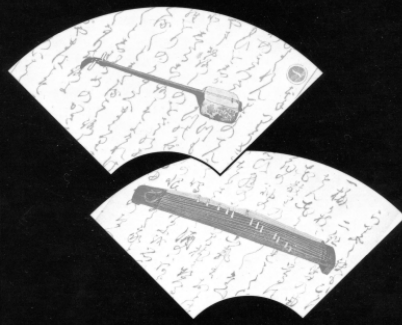


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KUMIUTA

Traditional Songs for Certificates
A Study of their Texts and Implications

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Introduction

kumiuta, songs for certificates in traditional Japanese chamber music, are an art form that developed from the mid 17th century onwards. The term *kumiuta* implies "vocal music [created by] composing, assembling, piecing together of elements". The elements the composer of a *kumiuta* drew upon could originate in anything from contemporary dance songs to playful verses of old, from refined poems of Heian court literature to the works of T'ang period poets in China.

kumiuta have probably always been at the same time highly valued and looked down upon. The reason they were looked down upon by many is obvious: they seem to have no literary value and appear as a crude and rather meaningless conglomerate of material soon superseded by genres with more coherent and therefore more interesting texts. On the other hand, *kumiuta* have, by some, been held in great esteem, and the respect they are awarded by professional musicians certainly justifies devoting a more detailed study to this curious type of song.

kumiuta form the core of the most important types of traditional Japanese music still known today. This consisted, at the dawn of the Meiji period, principally of texts sung to the accompaniment of the three-stringed plucked lute *shamisen*, while an upsurge of interest was at the time also taking place in songs performed to the accompaniment of the thirteen-stringed cithern *koto*.

Of course there were still other traditions - for instance that of the *shakuhachi* (flute), or traditions connected with *nô*. However, these were confined to small and very specific segments of society. Moreover, when Japan was confronted with Western concepts of art (and music), not all of what had grown on her own soil can be termed "traditional" in the strict sense, as it did not possess a well-organized system of being passed from one generation to the next. "Traditional" music, therefore, was (in the Meiji period), and is (today), in the first place *shamisen* and *koto* music performed as a framework for the rendering of a song. And - as will be shown in more detail later on - it is the *kumiuta* that form the basis of this framework.

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Whatever scholars may have proclaimed about the presence or lack of literary and musical value, or about the antiquated structure and unintelligible content of the *kumiuta*, one of the great blind masters of the 20th century, Koshino Eishô (1887 - 1965), speaks of the *koto kumiuta* with delicately phrased emotional attachment (Koshino 1934: 5-6):

"The *kumiuta* [...] are acknowledged to be the basis of the art of the *koto*. This, however, not only means that they form the basis for acquiring the technical skills, but that they are also rich in content. It cannot be denied that, as regards the technical side of the art of *koto* playing, all kinds of developments and inventions have been made since the time the *kumiuta* were composed, but as regards content nothing, to my mind, equals them.

Broadly speaking, the "hand" [i.e. the technical aspect] of Japanese music is simple, whereas the content is rich; it is characteristic [of Japanese pieces] to have been composed by penetrating into [the realm] of their content. Seen from this angle the *kumiuta* stand on the highest level [of Japanese art music]: it is possible to express a specific *kibun* ["atmosphere/frame of mind"] by means of plucking a single string; it is all a matter of what goes on in the mind of the player - [to perform this kind of art] is difficult for someone unable to express himself without the help of all sorts of technical means."

This kind of esteem is rare in the writings of non-professionals. Francis Piggott, the late 19th century author of one of the earliest documents on Japanese music by an observer from the West does, however, more than 200 years after the first *kumiuta* were composed, at least show the relative importance attached to this category of song in the context of learning the inner secrets of *koto* music (Piggott 1893 (1909): 44-47):

A child destined for the musical profession - which is composed chiefly of women and blind men - begins to learn the *koto* when it is four years old, and continues hard at work to the age of fourteen, by which time all the elementary tunes have been learnt [...]

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The course of instruction is divided into four stages; at the end of each a diploma is granted [...] The diploma examination is a curiously interesting little ceremony. In a small room in a very small house a crowd of twenty or thirty persons are assembled, pupils, parents, friends. The mistress sits before her *koto*, and in front of her six or seven *kotos* are ranged one behind the other, stepwise [...]: there sit demurely the little maid musicians [...] At the upper end of the room sits the blind professor [i.e. the head of the school, who alone has the right to grant diplomas] with his *koto* [...]

The professor strikes the first string; the pupils adjust the ivory *tsume* [finger picks] on their fingers and begin to tune. The blind man listens, striking the note on his *koto* occasionally to help - listens patiently, immovably, but with acute sensibility written on every line of his intelligent face, while the teacher points out the pupils who are still out of tune [...]

