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Decentering Gagaku. Exploring the multiplicity of contemporary Japanese Court music

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CHAPTER 2

IN THE LABORATORY OF MODERNITY

THE COMPLEX GENEALOGY OF 20TH-CENTURY 'JAPANESE COURT MUSIC'

In an early article on “the present condition” of *gagaku*, Eta Harich-Schneider, a pioneer in the study of the history of Japanese music¹, observed: “it is impossible to decide how far and according to what points of view the court music was remolded when, after the Meiji restoration [of 1868], the remains of the old cult and the deteriorated feudal arts were refurbished for reasons of Imperial prestige” (1953, 50). Although the German scholar did not specify what she meant by “the remains of the old cult”, more than fifty years of research have convincingly demonstrated that the proportion of the 19th-century remolding of *gagaku* was monumental, and its consequences extensive. For this reason, any serious consideration of the state of “court music” in the 20th century

¹ Her *A history of Japanese music* (Harich-Schneider 1973) is “the first comprehensive study of [Japanese] traditional music in a Western language by a Western scholar and based on primary sources” (Mehl 2007, 394). A fascinating figure, Harich-Schneider was a professional harpsichordist turned historical ethnomusicologist, so to say: after a few years spent teaching at the State Academy College for Music in Berlin, in 1941 she embarked on a tour to Japan that unexpectedly turned into an 8-year stay (Jansohn 2012, 66). In Tokyo, she took on the job of training the court musicians in European classical music, while at the same time pursuing both bibliographic research and practical studies of *gagaku*, benefitting from the help and resources of the performers-functionaries. The product of her research is documented in a series of journal articles that paved the way for more detailed analyses of many aspects of court music, from its vocal repertoire to the complex rhythmic structure of the danced pieces (Harich-Schneider 1952; 1954; 1965). Her interests were broad: in 1944 she published a German translation of Shakespeare’s sonnets (see Jansohn 2012).

must necessarily take as its point of departure the years immediately following the Meiji restoration.

In fact, the historical bond linking *gagaku* to the life of courtly aristocrats and of the Emperor himself was fully exploited by late 19th-century reformers, who envisioned a new order symbolically founded upon the renewed figure of a divine ruler². The reorganization of the court was thus also a reorganization (perhaps even a reinvention) of the music, first and foremost in terms of *gagaku*'s ritual applications. At the same time, though, in the Meiji period *gagaku* was characterized by a host of experimentations and novel endeavors, which included a particularly fascinating interrelation with the reform of music education and should be examined as proofs of *gagaku* musicians' creativity. These experiments show that the epistemological categories applied to domestic and foreign music were themselves being renegotiated, and that there is much more to Japan's musical 'modernization' than a straightforward process of 'Westernization'. Bringing together a number of Meiji-period music-making practices that in various ways intersected *gagaku* highlights its role within a larger discourse of national modernity; proves that *gagaku* was already a multiple object over 150 years ago; and demonstrates that the concept of 'Japanese court music' took a definite shape roughly between 1870 and the 1910s. While the secondary sources quoted below have done a wonderful job of investigating individual instances of *gagaku*'s entanglement with the formation of 'Japanese modernity', a juxtaposition of these practices has not been attempted to date. A more 'choral' perspective on *gagaku*'s modernity better serves the purpose of illustrating its vitality, especially because it brings back into view a number of topics that are at the margins of *gagaku* scholarship. One additional virtue of this approach is thus the fact that it forces us to reconsider the limits of the definition of *gagaku* itself.

For all these reasons, any understanding of court music's 'new present condition' (the broader topic of this dissertation) is bound to remain both incomplete and unaware of its complex genealogy without a thorough and multifaceted investigation of *gagaku*'s transformations throughout the Meiji period.

² For a general discussion of these issues, see (Kim 2011; Zhong 2011)

2.1 TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE MUSIC TRANSMISSION: THE OFFICE OF *GAGAKU* AND THE *SELECTED SCORES OF THE MEIJI*

On November 3, 1870, one of the first decrees issued by the new government of Japan formally established an Office of *Gagaku* (*Gagakukyoku*) in the new capital of Tokyo³. At first, its 35 members were free to choose between residing in the new capital or in Kyoto, where a detached branch office was temporarily set up, but in 1877 the Kyoto office was closed and all the musicians were ordered to move to Tokyo, thus cementing the new institution (Ono 2016, 183). Reminiscent of a glorious past in which *gagaku* had an important role in the life of the court, the new Office responded to an obvious desire to centralize the organizational structures of the state. The numerous historical changes and the plurality of traditions of music transmission that characterized *gagaku* in the early modern period stood in the way of a smooth centralization of ‘court music’, something that could only be accomplished by bringing together performers with diverse provenances into a unified professional body at the service of the state (Endō 2013, 48–49). The reinstatement of the centrality of the emperor was therefore accompanied by a parallel ‘update’ of the structures that had regulated the production of court music in the Heian period: the ancient *Gagakuryō* was resurrected and renamed *Gagakukyoku*, while the musicians once known as *gakujin* became state functionaries by the name of *reijin* (Endō 2013, 37–50).

If such parallels might seem to suggest a certain degree of continuity with the past (or at least a symbolic revival thereof), in reality the reshuffling of *gagaku* responded to pressing issues. In the eyes of the bureaucrats, in fact, the most crucial task of the musicians was to produce a uniform body of songs and dances to accompany new or renewed rituals and ceremonies in the court (Tsukahara 2009, 136). In this sense, the relevance of music to the newly established administration is reflected by the fact that since its very inception the Office of *Gagaku* was part of the Daijōkan, the highest

³ The office changed denomination several times: in 1874 it was renamed Court Music Section of the Office of Ceremonies (*Shikiburyō gagakuka*), in 1881 Court Music Section, Board of Ceremonies, Imperial Household Department (*Kunaishō shikibushoku gagakubu*), in 1907 Music Department of the Board of Ceremonies of the Imperial Household Office (*Kunaishō shikibushoku gakubu*). Finally in 1949 the present name started being used: Music Department of the Board of Ceremonies of the Imperial Household Agency (*Kunaichō shikibushoku gakubu*) (Gamō 1986, 207; Tsukahara 1998, 220). Hereafter, I will use the expression Office of *Gagaku* referring to the years immediately following the Meiji revolution of 1868 (approximately 1870-1915), to avoid confusion with the present appellation.

structure of the state, which had existed, in one form or another, since as early as the 8th century (Gamō 1986, 206)⁴. Even so, a number of obstacles had to be overcome for the political project behind the creation of the Office of *Gagaku* to succeed. Indeed, the way court music was transmitted before the Meiji period was particularly at odds with any model of bureaucratic efficiency predicated on systematization and unity. For centuries, the main centers of musical performance had been unequally spread out across the archipelago, mostly revolving around the ancient capital of Kyoto. As a matter of fact, *gagaku* was not only performed at the old imperial court, but also at major local shrines and temples⁵, often in conjunction with Buddhist chanting (*shōmyō*) as accompaniment to large-scale ritual celebrations⁶.

Furthermore, the transmission of *gagaku* music and dances was firmly grounded in a hereditary system consisting in family lines that passed down their specialized knowledge through an oral-aural method called *kuden* or *kōtō denshō* (literally, “oral tradition” (Tanabe 1975, 50; Kikkawa 1984b, 327). Since it was characteristically imitative and practice-based, such a system relied only in part on musical notation, which by its very nature functions as an aid to memorization. Each *gagaku* family (called *gakke*) specialized in one of the wind instruments of the ensemble: the firstborn male heir was assigned to the performance of either the double reed oboe *hichiriki*, the transverse flute *ryūteki* or the mouth organ *shō*. For centuries, the social status of these performers had been rather low: in the Heian period, for example, strict adherence to the protocols of the court required that they perform at a physically lower level than the noblemen. Hence, musicians had limited access to the court’s pavilions (which were raised above the ground) and were known as *jige gakunin* or ‘musicians below the ground’ (Gamō 1989, 408). In this sense, it would perhaps be more fitting to think about the local transmission of *gagaku* in terms of a ‘craft’ handed down from generation to generation within families of dedicated artisans –a role quite different from that attributed to the ‘artist’ as conceived by European Romanticism.

⁴ This combination of actual and only professed symbols of continuity with the past is a defining feature of the Meiji period.

⁵ The terms ‘shrine’ and ‘temple’ are used to indicate two types of cultic centers that are marked differently in contemporary Japan: respectively, *jinja* associated with the cult of *kami* deities and (*o*)*tera*, associated with the cult of Buddhist deities. Needless to say, this distinction itself is a result of changes that for the most part took place during the Meiji period.

⁶ The most important Buddhist celebrations including the performance of court music were called *bugaku hōyō*, “Buddhist ceremonies with court dance” (see Endō 2013, 226–29).

In contrast to these ‘local craftsmen’, aristocrats during the late Heian period had started to perform on *gagaku*’s string instruments, such as the pear-neck lute (*gaku*)*biwa* and the zither (*gaku*)*sō*⁸. These performances, known as *gyoyu* or *miasobi*, described at length in such famous sources as the *Genji monogatari* (1008) or the *Makura no sōshi* (1002), represented a refined pastime and an important vehicle for the circulation of aesthetic principles within the courtly society. The habit of performing *gagaku* spread fast, and soon even the Emperor and his family became involved in events that featured various kinds of court music. Together with the production of a great number of new pieces by high-ranking officials, this new practice also resulted in the compilation of the first notable collections of scores (Endō et al. 2006, 114). With all likelihood, these were initially intended to help the aristocrats getting acquainted with an unfamiliar repertoire: far from being the hastily scrambled up ‘mnemonic crutches’ so common to folk musicians the world over, these scores consisted in refined manuscripts whose quality befitted the sophistication of the Heian court. Their authors speculated on abstract topics such as the modal theory inherited from China or the relationship between court music’s sounds and the Daoist doctrines of yin and yang –in so doing contributing to the progressive assimilation of what was initially a foreign repertoire, and to the establishment of a more markedly autochthonous theory of *gagaku* (Endō 2013, 134–63)⁹.

