

# The Systemisation of the Musical Language of the *Fukezen Shakuhachi Honkyoku*

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## 1. **SUIZEN – ‘BLOWING ZEN’: SPIRITUALITY AS MUSIC, AND MUSIC AS SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

Until the middle of the 19th century the *shakuhachi* bamboo flute, nowadays something of a symbol of the Japanese musical tradition, functioned not as a musical instrument (*gakki*) but primarily as a religious tool (*bóki*) exclusive to the Zen Buddhist *Fuke* sect.

Whilst the sect's *komusó* - or “monks of nothingness” - spent most of their time playing, they did not regard themselves as musicians, for the musical activity which they engaged in, and which the uninitiated observer would surely term “playing the flute”, was actually just a form of Zen meditation in which esoterically transmitted pieces of music now referred to collectively as *honkyoku* (lit. “basic pieces”), were performed on the instrument.

This manner of playing the *shakuhachi* (known as the *fuke* style), as has come down to us primarily through the traditions of the *Myóanji* (‘Light and Darkness’) Temple in Kyoto, is first and foremost a manifestation of the **Zen**, of its emphasis on the real and true, its focus on the essence, its rejection of that which is external and superficial. Its ideal in sound is ‘the murmuring of the wind through the bamboo grove’, and its basic principal is that of *ichi on jobutsu*, or **one-sound Buddhahood**. *Kurosawa Kinko I* (1710–1771), the founder of the *Kinko Ryú* is said to have verbalised the concept of *suizen* with such laconic kóan-like pronouncements.<sup>1</sup> (“*The members of the Fuke sect have left us with very little written material elucidating the philosophy which underlay their playing shakuhachi as suizen, the blowing Zen, the honkyoku presumably speaking for themselves*”. Lee 1992:132)

The *Komusó* monks' way of life was very unusual. On initiation to the sect they had to demonstrate their samurai origins and a component of their asceticism was the obligation to perform *takuhatsu* for a minimum of three days each month, and thus solicit, by means of the *shakuhachi*, alms for the monastery and food for their own consumption.

They carried special deep straw hats, known as *tengai*, which covered their faces and granted them complete anonymity. They often introduced themselves only by the name of their monastery, or did not speak at all, and instead played some of the *honkyoku* pieces.

Within the walls of the *Fuke* temples the ‘monks of nothingness’ observed an every day routine of discipline similar to that in other Buddhist sects, although there was great emphasis on *shakuhachi*-playing as a means of practising ‘blowing meditation’.

Following matins with the accompanying play of prescribed compositions and *zazen*, seated meditation, time was set aside for *shakuhachi* practice, errands for alms and for perfecting martial arts. Each *komusó* could, at any time, become a *samurai* once again, and in fact the massive flute with its broadened base could also serve as a very formidable weapon, should such occasion arise.

## 2. THE *FUKE* STYLE AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

The *fuke* style, in contrast to other schools, strictly emphasises the original, above all, spiritual purpose of *shakuhachi* playing. Every piece is essentially acoded breathing and concentration exercise, in actual fact *suizen* - blowing meditation.

It was not to be watered down with (emotionally affected) musical effects, showy virtuosity, as, for example, in the case of the *Tozan* School.

Players of the *Myóan* tradition very rarely perform *honkyoku* pieces in public (in a musical context) or at concerts, even today.

– N.B.: The *Sadame* document, probably dating from the end of the 17th century states in **paragraph no. 19**: “... During his *takuhatsu* (religious mendicancy) practice he (the *komusó*) should never play secular music or popular tunes. He is not allowed to participate in any artistic activities.” (Takabashi - LEE, 1992, pp.117-121)

The compositions (there is nearly no improvisation in Japanese traditional music!) – always **composed** and respectful and faithful to fixed traditions - are known as *honkyoku* (original, basic pieces)<sup>3</sup> *koten honkyoku* (ancient, time-honoured pieces), as well as *fuke honkyoku*, and sometimes even *fukezen honkyoku* (from the *Fuke* sects, *Myóan honkyoku* from the *Myóanji* Temple in Kyoto etc.), to differentiate them from the compositions of other schools of *shakuhachi* playing, who, of course, refer to their basic pieces as *honkyoku* also. Significant is the case of the *Tozan* school (founded by Nakao Tozan at the end of the 19th century), which resolutely excluded all spirituality from its repertoire.

