VII. How coherent is a *kumiuta*?

The way *kumiuta* texts are presented in manuscripts and prints leaves no doubt that they were conceived of as a chain of separate verses and not as one coherent text running smoothly from beginning to end. If we aim a a deeper understanding of the structural principles underlying this chain and first turn our attention to the *shamisen kumiuta*, it may be permitted for a moment to recall our own songs performed to the dancing of groups of people (particularly in a Round Dance). Here, the structural principle of adding up verses in a fairly haphazard way is extremely common. After all some sort of music or song has to be produced for as long as the dance is going on, and the cyclic or repetetive structure of the dance is matched by relatively short stanzas whose text is of no great importance.

Illustrations show us that Japanese dances of the kind using the witty, playful and often straightforwardly erotic texts echoed in the *shamisen kumiuta* were also often cyclic dances (115), while texts like the *Onna-kabuki dorjuta* with their regular succession of short verse and refrain suggest a dance cyclic at least in so far as it is built up of short structural units of roughly the same dimension. In addition it may be pointed out that the term *odori* ["dance"], which is so frequently mentioned in the texts of the *shamisen kumiuta* themselves, translates literally as "jumping, leaping into the air". The structural principle of the *shamisen kumiuta*, therefore, which clearly have their roots in dances possessing both cyclic as well as lively, entertaining characteristics, may well be that of a chain of stanzas arranged more from the point of view of variety than coherence.

The true intensions of the blind masters, who created the repertoire of *kumiuta* and thus of certificate pieces for the training of professional musicians, are, however, unknown to us. This makes it impossible to tell for sure whether they just made use of dance songs as they were – perhaps giving them an added stroke of refinement –, or whether they were determined to create a very much more carefully structured repertoire of more carefully structured individual pieces, based on musical and textual elements typical of dance songs.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of how the middle part of dance song texts are structured, closer observation for instance of the *Onna-kabuki odoriuta* will reveal that they are not entirely haphazard, as they begin with a stanza of clearly introductory nature, and pay special attention to the wording of the final stanza. This is a principle we certainly find in the *shamisen kumiuta* as well.

But what can be said of a *kumiuta* as a whole? Does it, apart from beginning and end, form a random collection of verses or not? Let us first consider the way one *kumiuta* verse gets linked to the following verse (and also one entire *kumiuta* to the following *kumiuta*). As far as possible the translation of the texts themselves has tried to make any such linking clear. Suffice it to point out here that in the *shamisen kumiuta* the jump both in form and content from one verse and one song to the next is quite considerable, while on the other hand the *koto kumiuta* a) often base more than one verse within a song on the same source or topic, b) seem to show careful consideration of images to link one song to the next, and c) regularly have a new verse pick up a word or image introduced in a preceding one. Moreover, it is just because of a certain degree of homogeneity of style and content within verses 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 of a *koto kumiuta* that the penultimate verse 5 tends to stand out so markedly.

The question that is to be probed here, however, is not so much one concerning formal aspects such as the mechanism of linking itself. Rather I wish to focus on content, meaning and implication(s) of a *kumiuta*. Is it possible to find, on any other than just the formal level, some evidence that the masters who laid the foundation of *shamisen* and *koto* music as we know it today chose and arranged their texts with particular care and a specific intention?

It must here be repeated clearly that we have but scant knowledge of the surroundings in which the blind masters of the 17th century lived and what schools of thought they adhered to. Contemporary documents such as diaries or introductions to song text collections may state a number of dates, names, facts and legends, but all this tells us little about how *kumiuta* actually were understood. As for the artistic tradition itself – and

particularly the very core of such a tradition – it is, as it were, a "jewel", passed on from master to disciple verbally and shrouded in secrecy. The *kumiuta* texts alone, as they appear in song text collections from the late 17th century onwards, were certainly of little use to anyone intent on learning the tradition. This holds true also in the case of tablatures, which, even when detailed, were mere aides-memoire. It was thus always necessary to "enter the gate" of a master and personally absorb the art in all its aspects: text, instrumental play, song, implications and atmosphere. To make matters even more complex, we must probably reckon with the fact that the secrets of the tradition were not taught to all and everyone but were passed on only grudgingly and over a very long period of time to a selected group of persons. Thus interpretations of *kumiuta* texts by someone who had merely mastered the technical side of the art might be extremely misleading.