Over time, both the specialized *gagaku* families and their aristocratic counterparts developed peculiar performance techniques and idiosyncratic styles. While technical specialization characterized local lines of transmission, several noble families also produced so-called “secret pieces” (*hikyoku*), often consisting in solo performances of *gagaku* melodies on the *biwa*. These were associated to Buddhist ideas concerning salvation and the entrance into the Pure Land of Amida Buddha (Takuwa 2016, 36). The scores of such secret pieces were kept in especially high esteem, and with the progressive “esoterization” of the religious episteme of premodern Japan (Raveri 2014, 176–219) this music (and its texts) came to be included in a broader “culture of secrecy” (see Scheid and

⁸ Since the construction of the instruments employed in court music differs slightly from that of their counterparts employed in other genres of Japanese traditional music, the prefix *gaku*- is attached to their names. Thus, specialists talk about *gakubiwa* and *gakusō* to make it clear that they refer specifically to the instruments used to perform *gagaku* (see de Ferranti 2000, 79–80, 91–93; 2002, 821; Adriaansz 2002, 825).

⁹ Indeed, as we have seen in the Introduction, some scholars believe that the term *gagaku* should refer to the music composed or rearranged by Japanese composers of the second half of the Heian period.

Teeuwen 2006). Eventually, centuries of gradual modifications and the weakening of the imperial court further contributed to the inexorable differentiation of many lines of *gagaku* transmission, which in turn resulted in still perceivable discrepancies between the performance of the same pieces (see Chapter 3).

In 1870, *gagaku*'s multiple histories had to be rectified. The pre-existing, largely oral system of transmission needed to be modified if the musicians-functionaries were to perform exactly the same melodies in a homogeneous style. The most important means to accomplish such a goal was the production of a stable, authoritative set of scores for all the court musicians to rely on. Accordingly, the *orthodox and complete repertoire* of today's *gagaku* was assembled just a few years after the Office of *Gagaku* came into being: compiled in 1876 and 1888, the *Selected Scores of the Meiji* (*Meiji senteifu*)¹⁰ consist of two sets of instrumental, vocal and dance notations, for a total of 196 small fascicles¹¹ (see **FIG.2.1**). Writing them down was a formidable challenge: clear-cut decisions had to be made on performing practice and on the relationship between the fleeting sonic nature of the music and its material manifestations on paper. In a sense, therefore, unifying *gagaku* also meant *textualizing* it, transforming it into a more stable artefact that required, more than ever before, skills related to literacy and faithfulness to the written sign.

The first collection focused extensively on the music and dances to accompany ritual celebrations at shrines, while large orchestral suites were included within the second (Terauchi 2010, 14). Besides the pieces connected with the cults directed to the *kami*, such as the cycles of songs and dances *Kagurauta* and *Azuma asobi*, the first selection included also the vocal pieces belonging to the genres *saibara*, *imayō* and *rōei*, 49 orchestral and danced pieces of *tōgaku* style and 15 pieces of *komagaku* style. The second selection added respectively 34 *tōgaku* items and 10 *komagaku* items (Ono 2016, 184)¹². While it is all too easy to detect a political plan behind their creation, a deeper analysis of the circumstances that led to the compilation of the *Selected Scores of the Meiji* shows that these were the result of a number of different factors. First of all, the existence of three

¹⁰ It is interesting to notice that the title with which these scores are commonly referred to is not the one written on their covers. Rather, the expression *Meiji senteifu* was used for the first time by ethnomusicologist Hirano Kenji in the *Gagaku* entry of the 1959 dictionary *Ongaku jiten* (Gamō 1986, 207).

¹¹ See (Gamō 1986, 209–11; and Hashimoto 1986) for a detailed list of all the fascicles and their contents.

¹² These were not all the pieces contained (in full or partial form) within the ancient scores in the possession of the various *gagaku* families: those that were not selected, often because they had not been performed for many years, are known as *engaku* (Ono 2016, 184).

parallel versions of the scores¹³ and of small discrepancies among them proves that their practical usage was always a central preoccupation of the compilers (Gamō 1986, 218–212). Secondly, the discovery of another collection of notations that dates from 1870 or 1873 (*Meiji san'nen gagaku zenfu*) reveals both that it is possible to distinguish between the moment in which the project was requested and its actual completion, and that already in 1870 the compilation was at an advanced stage (Gamō 1986, 220). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, Gamō has demonstrated that the basis for the two major compilations of 1876 and 1888 was a third source, comprising pieces to be performed during *shintō* rituals: because the families in charge of transmitting this part of the repertoire had developed conflicting interpretations over the centuries, they were requested to present their 'private' scores to the Office. This they did as early as 1871 and 1872, and the resulting documentation formed the basis for the subsequent, official collections (Gamō 1986, 225–27).



FIGURE 2.1. The Selected Scores of the Meiji.

From the collection of the Imperial Household Agency of Japan (Endō 2004, 52–53).

¹³ Preserved respectively by the Head of the Music Department of the Imperial Household Agency (*gakuchōhon*), by the administrative office of the same Department (*kyōmuhon*) and by the musical instruments' repository (*gakkihon*).

Even though the identity of the compilers is not included in the two finished sets of 1876 and 1888, some of their names can be deduced from the *Meiji san'nen gagaku zenfu* (Terauchi 2010, 15). These indicate that members of former aristocratic families that were well-versed in the performance of *gagaku* string instruments¹⁶ played a decisive role at this early stage of the operation, and that the overall choices made reflected less an attempt to homogenize or mediate between various pre-existing traditions, and more the direct influence of those families (Terauchi 2010, 16). To an extent, choosing to begin from a family's specific performing style over those of others' was only natural, as it considerably reduced the efforts required to come to a truly shared decision. At the same time, however, this conservative approach to the problem of creating a 'unified' performance also reveals the existence of a power play among those in charge of leading court music into the 'modern' world. In line with its political task, the Office of *Gagaku* thus manufactured two collections of scores that "represent a sanitized and sanctified tradition, portrayed as unchanged and unchanging since ancient times" (Nelson 2008a, 48) –but it did so at the cost of taking a resolute stance toward the project: differences were leveled out rather than harmonized. The history behind the compilation of the *Selected Scores of the Meiji* bring to light an issue that is too often disregarded by *gagaku* specialists and historians of Japanese music more generally: namely, the (perhaps inevitable) political character of the centralization of *gagaku* music transmission in the early 1870s. While the fact that the heirs of aristocratic families had a greater influence on the final decision than the hereditary musicians is certainly not surprising in and of itself, from the point of view of a Foucauldian genealogy of "modern *gagaku*" (to use Tsukahara's and Terauchi's phrase) this point is particularly relevant, because it undermines the widespread 'orthodox' view of a smooth, seamless tradition that was not altered by the political changes of the late 19th century. On the contrary, the convoluted story of these scores reveals of the numerous seams in the fabric of *gagaku*.

On February 2, 1882, just twelve years after the birth of the *Gagakukyoku*, a thief smuggled into the storehouse of the Office's practice room, located in Tokyo's Kōjimachi (today's Chiyoda district). Even though Yaguchi Shin'ichi (this was the name of the culprit) was able to run away with 167 items comprising both precious instruments and scores, after a mere three months the police apprehended him, and returned the booty

¹⁶ That is, the 'noblemen above the ground' (*tōjō kizoku*), as opposed to the specialized families of musicians (*jige gakujin*) (Terauchi 2010, 16).

on May 2 (Gamō 1986, 205). But the plot thickens, for not all the items taken from the site were returned. After almost 150 years, the extant *Selected Scores of the Meiji* preserved at the Music Department of the Imperial Household Agency appear to be copies (Gamō 1986, 206). Perhaps those famous, mostly authoritative scores of the *gagaku* repertoire are an ironic example of a somewhat differently ‘lost’ tradition.

2.2 THE REORGANIZATION OF COURT RITUALS AND *GAGAKU* AS ‘SHINTO SOUNDSCAPE’

In addition to the production of physical supports for the inscription of the otherwise dangerously fleeting sounds of *gagaku*, the Meiji period was crucial for the formation of what could be called ‘*gagaku*’s modern imagery’: a much more intangible, albeit possibly more durable inheritance, consisting in all those associations between musical, socio-cultural and historical elements that eventually became *gagaku*’s stable (but not immutable) referents in Japanese popular culture. In fact, it was between the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century that a set of mutually reinforcing signifiers were selected and assigned to court music. These included the figure of the emperor, the terse atmosphere of a court that was little-known but widely fantasized about, and above all the association with *shintō*. The lasting effects of such a bond with a ‘religious tradition’ are still strong in present-day Japan: with famous pieces such as *Etenraku* or *Bairo* played at weddings, funerals and similar ceremonial occasions (often in the form of recorded CDs), shrines have become the most unanimously recognized sites for hearing *gagaku*. Similarly, *gagaku* is currently employed by *shintō* structures as a sort of unobtrusive, softly flowing ‘soundtrack’ to the experience of visiting their compounds. In everyday conversations with Japanese men and women of all ages, the answer to the question “Do you know *gagaku*?” is likely to be something akin to “Oh, wait...you mean the music you hear at *jinja* [Shinto shrines]?”. Of course, this is not to say that the public perception of *gagaku* has remained unchanged from the end of the 19th century to the present. The seldom explored history of *gagaku*’s entanglement with Japanese *colonial and nationalist modernity* between the Taishō (1912-1926) and the end of the American occupation in 1951 is an entirely distinct chapter. One should not forget, for example, that “[a]s a propaganda tool of an increasingly nationalistic state, *gagaku* was performed as sacred

music in Japanese ‘colonies’ established in other parts of Asia in the first half of the twentieth century”, but it is a well-known fact that “[d]espite the thorough discrediting of this nationalist propaganda with the collapse of the Japanese empire in 1945, the image of *gagaku* as a static, permanent symbol of the imperial house and Shinto religion is still strong in the minds of most Japanese” (Nelson 2008a, 48). It should be possible to expose the peculiarities with which in the Meiji period a connection was established between *shintō* and *gagaku*, without confusing the historiographical categories of ‘modern’ and ‘contemporary’.

