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## **Decentering Gagaku. Exploring the multiplicity of contemporary Japanese Court music**

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**CHAPTER 1**  
**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS**  
***GAGAKU'S 'MODES' OF REPRESENTATION***

The persistence of *gagaku* duplicates itself in the persistence of the variety of approaches mobilized to investigate it. The 'object' cannot be separated from the means of knowledge-production, so to say<sup>1</sup>: as suggested in the Introduction, in fact, different ways of investigating *gagaku* generate different objects for themselves. For this reason, trying to embrace the totality of *gagaku* research is as much bound to failure as trying to know all of its manifestations. Thus, the aim of reviewing some of the means through which *gagaku* has been approached should be to highlight how 'Japanese court music' was repeatedly turned into a stable discursive field, available and amenable to specific paradigms of research, rather than to paint a necessarily incomplete picture of what it is, has been, or will become. A meta-theoretical starting point that is not a conventional literature review, then, but rather an exercise in drawing the contours of a mutual interlocking between objects and research methodologies.

Some twenty years ago, Richard Howitt suggested to take more seriously the homology between the musical and geographical concepts of "scale", noticing that "musical scales provide a useful metaphor for understanding the ways in which geographical scale involves *relations* between elements of complex and dynamic

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<sup>1</sup> A lesson we have learnt from 20<sup>th</sup> century experimental physics and feminism (see Haraway 1988).

geographical totalities” (1998, 49 emphasis added). I think it is more than accidental that Howitt should pinpoint the relational aspect of the components of musical scales as something worth translating into the geographical discourse. In a similar vein, I want to suggest that the concept of *mode* can shed some light on the differences among parallel discourses regarding *gagaku*. With its less Eurocentric pedigree, in fact, modality is better suited than tonality to perform this task, because relations between notes in a musical mode respond to a less strictly defined hierarchy than relations within a tonal scale or “key”<sup>2</sup>. Like the relations between notes of a scale bring to mind the proportionality inherent to the geographical concept of scale, so too the different weight assigned to certain notes in relation to a “modal center” can function as an analogical model of how different strands of research on *gagaku* operate. This chapter thus introduces four “modes” of *gagaku* representation, four “meta-genres”<sup>3</sup>: the historical, the presentational, the musicological and the decentering. Each of these modes subsumes a number of studies that can be grouped together on the basis of the relative weight assigned to a certain aspect of *gagaku*.

1. In the historical mode, the emphasis lies in the unfolding of a linear chronological narrative, portrayed as more or less continuous, more or less unbroken. Continuity may at times be presented as a proof of authenticity (in which case the historical mode runs the risk of being appropriated by conservative approaches to ‘traditional music’). More often, however, the rationale of this approach is to highlight the place of *gagaku* within the history of Japanese music. But because *gagaku* is often the very first chapter in this history, it is easy to see how crucial its place is in the larger framework: antiquity once more is a mark of authenticity –but in this case, the authenticity and epistemological validity of the ‘history of Japanese music’.

2. What I call the ‘presentational mode’ is an especially recent trend, because it is in no small part linked to the broadening of *gagaku*’s target audience between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the present. The at first very limited but progressively broader outreach of *gagaku* musicians’ numerous activities is attested by the birth of specialized journals as well as by the growing presence of *gagaku* in the cultural life of Tokyo, and contributed

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<sup>2</sup> On the concept of mode, see (Powers 1980). In particular, see pp.422-450 for an investigation of mode “as a musicological concept” and pp.442-447 for the concept of *chōshi* (often translated as “modes”), so central in *gagaku*’s musical language.

<sup>3</sup> I thank Ivo Smits for characterizing my use of the term mode in this way.

greatly to the transformation of *gagaku* from an obscure ritualistic repertoire of sounds and gestures performed far away from the masses and barely identifiable as a coherent genre to a 'stage art' that could be appreciated in purely aesthetic terms and directly observed indoors (a phenomenon that has been thoroughly examined by Terauchi Naoko and Tsukahara Yasuko). These processes expanded *gagaku's* 'basin' of aficionados and non-professional performers to the point of rendering necessary a new type of publications, conceived with the clear purpose of presenting 'Japanese court music' to a public of non-specialists. Thence the choice of the term 'presentational', not to be confused with ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino's concept of "presentational performance" (Turino 2008): while his phrase refers specifically to music "involving one group of people (the artists) providing music for another (the audience)" with "pronounced artist-audience separation within face-to-face situations" (Turino 2008, 51–52) and embraces precise stylistic and contextual features, my own use of the term is much more neutral, simply alluding to the significance assigned by the texts subsumed under this mode to introducing the reader to *gagaku* in a way that can differ considerably from more 'scholastic' or 'academic' approaches. It is not by accident that the term presentational recalls *gagaku's* representations. In fact, a number of these studies employs pictures, charts and visual aids that help conveying their message clearly. These representations of *gagaku*, in turn, are open to the influence of media depictions of 'Japanese court music' –and may therefore open up a space for new interdisciplinary approaches to *gagaku*.

3. The importance of the methodologically accurate, meticulous study of ancient scores is at the core of what I define the 'musicological mode'. Here the reference to musicology is not intended as a precise marker of disciplinary affiliation. If that was the case, the mode should be further classified according to the internal theoretical or methodological choice made by this or that author (performance practice is not the same thing as cultural musicology). In a technical sense, it might be possible to opt for the term 'analytical' instead of 'presentational', signaling the similarity between the techniques deployed by the scholars quoted below and those of musical analysis. But these techniques are so grounded in the study of Euro-American musics (despite recent developments, e.g. Tenzer and Roeder 2011) that the term 'analytical' might be misleading. Furthermore, if not intended *strictu sensu*, the qualification may and does apply to other theoretical and methodological stances, so that the explanatory force of the 'mode' may be significantly

weakened. All in all, then, ‘musicological’ seems to be a sufficiently overarching term, while at the same time convincingly directing the attention toward the crucial element common to the studies quoted here, namely the importance they attribute to musical parameters conceptualized musicologically.

4. The struggle to deconstruct or counterbalance overwhelmingly centralized, ideologically-charged representations of *gagaku* through various examinations of its lesser-known facets is the common denominator of the analyses grouped together as ‘decentering’. The decentering efforts can be thematic, theoretical, methodological, but it typically entails a critique of the limitations inherent to the notion of ‘Japanese court music’. Undercurrents and traditionally dismissed topics are thus taken up with the aim of showing the diversity of *gagaku*, eliciting new paths for its study. These efforts are usually irreducible to the historical penchant that characterizes much of the texts encompassed within the historical and presentational modes, notably because they are not interested in showing the continuity of a repertoire throughout the centuries. Rather, these studies tend to emphasize the synchronic analysis of *gagaku* within and possibly outside of Japan. For this reason, this mode is indicative of possible future research trends, and should be understood as the most open to reformulations of its features and boundaries. Its hybrid character is in line with the theoretical approach highlighted in the Introduction, and should therefore be taken as indicative of the broader stances elucidated throughout this dissertation.

Of course, these four modes are not mutually exclusive: especially in the case of recent edited volumes and monographs, all four approaches may coexist, or it may be difficult to establish which one is dominant. My choices and criteria are bound to be arbitrary, partial: other modes are available to which equally broad academic bibliographies might correspond.

Research trends that will not be taken into consideration, because they do not fall within the bounds of the four modes presented below, include: the study of the relationship between *gagaku* and Japanese literature<sup>4</sup>; the neglected exploration of the

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<sup>4</sup> One title that has become a standard reference, whose mention at least seems indispensable, is Yamada Yoshio’s *Music and Genji monogatari* (1934). In Italian, see Daniele Sestili’s *Musica e Danza del Principe Genji* (1996).

historical connection between *gagaku* and *shōmyō* (Japanese Buddhist chant)<sup>5</sup>; and the numerous examples of so-called ‘contemporary *gagaku*’ (sometimes called *gendai gagaku* in Japanese), that is, music written in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by prominent composers (both Japanese and not) specifically for the *gagaku* ensemble<sup>6</sup>. Additionally, despite the fact that several publications and projects are intimately connected to accompanying CDs, DVDs and similar media, such materials are omitted here in light of the fact that a detailed review of their contents does not play a central role in the overall discussion that forms the theme of this dissertation. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that scholars and performers of *gagaku* increasingly rely on new media for their academic and artistic endeavors, to the point that *gagaku* has recently come to occupy a ‘niche’ in the discographic market for Japanese traditional music<sup>7</sup>.

Finally, the sources presented below are primarily in English and Japanese. Despite the fact that useful contributions on *gagaku* have appeared in such languages as Italian, French and German, these are rather sporadic, unconnected instances, more often than not simply episodes of much larger attempts to introduce Japanese traditional music as a whole (e.g. Tamba 1995; Sestili 2010). In a sense, most of these texts could be said to fit in the presentational mode described above<sup>8</sup>. Japanese- and English-language research, on the other hand, are both more varied and more consistent: because of the sheer number of publications available, it is easier to identify specific trends, and a comparatively longer history of research on Japanese music justifies more specialized research topics.

Boundary transgressions and leakages among each of the four modes of representation included below are not only frequent, but inevitable. In fact, this mutual overflowing of different types of knowledge production represents an important feature of a new way of thinking about *gagaku*. Thus, even though the approaches presented here do not encompass the dazzling variety of *gagaku*’s manifestations (its representations do not map onto its presentations, so to say), laying them out has the merit of bringing into

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<sup>5</sup> For three exceptions, almost forty years apart, see (K. Ono 1970; Kataoka 1970; and Ogi 2009). Nelson (2008a; and 2008b) makes the connection explicit, but continues to treat the two in parallel (thus fundamentally as distinct) instead of jointly.

<sup>6</sup> The most famous example being the suite *Shūteiga ichigu* (*In and Autumn Garden*) by Takemitsu Tōru (1979). On this and other pieces by central 20<sup>th</sup>-centuries composers such as John Cage, Matsudaira Yoritsune and Karlheinz Stockhausen inspired by or written for *gagaku* (ensembles), see (Galliano 2002; Wade 2014).

<sup>7</sup> For useful discographies, see (Endō et al. 2006, 230–37; Tokita and Hughes 2008b, 422).

<sup>8</sup> For a recent exception, see (Fujita 2012).

view additional sites that remain open for future exploration. Indeed, recognizing this ‘exceeding’ quality of *gagaku* is itself a powerful incentive to push research into hitherto unexplored territories that hold the promise of unheard reverberations.

## 1.1 THE HISTORICAL MODE

Given its antiquity, it comes as no surprise that *gagaku* was taken up as a topic for investigation very early on in Japanese history –so early in fact that when it comes to the first studies of court music the line between primary and secondary sources is at times blurred. Given that the authors of ancient texts on court music were often performers and descendants of specialized families of musicians, there is a certain ambiguity to the sheer diversity that characterizes ancient collections of miscellaneous sources: to what extent what we see today as a reflexive endeavor was in fact originally conceived in more practical terms as merely a supplementary means of transmitting practical musical traditions is difficult to say.

As noted by Steven Nelson, by the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century CE “theoretical and historical studies of music, genealogical tables of transmission of performance practice, records of the activities of musicians, collections of historical tales about music and musicians, and sources of importance in music iconography began to appear in abundance” (2002, 587)<sup>9</sup>. A great number of these sources deal with *gagaku* and Buddhist chanting, but the mixed reasons behind their compilation often resulted in their rather fragmentary nature. The earliest comprehensive treatise specifically dedicated to *gagaku* is Koma no Chikazane’s (1177-1242) *Kyōkunshō* (1233), a work in ten volumes that focuses mostly on the danced repertory. This is also the oldest of the so-called “three great books on *gagaku*” (*sandai gagusho*)<sup>10</sup> (Endō et al. 2006, 110–11), the other two being *Taigenshō* (1512) by Toyohara no Muneaki (1450-1524) and *Gakkaroku* (1690) by Abe no Suehisa (1622-

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<sup>9</sup> A detailed English list of 40 important sources of Japanese music from the collection of the Research Archives for Japanese Music at Ueno Gakuen college, complete with a description of each item, can be found in (Nelson 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Sometimes the *Zoku Kyōkunshō* (1270) by Koma no Asakuzu (1249-1333) (a relative of Chikazane) is added to the list (e.g. Nelson 2002, 587). Several passages of *Kyōkunshō* and *Zoku Kyōkunshō* coincide, but the latter also includes information on some pieces that are not mentioned in the former (S. Tōgi 1988, 285).