For us, close observation of the texts themselves appears to be the only means of gaining insight into the nature of *kumiuta*. In the commentary to each individual song, therefore, stress has been laid on the possible associations behind an image. The first step towards a deeper understanding of a *kumiuta* text (and not only a *kumiuta* text, for that matter) is to realize that a pine is never just a pine, a cuckoo never just a cuckoo, or a cloud not just a cloud. Images, in other words, are used in an allusive manner - though one hesitates to speak of outright allusion, since the literal meaning of most images is presumably not meant to disappear completely; crickets may, at least by beginners, probably still be imagined as crickets, even if they should imply that some lonely person is waiting.

Apart from the paucity of useful clues, one of the greatest problems faced when trying to fathom the implications of an image is: In which historical period and what kind of source material are we to look for comparable passages that may yield additional aspects and information? The choice made in the foregoing discussion of the song texts tended, on the basis of the general mood of a given verse and therefore the most likely meaning, to emphasize contemporary and late 15th/early 16th century dance songs as well as Ryûtatsu *kouta* in the case of the *shamisen kumiuta*, and the *Kokin waka-shû* in the that of the *koto*

kumiuta. Furthermore, the texts of *nô* plays were seen as a valuable source for finding out how a particular image is used within a wider context, although here again we are confronted with the problem of deeper implications remaining as elusive as in the *kumiuta*.

Anything close to correct understanding of the images in *kumiuta* would demand careful consideration of a very large quantity of songs in order to systematically grasp the mechanism of allusion; the present study thus cannot be more than a timid first step. Bearing in mind at least the essential importance of the use of images, we may now return to the question: Is a *kumiuta* coherent on the level of what it communicates?

If we first focus on the *shamisen kumiuta*, it will be noted that, in most pieces, and independent of the particular wording and images used, the singer undergoes a consistent emotional process from the second to the final verse. Verse 1 usually stands somewhat apart and is of introductory nature.

This emotional process undergone in the course of a *shamisen kumiuta* can be roughly described as one from longing, suffering and/or remembering, to amusement, determination, and/or the implication "come!". These are the topics dealt with in verse 2 of all the 21 *shamisen kumiuta:*

Ryûkyû-gumi:	longing for my lover
Tori-gumi:	yearning (for my lover)
Koshi-gumi:	who ever could forget!
Fushô-gumi:	I can't forget him
Hinda-gumi:	longing for the little maiden who fills my cup
Shinobi-gumi:	you've come to say goodbye, but rumour spreads
Ukiyo-gumi:	not an answer do you give me

How coherent is a *kumiuta*?

Matsu ni gozare: fate allows no ties; waiting for my lover

Kuzu no ha: I wait and my sleeves are wet with tears

Hira ya Komatsu: I cannot wait to head for Sakamoto
verse 3: waiting at the gate

Nagasaki: the birds sing at midnight and make
you go back home
verse 3: he left a token when he went

Shimosa Hosori: Maitreya Buddha has come
verse 3: he didn't come; obstacles
when visiting young ladies

Kyô-ganoko: I'm a tight-sleeved *kimono*
verse 3: I feel lost because of you

Hade Katabachi: Grateful for Buddha's blessing
(This final song of the 7 *hade* pieces is of basically different character from the preceding *kumiuta* and might be termed an auspicious song.)

Shizu: verse 1: I'm left to languish
may our love endure

Nishikigi: full of grudge inside a cage

Aoyagi: your image can never be forgotten

Hayafune: my thoughts return

Yawata: in my heart I long

Misu-gumi: verse 1: aflame with passion, getting thinner
you and I shall be in love a thousand ages

Nayoshi: what's all this jealousy about?!

In complete contrast to verse 2 (including, occasionally, verses 1 or 3), the ultimate verse is characterized by the following topics:

Ryûkyû-gumi:	buy firewood! chô ryô fu ryô... (instruments playing)
Tori-gumi:	my lord is on his way to me
Koshi-gumi:	respond to my desire! rub the bamboo scraper!
Fushô-gumi:	they've all got in the menfolk's eyes we'll see your eyes are cured!
Hinda-gumi:	how do you spend your nights? let's dance the dance from Hinda
Shinobi-gumi:	my love can't be (concealed) gracefully, self-satisfied
Ukiyo-gumi:	uchô tei tsuku ... (instruments playing) let's dance the young lads' dance
Matsu ni gozare:	my lover comes maple leaves
Kuzu no ha:	bring the leaf that speaks of the fleeting world!
Hira ya Komatsu:	hauling - drawing near - yielding ei sara ei!
Nagasaki:	famous bay pines, eternal youth set out!
Shimosa Hosori:	in need of money when my mistress hears of that she'll run amuck

How coherent is a *kumiuta*?

