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The *Koto*: Musical Instrument, Material Culture, and Meaning

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Introduction

THE *KOTO* (also called *sō*, *sō-no-koto* and, occasionally, *jūsangen*), a thirteen-string Japanese long zither (fig. 1), is both a practical musical instrument and a signifying object of music material culture.¹ When analyzed beyond the descriptive level of instrument construction it reveals layers of meaning that help in understanding not only its own form and function, but also aspects of Japanese culture as a whole. The *koto*, like many other objects of Japanese culture, may be understood “as a miniature version of Japan” (Falconer 1990, 468). Indeed, “once we open our eyes to other aspects of the musical instrument, we are surprised by the diverse meanings attached to and associated with it” (Tsuge 1978, 10).

While organology has often put forward arguments for a greater emphasis on understanding holistically the cultural significance of musical instruments (cf. Dournon 1981, Hood 1982, Wachsmann 1984, and De Vale 1990a), and some instrument ethnographies have taken into consideration such topics as the form, function, meaning, iconology, and mythology of these material objects (see, for example, Gulik

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1. A character list appears at the end of this article, covering all Japanese words given in transliterated form in the text. All illustrations (referred to in the text as figures) will be found following the character list. For further discussions in English concerning the morphology of the *koto*, see Adriaansz 1973 and 1984 and Johnson 1993 and 1996; in Japanese, Kishibe 1982 and Tanabe and Hirano 1982, which are reproduced in Hirano, Kamisangō, and Gamō 1989, provide a useful starting point. The present article is based largely on Johnson 1993.

1940, Grame 1962 and 1972, Winternitz 1967, Grame and Tsuge 1972, De Vale 1977, 1988, and 1990b, Tsuge 1978, Simonson 1987, Kárpáti 1989, Brincard 1989, De Vale and Dibia 1991, and Johnson 1993), the present discussion extends this approach and attempts to understand meanings connected with the physical form of the *koto* in their true cultural perspective.² The main emphasis here is not on the *koto*'s sound-producing qualities, but rather on what the instrument and its component parts mean when viewed as objects of material culture that can be "read" as non-verbal signifiers of cultural meaning. Only by looking more closely at the culture itself can we understand the multitude of signs the *koto* offers to an informed observer.

A useful tool that has been used in recent years to understand the levels of meaning in Japanese culture is the image of metaphorically—and very often also physically—unwrapping aspects of Japan (see, for example, Ben-Ari, Moeran, and Valentine 1990, Hendry 1993, and Oka 1967, 1975, and 1988). In connection with this metaphor, Hendry has commented that

Wrapping in Japan is a veritable 'cultural template', or perhaps we could add another metaphor and call it a 'cultural design'. It makes possible the marking of the whole range of life-stages and statuses, thus representing, and recreating, the hierarchical order which, in turn, gives rise to the locus of power relationships. Different manifestations of this organizing principle reflect and reinforce one another, . . . and they thus also offer almost unlimited possibilities for communication, verbal and non-verbal, and for the exercise of power. (1993, 172)

The present discussion, in unwrapping the *koto*, shows it to be a microcosm of Japanese culture. Following a brief description to establish its historical and geographic context, the central part of the inquiry looks at the *koto*'s main component parts, the quantity and aesthetic quality of its applied decoration, and, lastly, the visual image of the instrument as seen in its performance context. In conclusion, it is argued that any examination of musical instruments should draw on the approaches used in the anthropology of material culture, in the same way that ethnomusicology attempts to study the anthropology of musical sound

2. While the *koto* is also found outside Japan, where it might be played by Japanese, people of Japanese descent (cf. Olsen 1980 and 1983), and even non-Japanese performers, the meanings connected with the instrument in such contexts are not examined in this discussion.

(cf. the works in material culture and meaning by, for example, Hodder 1982, 1989, 1991, and Tilley 1990, and Olsen's 1990 work on the ethnomusicology of archaeology). Such an anthropological study of a musical instrument should attempt to explain thoroughly the many layers of meanings possessed by that object in its cultural contexts so that the reader may understand fully why that object exists as it does.

The Instrument

The *koto* has a documented history in Japan from the Nara era (710–794), when it was imported from the Asian mainland together with the court orchestra (*gagaku*) and numerous other material and conceptual objects of Chinese culture (see Fairbank, Reischauer, and Craig 1973). Since that time its primary structural form has not changed, although with the dissemination of the instrument outside of court music circles various traditions of performance have often developed and adhered to their own unique features, for example types of *koto*, music genres, front legs, plectra, tongue, sound holes, playing techniques, music ornamentation, playing positions, and types and quantity of applied decoration.

Two main types of *koto* are classified today: *zokusō* (more specifically the *Yamadagoto* [note that the “k” sound of “*koto*” is often pronounced “g” in compound nouns]), and the *gakusō*, along with several kinds of *koto*-related zithers, as shown in table 1.³

The present discussion will focus on the *Yamadagoto* (classified on a further level as *sugoto-jitate*: “simply-made”), which is now the most common type found in everyday performance. Because the three types of non-*Yamadagoto* (i.e., the *gakusō*, *chikusō*, and *Ikutagoto*) have many similarities of structural design, they will frequently be treated as a group for the purposes of comparison to the *Yamadagoto*. That is, when comparing instrument characteristics such as sound holes, tongue, feet, and applied decoration, only one of the three historical instrument

3. Occasionally, instruments are associated with other sub-schools or traditions (a *koto* belonging to the *Kyō-ryū*, for example, is mentioned in Musashino Academia Musicae 1969, 12; and Osaka College of Music 1984, 92 talks about plectra belonging to the *Kikuike-ryū* and the *Tsuguyama-ryū*), although more often than not it is the plectra that give the tradition or sub-tradition its unique identity rather than the instrument itself (see Hirano 1989 for a useful chart depicting the main traditions and sub-traditions of everyday *koto* performance).

TABLE 1. Main instrument types

| Instrument Type | Genre | Dates |
|---|---|--|
| <i>Gakusō</i> | <i>Gagaku</i> | From Nara era (710–794) |
| <i>Chikusō</i> (or <i>Tsukushigoto</i>) | <i>Tsukushigoto</i> | 16th–20th centuries (now extinct) |
| <i>Zokusō</i> | <i>Zokugaku</i> | From Yatsushashi Kengyō* (1614–85) |
| <i>Ikutagoto</i> | <i>Ikuta-ryū</i> | From Ikuta Kengyō (1656–1715). Most <i>Ikuta-ryū</i> musicians now use the <i>Yamadagoto</i> . |
| <i>Yamadagoto</i> | <i>Yamada-ryū</i> | From Yamada Kengyō (1757–1817) |
| <i>Koto</i> -related zithers: | | |
| <i>Tagensō</i> (“many-stringed <i>koto</i> ”); or <i>Shinsō</i> (“new <i>koto</i> ”; see Adriaansz 1984, 465) | 20th-century music | 20th century |
| <i>Ayamegato</i> (small <i>koto</i>); and <i>Tansō</i> (“half-size <i>koto</i> ”) | For practice or convenience (easily transported) | From 19th century |

*The term Kengyō was the highest of a series of ranks for professional *koto* musicians.

types may be mentioned, although any of them might be equally comparable.

The *koto* can have several cultural identities, depending on context. A particular instrument may belong to a specific tradition of performance, identifiable by its material form; it may be seen as a traditional Japanese musical instrument having a primarily national identity; or it may be viewed as a member of the larger family of East-Asian zithers in general, a group which also includes the Chinese *zheng*, Korean *kayagŭm*, and Vietnamese *dàn tranh* (see Tanabe 1964, Read 1975, Mitani 1980, and Adriaansz 1984).

While the *koto* is classified today mainly as a traditional Japanese musical instrument (*hōgakki* or *wagakki*: “Japanese musical instrument,” as opposed to *yōgakki*: “Western musical instrument”), its historic Chinese roots in the Asian mainland are not forgotten, in a manner analogous to the respect that Japanese give their ancestors and elders in general. This fundamental Japanese trait emphasizes the hierarchies permeating all aspects of Japanese society (see, for instance, Nakane 1984, Hendry and Webber 1986, and Hendry 1987 and 1993, where such concepts as *uchi/soto*: “inside”/“outside”; *tate/yoko*: “vertical”/“linear”; *senpai/kōhai*: “senior”/“junior”; and *honne/tatemae*: “true intention”/“front” or “public principle” are discussed). Even though *koto* performance has continued in an uninterrupted line through various court, temple, and everyday (i.e., non-court and non-temple) traditions to the present day, the *koto* is still regarded as a traditional instrument unique to Japan, in contrast to non-traditional instruments classified as *yōgakki*, despite the abundance of “contemporary” music which has been composed for the *koto*, sometimes in combination with innovative electronic and experimental instruments.