Once more I have to emphasise the verbalised and deeply truthful characteristic of the style as being *ichi on jobutsu*, or one-sound Buddhahood. (Kurosawa Kinko I.) *Fuke* style really recalls most of all ‘the murmuring of the wind blowing through the bamboo grove’.<sup>4</sup>

Although *honkyoku* pieces are essentially coded breath exercises and instructions for meditation, all such compositions are in addition, nevertheless, exceedingly beautiful and sophisticated **music!** They represent unique musical phenomena and a specific and ultimate musical language, which can be investigated by means of musical theory, as any other kind of music.

Some musical aspects are determined and given by the ascetic, exclusively **solo playing** of the wind instrument (in the case of participation at a religious ritual, all the players try to perform in unison!), thus eliminating the **possibility** of using chords, harmony, polyphony etc.

Other limitations are the dominant role of **spirituality** in the pieces (the principle of *suidan* - phrase of one full breath) which **eliminates** time-measured pulses and **rhythmisation**, where the use of easily remembered lyrical melodies is unsuitable, and so on.

The musical projection of these pieces, despite such constraints, is demonstrated on the level of musical thought, notably **tectonics**, which are interesting, highly organised structures with surprisingly subtle and complex internal relationships. They cannot be chance or even improvised. For that matter, improvisation is practically non-existent in traditional Japanese music!

### 3. KOTEN HONKYOKU

There are about 150 compositions preserved. Most of them are actually variations and derivatives of some tens of compositions, which, through the long period of oral transmission in various localities, have, in many cases, admitted significant changes<sup>5</sup>. Those of the *Myōanji honkyoku* Temple make up just 33 compositions. If we take into account the existing recordings of the abbots, then *Tanikita Muchiku*, abbot no. 37, represents 28 pieces, *Yoshimura Sōshin*, abbot no. 40, 32 pieces, the *Kinko* school has 36 and three secret etc.

In *honkyoku*, four basic functional levels of the repertoire are very clearly differentiated, which can, of course, to a certain extent interpenetrate:

3.1. **Solo performance** - play is primarily focused on interpretation itself, it is a form of personal spiritual practice. During lessons under the control of a master, during practice it is, above all, mental and breathing exercise (the **person-self** relationship), during actual play ("performances") the compositions are **meditation**. The mind concentrates - is moulded - the concurrent realisation and, at the same time, the reverse operation of *honkyoku* compositions - specifically structured **breathing** /! - *suidan*/ and **sound clusters** interacting with **mental processes** - meditation = **personal relationship: person - God**, the person "listens" - God "speaks".

3.2. **Collective** playing during services - this is collective (spiritual) **meditation** practice within the framework of liturgical rites. It represents an enhancement of the mentioned process of meditation by the "combining" of the mental-energetic potential of the participating individuals with the aim of **communication with the universe** (collective relationship: a group of people - God).<sup>6</sup>

3.3. **Playing as interpersonal communication** (relationship: person - people) - instead of verbal expression during interaction with surroundings, during *takubatsu* - religious mendicancy (it is said that the traditional thanksgiving by means of the *Hachi Gaeshi* - Returning of the bowl - was never amiss), at meet-

ings outside the monastery. Whoever met another *komusó* monk would play *Yobi Take* - Calling of the Bamboo, to which the monk concerned would reply with the *Uke Take* - Answer of the Bamboo, then followed by *Gutai Kyoku* - Face-to-face Meeting etc. Compare also the compositions for various situations (e.g. Opening the Gate - *Monbiraki* etc.).

3.4. Playing of the *shakuhachi* as a supplementary recreational activity, the special *gikyoku* repertoire was played - compositions for rest and gladness. Needless to say *komusó* were only allowed to play such in the afternoon.