A girl should be ready to receive her first diploma two years after she has passed the infantile stage and begins the regular course - that is to say, when she is about eleven or twelve. By that time she has learnt to tune her *koto*, and to play accurately about a dozen pieces. Many do not go beyond this, but are content to become the ordinary musicians of the tea-house; but for those who intend to become regular professionals, many and great difficulties lie beyond.

On receiving the first diploma - *omote no yurushi*, the "front licence" - five yen is paid to the teacher, together with a present of *sekihan* - boiled rice mixed with a small red bean. A present of *sekihan* is also made to the fellow-pupils [...]

The course [leading to the first diploma] includes [...] also a certain number of more complicated [pieces] - *kumi* [i.e. *kumiuta*], such as *Ume-ga-e* [...]

The second course begins with [the *kumiuta*] *Kumo no ue* [...] At the end of the course, the second diploma is granted -

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naka no yurushi, the "intermediate licence", or *ura no yurushi*, the "rear licence". The payment to the teacher for this diploma is eight *yen*, with the presents of rice and beans [...] as before [...]

At the end of the third course, the third diploma is granted - *oku no yurushi*, the "innermost licence" - the fee for which is fifteen *yen*, with the rice presents [...] as before. When this diploma has been obtained, the first string of the *koto* may be lowered an octave in all tunings.

In the fourth and last course pieces of great difficulty are studied, and the remainder of the subordinate tunings are learnt. It begins with [the *kumiuta*] *Ôgi no kyoku* [...] and ends with [the *kumiuta* by Yasumura Kengyô], *Hien no kyoku* [...] When the course is finished a fee of twenty *yen* is paid to the teacher for a sign-board [to put up in front of the house] and permission to use the teacher's name [i.e. a name which either in full or by means of one or more characters (syllables) clearly indicates the school to which one belongs]. The pupil then becomes a professional, and is allowed to start a school on her own account [i.e. a sub-school or sub-sub-school in subordinate position to that of the mistress, who in turn is in subordinate position to the blind professor].

In the context of Tokugawa period Japan, where legitimization through adherence to norms laid down by authorized heads of schools was of paramount importance, climbing the steps to professional musicianship meant climbing the steps from one *kumiuta* to the next. It is almost certain that the blind masters, who during the 17th century created such steps, did so by creating the *kumiuta*, and then carefully watched over the examinations to ensure that progress from step to step took place in an orderly way. If, with time, particularly traditions associated with theatre music (and with masters who were not blind) ceased to include *kumiuta* in their steps to professionalism, the fact remains that the ancestors of these traditions in most cases had learnt their art from the professional blind musicians who taught the *kumiuta*.

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Today there are only very few artists still able to perform a *kumiuta*. Therefore, *kumiuta* are almost never heard any more, and for over half a century now neither the average performers of traditional music, nor scholars, and least of all the public have shown much interest in them.

In view of this fact my study of *kumiuta* pursues the aim first and above all of introducing the texts of the major *shamisen kumiuta* and the core of the *koto kumiuta*. This task is not, however, as simple as it sounds. For one thing many of the images used and allusions made appear obscure and often need extensive discussion. Such a discussion can be based on a small number of published commentaries of *kumiuta* texts.

Even if we do, finally, manage to get a rough idea of the meaning and some of the implications of single verses and images, the question remains: What is the aim of a *kumiuta* as a whole? If we refuse to go along with the commonly held notion that *kumiuta* are but a primitive concoction of disparate material, then ought not at least some degree of coherence be discernible? And ought not some type of principle be found underlying the overall structure? To my knowledge, such questions have as yet never been posed.

Taking into account the fact that *kumiuta* (quite especially the *koto kumiuta*) became fixed in form during the first third of the Tokugawa period, and as fixed forms constituted the basis of the certificate system, then we must presume that those who created them had a specific goal in mind. Analysis of the texts and implications of the separate elements of the *kumiuta*, together with an understanding of the principles of their overall form should, therefore, give us insights into what the aim of many a major line of traditional Japanese music may have been.

At this point the following fact must be made quite clear: No living person is able to tell us with certainty what all the images and hints of these 17th century songs really implied. Also, it must be remembered that many of the basic songs of classical Japanese music formed part of a secret tradition that passed on vital aspects only gradually, only verbally, and only to specific disciples.

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There seems to be but one way to gain insight into the meaning and implications of a *kumiuta*: through familiarity. That is, the more songs we know the more information we gain on what expression and image comes up in what sort of context, and the more understanding we develop for key-images. In this sense it is essential to relate an image found in one song to the same image in as many other songs as possible, always bearing in mind that the additional information thus gained might be, but is not necessarily relevant. The present study, which lays weight on bringing images, their context and possible implications to attention thus does not claim to be more than a first step in the exploration of traditional Japanese song; greater familiarity gained through consideration of many more songs, verses and poems will almost certainly add further aspects to the images discussed here and make these appear in again a slightly different light.

