone in 1979 with 1,600 subscribers before the appearance, in 1985, of a portable “shoulder-phone”, which was bulky and weighed as much as three kilogrammes. The appellation,
keitai denwa (portable telephone), was first used in 1987, as a brand name, when the mobile telephone weighed about 900 grammes and the number of subscribers turned out to be about 100,000, which was 0.1% of the population. The weight was reduced down to 640 grammes in 1989 when the annual addition of some 400,000 subscribers began. Since 1995, when the number of subscribers went beyond 10 million, another 10 million was added every year with the number passing 60 million in August 2000, which was 48.6% of the population (Nakamura 2001: 47). It was around this time when the abridged appellation, keitai, or more precisely, kaiitai, became informally the common name for the mobile telephone. Negative opinions about the circulation of the mobile telephone have sometimes been voiced because of its electromagnetic wave which has a detrimental affect on precision medical instruments, its disputed usage while driving a car, and its tendency to causing a nuisance to other people in public spaces. However, the opinions expressed never had an affect on the general acceptance of the mobile telephone.

Meanwhile, NTT DoCoMo began, in February 1999, to serve subscribers with “i mode”, a protocol for using internet services through the portable telephone, which enabled subscribers to access to web site information as well as to send and receive e-mail messages (Nojima 2000: 62). Particularly, e-mail through the mobile telephone soon became part of daily life for younger people. It costs much less than talking on the telephone while it is convenient in its avoidance of the inevitable intrusiveness of the ordinary telephone call, and the limit to the number of letters used when sending a message gradually eased on certain protocols. It is now nothing out of the ordinary to see a young person walking on a street inputting or taking out a message solely with a thumb while holding a portable telephone in the same hand. What should also be stressed is that, physically speaking, there is no other country where such a huge amount of neat and pretty little telephones are omnipresent (Mizukoshi 2001: 24). The stylishness might remind one of full-grown Walkman machines for domestic consumers, which are in contrast to comparatively crude export models catered for assumingly clumsy overseas customers. Significantly, the number of subscribers to mobile telephones exceeded, in March 2000, that of subscribers to traditional installed-telephones, which was 55 million (Maruyama 2000: 67), while nearly twenty per cent of public pay phones have been removed in the past decade, and prepaid telephone cards, which amounted to nearly 400 million in 1995, dropped to 54 million in 2001 (“Tensei jingo” 2003).

Ring tone music developed in parallel with this amazing increase of mobile telephones, with the first services beginning in June 1997, and in 2003 it was estimated that some 400,000 or more different pieces of music were available for telephone subscribers to download. According to a statement by a manufacturer of ring tone music, NTT DoCoMo provided their subscribers, as of October 2001, with about fifty web sites for ring tone music while two other major portable telephone firms, “J-PHONE” and “au”, provided their subscribers with thirty respectively, with each site supplying some 3,000 pieces of music (Matsui 2001). Subscribers, particularly younger ones, very often use
different preferable pieces depending on whom one expects a call from; one's steady boyfriend or girlfriend, one's wife or husband, a group of one's close friends, a group of one's classmates, a group of one's relatives, and so on. Ring tone music enables them to be ready for the way they respond to the caller. Then, hearing a particular piece too frequently naturally prompts one to replace it with another one. Meanwhile, some subscribers are curious enough to download a new or novel piece and simply enjoy listening to it or have their friends hear it. The average expense for a subscriber to download 15 to 20 pieces of ring-tone music per month is 100 to 300 yen (approximately £0.50 to £1.5, or US$0.80 to $2.50), which is paid to ring-tone transmission firms. These firms, which now amount to more than one hundred, in turn pay 5 yen (approximately £0.025 or US$0.04) per piece of music as a copyright fee to JASRAC, who distribute a certain amount of fees to composers (Asahi-shimbun 2003a). Also available is a variety of ring tone "voice", such as the chirping of an uguisu, a bush warbler, and brief relaying messages by fashionable comedians, but its use is very limited.

The present ubiquitous appellation, chaku-melo, is an abridgement of chakushin melody [ring tone melody], which was first used as a brand name for ring tone music when it was first introduced in June 1997 (Okada 2001: 71). (The consistent use of the phrase, "ring tone music", in the present article in English on a Japanese phenomenon is caused by this Japanese appellation, while one might wonder if it is hardly more than a signal or it is a musical signal.) Its popularity, along with its abridged appellation, was obviously exploited as well as accelerated by the publication, in November 1998, of Keitai Chaku-melo Do-re-mi Book (Tokyo: Futaba-sha), a manual for inputting a melody by oneself into one's own portable telephone. As this book illustrates, the initial ring tone music, with no semitones, was a clinking single-tone melody made up of one diatonic scale. It sounds similar to the musical sound that a calling party still often hears on the traditional telephone when he/she waits for the called person after he/she is told to hold it by someone who first answered the call.