#### 4. THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE OF THE *SHAKUHACHI HONKYOKU*

Solo one-voice performance of the woodwind instrument supposed a dominance of melodic components of the musical language.

4.1 A speciality of the traditional repertoire is the significant **sonic character** (the ideal for the sound is the “murmuring of the wind blowing through the bamboo grove”!). The most important carrier of the musical structure is firstly **timbre with “noise sounds”** (*ikiatari, atari* etc.). Such noise sounds and transformations of **timbre** (by change of dynamics, by means of various types of vibrato, such as *furi*, or *yuri*, complex sonic ornamental formulae like *hororo, korokoro* etc.), which in combination with the **kinetic component** constantly oscillating around the **limits of motional stagnation**, are shifting the **melodics** to, at least, the **second level of importance**.

4.2 Also of note is the systematic work with **microtones** and intonation **flexion** (*meru, karu, merikomi, nayashi*, special *suri* glissando etc.) from the standard tonal terrain, realised by the changing of the blowing angle in combination with partial covering of the fingerholes.

4.3 Especially remarkable and characteristic are the mentioned **timbre elements**, such as **aspiration, overblow** and so on, denoted as *iki atari* - “breath accents”.

4.4 A speciality is also **tone setting**, which, different from our usual articulation with the help of the tongue, is managed through **finger articulation** by stroking the finger on the tone hole which is used exclusively - *atari* (tone setting), often in combination with breath articulation - *iki atari*.

4.5 From our point of view the *shakuhachi* **tonal terrain** itself is very unusual. The basic framework of the **anhemitonic pentatonic d1 f1 g1 a1 c2 d2**, which the instrument gives in the lower octave via the successive covering of the 5 finger holes, **always expanded** in *honkyoku* by a range of further tones. E.g. between a and g, there is a *Chimeru* position which gives the a tone, as a rule, ca 1/4 of a tone lower, and *U* position which gives the a flat ca 1/4 of tone lower. Similarly between f and d there can be a spectrum of tones from f through lower e flat etc.

Published analyses of the *honkyoku* pieces have until now been almost always reductions of the pieces to a melodic line (even the transcription, which Riley Lee /Lee 1992/ demonstrates in his dissertation etc.), which is otherwise logical for solo flute performance. Though this would give a relatively satisfactory picture of music in our cultural context, it is, in the case of *shakuhachi honkyoku*, quite misleading, as it does not take into account the common **dominant formative role of timbre components**. Also in question is the enormity of **static kinetic components** (mostly under "limits of motional stagnation") which leads, to a significant degree, to confusion for the European listener. All the *honkyoku* compositions appear simply as a succession of extremely long tones, unconnected to anything which would at least distantly recall our melodies.

To transcribe such complex structures simply as "melodies" (a succession of intonation steps in an undefined rhythm - similarly to the way the Gregorian Chant is transcribed) is quite inadequate for the purposes of analysis. The result is simply **inadequate** and gives a misleading **orientation in the composition**. It is similarly non-functional as orientation in one's surroundings according to a map without contours - the determining of altitude, without differentiation of mountains, water, forests, routes and rivers etc.

## 5. SPECIFICS OF THE MUSICAL LANGUAGE OF *FUKE HONKYOKU*:

### 5.1. TECTONICS

Each composition forms one, or several (max. 5) **large parts** of a time period of 3 to ca 17 minutes. They are usually made up of a number of "**themes**", which are composed from various structured **phrasal chains**. The **phrases**, each lasting a full breath(!), on the level of our small musical sentences, or their parts (half-sentences), are made up of standardised timbre-melodic **elements and formulae**, thus not simply tones at all! These precisely formalised and fixed sonic-melodic **elements and formulae** are actually the building "blocks" of *honkyoku* compositions.

### 5.2. THE KINETICS OF *HONKYOKU*

Kinetics are the determined interaction, or the "contention" of **transcendental and musical time**.