Furthermore, this connection is not something the scholar of court music can take for granted, for it was substantially recast in the Meiji period. Undeniably, a precedent existed in the earliest days of *gagaku*, when the music was first introduced to the Japanese archipelago. At that time, a Music Office (*Ōtadokoro*) was set up especially for the performance and transmission of autochthonous songs and dances, and these were opposed to the ‘foreign’ repertoires, entrusted to the *Gagakuryō* or *Utamai no tsukasa* (Nelson 2008a, 41). However, centuries of modifications inevitably reshuffled the very contents of *gagaku* as a distinguishable performing art, while at the same time the practices, beliefs and institutions that we now subsume under the rubric of *shintō* were being transformed by way of extended interconnections with other more or less loose ‘religious’ systems such as Daoism, Confucianism and esoteric Buddhism (see Breen and Teeuwen 2000). In other words, the history of the relation between the two is marked by their respective transformations. For this reason, it is possible to maintain that it was only in the Meiji period that a specific link was established between a well-defined repertory of songs and dances termed *gagaku* and a new conceptualization of the practices surrounding the worship of the *kami* understood in terms of a unitary “state religion” (see Hardacre 1989)¹⁷.

¹⁷ Of course, the notion of *shintō* must itself be problematized, given the fact that nothing like a systematic organization of shrines with a shared belief or practice system and a specifically trained group of individuals recognized as specialists existed in Japan before the 19th century. In this sense, Kuroda Toshio was a pioneer in questioning the authenticity of the notion of *shintō* as “the primeval religion of Japan” (Kuroda 1981; see also Teeuwen and Scheid 2002; Dobbins 1996). Similarly, we must resist the oversimplification of interpreting the formation of State Shinto as the development of a ‘religion’: given the role that this concept accords to specialists and ritualists and the fact that it “refers to a cultural system containing a distinct outline of doctrine and religious social organizations”, we must admit that as an epistemological tool the term ‘religion’ is ill-suited for describing and understanding the practices nonchalantly referred to as Shinto or *shintō* (Shimazono 2009, 98; see also Isomae 2012; and the recent authoritative historical reconstruction in Hardacre 2017).

Creating this bond was not something that could be accomplished overnight. Rather, it required a comprehensive process that necessitated the reorganization of shrines' ceremonial contents and of their musical constituents. The extensive remodeling of the rituals of the imperial court that took place in the years immediately following the Meiji restoration had a fundamental role in this long process (Hardacre 1989, 31–33). In fact, in order to apply a unitary outline of ritual practice to the whole nation, it was important to come up with a paradigmatic model, which had to stem from the imperial palace in Tokyo because this was considered the nation's new spiritual center. The meticulous work of Tsukahara Yasuko has demonstrated that such a remodeling of court rituals took place concurrently with the one of *gagaku*'s music and dances (2009, 11–12; 2013).

At the same time, this process of renewal was not completely independent from what had happened in the decades leading to the creation of the Office of *Gagaku*. In fact, the rituals in which *gagaku* was employed in relation to the calendrical events of the court in the so-called Bakumatsu period¹⁸ are the ones that served as the basis upon which the systematization of the Meiji era was built (Tsukahara 2009, 29–30). Another element that formed the bedrock of future modifications was the tendency, started during the late Edo period (1603–1868), to recreate *gagaku* pieces that had fallen out of use in previous centuries. Supported financially by the Tokugawa, these 'restorations' became especially significant between 1779 and 1846, and reached the highest point during the reign of Emperor Kōmei (r. 1846–1866) (Tsukahara 2009, 32). Indeed, the entire 18th century and the first half of the 19th were a favorable time for *gagaku*, which was especially appreciated by the ruling class on the basis of its value as ritual music with Confucian overtones (*reigaku*), understood as “proper music” for self-cultivation (Shumway 2001, 123). Thus, “Buddhist rites [with *gagaku*] commemorating the ancestors of the Tokugawa shogun family were held in Nikkō (north of Tokyo) and Edo Castle (Tokyo), while the Confucian rite Sekiten was celebrated with *gagaku* (*tōgaku*) at the shogunate school Kōheikō. Many *daimyō*, including Tayasu Munetake (1715–1771) and Tokugawa Harutomi (1771–1853), cultivated *gagaku*, collecting instruments and music notation, and performing themselves.” (Tsukahara 2013, 226).

¹⁸ The expression refers loosely to the last years of the Tokugawa shogunate, sometimes defined as the fifteen years between the arrival of Commodore Perry's black ships in 1853 and the Meiji reforms of 1868.

| PIECES RESTORED | ABOLITION/SUSPENSION | RESTORATION(S) | DETAILS |
|--------------------|---|---|---|
| <i>Yamatomai</i> | 1308-1311 | 1748 1848 extension and expansion | |
| <i>Tamai</i> | 1466 Then again after 1818 | 1783 1787 (revision) | Employed in the <i>Daijōe</i> ceremonies |
| <i>Kishimai</i> | 1466 Then again after 1687 | 1687 1818 | |
| <i>Saibara</i> | Until the late Muromachi period (1336-1573) | 1626 (Piece <i>Ise no umi</i>) 1683 (Piece <i>Anatō</i>) 1787 (Piece <i>Mushiroda; Anatō</i>) 1813 (Piece <i>Yamashiro</i>) 1818 (Piece <i>Minoyama</i>) 1828 (Piece <i>Koromogae</i>) | <i>Ise no umi</i> was restored on the occasion of Emperor Go-Mizunō (r.1611-1629)'s visit to Nijō castle <i>Yamashiro</i> was restored on the occasion of the restoration of the <i>Kamo rinjisai</i> festival in 1814 |
| <i>Azuma asobi</i> | | 1694 1702 (additions) 1813 (partial revision, complete restoration) | From 1706, performed also at the Tokugawa castle in Nikkō |
| <i>Kumemai</i> | 1466 | 1818 | Employed in the ceremonies of Imperial succession |

TABLE 2.1 Restoration of *gagaku* pieces during the second half of the Edo period.

(Adapted from Tsukahara 2009, 33).

| YEAR | RITUAL |
|-------------|---|
| 1588 | <i>Bugaku</i> and <i>kangen</i> performed when Empero Go-Yōzei (r.1586-1611) visited the new Jurakudai palace |
| 1615 | <i>Tōka no sechie</i> |
| 1626 | Emperor Go-Mizunō (r.1611-1629)’s visit to Nijō castle |
| 1650 CA | Composition of the <i>Tōji nenjū gyōji</i> (<i>Annual Events of the Time</i>) by Emperor Go-Mizunō |
| 1687 | Restoration of the <i>Daijōsai</i> rituals for Emperor Higashiyama (r.1687-1709) |
| 1738 | Restoration of the <i>Daijōsai</i> rituals for Emperor Sakuramachi (r.1735-1747) |
| 1740 | <i>Niinamesai</i> and <i>Toyo no akari no sechie</i> (discontinued again since 1778) |
| 1748 | Restoration of the <i>Daijōsai</i> rituals for Emperor Momozono (r.1747-1762) |
| 1786 | <i>Niinamesai</i> |
| 1787 | Restoration of the <i>Daijōsai</i> rituals for Emperor Kōkaku (r.1780-1817) |
| 1790 | Reconstruction of the Imperial palace in accordance with the ancient style |
| 1791 | <i>Niinamesai</i> |
| 1813 | <i>Iwashimizu rinjisai</i> |
| 1814 | <i>Kamo rinjisai</i> |
| 1818 | Restoration of the <i>Daijōsai</i> rituals for Emperor Ninkō (r.1817-1846) |
| 1848 | Restoration of the <i>Daijōsai</i> rituals for Emperor Kōmei (r.1846-1867) |
| 1863 | Empero Kōmei’s visit to Kamo shrine to pray for the “exclusion of the barbarians” (<i>jōi</i>) from Japan |
| 1864 | <i>Kitano rinjisai</i> and <i>Bugaku bairan</i> |
| 1865 | <i>Yoshidasai</i> , <i>Gion rinjisai</i> , <i>Ōharano matsuri</i> |
| 1866 | <i>Matsunō matsuri</i> |

TABLE 2.2 Restorations of court rituals since the early modern period. (Adapted from Tsukahara 2009, 74).

TABLE 2.1, adapted from the pioneering studies published in 1959 by Hirade Hisao (1959a; 1959b; 1959c; 1959d) as reworked by Tsukahara Yasuko (2009, 33; 74), shows the pieces of the repertoire that were revived during the latter part of the Edo period, also indicating for how long they were abolished or suspended. A comparison with **TABLE 2.2**, which displays the main ritual occasions restored from the early modern period to 1868, effectively brings to light the following important characteristics of *gagaku*’s repertoire and its performance occasions in the years between the 17th century and 1870:

first of all, the restoration of specific items corresponds closely to the dates in which specific court rituals were themselves revived¹⁹. Secondly, a great number of pieces was restored in conjunction with the revival of the Daijōsai, arguably the most important ritual celebrated on the occasion of the enthronement of a new sovereign. Finally and most importantly, the years immediately preceding the Meiji restoration are marked by an increment of the revival of ceremonies that took place at shrines. In a sense, therefore, these revived rituals may be seen as paving the way for the subsequent tendency to associate court music with *shintō*. This short list is not intended as an exhaustive evaluation of the continuity between early modern, modern, and contemporary *gagaku*. Such an endeavor would require much more space and a more finely-tuned analysis of extant historical documents. Here it is enough to point out that certain trends within the reconstruction of rituals in the Edo period seem to lay the foundations for the (almost entirely modern) forging of a link between *gagaku* and *shintō*.

With the transfer of the capital from Kyoto to Tokyo and the creation of the Office of *Gagaku* in 1870, the policy of revitalization of portions of the repertoire was abruptly abandoned, and several ceremonial occasions were discontinued (Tsukahara 2009, 34–36)²⁰. Shortly afterwards, “the abolished court ceremonies were replaced with a broad range of new imperial rites celebrated in Shinto style” (Tsukahara 2013, 226). What is most striking in the case of the rituals created anew after 1868 is the fact that the overwhelming majority of them is dedicated to the figure of the emperor: from those memorializing the four sovereigns preceding Emperor Meiji, to those that revolving around the foundational figure of Emperor Jinmu (believed to be the first Emperor of Japan), to those, somewhat more abstract, that celebrated all emperors and empresses or the beginning of the imperial system itself, to those dedicated to the goddess Amaterasu, the list clearly reveals a pressing need to reinforce the symbolic role of the emperor by positioning him at the very center of the calendrical activities of the court. Importantly, as pointed out by Tsukahara, “all of these rites were created by the Jingikan (Department of Shinto Affairs, a branch of the bureaucracy reinstated in 1868) with a view to unifying court ritual and political affairs, and were celebrated in a newly created Shinto style at

¹⁹ Relevant dates are marked in bold in both tables.

