

ETHNIC FOLKWAYS RECORDS FE 4218

MUSIC OF THE
Shakuhachi
Kōtōkan Kōchiku Esron

Recorded by Jacob Feuerring
Performed by Yasuda Shinpū



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MUSIC OF THE SHAKUHACHI

RECORDED IN JAPAN BY JACOB FEUERRING
PERFORMED BY YASUDA SHINPU

SIDE 1

Band 1. Choshi (Kotokan)
Band 2. Kyorei (Kotokan)
Band 3. Koku (Hochiku)

SIDE 2

Band 1. Mukaiji (Hochiku)
Band 2. Ajikan (Esron)

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DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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FOREWORD

There is a saying that music and etiquette are necessary to make things complete and whole. This was certainly true in ancient China where both music and etiquette were essential to the smooth functioning of the political system. It was the writer Kōshi's opinion

("Reigakukeisei, Sonokyoku wa itsunari"; "Etiquette, music, punishment and government - in the end all become one.")

Music and government were inclusive and if music made the country prosper it was also music that brought a country to ruin.

Therefore, in China, religion, government and music, being based on the principle of church and state being one, were all essential parts that could not be separated. This was well understood by the rulers who took care to administer the affairs of state accordingly.

From this point of view to study ancient Chinese music was the same as studying Chinese history. Unfortunately, it was not possible then, as it is today, to record such music and so it is not possible to reproduce the tunes of those times. In particular, the shakuhachi music that was part of China's ancient religious music (mainly Buddhist) cannot be known to us today. Of course there are various ancient books of flute music left to us but it is not clear how these should be interpreted within the musical systems of today.

This manuscript is intended to related in simple terms an outline of the history of shakuhachi music as an example of ancient Buddhist music.

Though the author is particularly interested in ancient music, he is not a music research specialist and the reader is warned to take this into careful account.

Again in Kōyōsai's Zuihitsu Isshi of the Sung era it is written that a certain mad monk journeyed to the south of the capital where he acquired a shakuhachi which he played...could not this monk have been a member of the Buddhist sect known as Shingeshū. It makes one smile to think that in those days it was considered strange for a monk to play a shakuhachi.

Since I don't know the cultural history of China I do not know how or by whom the shakuhachi and dōshō¹ were introduced into China. I have not heard of the existence of the shakuhachi in present day China. Perhaps as the dōshō developed it took precedence over the shakuhachi.

¹The dōshō is a vertical end blown flute similar to the shakuhachi. It doesn't have a root base and it is a thin straight tube with a deeper groove in the blowing end. It also has six holes.

THE HISTORY OF THE SHAKUHACHI IN CHINA

From time immemorial in China there were such wind instruments as the shō, teki and kan. Upon careful examination of the Chinese characters it is not difficult to imagine that all these instruments were made of bamboo as the Chinese character for bamboo is contained in all their names.

We can see from the existence of many books of the Chou and Yin dynasties that much importance was placed on music in ancient China. The works include Kōtei's Unmontaikān, Gyotei's Daishōgaku, Utei's Dai Kagaku.

There is a story that Kōtei once ordered a certain musician to go to Mt. Konron to acquire bamboo and he had this musician make a flute with this bamboo. This musician, Lei Lin, went west from Taika and after a long journey he discovered suitable bamboo in the Gekei Valley near Genyu. The length of this bamboo was three sun and nine bu (about five inches). The proper sound for the ōjiki flute was determined by blowing upon this flute.

The fact that a valuable musician would be sent such a great distance simply to acquire suitable bamboo tells us how important the flute was in ancient times.

One can conjecture that the reed pipe of Egypt was transmitted through the near and middle east but this has not been proved. It was first evolved into an instrument that had a mouth piece and bell end like a bugle. Later it evolved into a vertical end blown flute. But the reed pipe brought to the west evolved from a bugle type instrument into the modern trumpet.

The bamboo flute was transmitted from Middle Asia, through Afghanistan, through India, where it became strongly influenced by the Buddhist culture, into China where it was adopted by the government and became popular.

Now, as for the shakuhachi of China, it has been generally passed down that it was

Rozai who made the first shakuhachi with six holes during the foundation of the Tang dynasty.