**Transcendental Time** – a term indicating striking **temporal disproportion** in musical phenomena, as a rule liturgical, where motion and temporal proportion do not occur as a result of musical regularity laws and logic, but to a much greater extent **as the result of the bonds with the divine** and "eternity". Motion in *honkyoku* is significantly static, precisely because of the dominance of the **sacred purpose** and function, and to a certain extent, it is also subject to **breathing meditation**, the principle of the *suidan* - the phrase of one full breath - thus a form of breathing exercise.

Transcendental time is evident, above all, in *honkyoku* compositions with a primarily meditative function (e.g. “The Three Classic Pieces” of *Kyorei* – The Empty Bell, *Mukaiji* – The Flute above the Misty Sea, *Kokú* – Empty Sky, or *Reibo* – Yearning for the Bell etc.)

**Musically structured time** is, of course, asserted in *honkyoku*, as the compositions evidently have a musical aspect as well. It is prominent not only in the parts of the *gikyoku* repertoire (“entertaining and recreational” music for the relaxation of monks, e.g. *Darani*) and non-verbal communicative, meant particularly for pursuit outside the monastery (*Hachi gaeshi* – Returning of the Bowl, *Monbiraki* – Opening the Gate etc.), but by means of obvious **musical effects** and to a certain extent even in the **primarily meditative repertoire**.<sup>7</sup>

### 5.3. RHYTHM

In *honkyoku* free rhythm is predominant. Motion is determined by the principle of *suidan* (*sui* – breath, *dan* – part, degree, section etc.) – the phrase lasting a “full breath”. The length of the phrase is understandably different for each different player, according to individual breathing disposition – thus there is an evident correlation with original breathing exercises during meditation.

Many indicate a traditional notation – actually a form of **tabulature**, where individual characters of the *katakana* alphabet are read in columns from top to bottom and right to left. The characters indicate specific fingerings on the instrument and the notation distinguishes three various time values.<sup>8</sup>

### 5.4. TIME VALUES:

Each *katakana* character indicates a construction **element** or **formula** having one of the following three time values:

- a) **Short** – if the next character is written immediately after the preceding.
- b) **Long** – if there is a vertical line after the character.
- c) **Very Short** – if a smaller character is written before the standard one, it means roughly the equivalent of our melodic ornament, a grace note.

**Rests** also have three various basic values:

- a) **Phrase end** – horizontal line, measuring one full breath according to the *suidan* principle, is in essence a short pause for **breathing**.
- b) **More distinct pause** – a small circle, indicating a larger caesura, or longer rest than is necessary for breathing.
- c) **Section end** (e.g. 1<sup>st</sup> part of the *Kyorei*, 5 parts of the *Kokú* etc.), or composition end – two adjacent horizontal lines.

In practice the phrases are often not played in any way according to the notation and principles of *suidan*, but in defined time-supported rhythms. It is essential to listen to the teacher and memorise.<sup>9</sup>

*Honkyoku* notation probably appeared at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and is said to have originally served as a “testimonial”, the master wrote in calligraphy and confirmed it with his stamp, as a certification of the hand-over and acceptance of the composition after recognising that the student has mastered it. Today the notation is above all a mnemonic aid, fixing the order of fingering, and the rising or falling of the tone. It does not determine the extent to which, in principle, it is necessary to listen and memorise, above all, the detailed (often **micro-interval**) intonation flexion, intonation oscillations (*furi*), timbre elements, special “techniques”, often of a sonic character (*atari*, *iki atari*, *muraiki*, vibrato *yuri*, *yuri komi* etc.)

These days it is starting to be often even used for playing “from a score”(!) on the podium, which is perhaps logical for the *Tozan* school and does not encroach, but, for the 36 *honkyoku* compositions of the *Kinko* school and particularly in the case of the *Myoan* it is not appropriate and it manifestly collides with the *honkyoku* Zen essence.

## 6. TECTONIC STRUCTURE IN THE *HONKYOKU*

### 6.1 TECTONIC STRUCTURES<sup>10</sup> ON THE 1<sup>ST</sup> HIERARCHIC LEVEL: ELEMENTS AND FORMULAE.

6.1.1 **Elements** - tones produced by the flute, basic tonal range and fingering - Ro(d1), Tsu(f1), Re(g1), Chi(a1), Ri(c2), U(a flat), I(d2), A(c2), *sanno*U(b flat 2), *nishigono*Ha(c2) etc., equivalent to speech sounds in speech.