Zoomorphism

The *koto* has a zoomorphic nomenclature that sees many of its component parts having the prefix *ryū* (“dragon”; also known in Japanese as *tatsu* or *doragon*, the latter term being the direct translation of the English-language equivalent). The instrument has, for example, *ryū-tō* or *ryū-zu* (“dragon’s head”; the end to the player’s right), *ryū-bi* (“dragon’s tail”; the end to the player’s left), *ryū-gan* (“dragon’s eyes”; string holes), *ryū-kaku* (“dragon’s horns”; fixed bridges), *ryū-kō* (“dragon’s back”; upper surface of the soundboard), *ryū-gaku* (“dragon’s forehead”; the area between the fixed bridge at the “head” and the ex-

tremity), *ryū-kō* (“dragon’s mouth”; front end at the “head”; the sound holes are also called mouths, *ryū-ku*), *ryū-zetsu* (“dragon’s tongue”; the plaque inside the mouth at the “head”), *ryū-shin* (“dragon’s lips”; edge of the mouth at the “head”), *ryū-kyō* (“dragon’s cheek”; “head” end of the long sides), *ryū-de* (“dragon’s hands”; front legs under the “head”; also called *ryū-shu*), *ryū-shi* (“dragon’s legs”; tail legs), *ryū-fuku* (“dragon’s belly”; or *ryū-hai*: “dragon’s back”; the underneath), and *ryū-ken* (“dragon’s eyelids”; the space between the string holes at the “head” and the two long sides). In everyday discourse many of the component parts are referred to without the prefix (i.e., horns, back, or legs). The importance of the dragon symbolism is seen in the appearance of such a mythical creature as visual decoration on the upper surface of the head of many historical *koto* (i.e., non-Yamada instruments; figs. 8 and 9), and even the shape of the instrument in general is easily understood to be a dragon, but only once the symbolism is known. While Tsuge (1978, 17) comments that “the Japanese *koto* . . . is historically viewed as a crouching dragon,” unlike some musical instruments that are actually shaped like animals (e.g., the three-string Burmese zither, *mí gyaùn*, which looks like a crocodile), the *koto* does not physically look like a dragon.

The dragon, which has an association with water and music (see Tsuge 1978), is a symbol of the Emperor and its connection with the *koto* therefore adds to the instrument’s significance in Japanese culture by giving it a status reserved only for the most important things (compare the phoenix as a symbol of the Empress). Visser (1969, 160–61) also notes the connection between dragons, water, and music.⁴

While the dragon is the *koto*’s main zoomorphic symbolism, the instrument also has a connection with the phoenix (through its wood, as noted in the following section), and with other animals through the use of terms such as cat’s paws (an alternative name for the front legs) and caterpillar legs (an alternative name for the tail legs). Also, the movable bridges on the surface of the soundboard are occasionally said to form the shape of wild geese in flight (a concept considered below, p. 69).

4. Another link between dragons and musical instruments is mentioned by Volker (1975, 57): “[After] an enormous dragon devastated the island of Enoshima . . . , the goddess Benten . . . lulled the animal to sleep by the music of her *koto* . . . , and afterwards killed it.” Newman and Ryerson (1964, 97) comment that Benten, one of the seven Japanese gods of good luck, is often depicted riding a dragon, and an anonymous woodblock print of around 1800 (see Haags Gemeentemuseum 1975, 27, Plate 1) even shows her riding on a dragon while playing a one-string zither (*ichigenkin*).

Materials

While the primary material used in *koto* construction is wood, a variety of other materials also appear, including plastic, metal, ivory, bone, silk, tetron, paper, brocade, lacquer, tortoise shell, and gold foil, many of which are examined later. The main body of the *koto*, consisting of an upper soundboard and an added backboard (which together form a sound chamber) is made of *kiri* (*Paulownia imperialis*), although an inferior instrument might only be veneered with *kiri*. This wood is used traditionally for objects such as clogs and furniture (especially chests of drawers, which some *koto* manufacturers also make), and gains a special significance in Japanese culture from its association with the Imperial family and the mythical phoenix. According to Newman and Ryerson (1964, 98), “the Hō-ō [phoenix] is found in combination with the *kiri-no-ki* [*kiri* tree], *Paulownia imperialis*, the leaves and blossoms of which are the official *mon* [family crest] of the Empress while the Emperor wears the sixteen-petalled chrysanthemum.” This connection between the Imperial family and *kiri* can be seen in the song text of “Kiritsubo” (“The Paulownia Court”), one of Yatsunashi Kengyō’s (1614–85) traditional *kumiuta* (suites of songs) for *koto*, whose first verse reads as follows (the title refers to Murasaki Shikibu’s eleventh-century novel *Genji Monogatari* [*The Tale of Genji*]; see Murasaki 1935 and 1976):

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Kiritsubo no | The Emperor’s vow |
| kōi no | Of everlasting love |
| hiyoku-renri no | With the lady of the Paulownia Court— |
| chigiri mo | To share a wing in the sky and |
| sadame naki yo no | A branch on earth— |
| narai tote | How sad to see it |
| yume no aida zo | An empty dream, |
| kanashiki | The fate of this transient life. |
| | (Tsuge 1983a, 16) |

The significance of trees and wood in general, which in Japan are often associated with supernatural power, gods, and the divine (Davis 1989, 174-89), is described by Kárpáti, who helps to show the place that *kiri* holds today in Japanese culture:

Japanese mythology attaches a distinguished role to wood . . . , since it classifies bamboo together with fir-tree and plum-tree among the especially

important plants, indicating good luck. One of their myths describes the possibility of wood receiving an exceptional, directly supernatural quality. *Kojiki* [Chapter 117] and *Nihongi* [Chapter 10] unanimously inform us about a case which took place at the time of the reign of Emperor Nintoku [A.D. 313–99]. Having been used for many years, a ship named Karano was no longer safe for navigation, therefore its wood was used for cooking salt. However, in a miraculous manner, the wood refused to burn. At the instruction of the emperor, a zyther was made out of the wood; the musical instrument had such a loud sound that it could be heard at a distance of seven villages. (1989, 13–14)⁵

Understanding the profound cultural significance of *kiri* as a traditional Japanese material helps us see that the material not only gives the *koto* a specific physical form, but also endows it with further levels of explicit and implicit meaning in Japanese culture.

Measurements

The *Yamadagoto* is usually around 182 cm long, with a width of around 23 cm at the end to the player's left (the "tail") and 25 cm at the opposite end (the "head"), although other standard, as well as slightly alternative, measurements have existed historically (see Tanabe and Hirano 1982, 1350). The height of the instrument from the ground to the upper curve of the soundboard (without the movable bridges) ranges between about 9.5 cm to more than 18 cm along the sides (the highest point is located about 40–70 cm from the head). In practice, instruments are constructed using a unit of measurement called *honken*, from *hon*: "main"; *ken*: "space" (i.e., a unit of length); Webb (1983, 239–40) notes that the *honken* has varied historically between the Kansai (western Japan, around Ōsaka) and Kantō (eastern Japan, around Tōkyō) regions, and that it is a main unit of architecture found throughout Japanese culture.

Soundboard

The *koto*'s sharp widthwise curve, together with its arched lengthwise curve, helps to give the instrument its characteristic shape. The two long and arched, narrow sides have influenced the naming of historical

5. See Philippi 1969, 322 and Aston 1896, 1:269.

types of everyday *koto* that are often labelled *isogoto* (“beach *koto*”; or *naga-isogoto*: “long-beach *koto*”; various other names also exist), as found with the non-*Yamada zokusō*. Connected with the overall shape of the instrument is a symbolism that sees the soundboard’s curved surface as like heaven, the backboard like the Earth, and the sound chamber like the empty cosmos; the movable bridges represent the months of the year,⁶ while the pentatonic tuning represents the five cardinal points (Tanabe and Hirano 1982, 1350–51 and Adriaansz 1973, 29).

The grain patterns on the upper surface of the *koto*’s soundboard come in two main designs: *itame* (or *mokume*), which consists of swirling patterns around a central part on the upper surface (fig. 2, left), and *masame*, which has very fine, straight, longitudinal lines running down the upper surface of the soundboard (fig. 2, right). A third pattern called *tamamoku* is also found, featuring an abundance of very close swirling patterns with many central parts rather than just one (see fig. 3), although it is extremely unusual and is reserved for instruments of exceedingly good quality. While a *masame* soundboard has only one grade (because it is taken from around the radius of a log, with one long side facing the center), an *itame* soundboard, which is taken progressively from the outside of the log towards the center (i.e., the surface of the soundboard faces the outside of the log), may have several grades depending on the size of the log. Kishibe (1982, 1364) reports that a board from the outside of a log is called *uwakko* (“top board”), the next is *nibanko* (“second board”), and so on depending on the log’s size. The center of the log not only is too soft to be used for instrument construction, but also would not form the correct shape for a soundboard.