Hōto Kokushi became in China a Shingeshū¹ () monk. The founder of Shingeshū was the colorful monk of the Tang period, Shinge Zenshi. But in China there is not longer any Shingeshū.

In a work of Yamada Kōdō (a Japanese writer) the following is written:

"It is said that it was Hōto Kokushi who first introduced Shingeshū into Japan. When he went to Sung China he became attracted to the teachings of Shinge Zenshi and valued them highly. Hōto Kokushi learned how to play the bamboo flute from Chōyu, a descendant (16th generation) of Shinge Zenshi. He returned to Japan with four of Chōyu's disciples, Hōshin, Sōjo, Kokusa and Lisei. Hōto Kokushi built the Kōkoku temple on the Yura bay of Kishu² and there he lived with Chōyu's disciples.

Kusanoki Masashige's grandson, the monk Komu, traveled around Japan with a bamboo flute. It was from this time that the term komusō came to be applied to a certain type of itinerant monk who wandered around Japan playing the shakuhachi. It was during this time that these wandering monks embraced Shingeshū and established temples in various parts of Japan. Among these temples, Ichigetsu-ji in Shimofusa, Meianhi in Kyoto and Reihō-ji Musashi are particularly famous. It was not until the mid-Tokugawa period that these temples came to be known as Shingeshū. In October of the 4th year of Meiji, Shingeshū was outlawed."

(Yamada Kōdō, Zenshu Jitzen)

¹Shingeshū or Fuke-shu was a Zen sect that used the shakuhachi in their training. The Chinese founder is also known as Fuke Zengi.

²Yura bay of Kishu is in the province of Wakayama in Southern Japan.

THE SHAKUHACHI IN JAPAN

Under the Empress Suiko's reign (593-628 A.D.) contact with the continent (China) flourished in the Asuka culture that developed as a result. The continental culture was relayed through China and Korea as Buddhist culture and soon became firmly implanted in Japan.

This was a culture of the Imperial Court and was not available to the common people. This was true of the shakuhachi music that came from China in that the common people neither owned shakuhachis or played the music.

During the late Tang period certain monks in Southern China used a shakuhachi with five holes to adapt to the bonhai musical scale. It was during this same period that the Hitoyogiri Shakuhachi¹ was introduced into Japan along with Buddhist culture. This Hitoyogiri Shakuhachi, which was introduced during the late Nara era (8th Century) went out of existence in the Genroku period.

At the end of the Heian and the beginning of the Kamakura period, Hōto Kotushi, a Buddhist monk, went to Sung China and after his return he came to have much influence on the Buddhist world, especially upon Buddhist Shakuhachi music, in that he brought the shakuhachi with him from China.

¹The Hitoyogiri Shakuhachi is an early type of shakuhachi from China. It was smaller than the modern flute, its length being one joint of bamboo or about thirty inches. The end did not have the root of the bamboo. It is said the modification using the root section came about so monks who were not allowed to carry swords could use the shakuhachi as a club. The modern shakuhachi is made of two sections joined with an inner joint. This development is credited to Kurosawa Kinko. By this means a flute maker can remove a section of bamboo so the flute can be made into an exact length. A rare piece of bamboo is sometimes found and made into a one piece shakuhachi. These are called nobudake. Older flutes are sometimes one piece because the length and tuning were not so critical.

THE GENEALOGY OF THE SHAKUHACHI IN JAPAN

After the Kōkoku Temple in Yura, Hōto Kokushi established the Shokakuzamyōko Temple in Kyoto's Utama Valley before he died. The events of the one century between Hōto Kokushi and Kyochiku are not clearly known.

In the Ashikaga period there was a master of the Hitoyogiri Shakuhachi, which was adapted to the bonbai musical scale, named Sosa. In the Azuchi-Momoyama era the master Omorisōkun carried on the development of the Hitoyogiri Shakuhachi. But when the Komusō Shakuhachi came into use the Hitoyogiri Shakuhachi declined in popularity.

Adopted by temples of various areas, the Komusō Shakuhachi came to absorb a certain unique flavor from each of these temples and each temple came to develop its own unique manner of playing the Komusō Shakuhachi.