Even the elements themselves can come into play during the construction of phrases, though quite exceptionally (e.g. the 1<sup>st</sup> phrase in the *Kyorei* etc.)

6.1.2 **Formulae** – these always have two components:

a) **intonation** – each has a concrete tonal pitch, which can change in time due to various types of **inflection** (intonation oscillations - *furi*, temporary lowering of ca 1/4 of tone - *merikomi* etc.) - equivalent to vowels (a,e,i,o,u) in speech.

b) **sonic** – various “sounds” as *iki atari* breath accent, overblow, finger articulation by stroking of the finger over the tone hole - *atari* etc. - equivalent to consonants.

Both of the components together form the characteristic **compounded construction elements**:

6.1.0 **Archetype** – elements and the simplest, embryonic forms of some formulae, occurring particularly in *Kyorei* composition.

6.1.2.1 **Simple Formula** – from two or three elements with pertinent sonic com-

ponents, such as HaRo, TsuRe, TsuTsuRe, HaI, ChiU, HiU etc., equivalent to syllables in speech.

6.1.2.2 **Structured Formula** – composed from more elements and sonic components concretely organised, e.g. *Reon* - progressively with quickening alternation of two tones, HoRoRo, HaRaRo, closing formulae *daimeruRoRofuriRofuri* – analogous to the “Amen” formulae in Gregorian chants etc., equivalent to words with a meaning beyond that of standard sentences, e.g. “Raining!”, “End!”, “Let’s go!”, “Enough!” etc.

6.1.2.3 **Rhythmic Formula** – with concrete rhythmic development (occurring only rarely), e.g. KoRoKoRo etc.

## 6.2. TECTONIC STRUCTURE ON THE 2<sup>ND</sup> HIERARCHIC LEVEL: PHRASE

6.2.1 **Phrase** (segment) - sections lasting one breath (according to the principle of *suidan*, phrase of one full breath), composed of **elements and formulae**. Each phrase can have **one** or more elements or formulae, depending on whether they can be played in one breath(!), in *Kokú*, for example, one phrase is made up of 19(!) tones, whilst the beginning of *Kyorei* is a pure Tsu element-archetype – one long straight f<sub>1</sub> tone. A phrase is roughly equivalent to a short musical sentence, sometimes it is only a part-component (“half sentence”) of a higher component to the extent of a short musical sentence.

## 6.3. TECTONIC STRUCTURE ON THE 3<sup>RD</sup> HIERARCHIC LEVEL: “THEME”

6.3.1 **“Theme”** – usually formed by a chain of at least two phrases. Introductory “theme” of the composition *Taki Ochi* – The Falling Waterfall has six phrases, for example.

6.3.2 **Characteristic Theme** - typical for a given specific composition, usually used more times as it is usually with the theme in European music (e.g. the well-known “*Kokú* theme” - three times phrase formed of TsuRe etc.) - equivalent of compounded musical sentences, e.g. one part of a ternary or little rondo form etc.

## 6.4 TECTONIC STRUCTURE ON THE 4<sup>TH</sup> HIERARCHIC LEVEL: COMPOSITION, PARTS OF COMPOSITION

6.4.1 **Composition** - is formed from a number of such “themes” of the 3<sup>rd</sup> hierarchic level, often very complexly mutually interconnected - by the exercise of known musical compositional processes, such as repetition, variation, “thematic and motivic work”, reprise, reminiscence, generic affinity etc. Shorter com-

positions are structured in this way, e.g. *Chóshi*, *Hifumichó* etc., which correspond to our categories of large forms and can be arranged for example like a binary form, rondo etc.

6.4.2 **Parts** – such a developed and arranged whole is still not necessarily a whole composition, but one of a number of parts, which are always connected attacca, e.g. five in *Kokú*, three in *Taki Ochi*, two in *Kyorei* etc. In that case it could last more than 20 minutes and corresponds to our cyclic forms but in one movement and without any structural contrast.