1708). Because it is the oldest, *Kyōkunshō* served as the basis for the other two, which often quote it (S. Tōgi 1988, 282).

While *Kyōkunshō* shows a penchant toward danced pieces of Chinese origins (because its author was a dancer in the *tōgaku* repertoire), *Taigenshō* frequently exceeds the boundaries of the musical and expands on religious and philosophical topics (Kikkawa 1984b; 1984e). With as many as 50 volumes, *Gakkaroku* is the largest treatise in scale, and the most complete. Indeed, the *gagaku* scholar Hazuka Keimei has fittingly likened the three books to a spring, a multitude of brooks, and an ocean (quoted in Kikkawa 1984a, 222). Today, these texts can be found as typographical reprints or as modern editions based on early modern manuscripts within broad collections such as the *Nihon koten zenshū* or the *Nihon shisō taikai* (S. Tōgi 1988, 282; Nelson 2008a, 45–47)<sup>11</sup>. A recent illustrated edition of *Gakkaroku* is also valuable in that it is based on the oldest available primary sources for this work, the manuscripts in the possession of the Abe family (Abe 2008).

All three “great books” contain a wealth of information on the (often legendary) origins of *bugaku* and *kangen* pieces, the details of the oral transmission of the repertoire, and the performing techniques of each of the instruments in the ensemble. More importantly for their inclusion in this mode, they display a proto-historical approach to the study of *gagaku*: the insistence on the mythical origins of the music through frequent quotes of famous passages from the *Kojiki* in which ritual performances or musical instruments are portrayed; the genealogies of hereditary families of *gagaku* musicians; and the detailed calendars of the main performing occasions within and outside of the court all signal a budding search for linear historical developments.

Later important collections by Oka Masana (1681-1759) (*Newly Edited Anthology on the Way of Music, Shinsen gakudō ruijū taizen*) and by Ogawa Morinaka (1769-1823) (*Items of Song and Dance, Kabu hinmoku*) included texts on *gagaku* (Nelson 2002, 588)<sup>12</sup>. Other notable examples of early modern miscellaneous compendia are the *Gunsho ruijū* and the *Zoku gunsho ruijū*, compiled by Hanawa Hokiichi (1746-1821) (Nelson 2002,

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<sup>11</sup> A digitalized version of *Gakkaroku* is available online through the collection of the National Institute for Japanese Literature: [http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/iview/Frame.jsp?DB\\_ID=G0003917KTM&C\\_CODE=0281-045801&IMG\\_SIZE=&PROC\\_TYPE=null&SHOMEI=【楽家録】&REQUEST\\_MARK=null&OWNER=null&IMG\\_NO=1](http://base1.nijl.ac.jp/iview/Frame.jsp?DB_ID=G0003917KTM&C_CODE=0281-045801&IMG_SIZE=&PROC_TYPE=null&SHOMEI=【楽家録】&REQUEST_MARK=null&OWNER=null&IMG_NO=1) (accessed September 2, 2016).

<sup>12</sup> A reprint of the anonymous *Gagaku shōjiten*, largely based on Ogawa’s work, was recently published (Gagaku to bugaku oyobi kanren geinō no ima to mukashi kyōdō kenkyūkai 2016).

587). Many of the sources collected in these two multivolume endeavors deal with theoretical or practical aspects of court music's transmission and performance, and remain largely unexplored. They also quote the "three great books" at length, adding few truly new elements to what over the centuries had become an established, cumulative body of knowledge on *gagaku*.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, the political stability of the Tokugawa regime had positive reverberations on court music: broader sectors of the population acquired a loose awareness of what *gagaku* was, and a new wave of research was set in motion (Endō et al. 2006, 122–26). Recently, researchers have started to explore the connections between, on the one hand, the Tokugawa rulers and *gagaku* (e.g. Takenouchi 2006) and, on the other, the concomitant spreading of *gagaku* practice among commoners in what has been described as a "network" sustaining the circulation of instruments, ideas and people (see Minamitani 2005). These new research trends also display a historical bent, a preoccupation with the ways in which *gagaku* interacted with the particular sociocultural characteristics of Tokugawa Japan.

In the following 200 years or so, publications devoted to *gagaku* were marked by a mixture of continuity and discontinuity with their premodern and early modern counterparts. While thoroughness and inclusivity, modeled on the three great books on *gagaku*, remained central, authors also became increasingly conscious of the ongoing formation of a wider public of non-specialists. This growing public would eventually constitute an audience less interested in the details of the performing practice and more concerned with specific historical and aesthetic facets that could contribute to a fuller appreciation of *gagaku* as 'art music' (Endō et al. 2006, 139)<sup>13</sup>. At the same time, heightened contacts with European and American disciplines brought about a transformation of the ways in which intellectual discourses on *gagaku* were conducted. In fact, the formation of disciplinary fields modeled on their 'Western' counterparts meant that this performing art could be approached through the lenses of specific

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<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the issue of the shifting limits of the category of 'music' in early modern and modern Japan is itself crucial to understanding the shift to which *gagaku* was subjected: though it is not exactly clear when the compound *ongaku* started to be employed as a stable equivalent of the term 'music', it appears that it was not before the creation of the institution known as Music Investigation Committee (*Ongaku torishirabe gakari*) in 1879 (Kikkawa 1984d, 177). As late as 1926, Tanabe Hisao (in his *Essays on Japanese Music (Nihon ongaku kōwa)*) employed the word *ongaku* primarily as a synonym of the components of what today we commonly refer to as *gagaku* (1996 [1926]). On related terminological preoccupations, see also (S. Gamō 2000, 60–78).

theoretical premises and methodological tools: accordingly, while still in the making, (Japanese) ethnology, musicology and the history of music all began to tackle *gagaku* from their own exclusive standpoints.

At this time, hybrid texts began to appear that reflected these magmatic, intertwined currents, still retaining discernible traces of the underlying preoccupation with (re)constructing a historical narrative. For instance, the documents prepared on such occasions as the Paris International Exposition of 1867 and the 1873 World Exposition in Wien are fascinating attempts to produce new and synthetic general overviews of court music. One of the earliest examples of such an endeavor was the *Outline of Japanese Court Music (Nihon gagaku gaiben)*, a text which went along the instruments and scores sent to Paris in 1878 for the third Paris World Fair (*Exposition Universelle*) (Tsukahara 2013, 230). Another of these precursors of 20<sup>th</sup>-century overviews of *gagaku* was the 1884 *Report on the Results of the Music Investigation Committee (Ongaku torishirabe gakari seiseki shinpōsho)*, a text especially interesting because of its portrayal of court music as an element in a larger cultural attempt to accommodate ‘modern’, ‘Western’ elements alongside Japan’s lasting traditions (see Terauchi 2005; 2010, 17). Though not conceived for broad circulation, the *Memorandum on the Principles for Transcribing Gagaku (Gagaku o kifuhō hikae)* produced by the musicians of the Research Institute on Traditional Music (*Hōgaku chōsa gakari*) shortly after its creation in 1907 is yet another notable representative of this period. The *Memorandum* served as a detailed explanation of the methods employed during the activities of transcription and transnotation of part of the *gagaku* repertoire (see Chapter 2), but it also included a succinct overview of court music’s main musicological features (such as information on modes, scales, tunings and performing techniques) (Terauchi 2010, 45–51). Written at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all of these texts were crucial to the establishment of a narrative surrounding *gagaku* which placed it at the origin of Japanese music history<sup>14</sup>.

Recently, a growing number of studies by leading Japanese scholars of *gagaku* has directed a historical gaze at precisely the Meiji period (M. Gamō 1986; Hashimoto 1986; T. Tōgi 2006; M. Ono 2016). According to Terauchi Naoko and Tsukahara Yasuko, for example, the creation of the Office of *Gagaku* in 1870 and the subsequent production of

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<sup>14</sup> For an early example of the evaluation of debates concerning “Japanese music” during the Meiji period, see (Kikkawa 1984c, 111–28).

the collections of scores known as the *Selected Scores of the Meiji* represent “the birth of modern *gagaku*”, a watershed moment that punctuates the overall ‘flow’ of *gagaku* history (Tsukahara 2009, 42; Terauchi 2010). The work of Tsukahara is especially important, in that it convincingly links the remodeling of the court’s rituals to the formation of a new identity for *gagaku*, one in which the relationship with the imperial system was given a particularly prominent place, further emphasized by the superimposition of court music and a particular version of *shintō* (Tsukahara 1998; 2009; 2013). Indeed, Tsukahara’s *The Meiji Nation and Gagaku (Meiji kokka to gagaku)* (2009) can be considered the most important recent contribution to the study of *gagaku* at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>15</sup>. Terauchi’s aptly titled *Gagaku in Modern and Contemporary Japan (Gagaku no ‘kindai’ to ‘gendai’)* (2010). is broader in scope, and delineates a cultural history of *gagaku* spanning from 1870 to the present. Both books shed light on the genealogy of today’s *gagaku*, focusing on the scrupulous analysis of the historical developments that led to the establishment of the Office of *Gagaku* (1870), and on the activities of its musicians in the years immediately following its creation.

One often ignored but rather important contribution to the historical assessment of the significance of the Meiji period to present-day *gagaku* is represented by two articles published by non-Japanese scholars, Robert Garfias and Eta Harich-Schneider. While the former indirectly confirms the lasting effects of the association, established in the Meiji, between (court) rituals and (court) music, stating that “[i]t is improbable that *gagaku* will completely die out, as it still serves too important a function in the ritual and ceremonial life of Japan” (Garfias 1960, 18), the latter offers more immediately relevant observations. According to Harich-Schneider, “the theory of a strictly secluded court music, unchanged and immune to the ravages of time, is difficult to judge: it seems to be authentic in parts and a shrewdly and skillfully staged myth in other parts” (1953, 50). More than 50 years later, the judgement on the Meiji period has become more clear-cut: Steven Nelson has stated clearly that “as it is performed today, the music is largely the result of a systematization of the late nineteenth century” (2008a, 37), and that “the *gagaku* that we see and hear today has its roots in ‘Meiji *gagaku*’, or, even dating it back more, in ‘premodern *gagaku*’” (2009, 107). In all of these cases, it is interesting to notice that the

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<sup>15</sup> For the complementary perspective, that is, the study of the introduction of ‘Western music’ (*yōgaku*) in Japan and its relationship with ‘traditional Japanese music’ (*hōgaku*), see (Tsukahara 1993; Galliano 2002; Wade 2014).

'historical mode' has been consistently applied to the Meiji period by both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars, who productively turned to the study of the radical changes in *gagaku's* conditions of possibilities, so characteristic of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the years leading to the Second World War and immediately following it, virtually all the founding figures of disciplines such as the history of Japanese music, musicology, folkloric studies and ethnomusicology tackled *gagaku*<sup>16</sup>. Among these, Tanabe Hisao, the pioneer of Japanese comparative musicology, deserves special consideration in light of the complex relationship between his work and the colonial project of Japanese nationalism in East Asia (see Hosokawa 1998; Atkins 2010, 127–30; Suzuki 2013). With the exception of a few isolated instances in which specific elements were studied in great detail (especially Hirade 1959a; 1959b; 1959c; 1959d), early works on *gagaku* by authors such as Tanabe (from the 1910s), Koizumi Fumio (in the 1940s) and Kikkawa Eishi can be read as attempts to establish both its centrality within the history of Japanese music and a mature disciplinary platform to conduct research on it (see especially Koizumi 1958; Tanabe, Kikkawa, and Hirade 1955). In other words, these research endeavors were instrumental in producing a fully-fledged 'history of Japanese music'<sup>17</sup>.

After the war, two major developments that prompted a progressive boom of publications related to *gagaku* were its designation as "Intangible Cultural Property" in 1955 following the promulgation of the *Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties* (1950)<sup>18</sup>, and the inauguration of the new National Theater in Tokyo in 1966 (for the former, see Thornbury 1997; Akagawa 2016; for the latter, Terauchi 2008). These events provided the social stimulus necessary to establish the foundations of today's unprecedented public appreciation of 'Japanese court music'. The varying quality and sheer number of publications that resulted makes their encompassing review a challenging, even daunting task. However, because such a systematic endeavor has seldom been attempted<sup>19</sup>, it seems important to at least single out a few of the most

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<sup>16</sup> Indeed, studies of these fundamental figures constitute a budding academic subfield in and of itself: see (M. Gamō 1983; Hosokawa 1998; Fukuoka 2003; Suzuki 2013).