²⁰ In the remaining years of the Meiji period, such a tendency would resurface only sporadically: in 1911 *Soshimari*, a piece of Korean origins, was revived on the occasion of the commemoration of the annexation of Korea to Japan (which had taken place one year earlier); in 1912 a new sung piece, called *Ruika*, was composed for the funeral of Emperor Meiji (Tsukahara 2009, 36).

the Imperial Palace from 1872. Imperial rites had been celebrated in Buddhist style in the Edo period, and many of the new Meiji rites, especially those associated with Shinto ancestor worship, had no antecedents among the various court ceremonies of the Edo period” (2013, 226).

Such considerations indicate that any real understanding of *gagaku*’s modifications in the early Meiji period must also consider the concurrent development of so-called State Shinto (*kokka shintō*) (see Shimazono 2010). This has been defined as “the government enforcement of Shinto-style rituals in public places designed to promote the ideal of emperor worship, a concept that the Meiji government felt central to its ideological program intended to promote national unity” (Picken 2011, 164; see also Hardacre 1989). Shimazono Susumu has devised a tripartite structure to account for the dynamics of *shintō* during the Meiji period, artificially distinguishing between Shrine Shinto, a diffuse web of cultic centers; Court Shinto, the centralized, official site of ceremonies embodied by the imperial palace; and State Shinto, the chronologically-bound institutionalization of practices and beliefs and its encroachment on the structure of the state²¹ (2009, 95). From this point of view, the remodeling of the rituals of the court can be understood as the pivotal force through which Court Shinto led the way to State Shinto, providing a model to be implemented locally by Shrine Shinto. Moreover, Shimazono’s distinction between a “formative period” (1868 to 1890), followed by a moment of “establishment” (1890-1910), a “penetration period” (1910-1930) and a “fascist period” (1931-1945) can be fruitfully superimposed to the years during which the rituals were being reworked (2009, 101). In fact, the fifty years between 1868 and the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912 squarely correspond to the two periods of “establishment” and “penetration” of State Shinto, once again demonstrating the role of court music in the political processes of the time. Within this temporal framework, *gagaku* was consistently deployed in the highly symbolical funerary ceremonies for members of the imperial family. An analysis of the musical component of the funerals of Emperor Kōmei in 1867; Prince Wakamitsu Teruhiko no Mikoto (first male son of Emperor Meiji) in 1873; of the Empress Dowager Eishō (1897); and of Emperor Meiji (1912), demonstrates that by the first decade of the

²¹ Even though the separation of these three aspects of *shintō* practice misleadingly suggests that each can be dissected and treated independently from the other two, its value resides in providing a schematic representation of the complex dynamics at work during the Meiji and Taishō periods. Shimazono relies on the work of Murakami Shigeyoshi, but the latter offers a more nuanced typology spread out against the flow of Japanese history (see Murakami 1970, 17).

20th century “the sonic environment” of these occasions had completely changed (Tsukahara 2009, 96–106), de facto producing a (State) ‘Shinto soundscape’.

Finally, it is important to remember that the various rearrangements of the court rituals happened at the cost of expunging from the calendrical life of the central institutions those Buddhist elements that had characterized them for centuries. In fact, the process through which State Shinto came into being was both intellectually and physically violent: with the forcible “dissociation of Shinto and Buddhist divinities” known as *shinbutsu bunri* (Grapard 1984, 240), the Meiji government tried to put an end to a long history of “fusion of *kami* and buddhas” (*shinbutsu shūgō*)²², enforcing a policy of clear-cut separation between the two systems of belief that resulted in “frightening outbursts of violence against Buddhist institutions”, and in the condoned destruction of hundreds of temples throughout Japan (a phenomenon referred to as *haibutsu kishaku*) (Antoni 1995, 143).

Information regarding the ways in which the actual musical content of the rituals was altered is extremely scarce, but the efforts undertaken to manufacture a ‘Shinto soundscape’ are evident from the preference accorded to autochthonous music in a number of official occasions. In 1868, for example, the piece *Ōuta* was performed at the ascension ceremony of Emperor Meiji –an entirely different context from the ones it had before. Moreover, during the festival Iwashimizu Hōjōe pieces that had a relationship with Buddhism were expunged. In general, newly created rituals were all assigned the performance of “Shinto music” (Ono 2016, 182). Similarly, on the occasion of the first official encounter with a French diplomat in 1868, at the entrance of the Emperor the modal prelude *Hyōjo chōshi* and the danced piece *Manzairaku* were performed. In sum, “the existence of a religious tradition attached to *gagaku* was used abundantly as a mediator that could serve as a solemn ‘decoration’ of the Imperial family” (Ono 2016, 182).

And yet, the same reorganization of *gagaku* that portrayed it as a herald of the imperial system and of the ‘quintessentially Japanese religious tradition’ of State Shinto ran parallel to more diverse experimentations, in which court music was assigned less predetermined roles. This internal dynamism of *gagaku*’s modern modifications is more

²² “Shinto and Buddhism were thoroughly intertwined until the forcible separation that occurred after the Meiji Restoration” (Reader 2005, 435). On this topic, see the important volume *Buddhas and Kami in Japan: Honji Suijaku as a Combinatory Paradigm* (Teeuwen and Rambelli 2003).

clearly revealed taking into account the interactions between this ancient performing art and the nascent field of music education in the first decades of the Meiji period.

2.3 CAN THE CHILDREN SING *GAGAKU* ALONG? MUSIC EDUCATION AND *GAGAKU* IN THE MEIJI

The story of how music became one of the core subjects in the organized, ‘modern’ Japanese school curriculum can be read as a typical case of acculturation: following the abruptly increased political interactions with the United States and Europe in the 1850s and 60s, the influence of foreign models started to be felt in the Japanese artistic field at large, gradually overtaking and supplanting earlier forms of expression. Accordingly, compositional techniques and performing styles hailing from ‘the West’ were heavily adopted and applied to music-making “with a healthy dose of governmental intervention and guidance” (Herd 2008, 364).

In the context of the traditional performing arts, until the Meiji period receiving a musical education was tantamount to being affiliated with a specific ‘school’ or, rather, with a specific line of transmission in the wider context of the “*iemoto* system” (see Ortolani 1969; Smith 1998). For this reason, laying the foundations for a full-fledged national music education implied carrying out structural reforms, and the establishment of entirely new centers of transmission. Accordingly, the government proceeded to implement a system of mandatory music education for both primary and secondary schools, and came up with the outline of a specific institutional framework for the professional training of musicians (especially composers) (Wade 2014, 203–11). Both were characterized by the ample appropriation of models, styles and techniques hailing from a Euro-American context (Okunaka 2008, 203–11). The decision to privilege such models and techniques over pre-existing ones was far from accidental: if Alison Tokita is right in asserting that “the spread of Western classical music can be compared with the ubiquity of the modern novel which Benedict Anderson posits as an indicator of nationalism” (2010, 224–25), it might be possible to state that the intention of Meiji bureaucrats and politicians was from the start to channel nationalistic ideas and values through the medium of music, thus actively seeking to ‘modernize’ and ‘Westernize’ the education sector and, consequently, future generations of citizens.

In this “massive educational process of Japanese modernization” (Herd 2008, 364), the understandable lack of preparation on the part of the teachers-to-be was only half of the issue: as a fitting institutional setting for their training was being set up, the very contents and forms of music education had to be envisioned and produced. In fact, as early as 1872 a governmental decree listed “school songs” (*shōka*) and “musical performance” (*sōgaku*) as curriculum subjects in primary and middle school, but noticed that they were still “lacking” (Baba 1968, 293–94). To correct this situation, a Music Investigation Committee (*Ongaku torishirabe gakari*) was created in 1879, with famous educator Isawa Shūji (1851-1917) as director. Isawa had spent three years in the United States, where he had been trained by Luther Whiting Mason (1818-1896), then director of the Boston Music School and the author of the *National Music Course*, “a graded series of songbooks in extensive use in the late 19th century” (Manabe 2014, 97; see also Okunaka 2008, 139–40). According to Eppstein, Isawa argued that “traditional Japanese music was unsuitable in education, as music such as *gagaku* was ‘too refined’, while popular music, such as shamisen-based music for geisha, was ‘too vulgar’; he deemed a newly created ‘national’ music for all classes to be more suitable” (1994, 30-36, as quoted in Manabe 2014, 97). In line with a similar stance, the ambition of the Music Investigation Committee was to forge “a common music that could transcend local origins and social extraction, (...) a national music [*kokugaku*]” that could contribute to the formation of modern, educated citizens (Tsukahara 2009, 5–7).

In order to turn Isawa’s vision into reality, Mason himself was invited to Japan in 1880 as a leading member of the newly established Committee (see **FIG. 2.2**). The activities of the Committee resulted in the publication of the first collection of *Songs for Elementary School* (*Shōgaku shōkashū*) (1881) (**FIG. 2.3**). In line with the ‘acculturation hypothesis’, more than 90% of the songs consisted of European or American melodies with an adapted Japanese text (Galliano 2002, 30). Even though in the following years the number of melodies of Japanese origin was slightly increased, the overall influence of Christian devotional music remained predominant²³. The effects of this are aptly summarized by Galliano: “children learned to read Western notation, to sing in a choir, to enjoy harmonized tunes, and to perceive modulation” (2002, 30).

²³ Modern recordings of the earliest school songs can be heard on the 7th volume of the series *Collection of Modern School Songs Based on the Original Texts* (*Genten ni yoru kindai shōka shūsei*) (*Nihon Saisho No Shōka Ongakukai ~ Shōgaku Shōkashū* 2000).