## 7. KYOREI – THE EMPTY BELL

During esoteric night practice in sect temples the most important and longest compositions were said to be played, among which belong in particular the so-called “**Three Classical Pieces**”, *Sankyorei*.

Fascinating legends are tied to these three compositions: the first of them is related to the conception of the allegedly oldest *fuke honkyoku* composition which in its ascetically simple structure differs from all others. It is called the *Kyorei* (also *Kyótaku*) - “**The Empty Bell**”.

I have also used the notation of the piece during study under the supervision of the master *Kifu Mitsuhashi*, created by the prestigious master of traditional *fuke* style (of *Myóanji Taizan ryú* school, and others, including *Kinko ryū*) *Jin Nyódo* (1891-1966), who has an inscription at the end - a kind of Zen essay, which is construed even by the sect as officially proclaimed, though it is a quite improbable and historically unfounded birth for the *fuke* tradition and its “transmission” to Japan:

“... there is a tale written that *Fukezenji* (Chinese Pu-Hua), founder of the *Fuke* sect, and *Rinzaizenji* (Chinese Lin-ti), founder of the *Rinzai* sect, had their first spiritual meeting in *Chóinshu* in Northern China more than 1100 years ago. *Fukezenji* in the poem *Shida no Ge* (“Four Strokes”) manifested his spiritual enlightenment. It is a poem which was transmitted as a secret of classical models of musical composition from olden times.

*Chóhaku*, who was a pupil of master *Fukezenji*, was a talented player on the *dósho* flute, the original model of *shakuhachi*. He realised that he could practice Zen by means of flute play instead of *zazen*, sitting meditation. He composed the composition *Kyorei* for this aim, and tradition says it that it is the oldest of the 150 *honkyoku* pieces.

704 years ago the Japanese high cleric *Hotto Kokushin* visited China in order to study Buddhism and *Chosan*, who was a descendant of *Chóhaku* in the 16<sup>th</sup> generation, taught him this piece before his return to Japan. From that time *shakuhachi* spread over the whole of Japan as a tool of the *Fuke* sect and thus for a long time mutually joined religion with art and the tradition developed to its current form.”

The *Kyorei* composition, referred to as *Kyótaku*, is really unique in the context of *honkyoku*. Only a few basic compositional elements are used in it from the many used in *honkyoku*, and all are here always in quite disengaged, almost archetypal-embryonic form. It is possible to well imagine that just this is the kind of original

model and inspiration of all the other *fake honkyoku* compositions and the *Kyorei*, especially, is a sort of an authentic embodiment of the essence of “blowing” Zen.

Therefore I append here as model examples of treatments of specific musical speech analysis of these special compositions:

Appendix 1: Facsimile of the Original *Kyorei* Notation (of *Jin Nyōdo*)

Appendix 2: Projection of Melody

Appendix 3: Table of the Tonal Material of the Principal *Myōan honkyoku* Pieces

Appendix 4: Table of the Tectonic Structures of the *Kyorei*

### SCHEMATA OF KYOREI TECTONIC STRUCTURES

Recording: *Mitsubashi Kifu*, 6:38 (Notation *Jin Nyodo*)

#### 1. Elements and Formulae Used in the *Kyorei* (Hierarchic Level 1)

Tsu(1), TsuRe(2), U(3)*merikomi*,  
*sannoURi*(4), RiI(5),  
*meriTsuRo*(6), *daimerRo*(7)

#### 2. Phrase – always played on one full breath (Level 2) such as appended phrase no. 5: RiI-I-I-Ri-Ri-I-/

#### 3. Themes in the *Kyorei* (Level 3), tectonic algorithm of the composition:

a – “Cephalic Theme” - 1/2/3/4(2+)/

Transformation of the “Cephalic Theme” and:

a1: 1/2/3/4/ a2: 1/23/4/ a3: 123/4/

a1` : 1/2/3/2+/ a2` : 1/23/2+/ a3` : 123/2+/

Mathematical Algorithm of Work with the “Cephalic Theme” and:

a1,a2,a3...,a2...,a1`, a2`,a3`..., a2, a1/: (1<sup>st</sup> part of the composition) phrase  
 1/2/3/ 1/23/ 123/ .../1/23/... /1/2/3/ 1/23/ 123/... /1/23/ - and transformation  
 of numbers: a2,a3...,a2,a3...,a2.../: (2<sup>nd</sup> part of composition) /1/23/ 123/...  
 /1/23/ 123/... /1/23//

b – 2<sup>nd</sup> theme: 4+/5/

c – 3<sup>rd</sup> theme: 6/6/6/7/7-/

#### 4. Parts of the Composition (Level 4)

2 parts AA'