<sup>17</sup> For a review of the disciplinary trends within "music scholarship" in Japan, see (Shimeda 2002).

<sup>18</sup> See the entry "*Gagaku*" in the digital database of Japanese cultural properties: <http://kunishitei.bunka.go.jp/bsys/maindetails.asp> (accessed September 5, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> The *Nihon ongaku daijiten* (*Dictionary of Japanese Music*) includes a section devoted to surveying research methods applied specifically to court music and their outcomes: its author distinguishes between musicological and historical approaches; the reconstruction of ancient pieces in the repertoire; the analysis and restoration of ancient instruments; and instances of transnotation and transcription (M. Gamō 1989, 412–14). However, this is not really a review of the available bibliography on these subjects, but rather a

representative works that can be subsumed under the admittedly arbitrary label that is the ‘historical mode’.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, two fundamental English-language books were published that surveyed court music in very different ways. While William Malm’s *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (first published in 1959), included a chapter dedicated to court music, and opted for thematic sections on the instruments, the history of the genre and its performance practice (see Malm 2001, 97–118 for the new, revised edition), Eta Harich-Schneider’s *A History of Japanese Music* (1973) was consistently historical, with the topic of *gagaku* taken up repeatedly throughout. In a sense, then, the treatment of *gagaku* in English reflected the tendencies that characterized Japanese scholarship in the postwar-years: a more straightforwardly historical perspective existed alongside a broader, more encompassing approach. Kishibe’s *The Traditional Music of Japan* (published in English) (1984, 32–44), for example, briefly covers the main aspects of *gagaku*’s repertoire and presents its instruments, while Kikkawa’s *History of Japanese Music (Nihon ongaku no rekishi)* (1965, 22–92) breaks down the various components of court music and introduces them as instances of a broader trend to assimilate mainland Asian culture<sup>20</sup>. Both are representative of the gradual process that led to the establishment of a standard way of presenting and representing *gagaku*: namely, its inclusion into a linear historical exposition of the chronological flow of Japanese (traditional) music<sup>21</sup>.

Important examples of this crystallization of the historical mode into the disciplinary bounds of the history of Japanese music conceived as a separate discipline include an edited volume published in collaboration with the National Theater, in which some of the best scholars of Japanese music (Kikkawa Eishi, Yokomichi Mario, Koizumi Fumio, Kishibe Shigeo and Hoshi Akira) presented all of the major forms of traditional

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broad overview of themes and trends in *gagaku* research. Lists of sources at the end of general outlines of *gagaku* are also useful, but they are often restricted to the “most important” or “essential” texts (e.g. Endō et al. 2006; Terauchi 2011a; Endō 2013).

<sup>20</sup> This kind of approach, less interested in answering the question of what *gagaku* is and more prone to show that the arts brought to Japan before the 7<sup>th</sup> century CE were numerous and diverse, is reflected in the sections dedicated to “ancient and early medieval performing arts” of the most important works in English on Japanese theater: Ortolani’s *The Japanese Theater* (1995 especially Chapters 3, 4 and 5) and the recently published *A History of Japanese Theatre* edited by Jonah Salz (see Terauchi 2016).

<sup>21</sup> On why this type of narrative should not be taken for granted, but rather explored as a historical construction in and of itself, see (Groemer 2012). For a broad problematization of the notion of “Japanese music”, see also (Tokita and Hughes 2008a, 1–3).

performing arts synthetically (Kokuritsu gekijō jigyōbu sendenka 1974; see also the Italian translation Hoshi et al. 1996). As was the case with Kikkawa's 1965 text, here Kishibe treats *gagaku* as part of the "ancient music" of the archipelago. Albeit in the context of a similarly historical project (this time much larger in scale) Ogi Mitsuo's chapter on *gagaku* in the second volume of the collection *Japanese Music, Asian Music (Nihon no ongaku, Ajia no ongaku)* (1988, 19–42) takes a different approach, presenting the genre as a whole from the point of view of its relationships with the imperial court.

This 'historical development of the historical mode' applied to the study of *gagaku*, if conceptually odd (for its 'meta-meta-theoretical' character) has at least the merit of showing a number of shifts over the past 150 years: while until the Meiji period the cumulative body of knowledge on 'Japanese court music' relied heavily on the three "great books", after 1870 the musicians of the Office of *Gagaku* started to produce new comprehensive overviews under the influence of emerging disciplines modeled on Euro-American counterparts. On the basis of these developments, a fully-fledged historical paradigm became the dominant stance toward the study of *gagaku*, which was central both to Japanese projects of "East Asian colonial modernity" (see de Ferranti and Yamauchi 2012) and to the establishment of a history of Japanese music as told by Japanese researchers (see Shimeda 2002; Hirano 1988). After the war, history became increasingly marginal in overall representations of court music, which assigned more and more space to other aspects (from costumes and masks to local traditions), and this in turn concurred to the then ongoing remantization of *gagaku* 'as art'<sup>22</sup>.

This more inclusive tendency is reflected in what can be considered the utmost canonical sources for the study of Japanese traditional music: the entries related to Japan in the *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (see especially Hughes 2002; A. Marett 2002) and the articles of the 7<sup>th</sup> volume of the *Garland Encyclopedia of World Music* (Nelson 2002; Terauchi 2002). In Japanese, however, standard references like the *Encyclopedia of Japanese Traditional Music (Hōgaku hyakka jiten)* (especially M. Gamō 1984) and the *Dictionary of Japanese Music (Nihon ongaku daijiten)* (Hirano, Kamisangō, and Gamō 1989) attest to the persistence of the historical mode, as does Nelson's

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<sup>22</sup> That is not to say that such elements were entirely absent from earlier sources: for example, ancient treatises in particular contained numerous illustrations of *gagaku* paraphernalia. However, as a consequence of the emergence of the historical approach to the study of *gagaku* and of the tendency to 'anthologize' it as an early chapter in the history of Japanese music, such aspects were temporarily put aside or given less importance in favor of a more diachronic recounting of *gagaku*'s past.

treatment of *gagaku* and liturgical Buddhist chant in the *Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*, which separates the historical and musical facets of two repertoires that the author rightfully chooses to approach jointly (2008a; 2008b).

## 1.2 THE PRESENTATIONAL MODE

With the advent of the Meiji restoration and the creation of a centralized Office of *Gagaku* in 1870, the process of popularization of court music initiated in the Edo period received a formidable acceleration, which resulted both in the multiplication of groups of amateur practitioners and in the spreading of publications primarily concerned with helping the general population to familiarize with a performing art until then far removed from the everyday life of the people (see Terauchi 2010, vi–viii). One of the results of this rapidly changing attitude toward court music was the development of a new way of introducing *gagaku* to a broader public.

This new mode, which I describe as ‘presentational’, is dominant today, and is characterized by the assumption, often expounded in prefaces or introductions, that in spite of the growing size of *gagaku*’s audiences there remains a fundamental lack of familiarity with it (e.g. Oshida 1984, 7). In order to improve on this paradoxical situation, publications in the presentational mode generally provide broad overviews and careful guidance, rather than engaging in complex academic discussions on specific aspects of *gagaku* research. At the same time, the authors of these introductory texts are often the same ones of more specialized, scholarly articles. One interesting aspect of the presentational mode, then, is that in spite of its stylistic peculiarities, it is not entirely separated from other approaches: on the contrary, it is arguably the most permeable and fluid approach to *gagaku*.

As noticed by Terauchi, during the Taishō (1912–26) period and in the years before the war “individual musicians were more conscious of their past traditions and the future development of *gagaku*, and became eager to popularize their music amongst ordinary Japanese people. Their activities ranged from the establishment of *gagaku* groups to organizing concerts, publishing a journal, undertaking and circulating academic research, transcribing *gagaku* pieces into Western staff notation, and arranging orchestral versions”



(2008, 95). This diversification of the activities of the *gagaku* musicians is reflected in the multiplication of the means through which information was spread. In this sense, the appearance of journals dedicated to court music is particularly noteworthy (Terauchi 2013, 96). The most important of these journals was *Gagakukai* (*The World of Gagaku*), a publication connected to the semi-professional group *Ono gagakukai*, the oldest amateur *gagaku* group in Tokyo. The group published several bulletins a year since at least 1891. The first one to bear the title *Gagakukai* was N.16, dating April 6, 1892. The journal grew steadily both in terms of number of pages and of the quality of its contents. It ran continuously until 1994, though with occasional gaps of a year or more in between issues. It also became increasingly specialized, and its overall scholarly value is still acknowledged today. At the same time, *Gagakukai* made significant efforts to reach a broader public, incorporating articles in English and providing a section that listed important upcoming concerts and publications.

In many ways, today's only newsletter entirely dedicated to court music, called *Gagakudayori* (*News from Gagaku*) inherited the main features of *Gagakukai* and carried on its legacy. Published four times a year by the association Gagaku kyōgikai since 1976, it is approximately 15 pages long and has a characteristically broad approach, including modern translations of excerpts from ancient texts on *gagaku*; interviews with famous performers such as Miyata Mayumi and Shiba Sukeyasu; sections with questions and answers concerning the practical facets of instrumental performance; short academic articles; and a list of upcoming performances. Although the overall tone of the newsletter is not as academically-oriented as its predecessor's, *Gagakudayori* remains an essential source of information on present-day court music, especially when it comes to the current spreading of *gagaku* throughout Japan. Its editor, Professor Suzuki Haruo is a skilled *shō* maker and performer, and a tireless advocate of the necessity to pay more attention to often-neglected issues like the disappearance of the centennial craftsmanship of instrument makers or the threat to the materials used to build *gagaku* instruments by infrastructural projects (see Chapter 5).

At the beginning of the 1960s, when the historical mode of researching *gagaku* was turning into a paradigm, the first volumes solely dedicated to 'Japanese court music' started to appear. One antecedent was Ōno Chūryū's *Gagaku* (1942), a highly personal recollection that included impressionistic vignettes of daily life in the new capital, descriptions of the routine of a *gagaku* professional's ordinary 'day at work' (such as the

details of the physical space of the practice room) and a wealth of information relevant to the aforementioned investigation of the Meiji period<sup>23</sup>. Another interesting example of an early text dedicated to *gagaku* was Tōgi Masatarō's *Gagaku* (1968), which relied more on its photographic illustrations than on its actual contents (see M. Tōgi 1971 for the English edition). Oshida's *An Appreciation of Gagaku (Gagaku kanshō)* (1975 [1969]) was among the few comprehensive overviews of *gagaku* to revisit the historical paradigm by stressing the essential "fusion of inside and outside musics" that characterized its past.

One of the first collections of essays entirely dedicated to *gagaku* was the second volume in a series dedicated to Japanese ancient performing arts (Geinōshi kenkyūkai 1970). This was a truly comprehensive endeavor, which included texts on the continental origins of *gagaku* as well as studies of the history of its transmission, its musicological facets, its instruments, masks and costumes, its relations with Buddhist functions and liturgical Buddhist chant (*shōmyō*), and a survey of local festivals that included *bugaku* dances<sup>24</sup>. The volume was influential in its attempt to strike a balance between historical and more varied approaches, introducing *gagaku* from a multiplicity of points of view, cutting across chronological periodizations and disciplinary boundaries. A similar stance also characterizes Kikkawa's overall presentation of *gagaku* in a collective project undertaken by the National Theater, which provides a detailed overview of Japanese traditional performing arts (1965, 22–92). The same year in which William Malm's book was published, Robert Garfias authored a booklet on *gagaku* to accompany an American tour of the Imperial Household musicians (Garfias 1959; see Malm 1960 for a review).

In more recent years, the various tendencies outlined so far were recombined. The emergence of introductory books especially dedicated to *gagaku* and the growing recognition of the value of bringing court music's present manifestations in the discussion led to contributions in which the historical perspective is but one among many. For instance, the materials published in connection with the Japanese traditional music training course for performers organized by Japan's National Public Broadcasting System (NHK) juxtaposed a first, overtly historical section by Kusano Taeko which presents the various components of *gagaku* in light of the (by then) typical paradigm of "importation

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<sup>23</sup> Ōno's book can be grouped together with a handful of other personal 'artists' talks on art' (*geidan*), including three volumes by Tōgi Toshiharu (1999b; 2002; 2012) and, though in a somewhat different sense, some of Tōgi Hideki's publications (e.g. 2015).