Kureda Minonokami's vassel, Kurosawa Kōshichi composed 36 tunes based on such old music as Koku. These 36 tunes are what are known to us today as Kinko School Koten Honkyoku. This Kurosawa Kōshichi took the music name Kurosawa Kinko and was the founder of the Kinko School. It was the Kinko and Komusō Schools that dominated the shakuhachi since the Genroku period eventually came to merge.

During this time the shakuhachi had been strictly limited in use to the Buddhist temples but with the outlawing of the Shingeshū in the 4th year of Meiji the use of the shakuhachi spread to the common people. With this the Buddhist music of the shakuhachi eventually came to be popularized among the general public.

NAMES OF RECORDED TUNES AND THEIR EXPLANATIONS

1. Chōshi

This is considered to be especially basic to the Meian Koten Honkyoku. It is also known as Takeshirabe and holds a particularly important place in Shakuhachi music. Chōshi means melody. It is a very simple piece but certainly very profound. Usually a Meian student learns it as his first piece. At group Meian concerts the performers usually play it in unison before the concert begins. This tune is played on a long shakuhachi made of Ajzu Paulownia wood and it is called the Kōtokan.¹ Its length is exactly three shaku and six sun (107 cm.). This shakuhachi is just exactly one octave lower than a regular shakuhachi and its tone quality is extremely soft. Playing time is about 3 minutes and 35 seconds.

2. Kyorei

Considered next in importance to Chōshi in the Koten Honkyoku. This is one of three Kyorei, or especially treasured pieces of the Meian school. A meian student can buy a package of all the Meian scores. They are usually numbered. Chōshi is the first. However at the back are the three extra special pieces which are not numbered. Kyorei is one. It is said that this is a tune Hōto Kokushi brought back from Sung China.

Kyochu Kuzen once imagined that he heard the sound of a reitaku (a staff with rings carried by certain monks that would produce a ringing sound when moved) while he was praying in the Asama temple of Yamato. He then composed this tune based upon the same kōtokan that is used for Chōshi. Playing time is 8 minutes and 26 seconds.

¹The Kōtokan is a hand carved Shakuhachi type flute of Paulownia wood. It was developed and is made by Kikusui Kofu, a composer and head of his own school or style of Shakuhachi playing. Natural bamboo is very difficult to make into long flutes but the kōtokan can be carved into long lengths to produce very deep sounds.

3. Kokū

This is also one of three Kyorei or special pieces. It has a very spiritual or Buddhist feeling. It is central to Buddhist, especially Shakuhachi music. On the one hand it is believed that Hōto Kokushi brought this tune back from Sung China while on the other hand it is said that Kyochiku composed it. It is played on the Hōchiku Shakuhachi which is two shaku and three sun long (68 cm.).¹ This Hōchiku is considered to be typical of Shinge Shakuhachi. Playing time is 10 minutes and 57 seconds.

¹The Hōchiku differs from the Shakuhachi in that it does not have the root section of the bamboo. Also the bore or inside of the flute is straight throughout while the shakuhachi gradually narrows towards the root, then is very narrow about two inches from the end. There is a difference in the timbre of the shakuhachi and hōchiku. The latter has a louder more forceful sound. Its name means thunder bamboo.

4. Mukaiji

This is the third of the three Kyorei. Kyochiku composed this tune while viewing Mt. Asama through a fog from a boat in Ise Bay. It conveys well the feeling of Ise mountains wrapped in a spring mist. The essence of classical Buddhist music is expressed in this piece. It is three shaku and three sun long (93 cm.). Playing time is 10 minutes and 5 seconds.

5. Ajikan

From ancient times there was a town known as Aji in Kyuchu. Kiguchitaizan and Miyagawa Nyozan (35th generation of Meian School) added the term Kan and the tune came to be known as Ajikan. This piece is in the esoteric style peculiar to the Meian school of playing. It sounds like the chanting of Zen monks. It is typical Buddhist Shakuhachi music and is also known as Saji or Sa. It is played on a shakuhachi or specified length made of esron pipe.¹ This is used to adapt the tune to the current auditory sense. It could be said that it represents the Renaissance of Japanese classical music. This esron pipe has seven holes and is 56 cm. long. Playing time is 8 minutes and 35 seconds.