In the following pages the unpardonable sin has been committed of systematically evading all mention of the music (except for a few instances where the position of instrumental interludes has been marked in the Japanese text). The standpoint was taken, however, that the music (song and instrumental play) forms far too important an element within the organic entity of text, voice and instrument to be dealt with in a cursory manner and merits a full and, above all, meaningful analysis of its own. Therefore, though there certainly is the possibility of the text taking on different aspects in the light of musical analysis, it was decided to limit this study to questions posed by the text only. Moreover, discussion of the music will in any case have to be based on as detailed an understanding of the text as possible, particularly in a type of music where the musician is less concerned with questions of scale, tuning and modulation than with the interpretation of a comparatively simple musical line according to, we may say, its "psychological content".

Transcription of the Japanese texts into the Roman alphabet and the translation into English have both posed a number of problems demanding compromise. In principle, the classical Japanese spelling is rendered the way it would be pronounced today, though this does not necessarily coincide with the pronunciation in the 17th century and in the localities where the *kumiuta* were first sung. Adhering to modern pronunciation has

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the advantage that the texts appear as we are actually likely to hear them when a *kumiuta* is performed, but it is nevertheless a somewhat unsatisfying state that would demand research going far beyond the scope - and aim - of this study.

Translation posed the problem that not all words of the original could be rendered into English, or at least could not be done so in keeping with the mood sought to be conveyed by the original. A number of Japanese terms - particularly names of birds and flowers - have therefore been left untranslated and are explained in the commentary. Other words that have not been consistently translated are exclamations such as *iyō!*, *nō sate!*, *na!*, *nō!* etc. As there are but very few English counterparts to these exclamations that do not appear stylistically out of place it was preferred to leave some of them untranslated, or not rigidly render the same exclamation always with the same English equivalent.

As for the translation as a whole it is necessary to emphasize the fact that it in no way claims to be more than just a basis for discussion. If some attention was paid to a certain rhythmic regularity this is merely meant as an indication of the same aspect in the original.

In the comments dealing with textual variants and differences of textual order translation is mostly absent. Where no translation is given this may be taken to indicate that there is no or very little difference of meaning, or that the meaning of the variant is obscure. Obscure passages, it may be noted, are by no means rare in song texts, as the musical impulse will as a rule prevent a passage from being dropped even when its meaning is darkened; this may occur for instance when a word is replaced by a similar sounding one with some other or no meaning at all. Moreover, a mistake in the wording causing a passage to become obscure may be passed on by the rote method of teaching from generation to generation without ever being detected or corrected.

Forms in italics in the Japanese texts appearing in this study are employed to render exclamations and fill-in syllables given in letters of the *katakana* syllabary in Hirano 1982b. This edition differentiates between exclamations/fill-in syllables

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that form part of the basic text (these not being given in *katakana*), and ones that are clearly additions, probably in the sense that they owe their origin to the particular way a master or school interprets a given passage. (When referring to Asano 1959 I have retained the italics based on Hirano 1982b.)

Concerning pronunciation and order of personal names the following points should be noted: *ô* and *û* are long vowels, in contrast to *o* and *u* (however, the three place names Tokyo, Kyoto and Osaka are spelled without signs for lengthening, the correct pronunciation being *Tôkyô*, *Kyôto* and *Ôsaka*); every syllable is, in principle, pronounced individually and given a fairly equal amount of stress; all names follow the Japanese sequence of surname + given name, and name + title.

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I. Studies on kumiuta

kumiuta texts (as well as music tablatures) have been edited at regular intervals over the centuries, and sometimes they would include short text commentaries, showing from where a particular line or verse had taken its images or its wording. The few modern commentaries to kumiuta texts are thus largely based on elder publications. For the koto kumiuta the most important of these are to be found in the following song text collections: Chiin no nakadachi 知音の媒 (1686, later included in the Shichiku taizen 系竹大全, 1699), Shôgetsu-shô 松月鈔 (1694), Chô-sô jizai-shô 調箏自在抄 (1783), Sôkyoku-kô 箏曲考 (1786), Busô gafu taisei-shô 撫箏雅譜大成抄 (1812), and Sôkyoku fukuko-shô 箏曲復古抄 (1821). (A discussion of shamisen kumiuta text commentaries will follow.)