Kyô-ganoko:	your love enwraps me firmly
Hade Katabachi:	the moon
Shizu:	any moment the water I am bearing will spill
Nishikigi:	you don't love me? then don't come! (= come!)
Aoyagi:	come! let's dance the fulling dance
Hayafune:	pull the first branch and the second one will yield tsuririn ri!
Yawata:	come on! let's dance the young lads' dance
Misu-gumi:	mending the cracked *shakuhachi* retsure rore... (instrumental play)
Nayoshi:	watch the moon!

Having observed the characteristics of verse 2 on the one hand, and of the last verse on the other, the next question is: What sort of process does the singer (musician) undergo on his or her way from the gloom at the beginning of a *kumiuta* to the bright and/or determined mood at the end?

Before tracing the steps of the emotional "journey" of the *shamisen kumiuta* musician, we may point to the marked difference in structural clarity between the *shamisen* and the *koto kumiuta*. Whereas the latter not only prove to be arranged according to criteria that may be termed rigid, the former appear loosely structured in several regards: the overall length of the *shamisen kumiuta* varies considerably from piece to piece; the limits of a single verse are often uncertain (as can be seen when comparing the texts of the *Matsu no ha* with those indicated in Hirano 1982b); and jumps in style and atmosphere are sudden and unpredictable in comparison to the *koto kumiuta*. These characteristics pertain also to the steps of the emotional "journey" of a *shamisen kumiuta*: steps can indeed be observed,

but an individual song is undoubtedly marked by the structural principle of addition, that is, the "stuffing" of a piece between the beginning and the end, once by adding a little more text, once by omitting some text. The resulting variants of one and the same piece can be seen in the commentaries to the *shamisen kumiuta*.

What then is the approximate "emotional curve" a *shamisen kumiuta* follows on its way to the generally animated mood at the end? The most frequently occurring intermediate steps appear to be:

1. reproach, anger, urging somebody;
2. imagining how things might be if fate were favourable, a dream;
3. creation of a light and easy mood, often by means of citing some playful popular song or saying;
4. imagining a highly erotic scene or person;
5. indication that either personal feelings or a rumour (about personal feelings) cannot be held back, concealed, suppressed.

For a synopsis of the structure of all *shamisen kumiuta* the above 5 steps shall be called 1. "urging", 2. "happy dream", 3. "light mood", 4. "erotic image", 5. "bursting forth". In addition, the mood typical of verse 2 shall be termed "gloom", that of the final verse "enjoy!". The following table is thus obtained:

Ryûkyû-gumi:	1. introduction (light mood)
	2. gloom
	3. light mood
	4. erotic image
	5. bursting forth
	6. enjoy!

How coherent is a *kumiuta*?

Tori-gumi:

1. introduction
2. **gloom**
3. gloom
4. a kind of proverb about bursting forth
5. urging
6. erotic image
7. (probably) enjoy!
8. **enjoy!**

Koshi-gumi:

1. gloom
2. **gloom**
3. light mood
4. urging
5. (perhaps) bursting forth
6. **urging + enjoy!**

Fushô-gumi:

1. introduction (possibly gloom)
2. **gloom**
3. happy dream
4. gloom + urging
5. urging
6. **enjoy!**

Hinda-gumi:

1. introduction
2. (possibly) **gloom**
3. (possibly) erotic image
4. urging
5. **enjoy!**

Shinobi-gumi:

1. introduction (light mood)
2. **gloom**
3. (perhaps) bursting forth
4. light mood
5. **bursting forth + enjoy!**

Ukiyo-gumi:

1. citation (enjoy!)
2. **gloom**
3. light mood
4. erotic image
5. erotic image
6. **enjoy!**

How coherent is a *kumiuta*?