USE OF THE INSTRUMENTS

1. The Kōtokan is often made in long lengths. This fits well with Meian music because the player can make very deep low sounds or forceful windy blowing sounds. The paulownia also makes for a very soft sound.

2. The Hōchiku also fits in very well with Meian music. It also can easily be made in long lengths. Many players feel it has a natural sound much in keeping with the old Meian music. The modern shakuhachi is often filled with plaster in the tuning process. The Hōchiki is left in a natural state with usually only a light coat of lacquer.

3. The Eson pipe is often used with other instruments. Also in modern pieces because the pipe can be tuned very exactly. It is also used by people who can't afford the now expensive bamboo shakuhachi.

SHAKUHACHI: SHAPING THE SOUL OF BAMBOO by Riley Lee

Bamboo. The orient. Hoary legends of Sen priests, traveling monks with reed baskets over their heads. The sound of ten thousand bamboo leaves rustling in the autumn wind. The shakuhachi: Japanese bamboo flute.

The shakuhachi is made from the root end of a species of bamboo called madake, which is taken from the ground during the winter and aged one to three years before it is straightened, cut, drilled, lacquered inside, filed, polished and gradually transformed by a craftsman into a quality instrument through a process that takes weeks or months. The result remains basically a piece of bamboo, cut at an angle at one end to form the mouth piece, with four holes in front and one in the back. The standard shakuhachi is about 54.5 centimeters long, perhaps five centimeters in diameter and produces the D above middle C with a range of about three octaves. Though a maker would soon inform you otherwise, the inside looks like a uniform mirror-like surface lacquered either red or black. A piece of bamboo with five plain holes. How simple compared to the western flute or oboe.

A big difference between the shakuhachi and its western counterparts is that it is almost entirely handmade. A friend once pointed out that it takes at least ten years to learn how to do anything well, and this certainly applies to shakuhachi making. One can make a shakuhachi beautiful in appearance, easy to play and perfect in pitch, and yet be told that it lacks *chikuin*, one of those vague, untranslatable Japanese words that may mean something like the soul of the bamboo. It makes the difference between a good shakuhachi and an excellent one.

¹The esron pipe shakuhachi is a shakuhachi made from plastic pipe. It was made by Kikusui Kofu. The bore of the flute is straight and it becomes bell shaped at the end. The seven hole shakuhachi was developed by Kikusui Kofu. It can be made from bamboo or plastic or paulownia. The extra two holes, one in the middle of the flute and one below the bottom hole, enable the player to produce the western (do re mi) scale. On a five hole shakuhachi it can be played only by partially covering some of the holes to produce the entire scale.

INTRODUCTION OF PERFORMER

1. NAME: Yasuda Shinpū (Takashi)
2. ADDRESS: (current) 95 Aoshirochō
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3. BIRTHDATE: 12th year of Taishō (1923)
March 23
4. ACADEMIC HISTORY: Ritsumeikan University
(under-graduate and graduate)
Public Law
Administrative Law
5. HOBBIES: Shakuhachi
Haiku
Nanga
NOTE: Shakuhachi--first learned from father, Ritsukyō. Under Kikusui Kofū mainly studied Meian Honkyokū of the Koten Honkyoko.
6. OCCUPATION: Local Public Servant
7. FAMILY: Wife
Two daughters
8. OTHER: I am thankful for this opportunity that Mr. Feuerring has given me.

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR

STEPHEN MINDEL was born in New York City and is thirty-five years old. He has a B.A. from New York University and a Masters in creative writing from San Francisco State College.

For the past three years his home has been Kyoto, Japan where he has been studying the shakuhachi.

The difficulty lies in the inside, where the manner and quality in which either clay or a kind of plaster of paris, or both, and the Japanese lacquer are applied, determines whether the instrument will become a struggle or a joy to play. The method of measuring and creating a bore which produces the desired quality and pitch is an art almost haphazardly learned through practice and patience and complicated by the fact that each bamboo piece reacts differently from the last.

Which is more difficult? To make the shakuhachi or to play it? Who knows? Of course, a maker must know how to play; logically, the better his playing ability, the better he can make them. And almost every performer has at one time or another played around with a shakuhachi of his own making. However, it is the general opinion that one or the other is a task for a lifetime, i.e., no one hears of a person who can both play extremely well and make superb shakuhachi's. The same most probably applies to any other musical instrument, especially if it is still largely handmade.