<sup>24</sup> For a rare example of research dedicated to *bugaku*'s masks, see Nishikawa (1971), and its English translation, Nishikawa and Bethe (1978).

and appropriation” (2000, 23–44), with a more detailed exposition by Shiba Sukeyasu, which presents examples of scores in both traditional and staff notation (2000, 137–204).

Since the 2000s, the publishing company Ongaku no tomosha has produced agile reference books that tackle “Japanese music” in its entirety, either understood as “traditional music” (including the musics of ethnic minorities in Okinawa and Hokkaidō), or as the music composed and performed within the borders of Japan (thus including music composed through interactions with the so-called ‘Western classical repertoire’). In this context, Fukui (2006) relegates the historical side of *gagaku* to a few tables and charts, while Endō (2007, 17–35), in line with the overall approach of the volume *Dictionary of Japanese Music’s Basic Terms*, provides a glossary of *gagaku* terminology in which the various components of the repertoire and its transmission practices are given priority over historical transformations. In another recent contribution, the same author epitomizes the new presentational trend of *gagaku*’s general overviews including both a historical section that portrays *gagaku* as “music of foreign origins” (*toraigaku*) and other sections that present its materials, its theory, and its systems of transmission (Endō 2008).

The growing interest in *gagaku* as a ‘stand-alone’ subject for academic monographs, combined with the increasing availability of this performing art to a public of non-specialists, has given rise to publications that can be described as ‘fully presentational’, in that their manifest intention is to paint a multifaceted view of *gagaku* without losing sight of scientific accuracy. Such a stance is often reflected in the very titles of these works. Tōgi Toshiharu’s *An Invitation to Gagaku (Gagaku e no shōtai)* (1999a), for example, represents the most agile and accessible text on the subject available today. Skillfully combining interviews with performers and artisans, descriptions of the main performing subgenres, and a particularly effective use of pictures, the book never takes for granted what *gagaku* is, and manages to tackle its readers’ curiosity by incorporating unconventional themes such as the modern reconstruction of dance movements and costumes.

Another volume written by a member of an ancient *gagaku* family with the aim of helping readers getting acquainted with this performing art is Abe Suemasa’s *A Book to Understand Gagaku (Gagaku ga wakaru hon)* (1998). Despite its simple style and informal tone, however, this book is often unsystematic; rather than providing a solid platform to

truly deepen one's understanding of *gagaku*, Abe often confuses readers with a mixture of anecdotes, historical facts and technical descriptions of musicological components. Oshida's *An Invitation to Gagaku* (1984) is much more thorough. His volume is particularly interesting because of its inclusion of Confucian ritual music among the "sources" of *gagaku* (Oshida 1984, 36–53). Although we now know that *gagaku* consisted since its inception not in Confucian ritual music, but in songs and dances to accompany banquets (Endō 2004, 17) (see the Introduction), the presence of this little-explored aspect in Oshida's book is indicative of the author's encompassing approach.

The influence of a more markedly historical mode resonates in the *Illustrated Introductory Dictionary of Gagaku* (*Zusetsu gagaku nyūmon jiten*) (Endō et al. 2006), edited by Shiba Sukeyasu with contributions from Endō Tōru, Sasamoto Takeshi and Miyamaru Naoko. Despite its more traditional approach, this book was clearly conceived as a primer, a 'user-friendly' volume: the illustrations, for instance, are inspired by children's manga, and *furigana* reading guidance is provided for all the characters in the text (see **FIG.1.1**). Nonetheless, the more technical sections on *gagaku*'s modes, rhythmic patterns or performing techniques conform to the highest academic standards. Ultimately, the authors' intention can be summarized with the expression used by Shiba at the outset: "that through the book people may *enjoy gagaku*" (Endō et al. 2006, 5 emphasis added). And one is led to wonder whether the same could be said of the presentational mode as a whole: the hypothesis that the development of the presentational mode should be linked to a publicly recognized 'pleasurable' aspect of this performing art seems convincing.

The most recent and, in many respects, the best publication in the presentational mode is Endō's *A Dictionary to Understand Gagaku* (*Gagaku o shiru jiten*) (2013). Instead of presenting dictionary entries, the book comprises four chapters: *History; Subdivisions and Categories; Theory and Ideas; The Early Landscape of Gagaku*. Three useful appendixes provide, respectively, practical information on important individuals in *gagaku*'s history; the contents of some of the most important pieces of the repertory; and a list of relevant ceremonial occasions involving *gagaku*. Given the author's specialization in the ancient history and musicological facets of court music, it is not surprising that the origin and correct meaning of the word *gagaku* is thoroughly discussed in the context of the importation of the repertoire of banquet music from Tang China. Provocatively asking "is *gagaku* not *gagaku*?", Endō acknowledges that since at least the Edo period, Japanese

scholars were well-aware of the fact that the bulk of *tōgaku* (music imported from Tang China) was not ceremonial, but entertainment music, and stresses once and for all that “the original Chinese 雅樂 is very different from Japanese *gagaku*” (2013, 34–35) (see the Introduction).

Finally, it is important to notice that the progressive ‘opening up’ of the historical mode did not automatically lead to decentered views of *gagaku*: some of the projects in which the musicians of the Imperial Household in Tokyo were directly involved are, perhaps unsurprisingly, paramount examples of recent ‘conservative’ approaches to the topic. Among such projects are the comprehensive VHS (now DVD) series *Gagaku. An ‘Important Intangible Cultural Property’ of Japan*, which includes two useful accompanying commentaries by Endō Tōru and Steven Nelson (“*Jūyō Mukei Bunkazai*” *Gagaku. Voll.1-7* 2000; Endō 1999; Endō and Nelson 2000); the lavishly illustrated *The Design of Gagaku* (T. Ōno and Hayashi 1990); and the tellingly titled *Gagaku Orthodoxy. The Music Department of the Imperial Household* (Kōshitsu Our Imperial Family 2008). The latter is particularly impressive for the strength with which, through marvelous pictures of the prized possessions of the Imperial Household musicians, the message of there being only *one* authoritative way of doing *gagaku* is conveyed. In this sense, even though the historical mode may at first strike as especially appealing to those in search of an original, incorruptible version of *gagaku*, it is important to keep in mind that normative representations of this tradition can and do exploit a variety of other modes (including the presentational) to fulfill their ideological ends.

えんそう じゅんび  
演奏の準備

演奏を始める前と終わったあとに、かならず楽器を温めます。昔は炭をおこした火鉢で温めていましたが、現在では電熱器が使われています。これは、呼気による水蒸気が楽器の中に溜まらないようにするためです。温めないで演奏しようとすると、リードが壊れてしまいます。

温めるときは、持ちやすいほうの手で頭の中心に中指を当てながら押さえ、もう一方の手で竹の部分を支えます。この下側の手は、温めすぎを防ぐ役割もします。竹を支えているほうの手の中で楽器をくるくる回すようにして、電熱器（火鉢）の上で全体が均一に温まるようにします。竹の切れ目の中に（小）指を入れてみて鏡を触ったときに、やんわりと温かく感じられるくらいが、温める目安です。

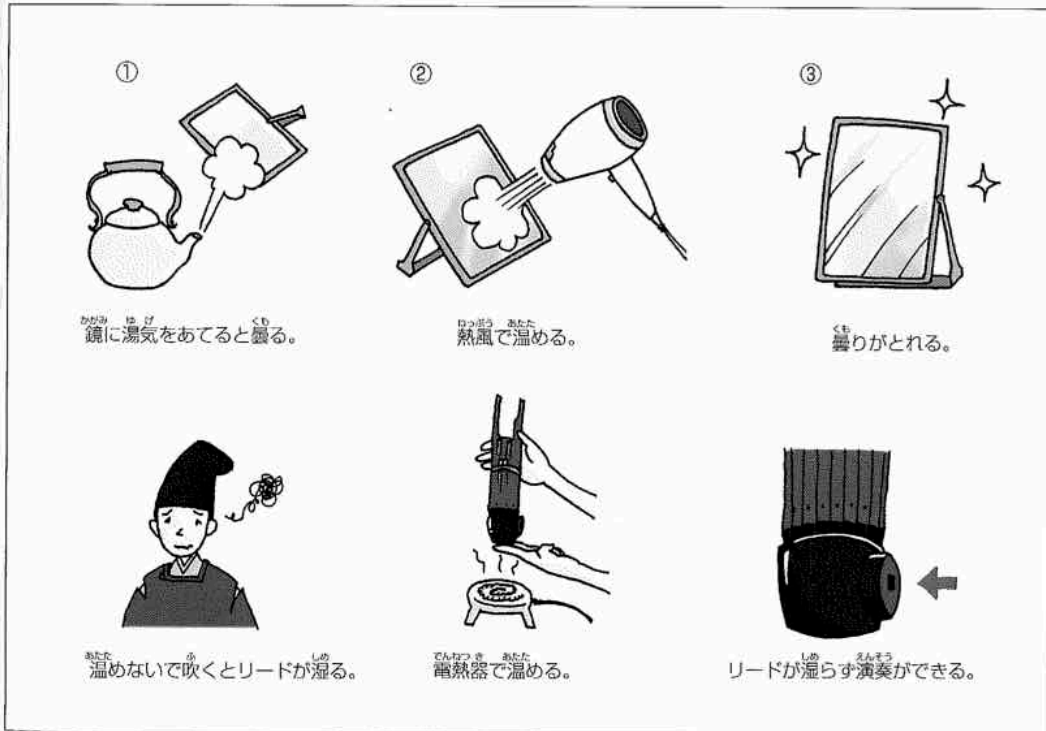
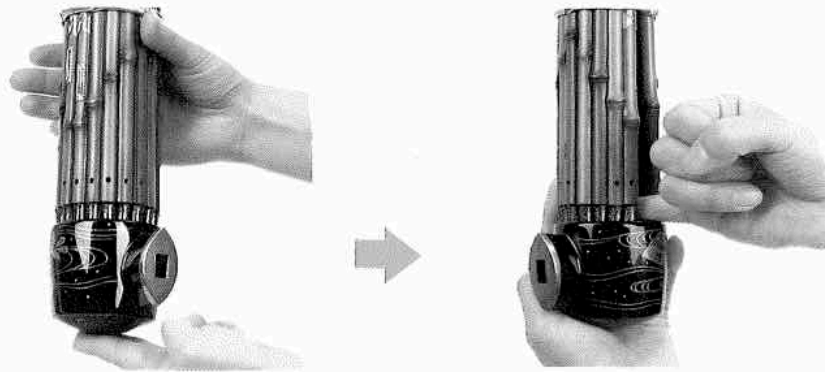


FIGURE.1.1. A detail from the *Illustrated Introductory Dictionary of Gagaku* (Endō et al. 2006, 151).

### 1.3 THE MUSICOLOGICAL MODE

In Japan, during the past 35 years, the aura surrounding the figure of the Cambridge scholar Laurence E. Picken (1909-2007) has gradually undergone a radical transformation: skepticism, diffidence, and, in some extreme cases, plain aversion has given way to intellectual curiosity, admiration, even excitement. The reason for such a shift is the progressive acceptance of some of the core arguments advanced by the so-called “Picken school” (see Hughes 2010), an expression that has come to indicate the former pupils of Picken’s (and, to a lesser extent, the pupils of his pupils) who cooperated in the “Tang Music Project”, described as “perhaps the most extensive [project] yet undertaken in the historical musicology of Asia” (Durán and Widdess 2002, 719)<sup>25</sup>.

The aims of the Tang Music Project were to examine the earliest available surviving scores of the *tōgaku* repertoire of Japanese *gagaku*; to analyze and transcribe these scores into staff notation<sup>26</sup>; and to obtain in this way a sense of what the music sounded like at the time of its transmission to the Japanese archipelago. Although Picken’s interest in Chinese music and culture dated back to the late 1920s, “the Tang Music Project took formal shape from 1972, when Ford Foundation funding helped bring a determined and talented group of young scholars to Cambridge to work with [him]. Jonathan Condit, Allan Marett, Elizabeth Markham and Rembrandt Wolpert all pursued their doctoral research under Laurence’s guidance on aspects of Tang music. Several other scholars, notably Mitani Yōko and Noël Nickson, were also frequently involved in the Tang project” (Hughes 2010, 232). The method consistently followed by the whole team was made clear by Picken in the introduction to the first volume of a series edited by him and his associates and entitled *Music from the Tang Court* (see Picken et al. 1981; 1985; 1985; 1987; 1990; 1997; 2000): to read the earliest scores of the *tōgaku* tradition “with no more information than that given in the manuscripts themselves, deliberately ignoring the living tradition and performance-practice of today” (Picken et al. 1981, 1:11).