The two basic grain patterns are found in the everyday language of Japanese design in general. In connection with *masame*, for example, Hendry (1993, 45–46) states that “*Masame* is the term given to a highly prized method involving wood cut across the grain from the centre of the trunk and split by hand to reveal a very fine straight grain. Boxes created from this wood will not bend or shrink, and gifts presented in such a container are apparently a sign of great respect.” Kikkawa (1986, 6) has actually compared the *itame* design to music sound itself, thus

6. An earlier version of the *koto* had twelve strings and the related Korean *kayagŭm* still does; Nakashima 1936, 54 and Adriaansz 1973, 29 both note that the *koto*’s current number of strings represents the thirteen lunar months of a year.

giving a further structural relationship that should be considered a part of the instrument's aesthetics: "The Japanese tend to prefer a voice with *sabi* (a type of patina that develops with age) or a *shibui* (astringent and refined) voice rather than a voice that is clear and pure. This probably parallels the Japanese aesthetic preference for complicated and knotty woodgrains over smooth fine-grained wood."

The outer surface of the *koto*'s soundboard, therefore, gives the instrument an initial, visual layer of traditional design that helps in relating the instrument's aesthetics to aspects of design in Japanese culture in general. This initial wrapping also serves as a visual signifier of instrument quality, helping the initiated viewer to understand immediately both the overall quality of the instrument and its place in Japanese culture.

A unique form of design indicating the quality of a particular *koto* is the carvings (*hori*) on the lower surface (underneath) of the instrument's soundboard, although they are only visible when the instrument is not being played and is purposely turned over. A design of straight lines (*sudareme*; *sudare*: "reed blinds"; *me*: "grain") is typical of standard instruments (fig. 4), while herringbone designs (*ayasugi*) are found on more expensive *koto* (figs. 5 and 6), and pairs of herringbone carvings (*komochi-ayasugi*) are reserved for instruments of exceptional quality (fig. 7). Floral shapes (*asagata-hori*) may also be used occasionally; basic instruments have no carvings at all. Such grooves are part of the language of geometric patterns of Japanese design in general (Lee 1981, 170–72, for example, illustrates twenty-three similar designs on textiles) and help to embody meaning in the construction of the *koto*.

While these grooves are often understood to improve the sound quality of the instrument, they should also be seen as hidden decoration that reveals hidden meaning concerning the aesthetics of the *koto*. Only the owner of the instrument, the maker, or somebody who is specifically inspecting it, would know they exist.⁷

Backboard

Two types of *koto* construction are distinguished by the way the backboard is attached to the soundboard (fig. 10). One has the sides of the backboard showing on the two long sides of the instrument (*betazuke*),

7. The *shamisen* also has such grooves carved on the four sides of the inside of its wooden sound box, and Malm (1986, 15) mentions similar geometric grooves on the *kotsuzumi* hourglass drum.

while the other does not (*tomezuke*). The second type of construction takes longer to make and is reserved for instruments of superior quality. A *betazuke* backboard is used with a *namikō* soundboard, where the extremity of the tail is scooped out and then filled (a faster manufacturing process), while a *tomezuke* backboard is used for a *kurikō* soundboard, in which the tail extremity remains intact. The backboard, like the soundboard, may be made with either of two types of grain (*itame* or *masame*).

Sound Holes

Although today all traditions of everyday *koto* performance usually use the same type of instrument (distinguished only by such features as plectra, kneeling positions, and ornamentation), historically each school was identified by its unique features of *koto* construction. The *Ikuta-ryū* tended to have general features and component parts closer to the *gakusō* or *chikusō*, while the *Yamadagoto*, albeit within general limitations, altered several features, as discussed below. One such method of identification was to give instruments of the *Ikuta-ryū* and the *Yamada-ryū* differently-shaped sound holes, as may easily be seen in figs. 4–7 and 11, although, as with the grooves on the underside of the soundboard, this difference is only visible when the instrument is not being played. While the sound holes clearly exist to allow sound to be emitted from the sound chamber, they also function as “windows” through which the grooves on the under surface of the soundboard may be viewed. (The actual shape of the sound holes does, in fact, resemble the shape of traditional Japanese windows; see Yoshida 1969, 155–57.)

Legs

The *koto* has two front legs and three back legs (figs. 4–8 and 12–13). While most historical instruments had their front legs permanently attached to the soundboard, present-day instruments have removable front legs. Like the sound holes, the front legs were, historically, signifiers of the tradition to which they belonged (cf. figs. 8 and 12), although today all everyday instruments have a similar style of legs. Like some legs in furniture design, the front legs are often called cat’s paws (*neko-ashi*).

The back legs (figs. 6–7), which are fixed permanently to the instrument, are often called centipede legs (*mukade-ashi*) because of their shape. The centipede, in turn, is often connected with the god of prosperity, Bishamon, one of the *Shichi Fukujin*, or seven gods of good luck (see Volker 1975, 29).

Strings

The thirteen strings of a present-day *koto* are of equal weight, length, and tension, and are usually made of tetron (*tetoron*), a synthetic material developed in the 1950s; earlier, nylon was also used as a synthetic substitute. Historically, however (mainly before the twentieth century), *koto* strings were made of silk, and even today, when a performance aims to recreate a truly traditional atmosphere and context, silk strings may be used, although this is extremely unusual. The historical importance of silk today has been summarized by Tsuge:

In ancient China, the word “silk and bamboo” (*szü-chu*) meant “music.” To be more precise, it meant stringed and wind instruments which were made of silk and bamboo. In Chinese, *szü* (“string” or “thread”) primarily means “silk”. In fact, most Chinese stringed instruments (and East Asian stringed instruments of Chinese origin) use silk strings even today. To give but a few examples, *ch'in* (the seven-stringed long zither) and *p'ï-p'a* (the four-stringed short lute) of China; *komun'go* (the six-stringed long zither) and *haegüm* (the two-stringed fiddle) of Korea; *koto* (the thirteen-stringed long zither) and *shamisen* (the three-stringed long lute) of Japan.

Although recently wire and nylon have replaced silk strings of some instruments, we can still see a close connection between the string instruments of East Asia and silk. One may wonder why silk was preferred to gut, horse-tail, or wire for the strings of musical instruments. It is hardly necessary to mention the significance of silk in the ancient world, in both the East and West. The existence of the “silk road” will suffice to remind us of its immeasurable value at that time. (1978, 16–17)

While the present-day nomenclature of the strings signifies only their relative place on the instrument (string “thirteen” is closest to the player), historically, the instrument’s strings had further cultural meaning, as shown in table 2 (see Tanabe and Hirano 1982, 1351, Andō 1986, 24, and Adriaansz 1973, 28), which gives their historical and present-day names. The *kanji* (Chinese characters) for the first three strings use one type for the *Ikuta-ryū* and another type for the *Yamada-ryū* (the *Yamada-ryū* characters are shown first in the character list at

TABLE 2. Modern and historical names of *koto* strings

| Number | Present-day name | Historical name | Historical meaning |
|--------|------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. | <i>ichi</i> | <i>jin</i> | benevolence |
| 2. | <i>ni</i> | <i>chi</i> | wisdom |
| 3. | <i>san</i> | <i>rei</i> | ritual |
| 4. | <i>shi/yon</i> | <i>gi</i> | righteousness |
| 5. | <i>go</i> | <i>shin</i> | sincerity |
| 6. | <i>roku</i> | <i>bun</i> | civil affairs |
| 7. | <i>shichi/nana</i> | <i>bu</i> | military power |
| 8. | <i>hachi</i> | <i>hi</i> | elegance |
| 9. | <i>kyū</i> | <i>ran</i> | door |
| 10. | <i>jū</i> | <i>shō</i> | commerce |
| 11. | <i>to</i> or <i>tō</i> | <i>to</i> or <i>tō</i> | unit of measure |
| 12. | <i>i</i> | <i>i</i> | to do |
| 13. | <i>kin</i> | <i>kin</i> | cloth |

the end of this article). Also, strings 11–13 use a single character not used in everyday counting, instead of the pair of characters used in present-day Japanese.

As the strings run over the tail brocade they are usually spaced equidistantly in the *Yamada-ryū*, but grouped into patterns in the *Ikuta-ryū*. A typical pattern might consist of three groups, either with two groups of five strings on the outside and a group of three in the center, as in figs. 2 and 6, or with two groups of four on the outside surrounding a group of five. (See also below, pp. 70–71, in connection with the layers of brocade at the tail and the three-part leaf decoration.)

Plectra

While the instruments of the two main traditions of everyday performance are today usually identical, the three plectra have remained noticeably different in shape. These consist of ivory, bone, or plastic tips that fit into tightly rolled paper rings placed on the thumb, index, and middle fingers of the right hand. In the *Ikuta-ryū* they are rectangular, in contrast to an oval shape that is more pointed toward the tip in the *Yamada-ryū*. The plectra should be viewed as intermediary devices that are part of the instrument on a further level of analysis, since they are generally the main signifiers of identity for performers of the two main traditions, together with different kneeling positions and some musical

ornamentation. Traditionally, players of the *Yamada-ryū* kneel directly facing the instrument, while *Ikuta-ryū* performers kneel at a slight angle toward the tail; *gakusō* players sit cross-legged. The *Ikuta-ryū* position allows the player to avoid wrist strain while still plucking the strings at the angle required to obtain a good tone with the sharp edges of the plectra used in that tradition.