There is a saying in Japanese, "*Kubi furi, san nen*," which means it takes three years just to learn how to move one's neck properly when playing the shakuhachi. If anything, the shakuhachi teaches patience. Making a sound is similar to blowing a note on a bottle. Have you ever tried to make a sound on a bottle when you're mad? Probably not, but the point is that the shakuhachi is such that one's mood (soul, inner-self) is easily reflected in the music created through the shakuhachi. There are many techniques used in playing the shakuhachi. One is called *tama-ne*, like the chirping of an autumn insect. Another is *gyo-sui*, a clear, bell-like double *pianissimo*, often preceded by a technique rather unique with the shakuhachi, the loud *mura-iki*, or thrashing breath, often compared to the forceful sound of a gust of wind in a swaying bamboo grove.

Much of the music of the shakuhachi is religious in origin and purpose. My teacher once told me the well-known legend according to the book *Kyotaku Denki Kokuji-kai*, of how the present shakuhachi came to Japan. He told me how there was a great Zen master in China during the Tang dynasty named Fuke Zenji, who, with the use of a bell, spread enlightenment throughout the countryside. A certain monk named Chohaku, aspiring to become a disciple of the great Fuke Zenji, approached him but was refused. Not giving up, Chohaku continued to follow the master and learn from him, yet was still refused discipleship. This naturally made him very sad. One day, he went to a bamboo grove, and fashioned a flute from a piece of bamboo. With it, he was inspired by his love for the old master to play in such a way as to imitate the masters bell. The song he created is called *Shin Kyorei*. Thus the shakuhachi was born.

A moving sound

Many years later, during the Chinese Southern Sung dynasty, or in Japan, the Kamakura era one Hotto Kokushi made a pilgrimage to China from his home in Japan to learn more about Buddhism. One day he heard a sound which so moved him that he decided he must bring whatever was making it back to Japan. It was the shakuhachi. Hotto Kokushi became the disciple of the Shakuhachi master, Chosan, who in fact descended directly sixteen generations from the first Chohaku. Hotto Kokushi eventually did return to Japan, bringing his discovery with him. One of his disciples, Kiyoshi Zenji, became very skillful at the shakuhachi. It was he that started the Fuke-shu, or sect of Zen that uses the shakuhachi as one way to *satori*.

The most famous chapter is probably during the Edo period, when basket wearing, traveling priests, called Komuso, made their appearance. Actually, these Komuso were mostly ex-Samurai, often acting as spies and informants for the Shogun government. It was at this time that the shakuhachi began being made with the heavy root end of the bamboo. The Edo Komuso was just as likely to use his self-protection as to create music.

The name shakuhachi comes from the old Japanese linear measuring system. One shaku, or about 30 cm. is divided into 10 sun (pronounced, "soon"). The standard shakuhachi is exactly one shaku, eight sun (hachi meaning eight) in length. Thus, Shaku-Hachi.

Different lengths of shakuhachi are used to play different ranges, similar to the tenor, alto and bass saxophone. The most commonly used lengths are one shaku, six sun; one shaku, eight sun; two shaku, one sun; and two shaku, four sun, which produces the G below middle C. Some performers make use of as many as 12 different lengths of shakuhachi.

Through the years, much of the shakuhachi movement has been divided into sects or schools. Some are now with us in name only, others were fairly recently created. There is a small trend among younger players to remain outside the influence of a sect; also the folk-shakuhachi of the country pays little attention to sects or schools. But usually one soon learns of the rigid sect system which controls the shakuhachi society in Japan. At present, the largest by far, especially in the Kansai area, is the Tozan-ryu (ryu means "sect"), founded about eighty years ago. There is also the Meian-ryu, claiming beginnings in the Shakuhachi-playing Zen priest tradition. The Kinko-ryu, founded during the Edo period and more prominent in the Kanto area, is presently blessed with a number of skilled professional players. And, of course, there is Chikuhō-ryu, which I belong to, started fifty years ago by my teacher's father, the first Chikohō Sakai.