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<sup>25</sup>Picken was the first to acknowledge the significance of the project in his career as a musicologist. During an interview with Carole Pegg (1987), when asked to offer some remarks about his work with Tang music, he simply commented: “I regard this part of my work as the most important work of my life”.

<sup>26</sup> Or, more precisely, to transnotate them. See Chapter 2 for a fuller explanation of the difference between transcription and transnotation. See also (Bent et al. 2002).



FIGURE 1.2. The entire manuscript of the *Tenpyō biwafu* (747) (from Nelson 2012, 6).

All of the manuscripts selected by the group present melodies for one instrument at a time –in other words, they are part-scores, not full scores-, and provide concrete instructions on how to execute specific notes on that particular instrument rather than giving notes’ names –they are ‘tablatures’, to use a technical term<sup>27</sup>. The earliest among these tablatures is also the oldest extant document connected to *gagaku*: known as *Tenpyō biwafu* and dating from 747, it is “a fragment of notation for the *gagaku biwa* (lute), recorded on the reverse of a document detailing the receipt of paper for copying the sutras held in the collection of the Shōsōin”, the treasure hall of Nara’s Tōdaiji temple (Nelson 2002, 588) (see FIG.1.2). Other examples of notation worth mentioning are the *Biwa shochōshi bon* (*Collection of Tuning Pieces for Biwa*) by the Chinese master Lian Chengwu, handed to Fujiwara no Sadatoshi in Yangzhou during the last official mission to Tang China of 838 (Nelson 2002, 588; see also Picken et al. 1990, 5:124–25); the *Gogen*

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<sup>27</sup> Studies of these sources in Japanese abound, but occupy a somewhat peripheral position in the study of *gagaku*. For instance, Hayashi (1970) focuses on notations of the *tōgaku* repertoire classifying them according to the instrument they were written for, but only devotes 3 pages to the topic. The dedicated *Dictionary of Gagaku* (*Gagaku jiten*) also includes a brief section with details on the most important primary sources (S. Tōgi 1988, 282–86), as does one of Endō’s excellent overviews of *gagaku* (Endō 2004, 114–15). Nelson (1986, 4–7) is the best overview of these sources in English. The same author has recently offered an overview of the main musicological issues surrounding these sources in Japanese: see (Nelson 2014).



*biwafu* for five-string lute, dating from the 11<sup>th</sup> century; the *Hakuga no fuefu* for transverse flute, by Minamoto no Hiromasa, edited in 966 (A. Marett 2002, 855–56). Two later collections of tablatures, respectively for the *biwa* (*Sango yōroku*) and for the zither *sō* (*Jinchi yōroku*) were compiled by Fujiwara no Moronaga (1138-1892): they record “the greater part of the *gagaku* repertoire as it existed at the end of the Heian period” (Nelson 2002, 589), and therefore often constituted the basis of Picken’s work. Scores for the mouth organ *shō* and the double-reed oboe *hichiriki* only survive in much later sources, often dating from the Edo period (see Ng 2011; Endō 2004, 114).

A close study of these early sources had been undertaken by Japanese scholars earlier or at the same time as the Tang Music Project was set in motion, notably by the scholar Hayashi Kenzō (1899-1976), whose main contributions were collected in the volume *Gagaku – Interpretation of Ancient Scores* (*Gagaku –Kogakufu no kaidoku*) (1969). However, Picken’s deliberate disregard of contemporary performance practice set him apart from such investigations, and caused a wave of criticism in Japan. In fact, “from the late nineteenth century, a conventional view of *tōgaku* emerged, which suggested that it was a static musical repertory, unchanged since its importation from China” (Ng 2011, 88). This was not simply a matter of cherishing the past: in fact, the implications of the analyses conducted by Picken and his former doctoral students Jonathan Condit (1979; 1981; 1984), Rembrandt Wolpert (1977; 1981), Elizabeth Markham (1983), and Allan Marett (1977; 1981; 1985; 1986; 2006) reshape the way we look and listen to *gagaku* in its entirety. Their revolutionary view, as synthesized by Steven Nelson, was that “the ancient melodies are carried in the modern *shō* and *biwa* parts like a type of *cantus firmus*” (2008b, 60), and that melodic lines have been rendered imperceptible and almost completely inaudible by a massive process of slowing down of the original performance tempi, by a factor variously estimated as of thirty-two (Picken et al. 1981, 1:14), sixteen (Hughes 2010, 234) or between four and eight (Nelson 2008b, 60) (see Howard 2014, 345). This thesis clashed with Japanese scholars’ understanding, which, in accordance with anyone’s experience of a piece of *tōgaku* in contemporary performance, elected the *hichiriki* and the *ryūteki* as the instruments that “carried the melodies” (e.g. Masumoto 1968, 20–23)<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, it was Picken’s opinion (or, rather, impression) that the Japanese

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<sup>28</sup> In Picken’s words: “It is furthermore evident that, in relation to the Tang-derived *canto fermo*, the variations provided by the versions for flute and *hichiriki* are *canti figurati*. They have arisen as elaborate variations on ancient tunes, originally minimally embellished. These variant versions have been generated

scholar Hayashi Kenzō “had no doubt as to the purity, not merely of the performing tradition, but also of the documentary tradition, presumably up to, and inclusive of, the Meiji revision” (Picken et al. 1981, 1:10).

The two claims, that the music had significantly slowed down, and that the string instruments (*biwa* and *sō*) also carried the melodies, are tightly interwoven: in fact, the latter can only be sustained if a melody is indeed perceivable upon listening to the individual instrumental parts of lute and zither. But the acoustical characteristics of these instruments result in such a short reverberation time or decay (that is, the time necessary for the sound to die away and become inaudible) that a melody-line can only be perceived if the score is performed above a certain speed<sup>29</sup>. In the case of the *shō*, however, Japanese musicologists have found that for several pieces the reconstruction of what would have been a melodic line is both problematic and unsatisfying: because of the difference between the pitch range of the string instruments and the *shō*, in fact, the reconstructed melodies of the mouth organ are difficult to perform and feel somewhat “unnatural”<sup>30</sup>.

At any rate, the idea that Japanese scholars would not accept the main tenets of the Tang Music Project on the basis of their utmost trust in the fidelity of contemporary *gagaku* performance is both unconvincing and misplaced: not only is it very difficult to come across a statement to that end in the literature, but as early as 1968 Masumoto Kikuko had observed energetically that “*gagaku* derives from one single line of melody” (1968, 13). In other words, there is evidence to suggest that Japanese researchers were well-aware of the heterophonic nature of *gagaku* music before Picken and his students began their work on *tōgaku*. What truly distinguished the “Picken school” from scholars conducting research in Japan until the 1970s was rather its claim that the ancient scores could bring back to life the *sound* of Tang period music: contrary to this view, Japanese researchers were always skeptical about the actual fidelity to the original sound world, and saw this reconstructive endeavor as necessarily incomplete, simply because a full set of part-scores (or a full score, for that matters) for all the instruments of the ensemble, dating from the same period, is simply not extant. Thus all a *gagaku* scholar can do is

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by the largely systematic and formulaic application to such melodies of all the standard, universally recognised types of melodic, decorative procedures: by the introduction of appoggiaturas, passing notes, anticipations, auxiliaries, and *échappés*” (Picken et al. 1990, 5:114 emphasis in the original).

<sup>29</sup> Picken and his students allude to precisely this connection between the perception of the melody and the indication of the tempo assigned to their rendition of the piece *Seigaiha* in a 1975 short article reprinted in the journal *Gagakukai* (Picken et al. 1975, 58).

<sup>30</sup> Takuwa Satoshi, personal communication (September 8, 2016).

patching together different sources from different eras, hoping to reach at best an impressionistic, always partially reinvented version of how they music might have sounded like in the past.

In the fifth volume of *Music from the Tang Court*, Picken addresses this issue, making it clear that attaining a final, definitive text “even for a single manuscript, is ludicrous [because] the Tang-Music repertory, like the smaller *saibara*-repertory, is to be compared with a folk-song tradition” (Picken et al. 1990, 5:108). He observed that “the various items notated in tablature for particular, melodic instruments, are not *parts*, destined for performance in heterophonic ensemble; they are *versions*, appropriate to the mechanics and range of each of the five melodic instruments; they were never tailored, one version in respect to another, so as to yield a particular overall effect in ensemble-performance” (Picken et al. 1990, 5:107 emphasis in the original). And such a stance is much more extreme than merely affirming the melodic function of *biwa*, *sō* and *shō* in the ancient scores.

Ultimately, the ‘outrageous’ character of the scholarly input of the Tang Music Project should perhaps be reassessed on the basis not of its findings, but of its premises: in this sense, recent attempts “to situate Picken’s legacy against the ‘historical turn’ in ethnomusicology” (Howard 2014, 337) may be complemented by some reflections on the feasibility of associating Picken’s project to what has been termed “historical acoustemology” –that is, a historical-acoustic-epistemology (Bruce R. Smith, quoted in Smith 2015, 56). When the question becomes “whether or not we can (or ought to) try to re-experience the auditory and sensate past” (Smith 2015, 60), two opposite tendencies can be distinguished:

“On one side, there is a very tenuous claim that we can recapture and reexperience the sounds of the past. The most radical of these claims posits the recapturing of sounds –from any period of history –as undiluted and unmediated. According to this position, past sounds are directly exportable to the present through listening to recordings and the reenactment of sounds. (...) The alternative argument maintains that efforts along these lines are deeply misleading and insists that without sufficient appreciation of the context in which the sounds occurred, we warp our understanding of echoes to the point of intellectual desiccation” (Smith 2015, 56).

While it would probably be farfetched to claim that Picken disregarded context in favor of content, one could say that the musicological analysis of the scores was always the

central component of his momentous endeavor. From this point of view, the Tang Music Project's search for a sonic world hidden behind and beyond the existing sonic reality of Japanese *gagaku* was conducted with the sophisticated, "etic" instruments of a musicology that owes much to the field of philology<sup>31</sup>. In fact, this approach was particularly preoccupied with establishing the exact time and circumstances surrounding the compilation of its sources, trying to reach a satisfactory understanding of the rhythmical and modal characteristics of what could be described as 'Tang music theory'. Hence, the mode of *gagaku* research inaugurated by Laurence Picken and his students initially focused on bringing back to life the sounds of Tang-period Chinese music through an excessively optimistic, positivistic "unabashed use of *etic*, 'scientific and objective', analytical methods" (Picken et al. 1990, 5:111 emphasis in the original)<sup>32</sup>.

Despite the different perception of what exactly a (philologically-oriented) musicological analysis could attain, over the years Picken's approach received increasing validation from Japanese *gagaku* scholars, who absorbed it and reworked it into what has been called a "reconstruction ideology" (Terauchi 2010, 187). This gradual process started as early as the 1970s through personal interactions between Japanese researchers such as Hayashi Kenzō and Mabuchi Usaburō and members of the Picken school, most notably Allan Marett and his student Steven Nelson. This mutual rapprochement eventually led to strands of research that presently dominate the academic study of *gagaku* in Japan. In this sense, an interest in the sounds of *gagaku* not as perceived and performed but as composed and theorized sparked a host of research practices which, when grouped together, form the panorama of *gagaku*'s most important mode of research in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Diverse as they may appear at first, all of these approaches can clearly be subsumed under what I called the musicological mode because they all share the Picken school's fundamental goal of reconstructing aspects of the music (like modes, rhythmic patterns and ornamentation) which represent musicological categories. The musicological mode is thus primarily interested in *musical parameters as*

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<sup>31</sup> See Picken's strenuous defense of the use of etic concepts in association with emic ones: "we should make plain that, while accepting the need to determine the nature of emic conceptions of the process of musical composition, we reject the notion that analysis from outside is either impertinent or irrelevant. The understanding of a music from outside our own culture requires both approaches" (Picken et al. 1990, 5:111).