Movable Bridges

An important feature that helps to determine an instrument's aesthetic and monetary value is the material used for its movable bridges. Like some of the other component parts added to the main board (such as the white borders on numerous edges, *fuchi*), today the bridges of cheaper instruments are plastic; on average instruments they are bone, while ivory, as an extremely highly-valued material, is sometimes used for the most expensive instruments. Historically, *koto* bridges were usually made of wood, or wood tipped with ivory or bone.

The pattern formed by the thirteen movable bridges on the surface of the *koto*'s soundboard has been compared to that of geese flying in formation (Tsuge 1983a, 5; Ackermann 1990, 346). For example, in the piece for *koto*, *shamisen*, or *kokyū*, "Okayasu-Ginuta," ascribed to Okayasu Kosaburō (fl. ca. 1710), the text of the first verse illustrates clearly such an image:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| Tsuki no mae no | In the moonlight |
| kinuta wa | The fulling block |
| yosamu wo tsuguru | Sounds out the evening chill. |
| kumoi no kari wa | Against the clouds |
| kotoji ni utsushite | Wild geese trace |
| omoshiro ya | Bridges of the <i>koto</i> . |
| | (Tsuge 1983a, 141) |

The third verse of Yatsunashi Kengyō's *koto-kumiuta*, "Fuki" (butterbur plant), also makes reference to geese:

| | |
|------------------|-----------------------------------|
| tsuki no mae no | the tune being played |
| shirabe wa | before the moon |
| yosamu o tsuguru | is autumn wind that tells |
| akikaze | of nightly cold |
| kumoi no | up in the clouds |
| kari-ga-ne wa | the flight of geese |
| kotoji ni otsuru | down onto the <i>koto</i> bridges |
| koegoe | fall their cries |

Ackermann (1990, 334)

As Ackermann (1990, 347) observes, in Japanese culture, “wild geese in autumn are associated with the idea of coming, returning. The opposite image would be wild geese in spring, associated with the concept of leaving, flying off to the north, from where they will return again in autumn.” Some historical movable bridges were actually made in the shape of birds (see Musashino Academia Musicae 1969, 78); and Adachi (1972, 148) shows several Japanese design motives that form symbolic patterns using the *koto*’s movable bridges (as well as other designs with plectra).

String Holes

On both fixed bridges, the string holes in the outer side of each of the bases (thin strips of harder wood that are glued to the surface of the soundboard) are often in the shape of the chrysanthemum (figs. 8–9 and 13). This flower is considered auspicious in Japan, undoubtedly because, as mentioned earlier, it is one of the two Imperial crests (the other one is the *paulownia* leaf).

Oak Leaf

An oak leaf decoration called *kashiwaba* (“oak leaf”; also known as *kashiwagata*: “oak leaf shape,” or, very rarely, *santake*: “three peaks”) is found on the upper surface of the tail’s extremity (the end furthest away from the player; fig. 2). The oak leaf, which is made from a harder wood than *kiri*, consists of three parts: a central whole leaf and two half leaves, one on each side. The leaf’s practical function is to protect the soft *kiri* wood from the tension of the strings as they run over the tail; its use on the *koto* is known from the Nara era when the instrument was first imported into Japan (see Shôsôin 1967, Plates 45 and 47). Several three-part paulownia decorations (for example *go-shichi-kiri-mon*: “five-seven *paulownia* crest”; and *go-san-kiri-mon*: “five-three *paulownia* crest”), with shapes similar to the *koto*’s oak leaf, appear frequently in Japanese design and are associated with the Empress.⁸ The cultural significance of the oak leaf on the *koto* is further increased by its connection with *samurai* (“warriors”):

8. While these designs have a lower part of three leaves, the upper part consists of groupings of 5-7-5 and 3-5-3 (see Adachi 1972, 172–76).

There is a certain Japanese tree, called *tegashiwa* [a variety of oak], and its leaves in shape are not unlike a hand. In ancient days, when it was necessary for a *samurai* to leave his home, he received just before his departure a *tai* (perch), which was served on the leaf of a *tegashiwa* tree. This was his farewell repast, and when the *samurai* had eaten the fish the leaf was hung over the door, in the belief that it would guard him on his journey, and bring him safely back to his home again. It was not the shape, but the movement of the *tegashiwa* leaf that gave rise to this pleasing fancy, for the leaf, when blown by the wind, appeared to beckon after the graceful Japanese manner. (Davis 1989, 348; see also Joly 1908, 362.)

The actual structural form of the leaf, in addition to the materials from which it is made, also helps in the classification of instrument quality. For example, a design made only as an outline, so that the surface of the soundboard shows through the center of each of the three parts, is considered of superior quality to one that is solid throughout.

Brocade

At the tail extremity of the *koto* several layers of brocade are put under the strings to prevent them from digging into the soft *kiri* soundboard (figs. 2 and 6). The usual number of layers is three or five, signifying respectively a cheaper or a more expensive instrument, although occasionally, on an even cheaper instrument, there may be just one layer. The use of odd numbers is perhaps related to the importance of the numbers seven, five, and three in Japanese culture in general. There are festivals of national importance on the third day of the third month (Girls' Festival), the fifth day of the fifth month (Children's Festival), and the seventh day of the seventh month (Star Festival). Number symbolism is also predominant in *yakudoshi* (years of calamity), death and memorial celebrations (see Hendry 1987, 128–29, and Lewis 1986), and poetry (*haiku*, for example, has three lines of five, seven, and five syllables respectively).

Tongue

As with the sound holes and front feet, the “dragon’s tongue” on the *Ikutagoto* and *Yamadagoto* were historically of a slightly different shape (figs. 8 and 12), although today the *Yamadagoto* tongue is the standard one for the non-court instrument. The tongue is often lacquered and may have *makie* (gold or silver lacquer work) applied to it (see below).

Head Cover

At the head extremity a cover is placed over the end of the *koto* to protect its sharp corners (fig. 14). The head cover is usually kept on during rehearsal when that end of the instrument is placed on a simple stand as a substitute for the removable front legs (i.e., a *torii* stand, fig. 14, or a bridge box).⁹ However, during public performances the head cover is removed for two main reasons: to allow the front legs to be attached in order to help signify the importance of the performance event; and also to reveal, to a certain extent, the lacquer decoration often placed at the extremity on the instrument's tongue (where a cheaper instrument would have only plain lacquer), although the audience would not be able to see this decoration too well. Removal of the head cover also shows another physical process of unwrapping the instrument through its various layers of embedded meaning. The head cover usually has the same type of decorative motives as the tail brocade in order to give the instrument visual balance at each extremity.

Applied Decoration

The body of the *koto* is burnt with hot irons, the effect of which helps to bring out the wood's grain pattern when the raised parts of the wood are rubbed away. In addition, applied decoration is added to some parts of the instrument. As used here, the term "applied decoration" refers to various forms of covering that are placed on top of the basic shell of the instrument in order to decorate it and give it value. The quality and quantity of such decoration today helps to determine the aesthetic value of the instrument. Historical instruments, such as those used during the Heian era, had an abundance of lacquer, often covering the entire body. For example, the surface of the Heian-era *makiegoto* ("lacquered *koto*") kept in Kasuga-taisha (Kasuga Shrine) Treasure Hall in Nara is entirely covered with lacquer that includes designs of landscapes, flowers, and insects. The present-day *koto* has such lacquer placed only in the mouth and around the lips. The *gakusō*, *chikusō*, and *Ikutagoto* also have more lacquer work and decorative designs covering the head and tail areas. It was only with the *Yamadagoto* that such

9. On rare occasions the head cover itself may double as a stand and be placed under the instrument. This would never be done during public performance, and only when no other stands were readily available.

lacquer work was removed from the sides, tail, and head, and reserved for the lips and tongue, often in conjunction with symbolic motives.

The subjects used as applied decoration on the *koto* (i.e., on the covers, head cover, tail brocade, lips, and tongue) form part of a living language of Japanese design in which pictorial, figurative, and geometrical subjects are used to give the instrument an aesthetic value. The applied decoration may be viewed as art work which, by visual communication (cf. Layton 1981, 86–133), signifies not only the value of the instrument but also symbolic meanings through the subject matter of the designs. The actual number of subjects used is vast, although certain symbols of longevity, such as pine, bamboo, plum, tortoise, and crane, are among the more frequent pictorial images. In connection with design motives on *kimono*, for example (like the *koto*, a “traditional” Japanese object of material culture that would embrace such designs), Blakemore (1978, 12) says that “a composite of cultural symbols both representational and abstract . . . can make up the pattern of an elaborate kimono. The limits are only those of the talent and imagination of the designer.” These remarks are supported by Lee’s (1981, 30) comment that “a visit to any textile, ceramic, or lacquer shop in Japan reveals an abundance of all kinds of seductive designs in a living language. The combination of traditional and creative style, a skilful means of production, and a built-in and socially sanctioned aesthetic educational system creates the genius of Japanese design.”