In my study, many of the indications found in these pre-Meiji period sources are discussed. Occasionally, though, the relationship of the commentary to the song text proper seems so vague that I decided a discussion of the former would be too inconclusive for consideration here. As a rule, extant modern studies of kumiuta texts treat such cases as presumably being beside the point. In this connection it is important to stress that as the actual carriers of the tradition all were blind masters who passed on the inner secrets of the art verbally and only to a chosen few, it is not at all certain how far even the oldest commentaries can be trusted for accuracy. Very likely, publications of kumiuta texts, and particularly commentaries of these texts, were directed at amateurs and people with interest in the art, but almost certainly not at those who in closest contact with the master were initiated into the secrets of the tradition in order to become professionals themselves.

Research specifically of kumiuta texts - as well as the history of kumiuta - prior to World War II is associated mainly with Takano Tatsuyuki and Fujita Tokutarô, two distinguished scholars who helped establishing the study of [Japanese] song texts (*kayô* 歌謡) as a discipline in its own right. Takano Tatsuyuki's two major works are, on the one hand, *Nihon kayô-shi* ["The History of Japanese *kayô*"], 1926, in which we find a relatively minute description of the process of kumiuta text composition, and on

II. Sources of kumiuta texts

1. Sources of shamisen kumiuta texts

The shamisen kumiuta texts in this study have been taken from the song text collection *Matsu no ha* (6) 松の葉, first published 1703 in Kyoto.

The earliest known evidence for the existence of shamisen kumiuta is the publication *Shichiku shoshin-shū* 系竹初心集 ["Collection of pieces for beginners of string and bamboo [instruments]"] (1664), which mentions one kumiuta by name (the *Ryūkyū-gumi*), as well as the existence of a category of "hade" pieces. Unfortunately, no further details are given, nor are the texts introduced.

The full texts of shamisen kumiuta appear for the first time in the *Ônusa* 大怒佐 (published in 1685). Here we find 7 pieces termed *honte* and 13 termed *hade* (7), as well as 7 pieces classed as *secret* (the latter only as titles without the full text). As will be discussed in detail later on the shamisen kumiuta in the *Ônusa* differ considerably in wording and order from those in the *Matsu no ha*. (The *Ônusa* was reedited in 1699 - or possibly already in 1687 - as part of the *Shichiku taizen* 系竹大全 ["Large complete [edition of pieces for] string and bamboo"]).

The form in which the shamisen kumiuta appear in the *Matsu no ha* has been looked upon since the early 18th century as the classical (Yanagawa school) form. The art of the other important line of shamisen kumiuta playing - the Nogawa school - is likely, however, to be based not on the tradition reflected in the *Matsu no ha*, but in that of the older *Ônusa*. (For the Yanagawa and Nogawa schools cf. chapter IV.7.)

The *Matsu no ha*, which was compiled by one *Shūshōken* 秀松軒, may be considered one of the most important and extensive collections of song texts of Tokugawa period Japan. The shamisen kumiuta fill the first of its five volumes and are arranged into 7 *honte* ["basic hand"] or *honkyoku* ["basic pieces"], compositions allegedly by *Ishimura Kengyō* and *Torazawa Kengyō*, 7 *hade* ["broken hand"] or *shinkyoku* ["new pieces"], compositions

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allegedly by Yanagawa Kengyô, and 7 *ura-gumi* ["inner kumiuta"], compositions by Yanagawa Kengyô. In all major aspects the kumiuta texts as they stand in the *Matsu no ha* are identical with those of the basic certificate pieces of the Yanagawa school in the centuries following.

After the *Matsu no ha* the next known publication of the *shamisen* kumiuta is the *Shinkyoku Ito no fushi* 新曲系の節 ["New pieces - Tune of the strings"] of 1757; it is noteworthy that the *Kinsen Waka no ito* 琴線和歌の系 (1751), of which the *Shinkyoku Ito no fushi* is a kind of expanded reprint, did not contain the *shamisen* kumiuta, possibly reflecting the fact that by that time other types of *shamisen* music had all but replaced the kumiuta as the treasured core of the tradition. *Shinkyoku Ito no fushi* itself gives only the full texts of the kumiuta for the first certificate; moreover, some rearrangement can be seen when compared to the *Matsu no ha* as regards the classification of the pieces, i.e. their position in the process of study.

The *Uta Keizu* 歌系図 of 1782, a synopsis of composers and text-writers of *jiuta* music (8), is the first published work showing the structure of the repertoire according to the Nogawa school tradition (the tradition of Osaka); the actual song texts, however, are not indicated.