<sup>32</sup> In this sense, it is perhaps ironic that some critics would point out that the Cambridge school produced a fracture between "scientific accurateness" and "artistic creativity", and fundamentally lacked a "concrete sonic image" of the reconstructed pieces (see Terauchi 2010, 217-18).

they are conceptualized by the disciplinary standards proper to musicology rather listeners or performers who experience the music. While it is certainly true that musicology as a discipline includes a number of approaches and methodologies, this is irrelevant to the present classification, because the stance taken by the scholars I grouped under the ‘musicological’ mode is, indeed, musicological rather than historical, presentational or decentering. The fact that so many of the Japanese researchers presently involved in an analytical study of *gagaku* are directly influenced by Picken (as it is clearly the case with the work of Endō, Takuwa, and Terauchi herself) is a strong reason to reconnect the ‘musicological mode’ as a unitary epistemological category to Laurence Picken.

Terauchi has already studied in some detail the genealogy of the “reconstruction ideology” at the basis of much of this research, tracing it back to its Japanese forefathers Tōgi Tetteki (1869-1925), Yamanoi Motokiyo (1885-1970), Shiba Sukehiro (1898-1962) and Konoe Naomaro (1900-1932), and finally reconnecting it to trends appeared in the 1970s (2010, 187–222). If this academic filiation is well documented, more recent years were also characterized by the appearance of discernible differences among competing ‘lines of academic transmission’ *within* the musicological paradigm. One group of researchers maintains a strong historical and philological approach: gravitating around the Research Institute for Japanese Music Historiography at Ueno Gakuen University in Tokyo, scholars such as Fukushima Kazuo, Steven Nelson and Endō Tōru have relied on the Institute’s collection of ancient manuscripts and instruments, publishing the outcomes of their investigations in the journal *Studies in the Historiography of Japanese Music* (*Nihon ongakushi kenkyū*). Fukushima systematically laid out the methodological coordinates of his approach by distinguishing it from other branches of musicology such as musical esthetics, the sociology of music and ethnomusicology, emphasizing instead the “objectivity of material documentation”, all the while distancing the historiography of music from the study of practical performance, deemed “unnecessary” to the specific goal of using historical documents as research materials that mediate between past and present (Fukushima 1988, 28–31).

This interest in the material aspects of the documents used to investigate *gagaku*’s history is in many ways a trait inherited from Hayashi Kenzō. As already mentioned, in *Gagaku – Interpretation of Ancient Scores* (1969) Hayashi had also worked toward the interpretation of ancient documents, meticulously classifying the musical symbols inscribed in the notations examined and conducting statistical analyses of their

occurrences. Precisely because, as noted by Terauchi (2010, 213), his starting point was not contemporary *gagaku* practice, but rather a fascination with ancient Chinese culture (which in turn originated in his literary interests), Hayashi's approach was particularly akin to Picken's. Indeed, most of the manuscripts analyzed by the former were also taken up by the latter.

For this reason, Steven Nelson represents the 'missing link' between Hayashi's legacy and the work of the Cambridge school. As a student of Allan Marett, Nelson was able to appreciate the results of both Japanese and non-Japanese scholars, and to address their respective shortcomings. Accordingly, already in 1988 he regretted that Japanese researchers did not take on Hayashi's legacy, while at the same time lamenting the fact that Picken's work was not well known in Japan (1988, 27–28). Over the years, Nelson has consistently carried out this role of mediator, alternating publications that presented the many primary sources available for the study of Japanese *gagaku* (e.g. Nelson 1986; 2002) and excellent overviews of the genre in English (Nelson 1990; 2008a; 2008b). In parallel, he has contributed immensely to the debate concerning the interpretation of ancient tablature scores, especially the ones for *gagaku*'s string instruments (e.g. Nelson 1988; 2012). Two features of Nelson's research that are particularly worth pointing out here are his acknowledgment of the fact that Japanese court music and liturgical Buddhist chant "share not only a common origin on the Asian mainland and many aspects of their music theory, but also a common history and overlapping performance contexts" (2008a, 35)<sup>33</sup>, and his more recent attempts to reconstruct ancient *gagaku* in a way that is both faithful to the ancient notation (in other words, philologically accurate) and musically appealing to *gagaku* performers (see Nelson 2009; 2014). When it comes to these attempts, it is especially interesting to notice that his reconstructed pieces are either performed by himself on the zither *sō* (in case of solo pieces) or by members of the group Reigakusha<sup>34</sup>. In this way, Nelson's most recent work on *tōgaku* can be said to move toward a reconciliation of philological rigor and artistic enjoyment, in a way indirectly recognizing the significance of the audience as an actor, a "user of music" (see Hennion 2015), that should not be stripped away from serious, academic reconstruction projects.

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<sup>33</sup> Which brought him to double as one of the leading experts of Shingi Shingon-school *shōmyō*: see his fundamental *Buddhist chant of Shingi-Shingon: a guide for readers and listeners* (Nelson 1998).

<sup>34</sup> Among his most relevant conference-demonstrations, one was significantly entitled *Towards a verifiable 'reproduction' of the music of ancient East Asia: From decipherment of old notations to music for performance* (4th Symposium of the ICTM Study Group on Musics of East Asia, Nara, August 22, 2014).

In a sense, the scholarly output of Nelson's frequent collaborator Endō Tōru is at once broader and more circumscribed. While on the one hand Endō has authored a number of overviews of *gagaku* aimed toward a broader public of non-specialists (e.g. Endō 2004; 2007), on the other he has also conducted painstakingly precise research on the various modes of the *tōgaku* repertoire, convincingly demonstrating that "in the transmission of *tōgaku* in Japan during the Heian period, there are already visible signs of estrangement from the musical theory of the Tang period" (Endō 2005). If these words confirm the affinities between Endō's approach and the 'musicological mode', his recent contribution to an edited volume on the rituals involving *gagaku* as it is performed at Amanosha shrine near mount Kōya should equally be linked to Hayashi's ground-breaking research on the importance of pictorial evidence to the historical study of Japanese *gagaku* (see Endō 2011).

Something akin to Endō's study of *tōgaku*'s modality was attempted by Terauchi Naoko for the rhythmical structure of the same repertoire, but with a focus on the end of the Edo period (see Terauchi 1996). Interestingly, a precursor of Terauchi's research was Harich-Schneider's *The rhythmical patterns in gagaku and bugaku* (1965), which, in turn, concentrated on the *present* performance of the repertoire (and was unfortunately marred by a number of imprecisions). Terauchi also recently completed a more comprehensive musicological overview of *tōgaku*, in which she carried out a broad analysis of what, echoing John Blacking, she calls "surface structure and deep structure", defined rather ambiguously as "the context of sonic form and process" (2011b, 20; confront Blacking's use of the verbatim phrases in Blacking 1971). The starting point here is the observation that "between the surface and deep structures in present-day *tōgaku* practice there is certainly a disjunction of musical idiom and mode. In other words, different principles govern each level of the music" (Terauchi 2011b, 20). This leads Terauchi to present the contemporary musical practice of *tōgaku* in terms of surface structure, and Chinese modal theory as deep structure. Furthermore, Picken-inspired methods of deciphering ancient scores are taken up in order to demonstrate that "it is possible to reconstruct ancient *tōgaku* melodies by reading and interpreting current and historical sources of music notation with a full understanding of the relationship between the current surface realization and the deep basic melody" (Terauchi 2011b, 21).

Regardless of the fact that such a claim would require a much more detailed discussion than that offered in the context of an edited volume, the main shortcoming in Terauchi's

project is the conflation of the ill-defined pair ‘surface/deep structure’ with the chronological opposition of present and past practice. Though her essay can be read as a useful introduction to the main issues surrounding the musicological mode of researching *gagaku*, it fails to show how exactly it differs from Picken’s approach. What is one to make, for instance, of the analysis of melodic patterns and of the “shifting of focus” among the various instruments of the ensemble in contemporary practice (Terauchi 2011b, 34–35), if the reconstruction of the ancient melodies is accomplished through “disregard[ing] present-day embellishment practice and simply tak[ing] the pitches that the tablature signs indicate” (Terauchi 2011b, 39)? Despite the fact that her analysis is not as compelling as it could have been, Terauchi demonstrates that the musicological paradigm initiated by Picken is still influencing a younger generation of (Japanese) researchers<sup>35</sup>.

Other scholars who have chosen to apply a similar musicological mode to the current performance of *gagaku* rather than to its past, include Masumoto Kikuko, Robert Garfias and Mabuchi Usaburō. Masumoto’s own presentation of *Gagaku. A New Approach to Traditional Music (Gagaku. Dentō ongaku e no atarashī apurōchi)* as “something right in the middle between a conversation and a scholarly dissertation”, a “useful book” for those “curious to find out more about the practical aspects of a specific traditional genre without having to commit to attending classes”, can only be interpreted as an understatement (1968, 1). In fact, her 1968 book is vast and comprehensive, covering almost every aspect of *gagaku*, from the shape and use of plectrums and drumsticks to the analysis of the scores of each instrument, from the problematic concepts of mode (*chōshi*) and rhythm (*hyōshi*) to ‘emic’ expressions used by musicians, like *sureru*, “when two sounds performed simultaneously do not match” (Masumoto 1968, 357) and *zureru*, a “temporal discordance in the ‘stopping point’ of several elements performed simultaneously” (Masumoto 1968, 373)<sup>36</sup>. And it is precisely in cases like these that Masumoto’s musicological attitude becomes especially evident: resorting to transcriptions into staff notation almost at every turn of the page, using Western music

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<sup>35</sup> Recently, Chinese and Korean authors have also demonstrated an interest in Picken’s methodology, while at the same time weighing the significance of Japanese pioneers like Kishibe Shigeo (see Zhao 2014).

<sup>36</sup> I must thank Mr. Saitō Hisashi from the Research Centre for Japanese Traditional Music in Kyoto for directing my attention toward these aspects of Masumoto’s research.



as the taken-for-granted referent of her observations, the author effectively provides an outstanding musicological analysis of *gagaku*'s main features.

Robert Garfias's *Music of a Thousand Autumns* (1975b) is the result of extended contact with the Imperial Household musicians during the 1950s, and is somewhat in between the ethnographic- and the musicologically-oriented. The author states clearly that "the main emphasis in this study is the analysis of the *tōgaku* literature from actual performance techniques" (Garfias 1975b, 57), and efforts are made to integrate descriptions of the musical practice with insight on the musicological features of *gagaku*. Overall, the balance between these two polarities is remarkable, but the book remains primarily interested in musical structures (melodic, rhythmical and compositional), even in the face of Garfias's own recognition that "there is little consciousness of form among court musicians of today" (1975b, 94). Thus, even though his reliance on fieldwork and his recounting of such firsthand experiences are very significant in the context of a field of study that has been traditionally text-centered, *Music of a Thousand Autumns* remains fundamentally anchored to the same approach that characterized scholars like Endō, Nelson, and even Picken.

Finally, the unique and elaborate approach of Mabuchi Usaburō deserves special mention. In an article entitled *A Study of Texture in Tōgaku*, the Osaka Kyōiku University Professor observed that "[p]resently, I think two main methodologies are applied to the study of *gagaku* pieces: to take ancient scores as an object of analysis, or to embrace an ethnological approach towards contemporary performance. When this is done, the scores presently in use are unjustly ignored" (1980, 11–12). Deeming both philological and ethnological approaches limited in that the former is confined by the theoretical principles that produced the scores in the first place, and the latter by its specific objectives, Mabuchi sets out to analyze what can be grasped through the sole analysis of *contemporary* scores in staff notation, believing that "something of great importance" must be hidden among those notes. While openly musicological, Mabuchi's acute awareness of the limits of the research trends of the time is remarkable, even though his stance is hardly embraceable.

A strand of research that maintains a particularly complicated relationship with both historical and musicological modes of inquiry, and in a sense is characterized by a continuous oscillation between the two, is that of the reconstruction of the instruments

preserved in the Shōsōin treasury of Tōdaiji temple in Nara, and of musical pieces to be performed on these instruments. The fact that at the time of their introduction to Japan particular instruments that are now excluded from the repertoire were employed in *gagaku* performances is amply testified by pictorial evidences found both in Japanese temples (especially in the area surrounding Nara), and on the walls of the famous Dunhuang caves in China (see especially Kishibe 1982, 124–48). Serious research on the surviving instruments preserved but no longer in use was undertaken since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and interest on the subject grew steadily in the past 100 years. Indeed, both Tanabe Hisao and Hayashi Kenzō conducted investigations and catalogued the musical treasures of the Shōsōin, in the 1920s and 1940s, respectively (see Hayashi 1975, 16).