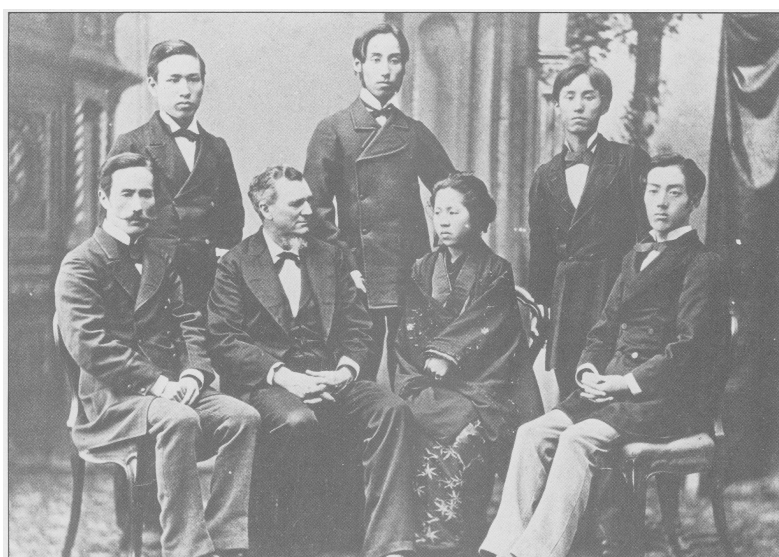


FIGURE 2.2. Luther Whiting Mason with Japanese students during his sojourn in Japan (March 1880 – July 1882) (Berger 1987, 32).

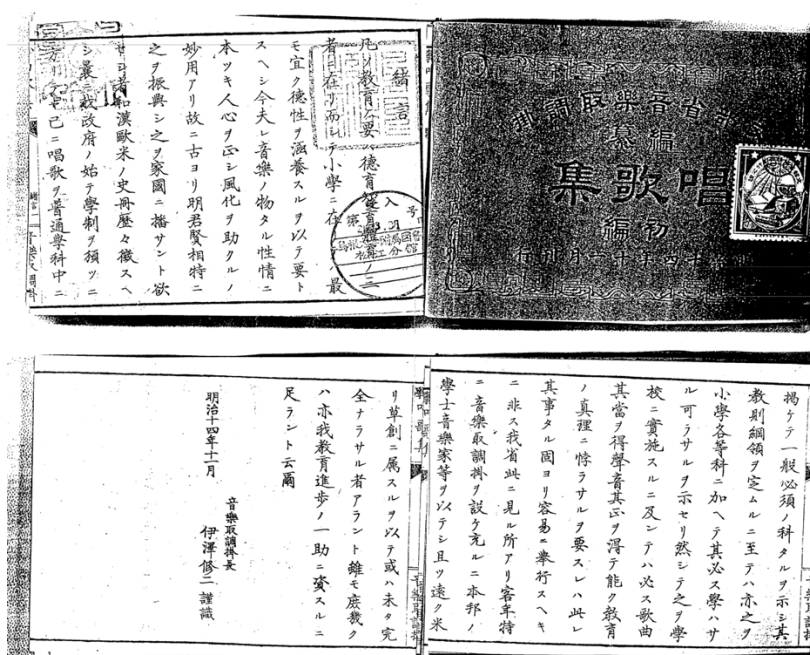


FIGURE 2.3. The frontispiece of the first edition of the *Songs for Elementary School* (1881).
(From a photographic reprint preserved at the Research Centre for Japanese Traditional Music, Kyoto).

In 1887, the Music Investigation Committee became the Tokyo Music School (*Tōkyō ongaku gakkō*, predecessor of today's Tokyo University of Fine Arts and Music), with Isawa as its director (Howe, Lai, and Liou 2015, 95); two years later, music education was introduced into the curriculum of secondary schools. Within the span of ten years, tangible results had been achieved (Galliano 2002, 91).

While it is certainly true that the story of the creation of a national music for education and indoctrination is characterized by the import of Euro-American musical traits, this does not mean that in the process there was no space for discussion and even exploration of possible alternatives. For one thing, some of the first members of the *Ongaku torishirabe gakari* were musicians hailing from several Japanese traditional performing arts, including a few *gagaku* musicians from the Office of *Gagaku* (Galliano 2002, 51). Furthermore, in those same years *gagaku* provided an interesting example of a failed attempt to compose a 'music for the nation' building on different, non-Western materials. Between 1877 and 1884, the musicians of the Office of *Gagaku* worked on two collections of 'educational songs' (*hoiku shōka*) at the request of institutions seeking to include music in their curricula. The first was commissioned for the opening ceremony of the kindergarten of Tokyo Women's Normal School (*Tōkyō joshi shihan gakkō*), and comprised about 100 songs (FIG. 2.4), while the second only included 24 songs and was compiled for the Institute for Research on the Imperial Classics (*Kōten kōkyūsho*), a school founded to educate Shinto clergymen (Gottschewski 2013, 245–47)²⁴.

The results were significantly different from those of the *Ongaku torishirabe gakari*: "while the songs of the *Shōgaku shōkashū* mainly use Western melodies and are notated in Western staff system, the *hoiku shōka* are based on the music theory of *gagaku* and written in *hakase*" (Gottschewski 2003, 1), the neumatic notation used for Buddhist chant (*shōmyō*) and court music's vocal pieces (see FIG. 2.5). Moreover, as noted by Ibukiyama, the latter's songs were to be accompanied by the wooden clappers *shakubyōshi* and by the six-stringed zither *wagon*, both instruments used in the *shintō*-associated subgenre of *gagaku* known as *kuniburi no utamai* (1979, 2)²⁵.

²⁴ For a discussion of the role of this institution in the development of a nationalistic version of *shintō*, see (Shimazono 2009).

²⁵ Compare the recordings contained in the 6th volumes of the series *Collection of Modern School Songs Based on the Original* with those in the abovementioned 7th volume (*Reijintachi No Shōka ~ Hoiku Shōka* 2000).

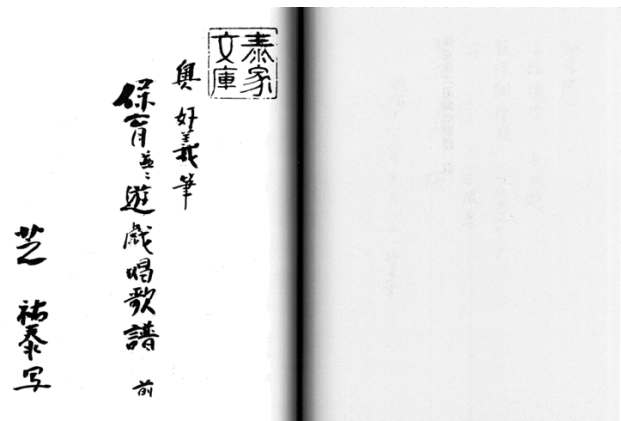


FIGURE 2.4. Frontispiece of the *hoiku shōka* written for the kindergarten of Tokyo Women's Normal School. Hand copied in 1971 by Shiba Sukehiro on the basis of a manuscript by Oku Yoshihisa (1858-1933) (Shiba 1991, 203, 208-9).

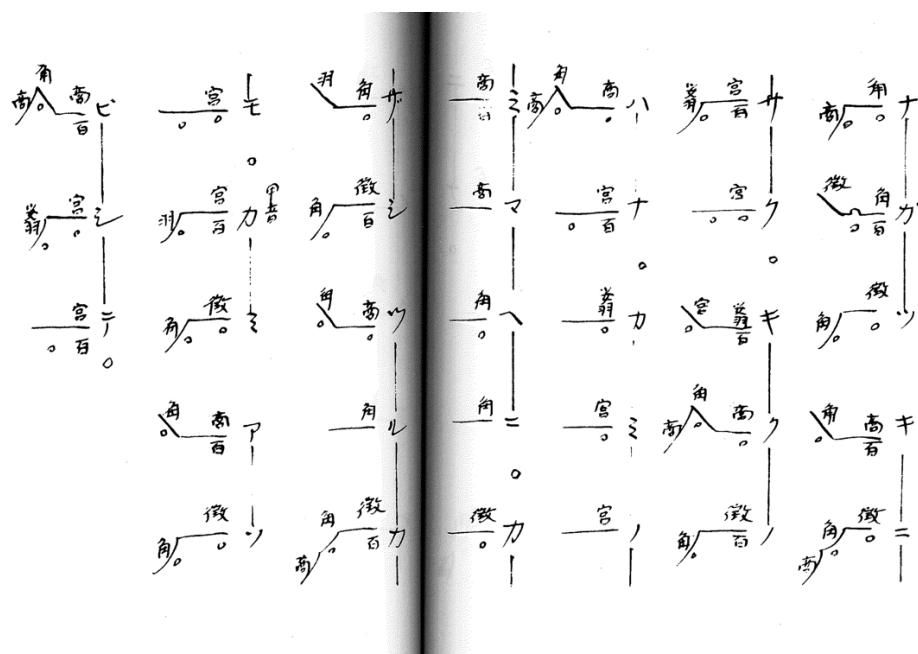


FIGURE 2.5. Notation of the vocal part of the song *Kiku no kazashi* (*The Chrysanthemum Fastened in the Hair*) (starting on the left side of the first picture). Note the striking similarity with the notation of Buddhist chanting (Shiba 1991, 249-51).

Considering that the *hoiku shōka* also differed from the school songs of Isawa and Mason in terms of pitch and modulation, it is certainly appropriate to consider them as something musically distinct from the creations of the Music Investigation Committee

(see Ibukiyama 1979, 20). Gottschewski is therefore right in pointing out that the “nursery school songs” produced by the musicians of the court represented an example of musical creativity in the context of ‘traditional music’ (that is, a manifestation of ‘modernity within tradition’), and that their study must be wary of the binary opposition between ‘Western’ modernity and ‘Asian’ tradition –a stance that would “neglect modernization in traditional culture” (2013, 263). Confirming the artistic and historical value of these compositions, Ibukiyama also notes that these pieces were not merely used in schools as classroom material, but also performed at *gagaku* recitals: in other words, these were full-fledged compositions and artistic experimentations (1979, 24). Paraphrasing Gottschewski, we could then say that the *hoiku shōka* show that change is possible in musical contexts perceived as unalterable or even immutable²⁷. Perhaps similar considerations should be expanded to Meiji-period school songs as a whole, as Tsukahara seems to suggest: “Although these modern songs are closer in style to Western than traditional music (because they were modelled on similar Western songs), they reflect more than just the introduction and assimilation of Western music: they represent a new eclectic song style based on the idea of the Japanese people ‘singing together in Japanese’” (2013, 224).