There are several large differences between most of these sects, the most noticeable being the notation system. Each school has its own way of writing the music. Perhaps I am really too biased to discuss the relative merits of

each sect, but I suggest to anyone learning the shakuhachi to pay more attention to choosing the teacher rather than the sect. A good shakuhachi player is a good shakuhachi player, no matter what school he is in.

The music of the shakuhachi today is often divided into four main groups: Honkyoku, or mainstream; Gaikyoku, or outer stream; Shink-yoku, the new songs; and Gendai, or modern. Besides these there is the folk or country shakuhachi music. The honkyoku are the pieces preserved for us from the time when the shakuhachi was chiefly a religious instrument, in a sense similar to chanting or meditation. Its purposes was to help and attain enlightenment, rather than to be played for musical enjoyment. In fact, the honkyoku were originally not considered music, but more like prayers or chants, a form of meditating. Honkyoku, therefore, has no tempo or beats, usually no noticeable melody or theme, and often makes use of quarter tones and other pitches not found on the chromatic scales. The konkyoku is played with shakuhachi only, occasionally in two parts, but never with another instrument.

Often, in the past, a seeker of truth would spend his entire life playing only one song. One interpretation of the honkyoku derives from the word *honnin*, which means the person himself, the original or principle person. My teacher tells his students that though he will teach them how to play the honkyoku a certain way, it is up to the individual to respect the song enough, to enter the spirit of the song until it becomes his own. In the process, the manner of playing may have changed so much that little resemblance of the original remains.

Gaikyoku is all the the "old" music played to accompany the three-stringed *shamisen* and the thirteen-stringed, zither-like, *koto*. Well known examples of gaikyoku are *Chidori no Kyoku*, the "Song of the Plover", and *Roku dan no Shirabee* a song in six movements.

During the early part of this century, a new class of music for Japan's traditional instruments was developed. This new group is naturally called *Shin Kyoku*, or "new music". It is often very western-like and sometimes poor in comparison to more traditional music. However, much of the chinkyoku is excellent. The most famous--and justly so--is *Haru no Umi*, "Spring Sea", by the late Michio Miyaga.

Then, there is the *Gendai*, or modern group, written within the last ten or twenty years. Recently, as more and more modern composers are realizing the eternal qualities of Japan's traditional instruments, especially the shakuhachi, excellent music is increasing. The music definitely belong to this era, but at the same time remains Japanese in flavor. Often instruments traditionally not played together are used; an extremely successful example being the music for the Shakuhachi and the lute-shaped, sitar-like, *biwa*. The Shakuhachi is also being used as a solo instrument for symphonic works.

Finally, there is the *minyo*; folk, or country music. Some of my favorite songs are

of this type, yet the folk songs are often regarded as a bit beneath the more 'advanced' music. The land and ocean, the natural beauty of Japan, however, can be heard so well in the folk songs for shakuhachi.

The shakuhachi is a beautiful instrument which requires time and patience to master. People are often discouraged at the difficulty encountered in making only the first sound. However, the shakuhachi is available to all, including foreign barbarians; it is not impossibly mysterious and difficult. All the talk about it requiring a lifetime to truly master is true, but also hold for most anything.

Shakuhachi: Shaping the Soul of Bamboo
by Riley Lee from *kansai ACTION*, Vol. III,
No. 19, September 27-October 10, 1974.



Inside "HONDO" room of Meian-Ji, showing performance of Shakuhachi (Fuke Sect) Buddhist music, from the Kamakura Period. It is very old music used for ZAZEN (Meditation); older than Kinko Ryo Honkyoku, which came only during the EDO Period.

ON MEIAN KOTEN HONKYOKU¹

Performed by Yasuda Shinpū (with explanation of tape)

Recorded by Jacob Feuerring ('notes' in Japanese)

English translation by: Akiko Kumeda
Susan Barberi

Written by Yasuda Shinpū

Corrected and checked by: Stephen Mindel
And Footnotes Jacob Feuerring

¹ Koten Honkyoku means the oldest solo pieces of a certain school of shakuhachi playing as differentiated from modern pieces and those played with other instruments. The Meian school of playing is one of the main shakuhachi school and perhaps the oldest.