Hayashi's pioneering study *Research on the Shōsōin Instruments* (1964) advocated a conjoined use of different sources, including the analysis of artifacts and the iconography of music, to understand the details of the instruments' construction procedures. Just three years later, a dedicated book appeared that presented the instruments with photographic reproductions and analyses not only of the methods of investigation but also of the cultural aspects surrounding the music for which the instruments were devised (see Shōsōin jimusho 1967). Meanwhile, in 1966, the new National Theatre had opened its doors in Tokyo. The existence since its inauguration of a series entitled *Gagaku Concerts (Gagaku kōen)* proves the importance that was assigned to this performing art among the many activities of the new institution (see Terauchi 2008). As shown by Terauchi, it was from the 19<sup>th</sup> of this concerts, held in 1975, that the emphasis was placed on the reconstruction of ancient works no longer performed (Terauchi 2008, 109). Still, at this stage the reconstructed pieces were performed using modern instruments

Under the influence of Kido Toshirō (b.1930), a producer active at the National Theatre from 1966 to 1996, a vast project by the name of *Reigaku* was set in motion in 1975, which aimed specifically at reconstructing some of the Shōsōin instruments (Kokuritsu gekijō geinōbu 1994, 2–3) (see **FIG.1.3**). As soon as the restoration of an instrument was complete, the object was concretely put to use on stage. The first time this happened was with the 29<sup>th</sup> concert of the *gagaku* series, in 1981 (Terauchi 2008, 103, 118). In 1985, the professional group of *gagaku* musicians Reigakusha was born, under the influence of Shiba Sukeyasu (b.1935), a court musician who in the 1970s had taught courses on *gagaku* at Tokyo University of the Arts (Terauchi 2008, 98). The group became closely associated with the use of reconstructed instruments. At first, the concerts which

included reconstructed scores were not taken very seriously by *gagaku* researchers, possibly because one of the Kido's strongest intentions was monetary: as the public of *gagaku* concerts dwindled, its producer tried to "challenge traditional music to adapt to contemporary times" (quoted in Terauchi 2011a, 173).

Kido's conception of what a modern reconstruction (of music and musical instruments) should or might entail is complex and deserves a separate treatment<sup>37</sup>, but what is relevant here is the fact that the activities of the group Reigakusha and their leader Shiba Sukeyasu have become increasingly intertwined with the 'reconstruction paradigm' that constitutes the most important 21<sup>st</sup>-century result of the application of a musicological approach to the study of *gagaku*. What is more, the fact that both Shiba and Nelson have consistently relied on Reigakusha to perform their reconstructed pieces<sup>38</sup> (using instruments reconstructed on the basis of the specimens surviving in the Shōsōin), signals that what started out as a philological, cautious attitude towards a lost sound-world has gradually turned into a more experimental creative endeavor. This progressive abandoning of a 'textualist' bias in favor of a proactive combination of scholarly outputs and creative production is especially interesting because it pushes the boundaries of what we mean when we talk about 'Japanese court music' today. Indeed, in a sense, the results of such operations are neither Japanese, nor courtly, turning the music itself into something that is essentially different from mainstream definitions of *gagaku* – "a tradition with no history", to quote Kido's appealing words (Kido 1990b).

In conclusion, Terauchi is certainly right in her assertion that reconstruction projects are based on historical interpretations which are in themselves "accumulations of interpretations" (2010, 188) – each operational decision already a combination of decisions as to the nature of the instruments, the scores, and even the images in which sound has been inscribed over the centuries. The same scholar also wisely suggests to look beyond simplistic oppositions between theoretical approaches that produce musically uninteresting outcomes and imprecise artistic operations that leave behind the principles upon which the music was itself originally produced (Terauchi 2010, 189–90). Recent trends suggest that such a gap may indeed be closing – but they also show that in

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<sup>37</sup> See his many publications that collect program notes, articles and other semi-academic materials (especially Kido 1990a; 1990b; 2006).

<sup>38</sup> Some notable CDs which contain Shiba's reconstructions or original compositions include (Reigakusha 1995; 2011a; 2011b).

order to assess the various reconstruction projects both in terms of their creative import and of their fidelity to pre-established methodological standards one needs to be willing to radically revisit the very definition of *gagaku*. Accordingly, scholars may disagree on whether or not the various reconstruction projects can be subsumed under the ‘musicological mode’. Here such a link is made explicit on the basis of the dependence of all reconstructions upon a set of choices that are strikingly akin to those discussed by the pioneering work of Laurence Picken and continuously revisited by the younger generation of Japanese specialists of *gagaku*.

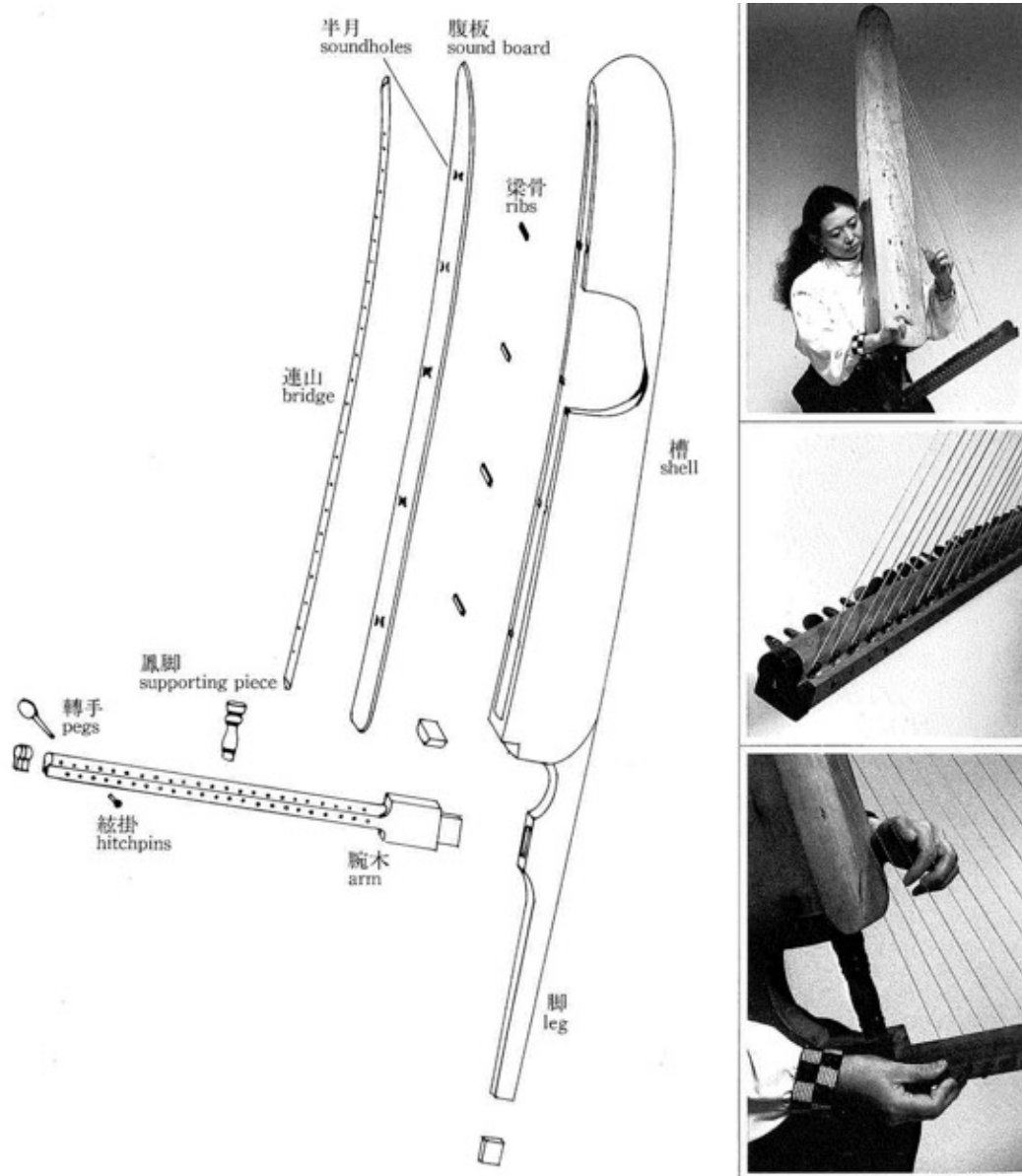


FIGURE 1.3. Some images of the *kugo*, a harp reconstructed by the National Theater.

(From Kokuritsu gekijō geinōbu 1994, 15).

#### 1.4 THE DECENTERING MODE

No matter how historically informed and critical of predefined assumptions, the vast majority of studies presented so far retain and in some cases reinforce the centrality of the Japanese court in the description and investigation of *gagaku*. In doing so, various approaches also indirectly confirm an imagery surrounding *gagaku* that ties it to spiritual and political power, to the highest strata of society, and to a constellation of values produced and circulated by those occupying dominant positions within society. However, while it is certainly grounded in the historical reality of the proximity of *gagaku* to the court, this is not the only narrative available. A sparser, more intermittent, and internally diverse approach to *gagaku* complicates its normal/normative interpretations by focusing specifically on themes generally neglected or altogether disregarded by the approaches presented thus far. This mode, best described as ‘decentering’, does not wish to deny the significance of dominant institutions throughout the history of *gagaku*, nor its astonishing continuity. It does, however, indicate several ways to counterbalance established orthodox views on ‘*gagaku* as Japanese court music’.

The most prominent author in the exploration of *gagaku*’s diversity is Terauchi Naoko. In her study of the modern history of Osaka’s most important group of local practitioners, for instance, Terauchi concluded that “the Garyōkai’s *gagaku* prompts us to reconsider what regeneration and diffusion can yield in the performing arts and what the potential inherent in each *gagaku* tradition can bring forth” (2013, 188). Implicit in these words is the recognition that *gagaku* already comprises different traditions, and that this multiplicity ought to be valued. In what is perhaps the best example of a study that decenters common views about court music, significantly titled *Beyond the Court: A Challenge to the Gagaku Tradition in the ‘Reconstruction Project’ of the National Theatre*, Terauchi stressed that the experiments conducted with the reconstructed instruments in the abovementioned *gagaku* concert series were crucial in “undermining the generally accepted image of *gagaku* as ‘eternally classic’ or ‘noble unchanged music’” (2008, 94). While carefully assessing the “immaturity” of some facets of the projects, such as the excessively imaginative instrumental playing techniques and musical expression assigned to the reconstructed instruments, Terauchi also speaks of a “diversified context” for *gagaku* since the 1990s (2008, 120–21), and in so doing makes it clear that the real

significance of the whole endeavor on the part of the Nation Theatre is its attempt to convey the manifold qualities (and thus the multiple quality) of *gagaku*.

Yet another project that tackles the diversity of *gagaku*, this time from the point of view of the actual performing sites where this music can be encountered in contemporary Japan, is Terauchi's *Listening to Gagaku (Gagaku o kiku)* (2011a). Presenting the concrete features of the spaces and performance occasions for *gagaku* in Kyoto, Osaka, Nara and Tokyo, the book is especially interesting not only because it embraces a participatory way of conducting research, notably absent from much of the literature on the topic, but also because it reflects on the mutual constitution of place and sound. Observing that "the actual performance of *gagaku* envelops the entire body of the listener" (Terauchi 2011a, v), the author explores the relationship between aural and visual appreciation of live performances, evoking in particular the impact of different "sonic environments" on the audience –from the stimulating indeterminacy of rituals that take place in the open air (characterized by the presence of ambient "noise") to the somewhat "shut off" and purified atmosphere of modern theaters (especially Terauchi 2011a, 96–95, 165–66). In so doing, Terauchi introduces the crucial theme of the body of the researcher in its immersion in the surrounding as he or she pays attention to *gagaku* not only aurally, but with all of the five senses. Despite the fact that her approach is not, strictly speaking, ethnographic, Terauchi thus comes one step closer to a socio-anthropology of *gagaku* –a perspective that is further elaborated in the present dissertation (see Chapter 4). In a way, then, it is only natural that such an approach should proceed from conceiving its object differently: when *gagaku* is not merely taken to be the reified object of a focused, educated listening mode, but is rather interpreted as intrinsically diverse and unstable, the methods of investigation are bound to change. Indeed, in similar cases, it is often hard to tell whether one's methodological stance proceeds from the object explored, or vice versa.