*Kyorei* (Empty Bell) Projection of melody 1

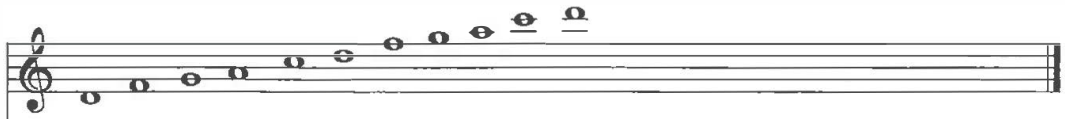
*sim.* *Mitsuhashi Kifu*

Shakuhachi

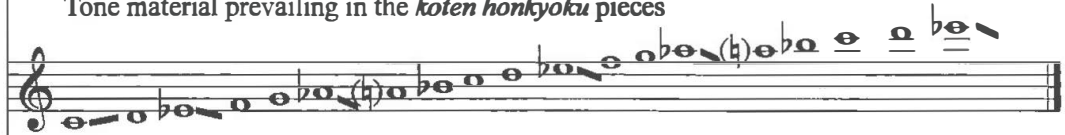
Dashed bar-line indicates *suidan* (the phrase lasting one full breath)

APPENDIX 2: PROJECTION OF MELODY

Basic scale of the *shakuhachi*



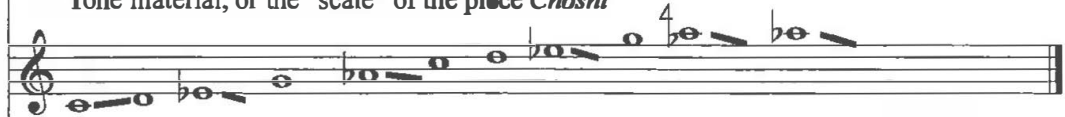
Tone material prevailing in the *koten honkyoku* pieces



Tone material, or the "scale" of the piece *Kyorei*



Tone material, or the "scale" of the piece *Chóshi*



Tone material, or the "scale" of the piece *Kokú*



APPENDIX 3: TABLE OF THE TONAL MATERIAL OF THE PRINCIPAL *MYŌAN HONKYOKU* PIECES

1 	2 	3 	4 	1	23 	4	123 	4	4+ 
1 5 	1	23	4	4+	5	1	2	3	2+ 
1 21 	23	2+	123	2+	6 	6	6	7 	7- 
1 31 	23	4' 	123	4'	4'+	5	1 	23	2+
123 41 	2+	6	6	6	7	7-	1	23	4' 

APPENDIX 4: TABLE OF THE TECTONIC STRUCTURES OF THE KYOREI

## NOTES:

<sup>1</sup> "The members of the *Fuke* sect have left us with very little written material elucidating the philosophy which underlies their playing *shakuhachi* as a *suizen*, the blowing Zen, the *bonkyoku* presumably speaking for themselves".