The actual subjects used in Japanese design might include some of the following motives listed by Blakemore (1978, 5) (compare the decoration on the instruments shown in the figures):

1. Water-related patterns: dew, waves, irises, swallows, fish, fireflies, rain, tortoise, eddies, seashells;
2. Sky-related patterns: swallows, geese, cranes [see especially figs. 12 and 14], clouds, lightning, dragonflies, arrows, butterflies, storks;
3. Abstract patterns;
4. Flower patterns: orchid, pink, clover, bellflower, peony, thistle, cherry, orange, morning glory, lily, plum;
5. Tree and leaf patterns: oleander, ivy, pine, bush clover, honeysuckle, bamboo [see especially fig. 12], hemp;
6. Garden-related patterns: landscapes, pools, flora, fauna, wells, fans, umbrellas, fish, turtles, bats;
7. Chrysanthemum patterns [see especially figs. 6 (brocade), 8, and 13].

In addition, family crests are sometimes used. Adachi (1972) lists 4,260 such designs, including several that actually show the *koto*'s plectra and movable bridges (p. 148). Musical instruments or their component parts are often found in Japanese design patterns. Lee (1981, 187), for example, shows a design motive with five movable bridges of the *koto* forming a circle; there is also a design formed with three plectra; and the *koto* itself is sometimes used as a decorative motive (p. 157). Such use of decoration shows that "the deep penetration of Japanese design into all levels of the people and the continuing discipline inherent in such omnipresent art forms as ceramics, textiles, the tea-ceremony, gardens and its miniature counterpart, flower arrangement, has insured a continuing aesthetic education for a very large proportion of the population" (Lee 1981, 30).

The last verse of the *kumiuta* "Hagoromo no Kyoku" ("Celestial Robes Music"), which is attributed to either Kitajima Kengyō (d. 1690) or Makino Kengyō (fl. c. 1716) (Tsuge 1983a, 6), illustrates the importance of pine and bamboo, two symbols of longevity:

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Yorozuyo kakete | For ten thousand years |
| aioi no | The pine and bamboo |
| matsu to take to no | Have grown together, |
| fukamidori | Their deep green |
| kawaranu iro wa | Never changing, |
| morotomo ni | As if they had promised |
| oisenu chigiri | One another |
| narubeshi | Never to grow old. |
| | (Tsuge 1983a, 7) |

Similarly, the first verse of the *koto* piece "Tenga Taihei" ("Peace in the Emperor's Realm") by Yatsuhashi Kengyō, shows the longevity symbolism of the crane, tortoise, and evergreens:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|
| Tenga taihei | Peace in the Emperor's realm, |
| chōkyū ni | Eternal is his reign. |
| osamaru miyo no | The wind blesses as it passes |
| matsukaze | Through the evergreens. |
| hinazuru wa | Baby cranes enjoy |
| chitose furu | One thousand years of life. |
| tani no nagare ni | Tortoises of ten thousand years |
| kame asobu | Play in the mountain stream. |
| | (Tsuge 1983a, 47) |

While the crane (which is said to live for one thousand years), for example, might be represented pictorially, the tortoise (which, like an evergreen, is thought to live for ten thousand years) is usually represented through a figurative pattern. Hexagonal decoration is symbolic of the tortoise (or turtle) in that the pattern represents the markings on the reptile's shell.¹⁰

On the importance of using nature (*shizen*) in Japanese design, Picken (1980, 11) comments that

The Japanese . . . consider themselves to be blessed by nature. Their islands are richly endowed with trees, water, and beautiful mountains. Nature is a mother's bosom to her children, the people, and nature is kind, with only the seasonal typhoon or fearful earth tremor to threaten disruption. There is in Shinto no equivalent to the Western philosophical distinction between man and nature. . . . So close, in fact, were the Japanese of old to nature and so indistinguishable was nature from man that when Japan began to import foreign concepts during the Meiji era, after the beginning of the modernization drive in 1868, a word had to be invented to express the idea contained in the English word "nature."

Grades of Instruments

Other types of decoration found on the *koto* include geometric edging (*fuchi*) on some of the parts that are added to the soundboard (e.g., fixed bridges, oak leaf, lips, and legs). While cheaper instruments would use white plastic or bone for the edging (as also for movable bridges and plectra), on more expensive instruments such parts are made from ivory. The more ivory on the instrument, the more expensive and aesthetically valued it will be (sometimes the added parts are even made from solid ivory alone).

Similarly, the materials used for parts added to the main body (i.e., the two fixed bridges, their bases, an oak leaf decoration, the tongue, and the front and back legs) divide *koto* into several grades of quality, based mainly on the type of wood, as shown below beginning with the most expensive (Kishibe 1982, 1364):

10. See Blakemore (1978, 12): "Over the years single motifs have gone through a series of transformations that often leave them far removed from the original design. For example, the tortoise, a symbol of longevity and traditionally a popular design for kimono, has been reduced to a hexagonal outline. But to the knowing eye, this is still immediately identifiable as the tortoise."

1. *Kōboku* (or *kōki*; red sandalwood of high quality), or ivory;
2. *Tagayasan* (ironwood);
3. *Shitan* and *karin* (red sandalwood or rosewood, and Chinese quince);
4. *Sakura* (cherry).

Based on the quantity and quality of the added materials, the type of grain pattern, and the type of construction used, the finished *koto* is given a unique name, part of which includes a grade designation (for further information, see Johnson 1993 and 1996). Several grades might be used by a given manufacturer; a typical list might be the one given by Andō (1986, 17), beginning with the lowest quality:

1. *Beta* (“plain”);
2. *Kakumaki* (“wrapped horns”);
3. *Han-uwa* (“half horns”; also called *han-uwazuno*: “half on the horns”);
4. *Uwazuno* (“on the horns”);
5. *Kinkuchi* (“gold mouth”);
6. *Kurikō* (“scooped out shell”).

The process of placing objects and people into hierarchies and groups is a fundamental classifying principle of Japanese culture and society. Such hierarchies permeate many aspects of Japanese culture in general and should be understood in direct relation to their meaning on the social level of discourse (see, for example, Nakane 1984, Hendry and Webber 1986, and Hendry 1987 and 1993).

Cases, Covers, and Wrapping the Instrument

Although cases and covers are not part of the instrument during its performance context, they are analyzed here to help show the physical and metaphorical wrapping and unwrapping of the instrument. A *koto* may have several outer covers whose practical function is to protect it while it is not being played. A hard fiberglass case would normally be the outermost layer of protection for the instrument during transportation. The next soft cover is usually padded plastic, after which there is the more usual and often highly decorated cloth cover. If the instrument is to be kept in a room for a short period, only this soft cover is used, or a simplified version of it covering only the upper surface of the

instrument. The physical process of actually unwrapping and wrapping the instrument in its protective clothing typifies a basic Japanese way of handling many objects of material culture, especially items that have just been purchased and objects that are given as presents. A purchase from any store could have at least five layers of wrapping around it that all help to give the item its special place in culture, while a present would not be the same if it were not wrapped with the appropriate layers of “clothing,” even though it would normally be unwrapped once the giver has left. Even the layers of wrapping themselves may bear symbolic motives (figurative or pictorial) adding further layers of cultural significance.

Wrapping objects to give significance beyond the purely functional is found throughout Japanese culture (see, for example, Oka 1967, 1975, and 1988). Hendry (1993, 75) notes the physical wrapping of the Heian period *jūnihitoe* that was worn by court ladies and the importance of the colors of these garments (see Dalby, 1988). Even the different levels of speech that include honorific, humble, polite, everyday, and dictionary forms show a level of Japanese culture that wraps itself up during discourse. Another example is found in religion, where entering a Shintō shrine is not just a matter of walking through a door, but a process of entering the *torii* gate (very often after passing through an outer gate as well) and progressing along sacred ground toward the main shrine buildings. The gods themselves are enshrined in layers of buildings (i.e., in temples and shrines) that help not only to protect them, but also to emphasize their importance in general. Physical or conceptual layers are not just concerned with decorating, but more with progressing to the sacred from the profane. The act of passing through one thing and entering something else is a basic principle of Japanese culture, as in many others, although in Japan the main difference is the emphasis placed on the layers in everyday discourse and the extent to which they are found in everyday life.

Performance Context

An examination of the *koto*'s visual appearance in its performance contexts can also reveal meaning in Japanese culture. For example, the more experienced and respected players would normally be positioned towards the front of the stage, indicating the vertical axis of Japanese society where respect is always shown to one's elders. The linear axis of

Japanese society is shown within the performing group itself, where everyone connected with one teacher would have the chance of performing together. The greatest respect is always shown to one's teacher, group leader, school, or even tradition. Here, social institutions are preserved by the transmission of traditions of *koto* performance within specific schools. In such a context one can also begin to understand the historical lineage of the group itself, a matter of great importance not only to the performers but also to the audience.