In less than a year of its appearance, ring tone music developed a larger range with, firstly, four different tones at a time; one being a melody, another a base line, and two others forming harmony, which needed an advanced knowledge of arrangement. Then the number of tones soon increased up to twelve in 2001 and sixteen and thirty-two or more in 2002. The sound of ring tone music has gotten animated, increasingly becoming closer to the sound of "transmitted karaoke" music that is arranged and input with the use of the MIDI computer (Matsui 2001). Inputting a piece of music by a subscriber into his or her telephone naturally requires an advanced technique, most subscribers having resorted to downloading music, and this has in turn increasingly been diversified. It was in early 2001 that the last revised edition of the book mentioned above was published.

On the other hand, the increasing number of tones used made arranging and inputting manufacturers very much in demand, requiring them to input one piece of music with a number of different tones, for subscribers use at the same time telephones of
different generations. This growing improvement of the sound quality of ring tone music made it possible in 2001 for some inputting arrangers to make a living solely by being engaged in making ring tone music, while it had mostly been crafted so far as a side job by such musicians as guitarists and pianists (Matsui 2001). Ring-tone music manufacturers are not composers, but invariably arrangers of existing compositions for ring tone, and are required to “follow the original as closely as possible”. If they give alterations or exclusions counter to the original composer’s intention, it would constitute an invasion of his/her personal rights. Meanwhile, the arranger for ring tone music possesses a neighbouring copyright by creating an arrangement (“JASRAC Park” 2002).

According to San’ai Giga Network Company (“Keitai Watch” 2002), which owns one of the most popular internet transmission websites of ring tone music, “The Ring Tone Melody GIGA” through “i mode” protocol, the instrumental ring tone versions of Hikaru Utada’s hit songs won the first, third and fifth places in the annual ranking of popular ring tone music which had been downloaded in the period from 1 December 2001 to 30 November 2002. Another trendy female singer Ayumi Hamazaki boasted the largest number of her songs covered in its Top 100. Meanwhile, 89 out of the Top 100 were tunes that became popular through TV: those for TV commercials and those used as theme music for TV dramas. It was in March 2001 that the ring tone versions of both old and new TV commercial songs became available for “i mode” protocol when MCC Music & Pictures began transmission services (“Keitai Watch” 5 March, 2001).

Such popularity of ring tone music prompted JASRAC to make legal provision in the newly classified field, “interactive transmission”. The copyright fee for the use of work in public transmission using communication networks is now explained in detail in Article 12 of the latest edition of Shiōryō Kitei [fee regulations] by JASRAC (2002b: 79-89) with its English version being available through the “English Page” of JASRAC’s web site (2002a). One of the JASRAC employees in a managerial position suggested that the present regulations would serve as a model for other countries to follow in the near future (Hornmouchi 2002), although they are open to general criticism as is evidenced in some personal web sites. The copyright aspect of ring tone music has, however, been known only to those who are in the trade, and the general public is unaware of the fact that the amount they pay for downloading pieces of ring tone music contains a proportion of the copyright fee shared with the transmitters in addition to their profit as commercial transmitters. It was in May 2003 that chaku-melo was associated with copyright fees for the first time in a national newspaper, when the amount, more than 7 billion yen, as fees for ring tone music paid in 2002 hit a small headline as a topic extracted from the JASRAC press conference (Asahi-shimbun 2003a).

Meanwhile, in December 2002, one of the major mobile phone firms, “au”, introduced a new function which enables one to download and hear a part of a CD recording itself through the mobile phone as a piece of ring tone music. The length of what can be downloaded is from about fifteen to thirty seconds each from a good variety of
domestic and international hit tracks at a cost of around ¥100 (Stg. £0.50 or US$0.80). What decisively differentiates it from the usual ring tone music in terms of sound is that what you hear is vocal music. In contrast to an electronically arranged instrumental version of a hit song, the voice of a singer singing the lyrics of a song is there on the mobile phone. Hence comes the appellation, for this new kind of ring tone music, *chaku-uta*, which can literally be dubbed as “ring tone song” or “ring tone singing”.

The copyright fees for ordinary ring tone music have been paid only to composers whose compositions are electronically and instrumentally arranged, but now this *chaku-uta* allows record companies to profit in the market of ring tone music. Without any further production and distribution cost, they can benefit from fees for the neighbouring copyright produced via CDs, at a time when the record industry has fallen into recession, that is since 1999. In February 2004 NTT DoCoMo also developed a new model of mobile phone that has a *chaku-uta* function (*Asahi-shimbun* 2003b), and it is now estimated that the sales figures of *chaku-uta* soared recently to an annual total of more than 10 billion yen while those of ring tone music as a whole was 100 billion yen (*Shinozaki* 2004). It may be no wonder that the Fair Trade Commission entered and inspected more than ten record companies as well as one of the major ring-tone transmission firms, Label Mobile, in late August, 2004, under suspicion of an offence against the Antimonopoly Act. The Commission suspected that the record companies gave priority to providing Label Mobile, a firm established in 2001 with joint investment by several major record companies, with CD tracks by performers who are under exclusive contract with them, whilst disregarding other firms (*Shinozaki* 2004).