<sup>2</sup> The *Fuke* Sect was dissolved in the framework of the *Meiji* reform of 1871, the monks had to enter other sects, or return to secular life. Many of them then functioned as outstanding musicians and teachers. Some of them managed to preserve and pass on the unique characteristics and richness of performance to the next generation, which is without doubt not only spiritual practice, "blowing meditation", but at the same time eminent music, unlike any other. The world's few hundred "shakuhachists" still follow this traditional *fuke* style today, mainly as personal meditation practice. Their "lay association" *Kyōchiku Zenji Hōsan Kai* organises meetings twice a year, as a kind of "festival" in the renaissance "Temple of Light and Darkness" in Kyoto, on the site of the temple complex of *Tōfukuji*. All participate in solo, or in groups which successively step forward in front of the statue of the temple's founder *Kyōchiku Zenji* (just the one who received the *Mukaiji* and *Kokū* in a "dream", second of the "Three Classical Pieces"), take up a strictly formal *seiza* position and dedicate some of the *bonkyoku* compositions to his spirit. Participation in the meeting of November 3, 1996 was one of my strongest experiences from Japan and retrospectively it seems to be one of the key moments of my further existence in our world of illusions and transience.

<sup>3</sup> To differentiate them from *shakuhachi* compositions occurring later, or transferred from other genres of JP traditional music, which are known as *gaikyoku* (literally "outside" compositions)

<sup>4</sup> Among the most commonly played pieces of *fuke bonkyoku* there clearly belonged the composition *Chōshi*, also sometimes called *Honshirabe*, still used by shakuhachists of all(!) schools today as a composition for warming up, harmonisation with the instrument and surroundings, for calmer thoughts. Traditionally it served as a prelude to other most significant and technically more difficult compositions. My teacher *Kifu Micubashi sensei* emphasised on many occasions that "Every *shakuhachi* player must know how to play *Chōshi* everywhere and every time, by memory for his whole life, even if he had just been woken up from a deep sleep(!)."

<sup>5</sup> In the period of the greatest flowering of the *Fuke* sect in the Edo period (1603 to 1868) 77 temples in the most varied places in Japan were purportedly under their control (Blaedel 1988:108).

<sup>6</sup> I made very interesting recordings of a set of ensemble performances of *fuke bonkyoku* compositions in the temples of *Rōgenji* near *Shūzenji* on the *Izu* Peninsula and *Myōanji* in Kyoto.

<sup>7</sup> Some of the *bonkyoku* compositions, similarly to the transcription of the originally Zen compositions in the notation of *Kinoko ryū*, commonly use characters for **diapason** rhythmisation taken mostly from *sankyoku* (literally "music three"), of chamber genre, which is unthinkable without the rhythmic co-ordination of the players.

<sup>8</sup> Some time since the 1<sup>st</sup> half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the compositions of *bonkyoku*, until then passed down exclusively in an oral tradition, started to be written in a kind of "tablature".

It was clearly borrowed from older types of tablature for wind instruments, whose oldest known form today makes up the lost first standard collection of "tune" compositions for transverse flute *Shinsen Odjo-fu* (*Nangu Fue-fu*) created in the year 920 by prince *Sadayasu* (870-924). It contained a detailed commentary of other parts in a *gagaku* orchestra, today known only from annotations in later records. The transcript always used the letters of the *katakana* syllabic alphabet, which is used by the Japanese to write mainly interjections, onomatopoeic expressions, sound quality, foreign words etc.

By means of *katakana* characters fingering was recorded - the positions of the fingers over the tone holes - for the individual tones of a composition. Somewhat curiously, never for playing from sheet in a way we are used to from our own music. The notation was above all a kind of testimonial, which the master wrote by hand in the form of calligraphy, confirmed by his personal stamp, for his pupil, as a confirmation that the latter had successfully learn and that it completed its handing over and acceptance.

The notation has served up till the present day mostly only as a mnemonic aid and *honkyoku* is played in principle from memory. Most nuances - colour, dynamic and intonation hues, which are often more important than a melodic sequences in *honkyoku* - that is to say it isn't describable in this way. During study in direct contact with a master it is necessary to patiently emulate the master and memorise the piece. Such a method of transmission leads, of course, to significant variability and constant transformation in compositions, and as such within the framework of one *fuke* tradition, which has incidentally<sup>9</sup>(!) of its own various lines.

<sup>9</sup> The primary obligation of the student is above all the most exact emulation of his teacher's own version. The use of his own ideas, variations and personality is quite ruled out in the student stage of play!

<sup>10</sup> Tectonic structure - term of Karel Risinger (clearly differentiated formal component of the musical piece - Risinger 1969:12)

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