Matsu ni gozare:

1. introduction (light mood)
2. **gloom**
3. happy dream
4. light mood
5. light mood
6. **erotic image**

Kuzu no ha:

1. introduction (light mood)
2. **gloom**
3. urging
4. happy dream
5. urging
6. **enjoy!**

Hira ya Komatsu:

1. introduction (probably light mood)
2. (probably) light mood
3. **gloom + urging**
4. gloom
5. erotic image + gloom + happy dream + **urging**

Nagasaki:

1. introduction (light mood)
2. **gloom**
3. gloom
4. happy dream
5. light mood
6. urging
7. **enjoy!**

Shimosa Hosori:

1. light mood + erotic image
2. reference to the *Lotus Sûtra*
3. **gloom**
4. gloom
5. (possibly) urging
6. urging
7. (possibly) **urging + enjoy!**

Kyô-ganoko:

1. introduction (light mood + gloom)
2. light mood + gloom
3. **gloom**
4. happy dream
5. light mood

6. light mood
7. urging
8. **erotic image**

Hade Katabachi:

1. introduction
2. **thankfulness**
3. light mood
4. (probably) **enjoy!**

Shizu:

1. introduction **(gloom)**
2. happy dream
3. (probably) light mood + erotic image
4. light mood
5. **bursting forth**

Nishikigi:

1. introduction (enjoy!)
2. **gloom**
3. gloom
4. (probably) urging
5. (probably) urging
6. **urging**

Aoyagi:

1. introduction (erotic image)
2. **gloom + bursting forth**
3. gloom
4. urging
5. erotic image
6. erotic image
7. **enjoy!**

Hayafune:

1. introduction
2. **gloom**
3. happy dream
4. gloom
5. gloom
6. gloom
7. light mood
8. light mood
9. (perhaps) urging
10. light mood
11. urging

How coherent is a *kumiuta*?

12. (probably) erotic image
13. (uncertain)
14. (possibly) erotic image or enjoy!
15. (probably) urging
16. **enjoy!**

Yawata:

1. **gloom**
2. bursting forth + happy dream
3. urging
4. urging
5. **enjoy!**

Misu-gumi:

1. **gloom**
2. happy dream
3. light mood + urging
4. bursting forth + urging
5. (probably) erotic image
6. **enjoy!**

Nayoshi:

1. introduction (urging)
2. **urging + gloom**
3. light mood
4. **enjoy!**

The sharp contrast in style between the *shamisen* and the *koto kumiuta* has already been mentioned. All *koto kumiuta* – not only those by Yatsuhashi Kengyô discussed in this study – in principle consist of 6 very regularly built verses of 4 lines each, following the pattern:

ki	起	"rise/open/begin"
shô	承	"answer/parry/catch"
ten	転	"rotate/change/shift"
ketsu	結	"bind/wind up/finish"

With very few exceptions (found usually in the 5th verse) each line in itself possesses a clear, two-part structure, frequently

of 6 + 4 or 7 + 4 syllables. (An effort was made in the translation to show up this two-part structure, even if the two parts of the English text as a rule do not correspond exactly to the two parts of the original.) To give just one detailed example, the syllable structure of the *koto kumiuta Fuki* is as follows:

verse 1:	6 + 4	7 + 4	6 + 5	6 + 4
verse 2:	6 + 4	6 + 5	6 + 5	6 + 4
verse 3:	6 + 4	7 + 4	4 + 5	7 + 4
verse 4:	7 + 4	5 + 3	6 + 4	5 + 3
verse 5:	6 + 5	5 + 4	7 + 6	7 + 4
verse 6:	5 + 4	7 + 4	5 + 5	7 + 4
verse 7:	5 + 5	7 + 5	4 + 4	6 + 5

Not only the structural regularity, but also the fairly frequent transformation of *waka* poems – or parts of *waka* poems – with their 5 + 7 + 5 + 7 + 7 syllable structure to fit into the frame of 4 two-part lines bears witness to a careful hand that must have prepared the texts for use as *kumiuta* (or often already for an older tradition of *koto* music such as *Tsukushi-goto* or temple music, on which many of the *koto kumiuta* verses are based). Hirano 1987: 72 stresses the difference between *shamisen* and *koto kumiuta* quite especially as regards the degree of artistry that went into the making of the song tests and assumes that Yatsuhashi Kengyô himself determined the subject matter of the the verses, had suitable material gathered from classical literary sources, and then structured this material for use in his *kumiuta*.