Now, although some serious attention has been paid to *keitai*, ring tone music has elicited no substantial discussion so far. A long research report by a group of eight sociologists on the use of mobile phones simply ignores ring tone music (*Mikami, et. al. 2001*), and a special number of *Nihongo-gaku* [Japanese linguistics] featuring articles on “*keitai* communication” yet doesn’t refer to ring tone music (2000). *Gendai-no esprit*, subtitled in French as “L’esprit d’aujourd’hui”, a periodical of which each issue devotes itself exclusively to a particular topic, featured in No. 405 many articles on the mobile telephone in contemporary Japanese society (2001), but only two references to ring tone music are found. One of them pays attention to its function of enabling a called party to identify a calling party individually or as a member of a specific group, and thus to enable a called partly to prepare himself/herself advantageously for getting into “*keitai* communication” with a calling party (*Yamada* 2001: 176). The other, longer comment wonders why the sound quality of ring tone music has so actively been developed as to go further away from the initial function of the signalling ring tone, and tries to turn to the idea of creating a soundscape by the owner of a mobile phone (*Okada* 2001: 63). This reverberates with the observation represented in the title of a talk by a ring-tone music manufacturer: “Ring tone music revolutionises the way we listen to music as once Walkman did” (*Matsui* 2001).

Whatever his implication is, the phenomenon of ring tone music could appropriately
be speculated in the historical context of technology and music in the past thirty years as well as in terms of mediation of music, specifically in Japan. The karaoke gadget, whose first model became popular in the early 1970s, prompted participatory consumption of popular songs. Then, Walkman was invented in the late 1970s, and, having been triggered by the wide circulation of cassette tapes, encouraged a tendency to personally “possess” certain pieces of music to create one’s own soundscape. CD, which was invented in the early 1980s, is characterised by its operational facility, which tended to urge consumers to turn almost all recorded music into muzak or background music since around the late 1980s. Now the phenomenon of ring tone music might be construed as a device to turn any piece of music into a jingle in the sense of a short song used in advertisements. When it begins to be played, one is inevitably inclined to answer the call as soon as possible unless it is an e-mail message, instead of enjoying listening to it for a while. In this respect, there is a good reason for an article on “ringing tones” in Finland, a country which “has more mobile phones per capita than any other country in the world”, to persist in referring to what is called “ring tone music” in the present article as “ringing tones” (Uimonen 2004).3

Endnotes
1. This appeal must have sounded as a warning at least to those who were attracted to the names of artists/groups, although how seriously they reacted is ambiguous because nothing specific is stated in regard to “severe punishment”. Personally, this striking way of warning immediately reminded me of the talk given about two months earlier, on 7 December 2002, by the then chair of RIAJ. It was the keynote address at the 14th annual conference of the Japanese Association for the Study of Popular Music (JASPM) to an audience of about sixty (Mitsui 2003: 376-377). He moaned about the drastic and dreadful decrease of disc sales in recent years due to the digitalisation of recorded music and the propagation of personal computers, which enable consumers to manufacture a clone copy of a record company product for their acquaintances for much less than one-tenth of the price of a CD (Tomizuka 2002a). It might be noteworthy that the advertisement described above reminded me of the address by the chair of RIAJ not only on account of his grievous and angry awareness of the “copyright crisis”, which is restrainedly connoted in the ad, but also the fact that his grumble was based upon what he made clear himself to the audience. “Severe punishment” in the advertisement sounds urgent, but he averred, though vexedly, that the present copyright law doesn’t prohibit CDs being copied personally at home, implying that one cannot ascertain that any clone copy made by a CD consumer is solely used by the consumer himself or herself, or is given to his or her friend.

2. It was in 1999 that the output of twenty-six record companies that are members of RIAJ for the first time stopped their steadily rising trend, and the output in 2002 retreated to the amount in 1991 along with the drastic decrease of million sellers. While there were, in 1998, twenty singles which sold one million and twenty-eight
million-selling albums, which ranged from fifteen one-million sellers to a five-million seller, there were no more than one million-selling single and only nine million-selling albums in 2002 at least up to October (Tomizuka 2002b: 1 & 5).

3. It should be noted that “ring back tone” music for mobile phones made its appearance on the market in 2003, but it remains little in demand in Japan, while, for whatever reason, it is popular in South Korea as can be judged from a good number of related transmission firms found on the internet. “The ring back tone is the tone that the A-party (calling party) hears through the phone while the phone at the B-party (called party) is ringing” (“Navajo” 2004).

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Tomizuka, Isamu. 2002b. A four-page handout given to the audience of the keynote address by Isamu Tomizuka at the 14th annual conference of JASPM (the Japanese
Association for the Study of Popular Music) on 7 December at Daitōbunka University in Saitama.