The significance of *Listening to Gagaku* lies precisely in its delicate balance between a style that is easily accessible and engaging, a historically-aware approach that presents *gagaku* through broad overviews, and a less practiced, ethnographic, at times even reflexive mode of conducting research. For this reason, the book resembles more straightforwardly anthropological accounts of Japanese performing arts. A foundational reference in this sense is the work of Honda Yasuji (1906-2001), who surveyed the dazzling variety of what came to be known as *minzoku geinō* or Japanese performing arts

–a term that was itself ‘invented’ as late as 1952 (Lancashire 2013, 13). Despite the fluctuating position of *gagaku* within his famous taxonomy of local artistic expressions, the relevance of Honda’s work is twofold: on the one hand, its classification system is intimately related to the institutional framework that brought to the nomination of musical items as “folk intangible cultural heritage” (see Thornbury 1997). Given the number of local festivals variously influenced by *gagaku* that have been nominated since the promulgation of the *Law for the Protection of Cultural Property* in 1950, one way to define the boundaries of ‘Japanese court music’ may be to look at Honda’s influential classificatory logic. What counts as “folk”, and what is its centralized opposite? How does the answer to this question map onto the dichotomy of “center” and “periphery”? If these are questions raised in part by a profound criticism of Honda’s rationale, it is undeniable that the scholar has provided generations of researchers with a new exciting methodology that could be employed in ethnographic approaches to local manifestations of court music. Today, this type of research constitutes an especially promising, if undervalued, subfield within the confines of *gagaku* studies.

Though he would probably reject this association with Honda’s work, Takuwa Satoshi, Associate Professor at Kyoto’s Research Centre for Japanese Traditional Music, is one of the few scholars who have conducted research on the performance of *bugaku* at local shrines and temples “in the provinces”<sup>39</sup>. A student of Mabuchi, Takuwa has conducted extensive research on the historical changes in *bugaku*’s dance movements, drawing from historical evidences contained in Koma no Chikazane’s *Kyōkunshō* (Takuwa 2003; 2016). Through a historical problematization of the distinction between “central *bugaku*” and “local *bugaku*” (Takuwa 2007, 40–41), and employing the so-called Labanotation method of transcription of human movements<sup>40</sup>, Takuwa showed a relation between central and peripheral versions of *gagaku*, advancing the thesis of a centrifugal progressive spreading of particular movements. In what can be considered a productive ‘mixed methodology’, Takuwa has recently turned to a comparison of the contents of ancient scores and treatises such as Fujiwara no Moronaga’s *Jinchi yōroku* and *Sangō yōroku*<sup>41</sup> and Koma no Chikazane’s *Kyōkunshō* with the living tradition of Jūnidan *bugaku* in

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<sup>39</sup> For a few exceptions, see (Takahashi 1978; 2005; Shumway 2001).

<sup>40</sup> Developed by Rudolf Laban in 1928 (see Guest 2005).

<sup>41</sup> On the issues raised by the transnotation of these scores, see the early articles by Garfias (1975a) and Condit (1976).

Morimachi (Shizuoka prefecture), a ceremonial performance that includes local dances influenced by *bugaku* pieces (Takuwa 2012). In this case, the starting point is Picken's theory of the "basic melody" of *shō, biwa* and *sō*, "ascertained through a folkloric approach" (Takuwa 2012, 71). The result of this bold comparison between premodern sources and contemporary performance practice are fully illustrated in a recent DVD, accompanied by a short written presentation of the whole endeavor (Takuwa 2015). Takuwa's work stands out as an example of how mixing methods can be a fruitful strategy to update and refine both musicological and ethnographic approaches to *gagaku*. Moreover, by juxtaposing center and periphery, his experiment with Morimachi's Jūnidan *bugaku* shows that the decentering mode is not necessarily deconstructive, and that, on the contrary, it might shed light on apparently marginal elements which eventually feed back into our common understanding of *gagaku*.

Other examples of research conducted on the 'fringes' of *gagaku* include Terence Lancashire's pioneering article on the activities of court music's maverick Tōgi Hideki (b.1959) (see Lancashire 2003). Caught up between a self-orientalizing stance towards a music believed to be "in the DNA" of the Japanese (Lancashire 2003, 35)<sup>42</sup> and a biographical proximity to 'Western popular music', from The Beatles to Pink Floyd, Tōgi has become "the unrepresentative representative of the *gagaku* tradition" (Lancashire 2003, 36). Undoubtedly, by performing *Hey Jude* on the *hichiriki* he has both challenged the stereotype of an unchanged, unchangeable music and attracted a vast number of new listeners. At the same time, however, with his books as well as his musical creations Tōgi promotes a specific understanding of the relationship between *gagaku* and its public. Scholars ought to take him seriously, if not for his worrying tendency to amplify and give currency to theories of Japanese uniqueness (Nihonjinron). Even though Terauchi has mentioned Tōgi on several occasions (e.g. 2010, 242–51), few researchers have tried to assess his activities (in German, see Bürkner 2003). And yet, the case can be made for the urgency of pursuing a decentering approach to *gagaku* via further explorations of groups and individual musicians who, probably under the influence of Tōgi, have started to mingle with core assumptions of what constitutes the 'sound-world' of Japanese court

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<sup>42</sup> See also Tōgi's 2002 interview to The Japan Times: <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2002/12/29/culture/hideki-togi-out-to-gagaku-your-world/#.V-qN6txH04A> (last accessed September 16, 2016).



music<sup>43</sup>. Not only could this line of research provide a better understanding of the endurance of one of Japanese most ancient traditional musics, it could also rejuvenate the ways we look at this as well as other performing arts.

Undoubtedly, the study of local traditions of *gagaku* practice in Kyoto, Osaka and Nara, taken up in Chapter 3, represents the most direct instance of a decentering attitude toward 'Japanese court music' –if only for the fact that they are 'decentered centers' of *gagaku* musicianship, far away from Tokyo. As partially revealed by Terauchi in her study of Osaka's Garyōkai, in fact, these local practitioners are fully aware of the ec-centric nature of their art, and value their different styles of performance greatly. Indeed, distance from *gagaku* orthodoxy is a certain sign of unicity, which in turn can easily become an element to capitalize upon. A thorough discussion of the ways in which contemporary groups in Kansai (and in Japan more generally) continue to commodify their tradition by promoting local festivals or concerts in the hope of gaining more listeners and practitioner (thus at the same time keeping the tradition alive and profiting from its market value) remains to be attempted. In fact, my own work is intended as a prelude to such an endeavor, providing as it does the first comprehensive review of the existing literature about the three performing centers between 1870 and the present. In Chapter 3, a detailed examination of the secondary sources available is offered in the context of the ways each local reality reacted to the changes brought upon them by the Meiji restoration. The choice of simply mentioning this topic here, instead of providing a more detailed review of the literature, is due not to a lack of academic research (which however remains rather marginal), but rather to the extraordinary importance accorded to it. Certainly *gagaku* traditions in Kansai represent the prime example of a decentering topic: for this very reason, they deserve a more extended evaluation.

Finally, although they may appear as minor in the vast panorama of *gagaku* studies, investigations in the decentering mode will no doubt constitute the core of future research. It is perhaps normal for the study of any truly vital musical tradition to move slowly towards its borders; but the case of *gagaku* is especially interesting in that such groundbreaking research puts into question the stability of the very core of the tradition. For this reason, shaking up our modes of apprehending *gagaku* is not only healthy, but

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<sup>43</sup> Other artists that treat *gagaku* as musical material to be mingled with include but are certainly not limited to the group Tenchi garaku (<http://www.tenchigaraku.com/>) and the Osaka-based *hichirki* player Fukami Ryōsuke (<http://profile.ameba.jp/ryosukefukami/>).

necessary to cope with the sheer speed of its transformations –a velocity too often obscured by the sometimes cumbersome historical value of this music.

One of the lavish pictures illustrating a recent book on the reconstruction of ancient instruments preserved in the Shōsōin treasure hall is a depiction of *gagaku* musician and scholar Shiba Sukeyasu performing on a flute that he has himself helped reconstructing (see Kokuritsu gekijō geinōbu 1994, 109) (see **FIG.1.4**). The book reaffirms the significance of pictorial evidence and musical archaeology to the study of those ancient sounds that partially survive in contemporary ‘Japanese court music’ –thus echoing an opinion voiced by Hayashi Kenzō and other researchers in the ‘musicological mode’ more than 50 years ago. But the presence of Shiba’s picture is also a reminder (to informed readers, at least) that the performer-qua-instrument-maker is also a composer who has written contemporary pieces tailored on the expressive possibilities of those same Shōsōin instruments. And the pieces he wrote, in turn, are routinely performed by the professional group Reigakusha –the same group of musicians who recently made it possible to turn Steven Nelson’s philologically reconstructed scores into resounding musical materials. All the while, important Japanese composers such as Ishii Maki and Ichiyanagi Toshi are also photographed in the same book, and they too have contributed new compositions for this new *gagaku* ensemble. At the same time as the sounds of Tang music come back to life, and as new sounds are born for new but reconstructed instruments in an incessantly creative loop of past and present, Japanese researchers like Takuwa and Mabuchi look for the connection between the past and its contemporary manifestations, bringing ethnographic methodologies into the equation.

As these examples demonstrate, historical, presentational, musicological and decentering modes are not clearly separable tracks along which run immediately distinguishable lines of research. Their isolation is arbitrary at best, certainly partial, in many ways almost unnatural. Much like human perception, *gagaku* is not something that can be easily “sliced up”: if differentiating among sensory modalities makes little sense in the face of the fact that “the world we perceive is the same world, whatever path we take, and in perceiving it, each of us acts as an undivided centre of movement and awareness” (Ingold 2011, 136), the same should perhaps be said of the world of *gagaku*. A simple exploration of the main contributions in each of the four modes or approaches thus makes it perfectly clear that for centuries research on *gagaku* has been characterized by mutual influences, disciplinary breaches and continuous overflows. Nonetheless, by showing the

relative weight assigned to specific aspects of *gagaku*, its constructedness as a particular object of research becomes evident. In this sense, the chronological flow of sounds and movements perceived as foundational by a particular field of knowledge identifiable as the history of Japanese music is a drastically different object from the “basic musical materials” inscribed in the tablatures of *tōgaku* (see Picken et al. 1990, 5:108). And the latter, in turn, is hardly the same as the ‘enjoyable’ art music of the presentational mode. Tōgi’s performance of *Hey Jude* on the *hichiriki* gets as far from the preconceived sound of *gagaku* as it is possible to imagine, decentering it to the extreme.

In the end, the reason why these four modes were favored is practical as well as theoretical: in fact, each of them resonates with the contents of the following chapters. Just like the historical mode is deeply concerned with retracing a unitary narrative that can be followed throughout the chronological unfolding of *gagaku*, so too local groups of practitioners active in the Kansai area have tried to overcome their 19<sup>th</sup>-century predicaments on the basis of an alleged continuity with a glorious and linear past (see Chapter 3). Similarly, the generative tension between recovering and reinventing the past so characteristic of the musicological approach evokes the ways in which ‘court music’ was re-semanticized (as such) after the Meiji restoration in 1868: in that process, too, a dynamic interplay of creativity and preservation was crucial (see Chapter 2). The presentational mode, with its broad, encompassing treatment of *gagaku*, is also reflected in the diverse dispositions of today’s amateurs, who are motivated by musical passion, but also bring a host of new associations and representations to their attachment to *gagaku* (see Chapter 4). Finally, the decentering mode, which pays special attention to the diversity of 21<sup>st</sup>-century *gagaku* and in many ways defies other, more clearly delineated approaches, resonates with the overflowing of court music into the realms of environmental and political discourses that characterizes Chapter 5.

Renegotiations of tradition circulate throughout different modes of *gagaku* research. Today, the stunningly different objects produced by each of them are still loosely subsumed under the feeble label of ‘Japanese court music’, and, as such, they are offered to a public that is vaster, more varied, and more familiar with *gagaku* than ever before. The question remains of how that unitary label will be kept in place, and of what that expression, ‘Japanese court music’, actually entails. The next chapter looks closely at these issues, showing the extent to which modern associations between *gagaku*, the Japanese court and *shintō* cannot be taken for granted, and highlighting the existence of

some powerful but eventually discarded alternative associations. Even when it was turning into 'Japanese court music', *gagaku* was so much more than that.



**FIGURE 1.4.** Shiba Sukeyasu performing a reconstructed transverse flute.

(From Kokuritsu gekijō geinōbu 1994, 109).