One aspect, however, that is entirely disregarded in all writings on *koto kumiuta* is the degree to which Chinese sources bear direct or indirect influence upon the texts (as well as the music and the implications of the pieces as a whole). This question must, however, apart from what has been stated in the commentaries, be left for a future study, which would presumably glean interesting facts from an in-depth consideration of the relationship between *koto kumiuta* and continental East Asian schools of thought and art in general.

In spite of the fact that in nearly all of the *koto kumiuta* discussed in this study more than one verse draws from the same

source and belongs to the same "world", it is impossible to speak of a consecutive text. Although – as already pointed out – verses are often carefully linked, a *koto kumiuta* nevertheless consists of steps that at fist sight appear totally haphazard. It is of major importance, therefore, to break through the surface of the text, as it were, and gain an understanding of the full context or the full range of images implied. In the case of the *koto kumiuta* this is even more essential than in that of the *shamisen kumiuta*, whose texts "speak" in a more direct fashion.

Even where we can unravel the full context of a *koto kumiuta* verse or line, the question often remains whether reference to a personage implies merely the situation directly alluded to, or more. Does reference to the meeting of Prince Genji with Lady Yûgao, for instance, wish to communicate just the particular mood of coming to a lady and meeting her, or does it also imply what happened after the meeting, in this case Lady Yûgao's uncanny death?

If there is coherency within a *koto kumiuta* – and we have reason to assume there is – then it must be a coherency of steps not expressed but alluded to by the individual verses, lines and images. Put another way, we may expect a *koto kumiuta* to be a coherent sequence of emotional steps generated by a sequence of verses, lines and images, each creating a very specific mood. Moreover, on the basis of the strict principles visible to us in matters of structure, we may expect also the principles governing the sequence of emotions to be far more consistent and strictly arranged than those in the *shamisen kumiuta*. However, it is today probably no longer possible fully to prove this assumption.

To start with an observation of the *koto kumiuta* ***Kokoro-zukushi***, the text suggests that the (*koto* playing) singer is meant to perform emotional steps of the following kind:

1. The singer imagines autumn and all that autumn stands for, then imagines the feeling of Prince Genji in banishment and isolation at Suma. This is followed by the realization that the nights are spent alone, and that the person one loves does not even appear in a dream (let alone in reality).

2. After the more descriptive verse 1 with its slightly stiff wording and very classical sequence of 7 + 5 syllable lines (line 4 has 7 + 4 syllables), verse 2 is characterized by a more personal touch as the singer imagines a well-known episode from the *Ise monogatari* and, as it were, forms a bridge to the beloved person by addressing a *miyakodori* bird ["capital bird"]. However, the beloved person is definitely out of reach, which gives the verse an overall mood of gloom.

3. The next verse constitutes a marked jump in the feelings of the singer as the dark night draws to a close, dark dreams are dispersed, the *hototogisu* ["cuckoo"] calls, and the white moon shines onto the white *unohana* flowers.

4. The clearing of dark feelings in verse 3 leads to the scene of Genji making his way to the bed-chamber of Lady Yûgao. The secrecy that shrouds this visit, its disastrous consequences and the impetuousness of Genji with his mere 17 years of age, however, together create a curiously unsatisfying mood, a mixture of roused passion and worry about what such passion will lead to.

5. With the element "passion" introduced in verse 4, passionate feelings now break through with full force. Stylistically, they are cast in wording and images that have the flavour of a more "popular" type of song, that is, the song of someone making a statement outside the constraints of formality.

6. The end of the piece certainly picks up the topic "passion" once more, but gives it a completely different context. Both the wording as well as the situation referred to are characterized by utmost refinement, elegance, and – we may assume – also knowledge about how to prevent passion becoming a destructive force leading to decay and death.

Presumably the question posed at the beginning of ***Ume-ga-e*** – the *kumiuta* preceding *Kokoro-zukushi* – points in the same direction as verse 6 of the latter *kumiuta*. "What will the warbler do in the blossoms when the wind blows?" is, it will be recalled, a very serious question asked already in temple (partly *ennen* ["prolongation of years/life"]) songs. On the surface, we may

interpret the question as "What will you do when the inevitable happens, the blossoms fall, fate goes its way, the place you have built your nest in and are attached to is no longer there, or old age approaches?" However, considering the emotional process the singer undergoes until reaching the end of *Ume-ga-e*, or also the process undergone in *Kokoro-zukushi* described above, it is very likely that the question "What will the warbler do when the wind blows?" also includes the aspect: "What happens when passion has destroyed momentary beauty?", or: "How can passion be prevented from becoming a destructive force?".