Even the performers' raiment is significant:

The kimono [traditional costume] must be in harmony with the environment and situation—the type of concert, its character (congratulatory or memorial), the musician's position in the given frame (central or periphery), her role and status in the event; it must also agree with the season; it must suit the musician's age; and needless to say, the kimono must state one's sex and marital status. (Tsuge 1983b, 66)

An informed member of the audience would also read the context to find out which tradition the performers belong to (i.e., *Ikuta-ryū* or *Yamada-ryū*). Historical *Ikutagoto* (mainly pre-twentieth century) had a differently shaped tongue and sound holes and usually increased amounts of lacquered decoration, although today both traditions generally use the same type of instrument. Additional details such as music ornamentation and even the shape of the plectra used are also informative.

The *koto* uses different types of stands in different contexts. For public performances the usual front legs are the cat's paws (*neko-ashi*) that are placed on the under surface once the head cover has been taken off (fig. 12). As their name suggests, they resemble cat's paws, a shape found throughout Japanese design. Sometimes at a performance, or even during rehearsal, a stand called a *torii* is used (fig. 14), whose name, shape and even color represent the sacred entrance to Shintō shrines, thus showing the sacred area that may be conceptualized around the area of *koto* performance. An alternative during rehearsal is the bridge box, in which the movable bridges are stored when not in use. The stands mentioned above are mainly used for performances of traditional Japanese music, or during performances that seek to create a traditional atmosphere. In such contexts a back screen and a red carpet would also be used (the latter being a symbol of good luck). By contrast, at performances that are considered modern the performers very often use high stands of various types while sitting in chairs instead of kneeling on the floor.

Dualism

The social and cultural language of *koto* signification offers numerous examples of dualism, such as *zokusō* and *gakusō*; *Ikutagoto* and *Yamadagoto*; the regions of Kansai (predominantly *Ikuta-ryū*) and Kantō (predominantly *Yamada-ryū*); *betazuke* and *tomezuke* constructon; *itame* and *masame* grain patterns; dragon and phoenix; and *kurikō* and *namikō* soundboards. Even differences between such concepts as *yōgaku* (Western music) and *hōgaku* (traditional Japanese music), *yōgakki* (Western musical instruments) and *hōgakki* (traditional Japanese musical instruments), *yin* and *yang* (in the *in-yō* scale theory that often classifies the scales used by the *koto*),¹¹ and *uchi* (“insiders”) and *soto* (“outsiders”), are connected with the *koto*, its transmission, and its meaning. The significance of dualism is shown with other music-related concepts such as *bugaku* (court dances), which has music of the left that signifies Chinese music, and music of the right that signifies Korean music. One of the main functions of dualism in connection with the *koto* is to create one identity vis-à-vis another (a type of *uchi/soto* relationship), albeit within part of the same group (*uchi*) on more of a general level.

Conclusion

The Japanese *koto*, like other musical instruments, is more than just an object of material culture that functions solely to produce musical sound. The instrument communicates meaning about its culture to those who are able to interpret the signs and symbols that have been constructed by the culture itself. Organologists should seek to understand further the meanings of the many signs and symbols connected to and associated with musical instruments, in order to appreciate fully their significance as objects used not only in music communication, but also in other forms of non-verbal communication connected with the material object itself. As Tilley (1989, 186) has noted, “the meaning of a sign is not predetermined, but is a matter of cultural and historical convention” (see also Layton 1981). In particular, the *koto* should be read as Japanese culture and not just an object *in* Japanese culture. That is, as an object of music material culture it should be studied

11. As Koizumi (1977, 77) has noted, “the dualism of the *in-yō* theory, a cosmic philosophy of Chinese origin dividing elements of the world into ‘shade’ and ‘light,’ was applied to the nomenclature of musical modes by UEHARA [Rokushiro (1848–1913)].”

together with other aspects of its society and culture and not merely as an isolated object. While an object's form can often be explained through an understanding of its function, the meaning of that object must be understood in relation to its wider socio-cultural context. All objects have social value and should be examined beyond the purely visible or functional levels of analysis. Although the *koto* has undoubtedly become a symbol of traditional Japan, it is only through an examination of both the signifying instrument and its component parts, in direct connection with their meaning in Japanese culture, that one can truly understand the place of the *koto* today.

Character List

| | | |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Asagata-hori 麻形掘り | Hōgaku 邦楽 | Koto-kumiuta |
| Ayamegoto 菖蒲箏・ | I 為 | 箏組歌 |
| あやめ箏 | Ichi 壺・一 | Kotsuzumi 小鼓 |
| Ayasugi 綾杉 | Ichigenkin 一弦琴 | Kōboku 紅木 |
| Beta ベタ | Ikakko イカッ甲 | Kōki 紅木 |
| Betazuke ベタ付け | Ikutagoto 生田箏 | Kōhai 後輩 |
| Bu 武 | Ikuta-ryū 生田流 | Kumiuta 組歌 |
| Bugaku 舞楽 | In 陰 | Kurikō 剗甲 |
| Bun 文 | Isogoto 磯箏 | Kyō-ryū 京流 |
| Chi 智 | Itame 板目 | Kyū 九 |
| Chikusō 筑箏 | Jin 仁 | Makie 蒔絵 |
| Ch'in (or qin) 琴 | Jū 十 | Makiegoto 蒔絵箏 |
| Doragon ドラゴン | Jūnihitoe 十二単 | Masame 柎目 |
| Fuchi 縁 | Jūsangen 十三弦 | Mokume 木目 |
| Gagaku 雅楽 | Kakumaki 角巻 | Mon 紋 |
| Gakusō 楽箏 | Kanji 漢字 | Mukade-ashi 百足足 |
| Genji Monogatari | Karin 花梨 | Naga-isogoto 長磯箏 |
| 源氏物語 | Kashiwaba 柏葉 | Namikō 並甲 |
| Gi 義 | Kashiwagata 柏形 | Nana 七 |
| Go 五 | Kayagūm 伽椰琴 | Neko-ashi 猫足 |
| Go-san-kiri-mon | Ken 間 | Ni 弍・二 |
| 五三桐紋 | Kikuike-ryū 菊池流 | Nibanko 二番甲 |
| Go-shichi-kiri-mon | Kimono 着物 | Nihon Sandai |
| 五七桐紋 | Kin 巾 | Jitsuroku |
| Hachi 八 | Kinkuchi 金口 | 日本三代實録 |
| Haegūm 奚琴 | Kiri 桐 | Nihongi 日本紀 |
| Haiku 俳句 | Kiri-no-ki 桐の木 | P'i-P'a 琵琶 |
| Han-uwa 半角 | Kokyū 胡弓 | Ran 蘭 |
| Han-uwazuno 半上角 | Komochi-ayasugi | Rei 礼 |
| Hi 蕤・斐 | 子持ち綾杉 | Roku 六 |
| Honken 本間 | Komun'go 玄琴 | Ryū 竜・龍 |
| Honne 本音 | Koto 琴・箏(箏)・ | Ryū-bi 竜尾 |
| Hōgakki 邦楽器 | こと | Ryū-de 竜手 |

Character List continued

| | | |
|------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Ryū-fuku 竜腹 | Shi 四 | Tatemae 建前 |
| Ryū-gaku 竜額 | Shibui 渋い | Tatsu 竜・龍 |
| Ryū-gan 竜眼 | Shichi 七 | Tegashiwa 手柏 |
| Ryū-hai 竜背 | Shichi Fukujin | Tetoron テトロン |
| Ryū-kaku 竜角 | 七福神 | To 斗 |
| Ryū-ken 竜険 | Shin 信 | Tomezuke トメ付け |
| Ryū-kō 竜口 | Shinsō 新箏 | Torii 鳥居 |
| Ryū-kō 竜甲 | Shitan 紫檀 | Tō 斗 |
| Ryū-ku 竜响 | Shizen 自然 | Tsuguyama-ryū |
| Ryū-kyō 竜頬 | Shō 商 | 継山流 |
| Ryū-shi 竜趾 | Soto 外 | Tsukushigoto 筑紫箏 |
| Ryū-shin 竜唇 | Sō 箏(箏) | Uchi 内 |
| Ryū-shu 竜手 | Sō-no-koto | Uwakko 上甲 |
| Ryū-tō 竜頭 | 箏の琴 | Uwazuno 上角 |
| Ryū-zetsu 竜舌 | Sudareme 簾目 | Wagakki 和楽器 |
| Ryū-zu 竜頭 | Sugoto-jitate | Yakudoshi 厄年 |
| Sabi 寂 | 素箏仕立て | Yamadagoto 山田箏 |
| Sakura 桜 | Szū 糸 | Yamada-ryū 山田流 |
| Samurai 侍 | Szū-chu 糸竹 | Yoko 横 |
| San 参・三 | Tagayasan 鉄刀木 | Yon 四 |
| Sandai Jitsuroku | Tagensō 多弦箏 | Yō 陽 |
| 三代實録 | Tai 鯛 | Yōgakki 洋楽器 |
| Santake 三岳 | Tamamoku 玉目 | Zheng 箏(箏) |
| Senpai 先輩 | Tansō 短箏 | Zokugaku 俗楽 |
| Shamisen 三味線 | Tate 縦 | Zokusō 俗箏 |