Both music and texts of the *shamisen* kumiuta tradition of the Yanagawa school (Hayazaki Kengyô-Fukakusa Kengyô line) had appeared in the *Gosenroku* 五線録 in 1769; the notation consisted of *kuchi-jamisen* (the imitation of the instrumental sounds in words) together with the indication of the positions for pressing the strings. This original *Gosenroku* was lost in a fire in the Tenmei era (1781-1788). Of the copies known today, one dates from the Meiwa era (1764-1771), the other from 1792. This latter manuscript shows an increase in content and minor changes in layout, musical line and song texts; interestingly, the song texts have returned to the form in which they appeared in the *Matsu no ha* in 1703.

The *Gosenroku* of 1792 has been the "heart" of the musical tradition of the Yanagawa school until the present day; the next

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important source, *Shin taisei Ito no fushi* 新大成系の節 ["New compilation - Tune of the strings"] of 1814 (reedited as *Shin-zō taisei Ito no fushi* 新增大成系の節 ["New expanded compilation - Tune of the strings"] in 1836), gives the *shamisen kumiuta* almost exactly as they appear in the *Gosenroku* of 1792. Later, in 1885, the *Gosenroku* of 1792 was again reedited, and in the *Ikuta-ryū kinkiyoku uta no umi* 生田流琴曲歌久海 of 1889 we find a handwritten copy of the *kumiuta* as they appeared in the *Gosenroku* of 1792 entitled "*Yanagawa-ryū honte-gumi tai'i zenshō*" 柳川流本手組大巻全書 [approximately: "Complete collection of the *kumiuta* of the Yanagawa school"].

A further important publication after the *Gosenroku* (1792), giving not only the text but also an exact and informative musical notation of the *shamisen kumiuta*, is the *Genkyoku taishin-shō* (*sho-hen*) 絃曲大槓抄・初編 of 1824.

Gosenroku, *Shin taisei Ito no fushi* and *Genkyoku taishin-shō* (*sho-hen*) represent the Yanagawa school tradition of *kumiuta* performance. Nogawa school tablatures, on the other hand, seem unknown (9) and do not figure in the lists given in Hirano 1967a, even though it is the Nogawa and not the Yanagawa school that has preserved the entire repertoire of *shamisen kumiuta* up to this very day.

2. Sources of koto kumiuta texts

koto kumiuta have been published at regular intervals since the 17th century, either as part of a song text collection, or as tablature giving more or less detailed instruction for performance. However, during nearly the whole lifetime of Yatsushashi Kengyō (1614-1685), the creator of the koto kumiuta, they were considered a secret tradition (Hirano 1958: 92) and the texts of only some of the songs were published. Moreover, these published texts at first did not appear as separate editions but were included among other types of song.

The first document containing the full texts and not just the mention of koto kumiuta (the titles of 11 of Yatsushashi Kengyō's 13 koto kumiuta (10) were included in the *Shichiku shoshin-shū*, 1664) is the manuscript *Sabishikiza no nagusami* 淋敷座之慰 ["Solace in a lonely chamber"], 1676 (11). The first known koto kumiuta textbook proper is the publication *Koto no shōga* (12) 琴のしやうか ["Koto Songs (?)], 1681 (13). The earliest publication to contain indications as to the playing technique of a koto kumiuta (14) is the booklet known as *Mamehon* 豆本 ["Little book"], 1682. The earliest textbook with a commentary to the wording is the *Chi'in no nakadachi* 知音の女集 ["Intermediary for getting to know the tones (?)], 1686. Two further koto kumiuta textbooks of the late 17th century are known, namely the manuscript *Hōmei hikyoku-shū* 鳳鳴秘曲集 ["Collection of secret pieces Cry of the Phoenix"], before 1688 (15), and the publication *Shōgetsu-shō* 松月鈔 ["Pine-Moon collection"], 1694.

Probably the most authoritative early koto kumiuta textbook, which contains some additional commentary on the text (16) as well as a few remarks on the playing technique of 10 out of the 13 original koto kumiuta (17), is the *Kinkyoku-shō* 琴曲抄 ["Collection of koto pieces"], 1695, with reprints 1763 and 1809.

After the original 13 koto kumiuta of Yatsushashi Kengyō, composition of koto kumiuta continued - albeit at a slow pace - throughout the 17th and even early 18th century, so that later koto kumiuta books contain more material than the early manuscripts and publications mentioned above. Thus already the *Kinkyoku-shō* includes 2 newer koto kumiuta.

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Well over half a century elapsed before the appearance of the next important *koto kumiuta* textbook, the *Kinkyoku yōga busō gafu-shū* 琴曲洋峨撫箏雅譜集, 1755. This source - which contains rudimentary indications of playing techniques - now includes a total of 23 *koto kumiuta*. Revisions, which again added new *kumiuta*, are dated 1810, 1834, 1851 and 1884.