The answer is given in *Ume-ga-e* in the last verse. The steps leading to this answer start out from the situation of gloom (verse 2) and frustration, as the person being thought of is definitely out of reach (verse 3). Verse 4 hints at the night drawing to an end, and at Suma and Akashi, in other words at the fact that there are people with the same feelings as one's own. The mood created by verse 4 leads to an abrupt giving in to emotion (verse 5), which in turn is brought under control in verse 6.

The introductory nature of the first *koto kumiuta* ***Fuki*** causes this song to possess a number of characteristics not found in *Kokoro-zukushi* or *Ume-ga-e*. The two most marked ones are the absence of a "gloom" verse, and the ending with an outcry demanding decisive action and escape from danger. The danger alluded to is, almost certainly, that indicated in the first verse of the next *kumiuta Ume-ga-e*, the danger that arises when fate - and passion - go their way, when the nest of the warbler in the plum blossoms is blown down.

In place of "gloom" verses, *Fuki* opens with a kind of prayer (verse 1) and the allusion to the "one-ness" of the universe, man (the musician) and nature (the warbler) being shown as subject to the same laws. Also, the two plants *fuki* and *myôga* may stand for the "two-ness" within the "one-ness" of the universe. (None of the commentaries, however, lends the images of these plants any signification. Although it is not uncommon for a poem to introduce an image or a concept (here *fuki* – "honour, wealth", and *myôga* – "divine protection") by means of an unrelated homonym, it does seem hard to believe that the very beginning of the entire *koto kumiuta* repertoire should consist

of two full lines without any meaning. Moreover, it will be noted that in the case of the *shamisen kumiuta* the *Matsu no ha* text begins with a very clear-cut reference to the "two-ness" of all humans.)

Verse 3 of *Fuki* takes up the bird image and creates – in all probability - a highly serene verse in which the emotions of the musician are carried by music upward towards the moon, and the cries of the wild geese fall downward to the musician. This meeting of heaven and earth, as it were, is followed by a further serene image, that of longevity and standstill of time (verse 4). Then the text jumps to a very different kind of palace scene, showing passion that cannot be withheld (verse 5). Verse 6, however, cools down uncontrolled passion again and leads to the end of the song with the warning and admonition discussed above.

There can be no doubt that the three *koto kumiuta Fuki*, *Uma-ga-e* and *Kokoro-zukushi* follow a carefully laid out plan of emotional steps, each in a slightly different way, but all dealing coherently with the topics "natural forces", "passion", and "channelling of passion". The *kumiuta* that follow *Kokoro-zukushi* do not rigidly imitate the patterns given by the first three songs, but they do lead the musician along roughly the same path of emotional experience. The most marked development in the course of the further *koto kumiuta* appears to be a decrease of formality and serenity, as well as an increase of gloom in the situations depicted at the beginning, and of playfulness in those depicted at the end of the song.

An observation of the beginnings of the further *koto kumiuta* reveals the following characteristics:

- Verse 1 of ***Tenga Taihei*** is clearly introductory in nature, the problem of not being able to control and hide attachment becoming the topic of verse 2.

- ***Usuyuki***, possibly picking up the image of the pledge from the foregoing *Tenga Taihei* (verse 4), laments the destruction of a pledge right at the start.

- ***Yuki no ashita***, picking up the image of scattering blossoms from verse 6 of foregoing *Usuyuki*, has a parting scene in verse 1.

- ***Kumo no ue*** with its reference to the women of the palace – as in verse 6 of foregoing *Yuki no ashita* – begins with attachment to bygone days.

- ***Usugoromo*** – possibly picking up the description of tears in verse 4 of foregoing *Kumo no ue* – begins with the lament about the force of love that leads to tears.

- ***Kiritsubo*** draws – just like verse 6 of foregoing *Usugoromo* – on the *Genji monogatari* and recalls the sad fate of Lady Kiritsubo, whose pledge of love proved to be subject to the laws of this uncertain world.