Even though they clearly manifested elements of novelty and deep artistic significance, the stylistic choices made by the court musicians were eventually deemed inadequate in consideration of the many complications caused by having young students sing melodies in the little-known modes of *gagaku*, accompanied by instruments whose acoustic qualities are far from ideal in creating a sense of homogeneous unity of voices²⁸. Eventually, the choice fell on Isawa’s model, and the *hoiku shōka* were quietly put aside. Nonetheless, a few songs made their way into successive collections of school songs, published in 1883 and 1884 (Tsukahara 2009, 117; Ibukiyama 1979, 24).

These institutional dynamics, and the artistic experimentations they helped shaping, suggest that a balanced reading of the role of music in Meiji-period education should consider the importance of *gagaku*, especially in light of the fact that musicians active in

²⁷ The artistic significance of these creations in the history of Japanese music is also evidenced by the fact that one of them, the song *Kimi ga yo*, was chosen as the national anthem in 1880 (Gottschewski 2003, 12–13).

²⁸ Both *shakubyōshi* and *wagon* have a dry sound, with a very short decay time. These characteristics are especially opposed to those of the organ, the instrument Mason felt was most appropriate to accompany his school songs.

this field were experimenting with foreign categories while at the same time retaining stylistic and aesthetic features pertaining to their own established repertoire. The *hoiku shōka* thus show that the narrative according to which Japanese music's 'modernization' can be equated to the unquestioned acceptance of 'Western' elements and the converse denigration of 'traditional' ones is both simplistic and historically imprecise.

A more specific issue is whether or not the *hoiku shōka* can be interpreted 'as *gagaku*'. Needless to say, in order to decide on this point, it is necessary to conduct a thorough comparative research on the similarities between, on the one side, nursery school songs and the school songs composed by the Music Investigation Committee and, on the other, nursery school songs and pieces firmly accepted as internal to the *gagaku* repertoire. In particular, it would be important to compare systematically the musical characteristics of the *hoiku shōka* and of the sung repertoires of *gagaku* (*utaimono*, see the Introduction): a similar comparison has been only approximated (see Ibukiyama 1979; and especially Gottschewski 2013), and would be worth undertaking more comprehensively. Melodic contour, ornamentation, pitch range, phrasing, and the modal quality of the pieces are only some of the aspects worth considering. However, this dissertation is not concerned with this kind of fine-grained musicological exercise, trying as it does to draw more comprehensive lines of tension within the history of *gagaku*. Ultimately, then, a decision as to whether or not the *hoiku shōka* 'are *gagaku*' (admitting that similar statements make scientific sense) rests on the width of a scholar's definition of *gagaku*. As a preliminary observation, I would advise against excluding the nursery school songs from such a definition –if anything because it has been convincingly demonstrated that these pieces were composed within a musical framework that one could call the 'sonic horizon' of *gagaku*.

A final point is the relationship between nursery school songs and the school songs of Isawa and Mason. It is probably here that a line could be drawn between *gagaku* and non-*gagaku*, again in light of the arguments made by a number of scholars concerning the constitutive differences between the two kinds of musical objects. But these are hardly central problems here. What counts is to show the extent to which *gagaku* musicians were active in the context of music education, and the existence of a multiplicity of uses to which *gagaku* was put in the Meiji. Regardless of whether the nursery school songs are *gagaku* or not, their existence highlights that *gagaku* was a multiple object well before Tōgi Hideki.

2.4 GAGAKU AND THE INVENTION OF 'JAPANESE TRADITIONAL MUSIC'

From what we have seen so far, a somewhat antithetical dynamic seems to characterize the artistic endeavors surrounding *gagaku* at the outset of the Meiji period. On the one hand stands a tendency to incorporate Euro-American models, most notably taking extant melodies in their entirety and supplementing them with newly composed or preexisting Japanese texts to create a repertory of school songs. This practical solution to the problem of, quite literally, 'harmonizing Japanese modernity' is evident in the three collections of school songs produced under Mason's influence between 1881 and 1883. On the other hand, however, *gagaku* musicians exhibited a significant amount of creativity in their multiple endeavors in and out of the court, whether this involved participating in the renewed rituals of a 'state religion' in the making, or composing hybrid musical objects that escape the distinction between 'modern' and 'traditional'. How are we to judge these apparently contradictory currents, running parallel from the 1860s to at least the first decade of the 20th century?

For one thing, the fact that the musicians of the Office of *Gagaku* were experimenting with previously unfamiliar categories should not come as a complete surprise, given that from 1874 they were trained in 'Western' music as well as in *gagaku* (Tsukahara 2009, 114). At the time, it was felt that ceremonial occasions derived from the United Kingdom, Prussian Germany and the United States (such as the visits of foreign authorities or the celebration of the emperor's birthday) should require a different, perhaps less religiously connoted repertoire. At first, the task of performing on these occasions was assigned to the military band of the navy, as it was virtually the only group capable to play the foreign repertoire at the time²⁹. But the sheer frequency of such ceremonial occasions made it seem inappropriate to repeatedly borrow the services of a branch of the military, and, eventually, it was considered more fitting to have the court musicians take over the task (Tsukahara 1998, 217)³⁰. This they did actively, even zealously, considering that already in 1879 an Association for Western Music (*Yōgaku kyōkai*) was founded, with voluntary participation and under the guidance of Luther Whiting Mason first (by then Professor at

²⁹ On the importance of marching bands for the introduction of European and American music in Japan, see (Galliano 2002). On military music in Meiji Japan, and its relationship to court music, see (Tsukahara 2009, 120–23; 2013, 230–35).

³⁰ Tsukahara also suggests that the main reasons for such a shift might have been "budgetary" (2013, 228).

the Music Investigation Committee) and Franz Eckert (1852-1916)³¹ later. At first only members aged 15 to 40 were required to undertake Western music training, but eventually this was extended to everyone, and to this day court musicians reach a high level of proficiency in one or more instruments of the European orchestra (Tsukahara 1998, 217–19).

Without a doubt, the members of the Office of *Gagaku* represented a unique case in Japan: as a body of state functionaries professionally trained in two widely different musical styles, by the end of the 1870s they were perhaps the most qualified and up-to-date group of professional musicians in the country. Through their training, they came into possession of a set of technical skills that made them particularly apt to confront a musical world in turmoil. Especially crucial was their ability to grapple with the complexities of (Western) staff notation (Tsukahara 2009, 115): it was this “bi-musicality”³³ that rendered the musicians-functionaries perfect candidates for a new project set up by the Tokyo Music School in 1907: the foundation of a Research Institute on Traditional Music (*Hōgaku chōsa gakari*). The purpose of the Institute was the investigation and preservation of “Japanese traditional music” (*hōgaku*) mainly through historical and musicological analyses (Ōkubo 2012, 5; Terauchi 2010, 36–51). The practical means to reach this goal were primarily two: extensive use of staff notation (*gosenfuka*) as a tool to record performed music *and* music notated with traditional methods; and the recording of music on wax cylinders. But the activities of the Research Institute were extremely diverse, encompassing a variety of genres, from the music of Nō theatre to music connected with the recitation of the Heike monogatari; Kabuki music; music for the puppet theatre; *shamisen* popular music; and much more (see Ōnuki 1989).

Gagaku was especially prominent, with sessions dedicated to its analysis or transcription taking place even two or three times per week between 1916 and 1928³⁴ (Terauchi 2010, 38–42). Four musicians from the Office of *Gagaku* took part in the project, with the original ambitious task of transcribing the whole corpus of court music as

³¹ The German composer credited with harmonizing the national anthem *Kimi ga yo* (see Gottschewski 2003).

³³ A notion introduced by Mantle Hood to describe “the training of ears, eyes, hands and voice” in more than one musical tradition (1960, 55). According to Hood, this should be a prerequisite for competent ethnomusicologists. Interestingly, it was Hood himself who indicated the musicians of the Imperial Household in Tokyo as being “truly bi-musical” (as suggested to him by Robert Garfias) (1960, 55).

³⁴ With a significant interruption caused by the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923.

transmitted by its ‘certified’ specialists³⁵. Together, they produced a brief text entitled *Memorandum on the Principles for Transcribing Gagaku* (*Gagaku o kifuhō hikae*), which, if examined today, not only provides a simple comprehensive understanding of *gagaku*, but also sheds light on the unique, sophisticated methods employed by these musicians in their groundbreaking attempt to deal with one further ‘textualization’ of court music³⁶. Since it is revealing of the activities of the *Hōgaku chōsa gakari* as a whole, it is worth taking a closer look at this pioneering analysis of *gagaku*.

Individual instrumental parts were treated in two different but parallel ways: on one side, the notes produced by each instrument (as derived from their individual tablature parts) were notated exactly as they appeared in the official *Meiji senteifu* and termed *shohō* (“the way [the music is] written”); on the other, the same melodic line was notated as it was actually heard in performance, under the name *sōhō* (“the way [the music is] performed”). This represented an innovative and original analytical exercise: the juxtaposition of a transnotation (*yakufu*) and a transcription (*saifu*)³⁷ made it possible to appreciate the subtleties of *gagaku* performance, while at the same time providing an accurate version of it in staff notation, thus remaining ‘faithful’ to the score (Terauchi 2010, 49) (see **FIG. 2.6**).

The inventiveness and the meticulousness with which the *gagaku* musicians faced the issue of representing differences between sonic and textual aspects of court music are especially interesting considering that the overall project of the *Hōgaku chōsa gakari* had a tremendous impact on the ways Japanese scholars and performers of future generations would conceive the music produced and preserved in the archipelago before (and in part even after) the Meiji period. In fact, it was precisely with the activities of this

³⁵ A monumental endeavor later accomplished by Shiba Sukehiro (1898-1982) in his four volumes *The Full Scores of Gagaku in Staff Notation* (*Gosenfu ni yoru gagaku sōfu*) (Shiba 1968-1972).