An important development as regards *koto kumiuta* books is the inclusion of detailed tablatures, with the help of which a relatively accurate musical reproduction becomes possible. A minute tablature of 19 *koto kumiuta* was already published in 1722 under the title *Kinkyoku shifu* 琴曲指譜 ["Tablature of *koto* pieces"], while the *Sōkyoku tai'i-shō* 箏曲大意抄, 1779, makes use of a different system of notation and contains 33 *koto kumiuta*. The author of the *Sōkyoku tai'i-shō* was the physician Yamada Shōkoku, who passed on the art of classical *koto* music to Yamada Kengō (1757-1817), founder of the *koto* music tradition of Edo. (The Yamada school reedited and expanded the *Kinkyoku yōga busō gafu-shū* and published it as the *Zōtei busō gafu-shū* 增訂撫箏雅譜集 in 1853 and 1883).

Of the song text editions with relatively detailed commentaries published in the late 18th and early 19th century the *Chō-sō jizai-shō* 調箏自在抄 of 1783, *Sōkyoku-kō* 箏曲考 ["Study of *koto* music"] of (1786), as well as the publication with the significant title *Sōkyoku fuku-ko-shō* 箏曲復古抄 ["Return to olden ways of *koto* music"] of 1821 may be mentioned.

The 19th century still saw a steady flow of *koto kumiuta* books; however, as already mentioned, these are either revisions and reissues of the *Kinkyoku yōga busō gafu-shū* of 1755, or imitations of the *Sōkyoku tai'i-shō* of 1779 (18).

The texts of the 13 *koto kumiuta* by Yatsushashi Kengyō translated in this study have been taken from *Koto kumiuta zenshū* (Hirano 1973). The first 10 songs were checked with the text of the *Sabishikiza no nagusami* (1676) as contained in *Nihon kayō kenkyū shiryō shūsei*, vol. 2 (1978), songs 11 to 13 with the *koto kumiuta* texts of the *Sōkyoku-kō* (1786) as contained in Takano 1928, vol. VIII. It was found that the wording of the present-day performance (reflected in Hirano 1973) is almost

identical to that of 1676 (and identical to that of 1786); the slight variations from the text of 1676 do not change the overall meaning of the verses (19).

III. The concept *kumiuta*

kumiuta means nothing more than "songs" (*uta*) that form a "composition" (*ku.ni*), *kumi* being derived from the verb *kumu* ["assembling, piecing together, linking"].

Generally *kumiuta* are understood today in the light of Kikkawa 1965, perhaps the most authoritative modern work on Japanese music history as a whole. They are characterized here as follows:

"[*kumiuta* are] songs pieced together [...] The majority [of *shamisen kumiuta*] consist of contemporary folk and popular songs pieced together [...]" (Kikkawa 1965: 167).

"[*shamisen kumiuta*] were [considered] extremely stereotype and they all sounded alike. A further unsatisfactory point was the vulgar "pot-pourri" (*yose-atsume*) character of the texts [...]" (Kikkawa 1965: 213/4).

"Whereas [*shamisen*] *kumiuta* consist of short songs pieced together, *nagauta* formed one coherent, long song [...] [As the example cited shows, this *nagauta*] is not a *muri na yose-atsume* ["collection, medley, putting elements together that don't really match"] to the same degree as a *kumiuta*" (Kikkawa 1965: 215).

"[This piece] still appears to have traces of *kumiuta* structure, but there are [other pieces in the song book] that do not appear so *kiregire* ["consisting of bits and scrapes, disconnected"]" (Kikkawa 1965: 215).

"The texts of *nagauta* are more refined (*tenga*) than those of [*shamisen*] *kumiuta* [...] The interjections *iyô!*, *sore!*, *nô!* etc., so typical of the *shamisen kumiuta*, are absent in *nagauta*. The reason for this is that in the case of the *shamisen kumiuta* the stereotype *kumiuta* melodies had to be fitted with appropriate texts, whereas with the *nagauta* the text was composed first and the music then made to fit; therefore no *sore!* or *iyô!* were needed to fill the melodic line, and it was no longer necessary to resort to the unnatural (*muri*) lengthening of vowels" (Kikkawa 1965: 216).

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koto kumiuta are introduced by Kikkawa 1965 in the following way:

"In temples [...] songs were sung to *gagaku* pieces performed in the context of *ennen* ["prolongation of years"] dances. Of these songs, the *Etenraku utaimono* - texts sung to the melody of the piece *Etenraku* - are particularly well known. These [*Etenraku utaimono*] had great influence upon the *koto* music of later times [...] It is known that *koto kumiuta* began as songs sung to the *koto* part of *gagaku* pieces" (Kikkawa 1965: 149-151).