- The last of the 10 first *koto kumiuta*, ***Suma***, has the image of spring in verse 2 and may therefore be picking up the atmosphere from foregoing *Kiritsubo*, verse 6. Presumably verse 1 of *Suma* forms an introduction, admonishing the singer to watch the moon – a passage strikingly reminiscent of the last verse in the *shamisen kumiuta* both of the *hade* and of the *ura-gumi* groups. The problem *Suma* touches on follows in verse 2, where the singer is confronted with the reality of shifting affections.

All the *koto kumiuta* from *Tenga Taihei* onwards in some way arrive, usually in verse 3 and 4, at the step of painfully experiencing the surge of uncontrollable emotions, followed suddenly by the appearance of light or some equally powerful image:

- In ***Tenga Taihei*** violet colour shows where it should not, and then the cloudless moon is seen.

- ***Usuyuki*** sings of the deepening of strong feelings, and in the next verse the morning dawns in the east.

- In ***Yuki no ashita*** the cuckoo turns night into something of a nightmare, then follows the image of the moon.

- ***Kumo no ue*** touches on the problem of trying to forget a happy past, again followed (in verse 5) by the image of the moon.

- ***Usugoromo*** tells of tantalizing dreams of someone absent, a gloomy topic suddenly brushed away by the whiteness of snow.

- In ***Kiritsubo*** flames of passion are emitted as if one were a firefly, then suddenly the moon is seen, the wind blows through the pines, the waves come roaring in and the deer call.

- Finally, ***Suma*** sings of the lonely atmosphere amidst the chirping of crickets, followed by the decision to cease harbouring bitter feelings; this in turn is followed by the appearance of the moon.

In the two last verses of the *koto kumiuta Kokoro-zukushi* and *Ume-ga-e* (and also towards the end of *Fuki)* we noted two very marked jumps of mood: First, following the appearance of light (or a similarly powerful image) passion flares up suddenly, then the flame of passion is cooled by an image implying order, beauty, refinement, and timelessness. The same structural principle is clearly taken up by the *koto kumiuta* from *Tenga Taihei* onwards. The emotional processes by which they conclude are as follows:

- ***Tenga Taihei*** alludes to Prince Genji's all too passionate approaches of Lady Oborozukiyo (this being one of the reasons for his banishment to Suma), and then turns to the harmonious scene of Genji and the Lady of Akashi offering prayers to the shrine of Sumiyoshi. (It is probably important to note that this offering of prayers came about after the decisive experience of banishment and as a result of a particularly refined period of courtship at Akashi.)

- In ***Usuyuki***, verse 5 – the only verse in a *kumiuta* by Yatsuhashi Kengyô taken from a collection of *waka* that was not "classical" – contains the words of a person overwhelmed by passion; in verse 6, however, there follows a refreshing scene of enjoyment at Yoshino, a location fraught with associations of classical beauty.

- ***Yuki no ashita*** emphasizes the aspect of waking up in a land of serenity, the wind blowing through the pines and *koto* music sounding. However, the end of this *kumiuta* is marked neither by serenity nor a scene of enjoyment in beautiful surroundings. Instead, it picks out an episode of particular disharmony that appears like a lesson warning of improper conduct.

- In ***Kumo no ue***, passion flares up in the sensual context of the image "Musashino" and then is subdued through the peaceful words of Lu Yu.

- ***Usugoromo*** jumps to two humorous scenes, first that of Kashiwagi no emon letting himself go and kicking down the plum blossoms, then that of an amusing episode of a cat on a leash. The latter warns that a person who has already formed ties will not yield.

- The next *kumiuta*, ***Kiritsubo***, first arouses emotions with the help of images of the declining moon, the wind in the pines, the roaring waves and the deer calling, and then confronts the musician in verse 4 with Genji's forceful way of approaching Lady Utsusemi. Verse 5 picks up the image of a nightly visit, and after a moment of doubt (expressed by means of the *kuina* bird) arrives at the image of another bird, the warbler and its plum blossom hat. Thus *Kiritsubo* finishes on a particularly playful note but stays strictly within classical limits, as the ultimate verse - inspite of its "folk-song" character – forms part of the classical literary heritage.

- ***Suma***, finally, has the musician first realize the situation of being *ukimi* ["a person in wretched circumstances"], then arouses emotions by means of the powerful image of the moon on the fifteenth of the 8th month. This in turn leads to the image of *yûgao*, and there is reason to believe that either the association with Lady Yûgao, or – more likely – that with the white *yûgao* flower and/or the form of the bottle gourd, implies a particularly refined sort of amusement.