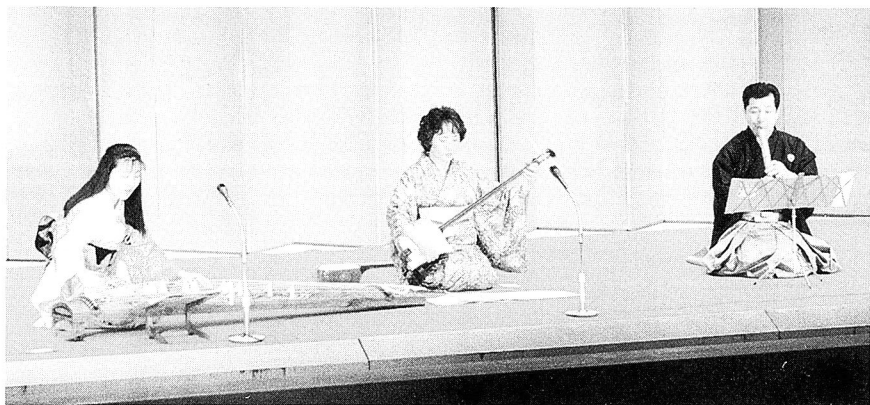


FIGURE 1. Left, *koto* (a modern-day *Yamadagoto*); center, *shamisen*; right, *shakuhachi*. Three members of the performance group *Kisaragi-kai* (belonging progressively to *Kikui Sōgaku-sha*, *Tsuguyama-ryū*, and *Ikuta-ryū*) in a *sankyoku* ensemble (Ōsaka, 16 February 1992).

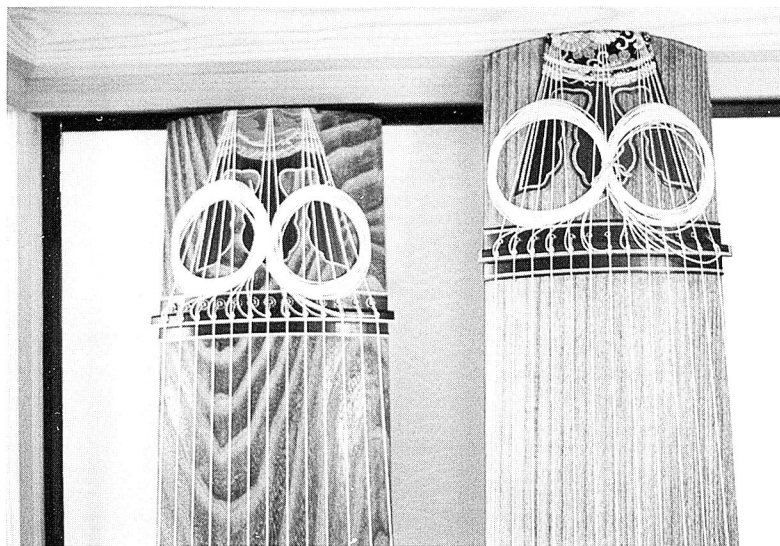


FIGURE 2. Left: a historical *Ikutagoto* with an *itame* (or *mokume*) soundboard; right: a *Yamadagoto* with a *masame* soundboard. Both instruments belong to Kikuhara Hatsuko (b. 1899), who is part of the *Ko-Ikuta-ryū*, itself part of the *Ikuta-ryū* (Ōsaka, 23 April 1991).

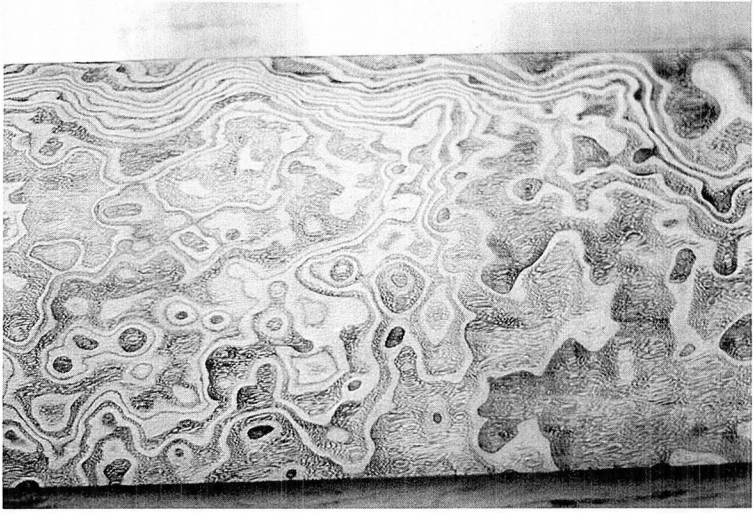


FIGURE 3. A *tamamoku* soundboard (Osaka College of Music, Museum of Musical Instruments, Ref. 0407 [see Osaka College of Music 1984, 91]; June 1991).

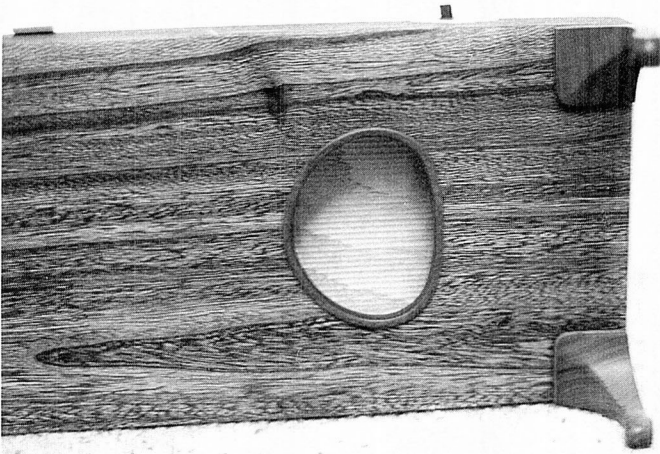


FIGURE 4. The underneath of the head of a *Yamadagoto* belonging to Dartington College of Arts (1988).

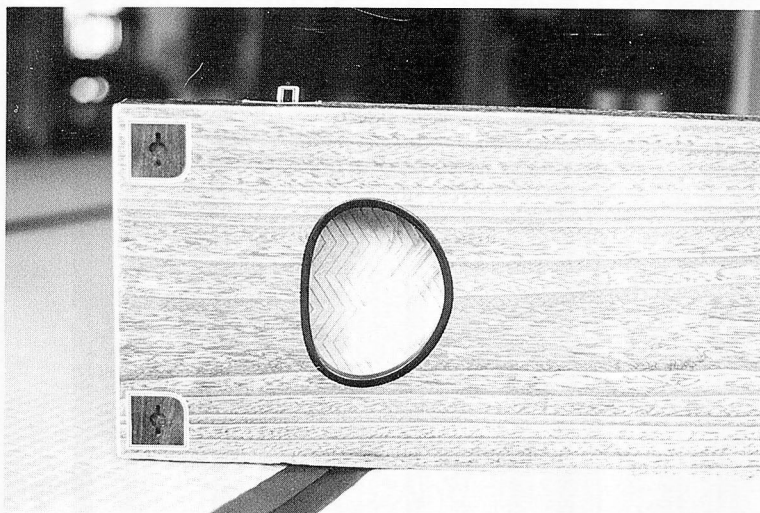


FIGURE 5. The underneath of the head of a *Yamadagoto* belonging to Matsuzaki Shūsetsu (Ogōri, Yamaguchi Prefecture, July 1990).

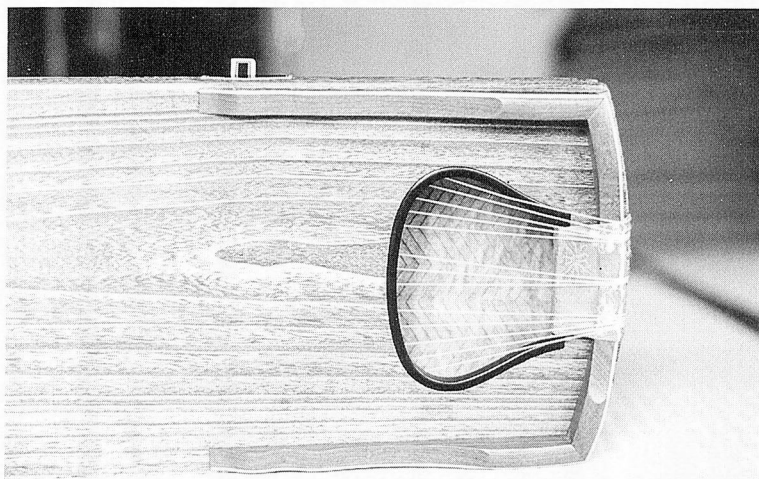


FIGURE 6. The underneath of the tail of a *Yamadagoto* belonging to Matsuzaki Shūsetsu (Ogōri, Yamaguchi Prefecture, July 1990).