³⁶ For a detailed exposition, see (Terauchi 2000). For a reprint, see (Tōkyō geijutsu Daigaku hyaku nen shi henshū iinkai and Geijutsu kenkyū shinkō zaidan 2003, 2:686–91).

³⁷ Both subcategories of notation (Ellingson 2002, 692) broadly defined as “a visual analogue of musical sound, either as a record of sound heard or imagined, or as a set of visual instructions for performers” (Bent et al. 2002, 73), ‘transnotation’ and ‘transcription’ are technical terms in musicology that acquire further specific meanings when used in ethnomusicological research. In particular, “in ethnomusicological transcription, music is written down from a live or recorded performance, or is transferred from sound to a written form by electronic or mechanical means” (Ellingson 2002, 692–93); transnotation, on the other hand, is the transferring of music from a (written) notation system to another. In the present case, the preexisting notation (from the *Meiji senteifu*) was transnotated (into staff notation), and in parallel the music actually performed was transcribed (also into staff notation). The operation is both highly sophisticated and technically demanding, but its positive effects are immense: in fact, the hiatus between the scores and their actual performance is rendered maximally clear.

institution that the category of *hōgaku*, often translated as ‘Japanese traditional music’, was born³⁸. For this reason, the role of *gagaku* in the activities of the Institute represents an important piece in the composite ‘puzzle’ that is *gagaku*’s modern multiplicity.



FIGURE 2.6. Transnotation and transcription of *Etenraku* by the musicians of the Hōgaku chōsa gakari: the discrepancies are apparent in the upper two lines, dedicated to the *ryūteki* flute (Terauchi 2010, 46).

Even though expressions such as *wagaku* (‘music of Wa’, an ancient name for the archipelago) had appeared in the second half of the Meiji period, the term *hōgaku* was created in 1907 on the occasion of the foundation of the Institute (Tsukahara 2007, 11). This and similar expressions were partly meant to signal an arising paradigmatic contrast with the equally broad category of *yōgaku* (Western music), perceived as overwhelmingly dominant at the beginning of the 20th century (see Tokita and Hughes

³⁸ For an excellent review of the social and intellectual processes that led to the establishment of the category of *hōgaku*, see (Groemer 2012).

2008, 2–3)⁴⁰. By contrast, the (first of all institutional) recourse to a new term should have the effect of “awaken[ing] the understanding and perception of Japanese traditional music” (Terauchi 2010, 37), encouraging the Japanese audience to get acquainted with its own musical heritage. However, as noticed by Terauchi, “here, the concept of *hōgaku* is not the new Japanese music or ‘national music’ praised by Isawa Shūji (...): analyzing the items selected by the Research Institute on Traditional Music, it becomes clear that *hōgaku* was a generic term to indicate *the traditional music that was present in Japan at that time*” (Terauchi 2010, 36 emphasis added). For this reason, much like *gagaku*, the term *hōgaku* soon became an ambiguous signifier, at times indicating the whole of Japanese music (including compositions in ‘Western’ style by Japanese individuals), at times only the music transmitted up to the Meiji by specialized guilds of musicians (Tsukahara 2007, 11–12). Accordingly, genres such as *gagaku* and the music of Nō were at times perceived as difficult to reconcile with other, more “folkloric” performing arts (Kikkawa 1984a, 904), so that a host of different expressions such as *junhōgaku* (pure *hōgaku*, referring specifically to the earliest examples of Japanese music); *kinsei hōgaku* (early-modern *hōgaku*); and *gendai hōgaku* (contemporary *hōgaku*) were introduced in the years between the appearance of the term *hōgaku* and the 1960s (and even later on) in the hope of achieving greater descriptive accuracy (Hirano 1989, 86).

As a matter of fact, Isawa’s personal dismissal of Japanese ‘traditional’ music in the 1870s was not based on an opposition between Western and Japanese repertoires, but rather on an earlier set of epistemological categories, namely that between *ga(gaku)* (understood as ‘elegant, refined music’) and *zoku(gaku)* (‘popular, folkloric, vulgar music’) (Tsukahara 2009, 6). Within this earlier paradigm, *zokugaku* indicated entertainment music, with special reference to the music performed by geisha in the Edo period, while *gagaku* was synonym with ‘serious’ music, as epitomized by the repertoires of the court, but also by Nō. Thence the interest of analyzing the epistemological shift: it was through the activities of the *Ongaku torishirabe gakari* that *gagaku* was re-conceptualized; the activities of those musicians laid the foundations of its transformation into the spokesperson of ‘Japanese traditional music’. Before the foundation of the Institute, *gagaku* was a word with a wholly different set of associations;

⁴⁰ The most notable source of ambiguity was represented by the activities of Japanese composers who wrote in ‘Western’ style: should those examples be considered *yōgaku* or *hōgaku*? (On these topics, see especially Kikkawa 1984a; Herd 2008, 365–71; Galliano 2002, 65–73).

afterwards, its reverberations were bound to bring to mind ‘non-Western’ and specifically ‘traditional’ music.

But the fact that ‘Japanese traditional music’ was not at first directly opposed to ‘Western music’ is also evidenced by the contents of a text written by Isawa in 1884, on the occasion of the inclusion of items of Japanese music in the International Health Exhibition in London⁴². The text, entitled *Ongaku torishirabe gakari seiseki shinpōsho*, summed up the main results obtained within the Institute’s first five years of existence (see Hirata 2012). There, Isawa clearly states that “The traditional music of our country can be divided roughly into two groups, *gagaku* and *zokugaku*” (Kawaguchi 1991, 1:67), before arguing that the scale used in Japanese music is not different from the one used in Western music (Hirata 2012, 36). Interestingly, Isawa writes these words at the outset of a chapter entitled *On the Scale of this Country (Honpō onritsu no koto)* using the same character for ‘country’ that will be later employed in the expression *hōgaku*, whose literal meaning thus appears to be close to ‘the music of this country’ rather than ‘Japanese traditional music’ (Fig. 2.7).

Gagaku’s role in this overall renegotiation of the epistemological categories denoting the music already present or recently introduced in Japan was especially ambiguous, as was its presentation to ‘the West’. In fact, “*gagaku* was the first of Japan’s traditional music genres to be introduced overseas in a systematic way”: instruments were featured in the second International Exposition held in Paris in 1867, in the 1873 World Exposition in Wien, and then again in the third Paris World Fair (*Exposition Universelle*) of 1878, this time with the inclusion of “a set of instruments, nine scrolls of music notation and thirteen drawings of *bugaku* dances, a booklet of commentary on *gagaku* entitled *Nihon gagaku gaiben (Outline of Japanese court music)*”, complete with an English translation (Tsukahara 2013, 230). This *Outline* offers a synthetic explanation of *gagaku*’s major subgenres (*tōgaku* and *komagaku*, see the Introduction) that unashamedly asserts: “almost all of the pieces were either reworked or composed anew after transmission, and the instruments are made in Japan. Nothing remains exactly the same as it was when it was transmitted. Although of foreign origin, this music is completely Japanese now, and is only referred to as ‘Chinese’ or ‘Korean’ in accordance with ancient custom” (Tsukahara 2013, 230). Tsukahara rightly notices that these words indicate that *gagaku* was

⁴² For a complete list of the items displayed, see (Terauchi 2005).

considered “Japanese music’, in recognition of the fact that it had been transmitted within the country for an extremely long time” (Tsukahara 2013, 230). But perhaps they also reveal that at the time there was no claim that *gagaku* had remain unaltered throughout the centuries. So while on the one hand autochthonous music could be presented as a component of a “modern nation” that “to a great extent has absorbed Western culture” (Terauchi 2010, 17), on the other it was increasingly being conceptualized in opposition to ‘Western music’, under the new rubric of *hōgaku*.

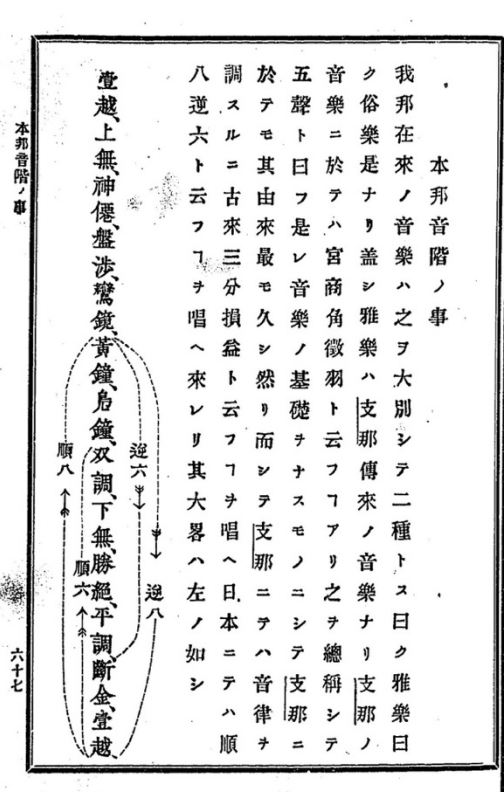


FIGURE 2.7. First lines of the chapter *On the Scale of this Country* from Isawa's *Ongaku torishirabe gakari seiseki shinpōsho*. (From the digitalized version available at <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/854780/44>).

Within this larger panorama, the *Hōgaku chōsa gakari* put forth the apparently paradoxical or even ‘schizophrenic’ idea that ‘traditional music’ needed to be recorded, preserved and protected through extensive use of specific musicological means derived from the study of ‘Western’ music, such as sound recording and transcription into staff notation. In this sense, the category of *hōgaku* was still at an early stage of crystallization –a concept still partly allowing mediation, as evidenced both by the heterogeneous nature of the genres it encompassed and the intellectual posture that underscored it, so heavily

imbricated with conceptions of ‘scientific endeavors’ based on a type of knowledge-production associated with ‘the West’ (i.e. getting to know an object by systematically applying a technical method perceived as ‘neutral’ and endowed with ‘explanatory force’).