The final three *koto kumiuta* by Yatsuhashi Kengyô, teaching as they do the "inner secrets of the art", appear somewhat harder

to understand than the first 10 pieces. Perhaps the structural principles of ***Ôgi no kyoku*** stand closest to those noted in songs 1 to 10. One particularly impressive characteristic of this piece is the careful consideration of temporal sequence: Recalling of a night passed together (introduction) – gathering dusk – moonlight – dreams – blazing passion (no direct reference to time) – waiting for dawn.

On the basis of the structural characteristics established for pieces 1 to 10 the individual steps of *Ôgi no kyoku* appear highly coherent:

1. introduction (recalling of a night passed together);
2. the white flowers are still faintly visible, but dusk will soon drown everything in darkness;
3. the moon pierces through the darkness;
4. passion is aroused, but the person being thought of is definitely out of reach;
5. passion becomes unbearable – decision to go ("folk-song" style producing a light and easy mood);
6. in contrast to most of the foregoing songs not a return to the beauty and elegance of restrained or of a "classical" form of passion, but rather a continuation of the mood created in verse 5: waiting for dawn, and rustling of the bamboo grass.

In ***Kumoi no kyoku*** coherence, at least on the level of implications, is more difficult to discern. On the level of topics, however, each new verse is linked to the preceding one, as may be seen from the following table:

verse 1: filled with yearning I'm left to smoulder
verse 2: forgetting – being forgotten
verse 3: tears
verse 4: rain – wind
verse 5: (wind) – waves – smashing sounds
verse 6: thunder and lightning.

An attempt to apply the characteristics of the separate steps of *Ôgi no kyoku* does show parallels too:

1. filled with yearning I'm left to smoulder (introduction)
2. worry, resignation to fate
3. all joy is drowned in tears
4. suddenly the wind in the pines knocks at the door
5. passion (=one form of the forces of nature) is aroused
6. again in contrast to most of the foregoing songs not a return to the beauty and elegance of a restrained and "classical" form of passion, but rather a continuation of the mood created in verse 5: if lightning is going to strike it strikes.

The first of the 3 *koto kumiuta* introducing the "inner secrets of the art", ***Shiki no kyoku***, on the surface communicates practically nothing. The text merely lists a number of objects and feelings typical for spring, summer, autumn and winter.

As already mentioned in the commentary to *Shiki no kyoku*, the four seasons constitute one of the most basic and common topics as well as important structural principles in any kind of artistic expression in Japan. Strange as it may seem, however, neither contemporary artists nor scholars appear to be posing the question as to the deeper meaning of these inward journeys from New Year to New Year; little is said about the four seasons except that they are of fundamental importance in Japanese feeling.

Certainly no conclusive answer can be given concerning the implications of this fascinating topic here. However, we may observe the path *Shiki no kyoku* follows in the light of what has been noted about the other *koto kumiuta*.

The inception appears to express the same fact as verse 2 of *Fuki*, namely that man and nature are subject to the same laws. These laws in spring are what may be described as "expansion of feeling". Verse 1 of *Shiki no kyoku* illustrates this expansion, starting with the (white) plum blossom and ending with the cherry blossom, known for the beauty of its scattering.

In summer the ups and downs of existence, pleasure and disappointment, love and longing have become part of a person's experience. This fact appears to be alluded to by what orange blossoms, *unohana*, iris, lotus and *nadeshiko* imply. At the same time, water is an image connected both with fertility as well as, perhaps, with tears.

Passions flare up in autumn with its red maple leaves and belling deer, and become almost unbearable in the face of the chirping crickets. Against this background, gloom and/or reality is - just as in the other *koto kumiuta* - pierced by sudden rays of light (or some equally powerful image): As the call of wild geese is heard night falls and the moon comes out.

Finally, the winter verse of *Shiki no kyoku* seems at the beginning to follow the pattern of the *koto kumiuta* 1 to 10 and focus on reality as experienced by ordinary mortals: (Possibly) passion getting out of control, and certainly the approach of old age and decay. The two last lines, however, breathe a totally different atmosphere as morning dawns after a cold, clear night, and feelings have turned to the elegant beauty of snow.