In the elder but nevertheless important and often cited study on song texts by Fujita Tonan (1930), the *kumiuta* are defined as follows:

"*shamisen kumiuta* are pieces made by merely putting together various short songs (Fujita Tonan 1930: 24). [*shamisen kumiuta*] are pieces composed by collecting passages taken [from the repertoire of] *kouta* ["short songs"], *riyô* ["rustic songs, 'folk' songs"], *odoriuta* ["dance songs"], songs of [early] *kabuki*, *o-funauta* boat songs or *kyôgen* songs known at the time; [for the singing of these texts] the *shamisen* is used as accompanying instrument, while between one song (verse) and another purely instrumental passages for the *shamisen* are inserted. As for the song texts themselves [...] the pieces do not aim at explaining (rendering) any content, and therefore come up with diverse textual passages whose sole purpose is to enable the *shamisen* to be played [...] [*shamisen kumiuta*] appear to have been composed as a kind of formalized music, a sort of synthesis of the playing techniques of the time. No great stress was laid on communicating the meaning of the texts [...]" (Fujita Tonan 1930: 14-15).

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Concerning the *koto kumiuta* Fujita Tonan 1930 explains:

"The *koto kumiuta* were created by Yatsushashi Kengyō in imitation of the *shamisen kumiuta*; [he] composed 13 pieces [...] that were to be the *honkyoku* ["basic pieces, core"] of *koto* music [...] The texts of the *koto kumiuta* were not made merely by Yatsushashi Kengyō himself [...] but appear to have been used already [in musical traditions] of Kyūshū [i.e. *Tsukushi-goto*]" (Fujita Tonan 1930: 22-23).

The facts presented by Kikkawa and Fujita Tonan give us a general idea of what a *kumiuta* text is: basically a *yose-atsume* ["collection/medley"], in the case of *shamisen kumiuta* of contemporary short songs appearing somewhat disconnected. Fujita Tonan additionally points out that little weight is placed on the wording, and that all sorts of texts are made use of to compose pieces meant not so much for singers as for players. Fujita Tonan also remarks that the *koto kumiuta* follow the principles of the *shamisen kumiuta*, and that their texts likewise are not new creations, being drawn from other existing genres of song.

Kikkawa 1965 informs us that both texts and music of the *koto kumiuta* are rooted in older traditions. Unlike the *shamisen kumiuta* with their elements deriving from short popular genres, however, the *koto kumiuta* have certain ties with temple (*jiin* 寺院) music, principally with songs sung to the melody of a *gagaku* piece (*gagaku* being the ancient musical tradition formed in the Nara and Heian periods for use primarily at the court).

By and large, most of the facts presented in Kikkawa 1965 and Fujita Tonan 1930 can be considered correct. However, both authors quite clearly view the *kumiuta* as a kind of clumsy forerunner of later, much more highly developed musical forms. Thus Kikkawa speaks of *shamisen kumiuta* being "unsatisfactory" (*monotarinai*) as regards the texts, and says of the *nagauta* form - the type of artistic *shamisen* music that followed the *kumiuta* - that it is not a *muri na yose-atsume* ["collection, medley, putting together elements that do not really match"] like the *kumiuta*. Also, Kikkawa stresses the fact that the later *nagauta* no longer depend on existing texts that demand an "unnatural lengthening of vowels". Similarly, Fujita Tonan

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describes *kumiuta* as "pieces made by merely (sic!) putting together various short songs".

kumiuta are thus considered, to put it blandly, as primitive. This is true today as it probably was one or even two centuries ago, and it seems fairly safe to assume that new types of song created by *shamisen* and *koto* masters from the late 17th century onwards were at least in part an effort to break away from the *kumiuta* form and create new songs more suited to contemporary taste. In this connection it is noteworthy that in the late 18th century Yamada Kengyô, the highly esteemed composer of 36 *koto* pieces and founder of the *koto* tradition of Edo, composed only one *koto kumiuta* and at the same time emphasized that his own music was basically narrative or at least possessed a longer, coherent text (20). Moreover, already Ihara Saikaku (1642-1693) remarks in *Okimiyage* (1693) that "the *honte* [i.e. *shamisen kumiuta*] are uninteresting for non-professionals" (21).

Both historians of the 20th century as well as at least some musicians of old appear to agree that the *kumiuta* is but a primitive form of *shamisen* or *koto* music. As long as this type of music was a common, living art it was probably accepted as part of the repertoire representing an early style. However, for the 20th century historian it has evidently proved almost inconceivable that a composer should create a piece by merely juxtaposing various pre-existing short song texts and forcing these onto a specific melody.