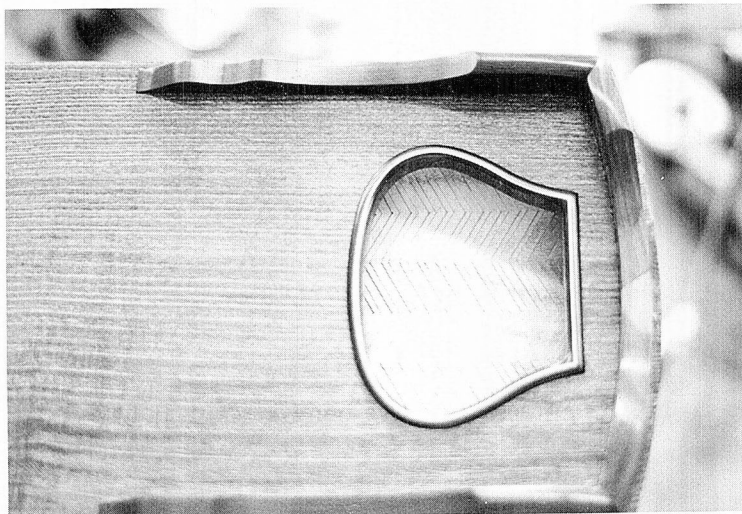


FIGURE 7. View of the underneath of the tail of a *Yamadagoto* during its manufacturing process (Makimoto Gakki, Fukuyama City, July 1990).

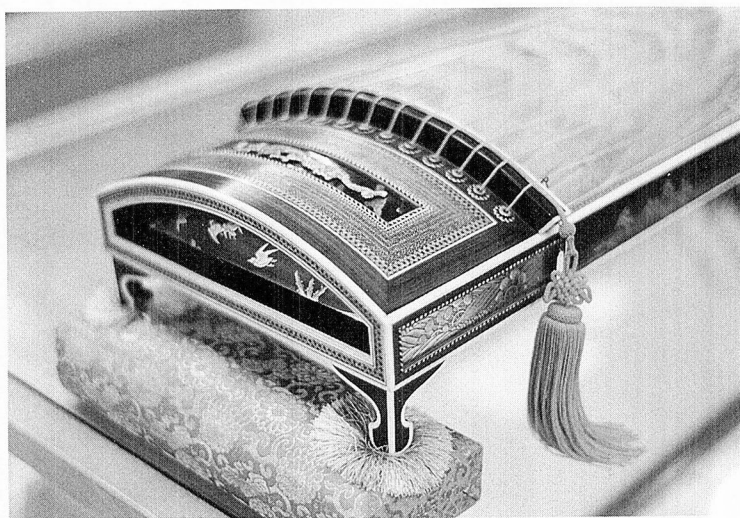


FIGURE 8. Side view of the head of a *chikusō* made by Moritsugu Hata in 1915, measuring about 190.2 cm long by 25.6 cm wide by 14.3 cm high (Musashino Academia Musicae, Museum of Musical Instruments, Ref. A 610 [see Musashino Academia Musicae 1969, 12]; November 1991).



FIGURE 9. Top view of the head of a *chikusō* made by Moritsugu Hata in 1906, measuring about 190 cm long by 24.6 cm wide by 14.4 cm high; *Genji-mon* are shown on the lips (see Koop and Inada 1960) (Musashino Academia Musicae, Museum of Musical Instruments, Ref. A 626 [see Musashino Academia Musicae 1969, 12]; November 1991).



FIGURE 10. Attaching the backboard. Left: *betazuke*; right: *tomezuke*.

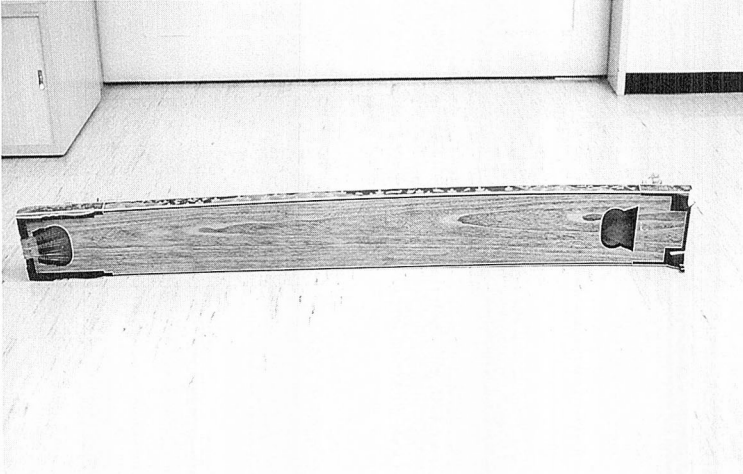


FIGURE 11. Underneath of a *chikusō* made by Masafusa (date unknown), measuring about 191 cm long by 22.7–24.7 cm wide by 4.5–8.1 cm high (Osaka College of Music, Museum of Musical Instruments, Ref. B03-0484 [see Osaka College of Music 1984, 89]; June 1991).

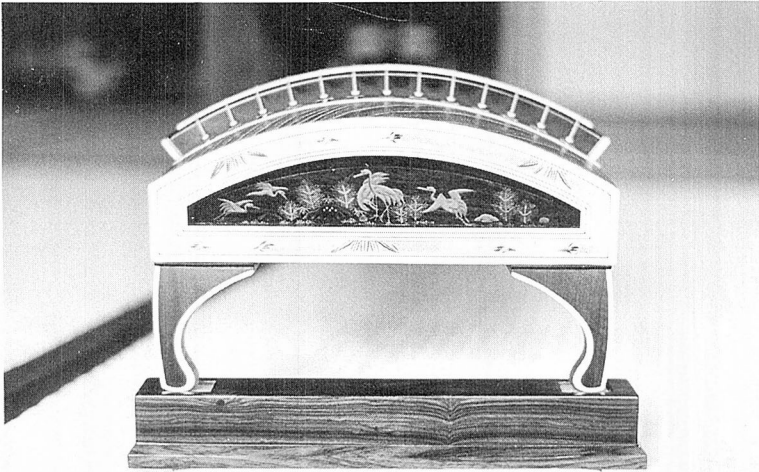


FIGURE 12. Front of a *Yamadagoto* with extra stand belonging to Matsuzaki Shūsetsu (Ogōri, Yamaguchi prefecture, July 1990).

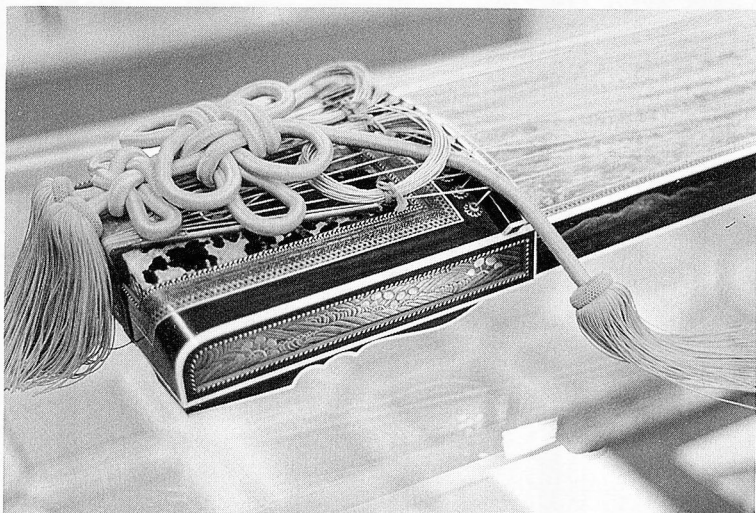


FIGURE 13. Side of the tail of the *chikusō* shown in fig. 8.

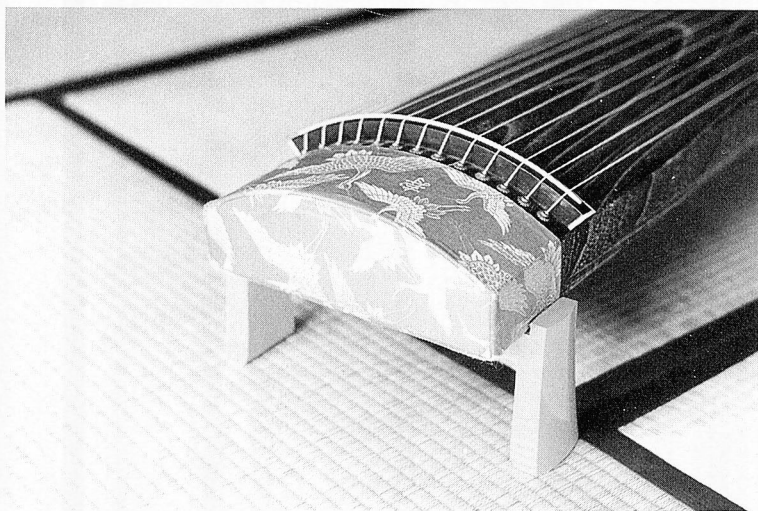


FIGURE 14. Front of a *Yamadagoto* belonging to Matsuzaki Shūsetsu, with head cover and *torii* stand (Ogōri, Yamaguchi Prefecture, July 1990).

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