Whatever may be said of the problems involved fitting a given text to a given melody (the many *iyo!*, *sore!* or *nô!* of the *shamisen kumiuta* certainly need not be interpreted merely as clumsy melody-fillers), it is probably a lack of understanding of the rules governing the sequence of the individual short songs and fragments making up a *kumiuta* that bars a real appreciation of this early type of *koto* and *shamisen* art. Moreover, it is almost certain that these rules continued to be valid for the composition of later types of *koto* and *shamisen* music right up until the moment musical composition in Japan became influenced by the Western notion of "music". The main difference between the *kumiuta* and later pre-modern types of *koto* and *shamisen* music may be a difference of external form, style and wording, but presumably not one of basic concept. Such

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a concept does, as the following study aims to show, appear to be traceable throughout the *kumiuta* repertoire and almost certainly guided the composer when arranging the individual elements that made up his songs.

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the course of its transformation the snakeskin was replaced by cat- or dogskin and the instrument came to be played with a *bach*i [large hand-held plectrum] similar to that used for the lute *biwa*. These transformations were almost certainly undertaken by *biwa-hôshi* (25), the blind musicians whose job it mainly was to tell the Tale of the Heike to the accompaniment of the *biwa*.

The above sources are somewhat vague about the exact origin of the *shamisen kumiuta* themselves. The *Shichiku shoshin-shû* mentions Ishimura Kengyô (died 1642) as composer of the *Ryûkyû-gumi* (the first piece of the *honte-gumi*), the *Shikidô ôkagami* sees Torazawa Kengyô (died 1654) as the driving force behind the establishment of the *honte-gumi*. Both sources, however, hold Torazawa Kengyô to have been the composer of the *hade-gumi*. As mentioned, the *Matsu no ha* is not specific about the origin of the *honte-gumi* (the indications given must probably be interpreted in a general way in the sense that the *honte*-compositions of Ishimura and Torazawa [Kengyô] are rooted in a piece brought from the Ryûkyû islands); the 7 *hade-gumi* on the other hand are indicated as being the creations of Yanagawa Kengyô (died 1680) (26). A final point not to be overlooked is that it is very unlikely that the *honte*- and *hade-gumi* we know today are in their original form as composed by Ishimura and/or Torazawa Kengyô; presumably they were reworked by or under supervision of Yanagawa Kengyô (27).

2. *denshō* 伝承 and *dentō* 伝統 - "handing down, tradition"

Before entering into the discussion of the further development of the *shamisen kumiuta* I consider it necessary to touch briefly upon the terms *denshō* ["transmission, handing down"] and *dentō* ["tradition"]. There is probably no concept in any Western language that corresponds exactly to the Japanese *denshō* and *dentō* and all that these expressions imply. This is particularly true for *denshō* and *dentō* during the Tokugawa period, a time where the mobility of the population - not only in the sense of travel but especially also in the sense of how and where to earn one's living - was limited. The importance of such a factor

cannot be underestimated regarding the "world" of the professional blind musicians, whose activities were under rigid control (28).

denshō in the context being dealt with here is *dentō*, a carefully structured process in which specific persons are authorized to learn specific pieces (or are prevented from doing so). Within a well-organized social entity consisting of persons in a specific relationship to a center there is a relatively small core of members who determine policy and take care that the secrets of their art are kept alive from generation to generation. Conversely, all members of such an organism take interest in and - following the patterns demanded of any member of a family or "house" - see it as their duty to keep careful records of the development of their group in the course of time. Incidentally, the great importance laid on "family" records regularly leads to certain falsifications and exaggerations concerning the lives and work of the "founding fathers".

In other words *dentō*, when used speaking of pre-Meiji period forms of art, refers to a far more specific process than the English "tradition", involving as it does a carefully controlled system of passing on something by specific, never anonymous persons within a specific context. This concept of *dentō*, and "art music" in the Japanese sense, are inseparably linked. Where there lacks (systematic) *dentō* there can be no "art music", and conversely, the existence of (systematic) *dentō* points to the existence of something "artistic", i.e. difficult as well as highly valued that must be treasured and passed on. In this sense Hirano (1983a: 3) differentiates between "passing on within some kind of organizational framework and in a systematized way" (29), and "passing on by means of convention, passing something on because it just happens to be there" (30). The expression *geijutsu kayō* ["artistic song"] is assigned to the former category, *shūzoku kayō* [translatable here perhaps as "popular song"] to the latter (Hirano 1983a: 12).

Kikkawa and Gamō (*Ongaku daijiten* 1981-1983: 1742/3) emphasize the fact that music not possessing "an organizational frame and systematization" (31) has in many cases not survived for long. The existence of such a frame and systematization is therefore a

prerequisite for the existence of art music. According to Kikkawa/Gamō, this, in turn, results in the fact that classical Japanese art music places not so much emphasis on the aspect of artistic creation as on "performing (art) inside an organizational framework and in a systematized way".