With the passage from the *ga/zoku* opposition to the *hōgaku/yōgaku* opposition, thanks in great part to the activities of the *Hōgaku chōsa gakari*, we witness the shifting of an entire episteme, as well as the development of a retrospective (that is, historical) understanding of how music could be perceived as familiar or unfamiliar, domestic or extraneous. As indicated by the techniques employed in the transcription of *gagaku* pieces, the contribution of court music to the formation of this idea of ‘Japanese traditional music’ was fundamental. However, it is probably wise not to think of the recording and (trans)notation of *gagaku* as certain signs of a sudden turn to an entirely new paradigm. Far from being ideological, the stance taken by the transcribers was probably more pragmatic in nature: in an essentially fluid context, in which epistemological categories were changing shape, their task was to find the best way to preserve faithfully the musical contents of *gagaku*. And that is just what they managed to accomplish.

Finally, both the inclusion of *gagaku* items in the context of international exhibitions abroad and its ‘textualization’ into full-fledged scores at the beginning of the Meiji period are symptoms of a growing awareness of *gagaku*’s value “as art music” (Terauchi 2010, xi). In fact, these examples could also be read as instances of a process of reification of *gagaku* within a system of values that assigns more and more importance to its aesthetic features. In this sense, the emergence of the category of ‘Japanese traditional music’ at the turn of the 19th century can and should be linked to the stable place occupied by *gagaku* in present-day ‘*hōgaku*’ sectors of record shops across Japan.

2.5 (COURT) MUSIC AND THE NATION

In all its manifestations, from court rituals to school songs, from international exhibitions to sophisticated transcriptions onto staff notation, Meiji-period *gagaku* partakes of the tangled up relationship between music, nationalism and modernity. For this reason, it is important to sketch out how such a critical nexus of values reverberates

not only throughout the history of 'Japanese court music', but also along the theoretical lines that guide its analysis.

Although both evidently problematic in terms of their applicability to the Japanese context, the concepts of nationalism and of modernity have been tackled by virtually all the scholars concerned with the intellectual and political history of Japan at the turn of the 19th century⁴³. In fact, the Meiji restoration is perceived as a foundational moment for what we came to consider constitutive features of Japan as a nation-state. In particular, it Marilyn Ivy has argued that the very ideas of 'Japan' and 'the Japanese' might be read as products of modernity, understood as a new historical phase inaugurated in 1868. Building on Naoki Sakai's related argument on the Japanese language, she has maintained that "it is arguable that there was no discursively unified notion of the 'Japanese' before the 18th century, and that the articulation of a unified Japanese ethnos with the 'nation' to produce 'Japanese culture' is entirely *modern*" (1995, 4 emphasis in the original) ⁴⁴.

In the case of court music, too, the creation of the Office of *Gagaku* and the production of the *Scores of the Meiji* marked a watershed moment, recently described as "the birth of modern *gagaku*" (Tsukahara 2009, 42; Ono 2016, 184). With this expression, scholars such as Tsukahara Yasuko and Terauchi Naoko have stressed the fact that it is possible to think in terms of 'before and after 1870', at the same time proposing to confront the node of modernity reflectively (that is, meta-theoretically) by asking both how the very term can be interpreted and what it meant for *gagaku*. Indeed, if the Meiji restoration can be thought of as a moment of creation and organization, the same must be said about *gagaku* in the late 19th century: as noticed by Terauchi, "*gagaku* was an essential element in the reorganization of the rituals of a new Japan, reborn as a nation-state, and in the creation of the imperial system; as such, it was itself reconstructed and reorganized" (2010, 11). In a similar vein, Steven G. Nelson has observed that "as it is performed today, the music is largely the result of a systematization of the late 19th century" (Nelson 2008b, 37). The driving forces behind that systematization are linked to the development of a new, smoldering nationalistic ideology resulting from the political and bureaucratic application of those same concepts of 'modernity' and 'nation-state' to key bureaucratic

⁴³ For instance, see (Vlastos 1998; Ivy 1995a).

⁴⁴ For some coordinates on modernity in and out of Japan, see (Appadurai 1996; but also Latour 1993). At the outset of their introductory chapter, the editors of the *Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music* similarly problematize the concepts of 'Japan' and of 'Japanese music' (Tokita and Hughes 2008, 1).

apparatuses, most notably the institution of the Imperial family and the field of mandatory school education. In other words, if the practices explored in this chapter all played a role in the birth of modern *gagaku*, they are also all partaking in the historical developments that led to the very definition of ‘Japanese modernity’. Necessarily, this situates *gagaku* in the context of an overarching discussion of the relationship between music and nationalism in Meiji Japan.

Several studies have dealt with the issue, convincingly demonstrating that music did in fact play an important role in shaping a new collective identitarian discourse informed by the principles that were to guide the ‘renewal’ of the nation⁴⁵. Indeed, building on the experience of adopting military music from foreign countries, the government came to the conclusion that music could be considered “valuable for character formation and discipline, and also for the spiritual and physical health of its practitioners” (Wade 2014, 17). Accordingly, music education quickly became “a cornerstone of producing modern citizens” (Yano and Hosokawa 2008b, 346)⁴⁶. In this sense, music was a medium with some unique characteristics, carrying out the task of indoctrination in *multisensory, multimodal ways*: “singing school songs became a way to teach the lesson of the nation, intellectually through the content of the lyrics, aurally through the sounds of the music, as well as bodily through the very act of unison singing” (Yano and Hosokawa 2008b, 346). For this reason, *gagaku*’s nursery school songs can be interpreted as attempts to give material and sonic substance to specific ideological principles. That these early attempts were hybrid in nature, defying the boundaries of tradition and modernity by borrowing from both and identifying with neither, is perhaps not so surprising, considering that school songs more generally reveal “the cultural ambivalence typical of early Meiji” (Herd 2008, 365) – incidentally, an ambivalence immediately evident in the stark juxtaposition of the calligraphic style of the songs’ lyrics and the staff notation to which the melodies were set (see **FIG. 2.8**).

⁴⁵ For example, see (Johnson 2004; Yano and Hosokawa 2008a; Tsukahara 2013).

⁴⁶ “The influence of *gagaku* permeated into both military and school pieces” through their use of *gagaku* scales, “producing a *distinctive sound world* in the ceremonial spaces of both”(Tsukahara 2013, 237 emphasis added).



FIGURE 2.8. An extract from the first song contained in the first edition of the *Songs for Elementary School* (1881). (From a copy preserved at the Research Centre for Japanese Traditional Music, Kyoto).

These elements of hybridity and ambiguity remind us that we should always be wary of simplistic binary interpretations: as noticed by Tsukahara Yasuko, the tendency to construe the musical dynamics of 19th-century Japan in terms of an opposition between ‘Western’ and ‘traditional’ music “reveals glimpses of a conceptual framework that views the modernization of music in non-Western cultures largely as a process of westernization” (2013, 224). But cases like the skillful transnotations made by the musicians of the *Hōgaku chōsa gakari* demonstrate that, far from being mere examples of westernization, the Japanese attempts to deploy technical skills derived from fairly unfamiliar musical and cultural backgrounds were characterized by a high degree of sophistication and creativity. In turn, this puts into question the validity of interpretations of *gagaku* as an unchanged and unchanging performing art: in fact, the examples above all demonstrate that during the early Meiji period “the ‘tradition’ of *gagaku* was reworked to make it suitable for a modern state, reappearing in what we may see as a strengthened form” (Tsukahara 2013, 227). If this is the case, the next step is to ask to what degree the reworking of court music was in fact a *reinvention*. In other words, one may ask whether ‘modern *gagaku*’ was nothing more than an invented tradition and, given the strict relationship between the two, whether the same can be said of State Shinto⁴⁷. However, it is equally important to keep in mind, as Terauchi does, that the

⁴⁷ As suggested also by Itō (1998, 31). For the “invention of tradition”, see (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983).

concept of “invented tradition” may itself be of little use, given that “perhaps traditions are always invented” (2010, vi)⁴⁸.

In conclusion, we have seen that in the years between the Meiji revolution of 1868 and the first decade of the new century *gagaku* found itself caught up in a densely interrelated network: modernization and reinvention were tightly bound in the fields of education, music making, religion, and the reorganization of the institutional apparatuses of the state. In many ways, the encounter (or better encounters) with modernity described so far show that *gagaku* was an important mediator at the center of a complex web of mutual affordances⁴⁹. Reshaped alongside the social structures it was involved in reshaping, *gagaku* started anew while remaining the ancient performing art it had been for centuries. Fulfilling the need of both nationalistic and modernizing drives to be symbolically represented required that this music be ‘resemanticized’ in terms of a performing art with strong religious connotations and an exclusive relation to the imperial family⁵⁰. In this sense, the ritual contexts in which *gagaku* was employed were not marginal elements in the political endeavors of the time; to the contrary, they were at the core of a new nationalism in the making: “Just as Japan’s ‘Emperor system’ (*tennōsei*) ideology functioned as the central pillar that supported the political system and unified the nation and its people in the pre-war period, so the *gagaku* of imperial rites played a special role

⁴⁸ However, this stance would not be condoned by Marilyn Ivy: according to the American scholar, “it is not possible to rest easy with the by now common critique of the invention of tradition: that is, that *all* tradition is invented. To say that all tradition is invented is still to rely on a *choice* between invention and authenticity, between fiction and reality, between discourse and history” (1995b, 21 emphasis in the original).

⁴⁹ The concept of affordance is borrowed from psychologist James Gibson, (2014, 119). Tia De Nora offered another image to think about music and its flexible potentials, talking about “musical framing”, a phenomenon that “occurs when music’s properties are somehow projected or mapped on to something else, when music’s properties are applied to and come to organize something outside themselves. Using the notion of framing as a starting point, it is possible to investigate how actors of all kinds forge links between musical materials and non-musical matters” (DeNora 2000, 27). Both the idea of *gagaku* as part of a series of mutual affordances, and of it being the subject of musical framing can go a long way in explaining in a non-deterministic fashion the relationship between ideology and court music in Meiji Japan. The first concept is favored here because it is essentially relational and disrespectful of material-semiotic discriminations between the entities brought into the relation.

⁵⁰ However, it is important to remember that, contrary to an “old image, which still exercises strong iconic-ideological power over the ‘Western’ imaginary”, the figure of Emperor Meiji “signified neither a return to ancient, ‘traditional’ Japanese culture nor a capitulation to the hastily put-together ‘state Shinto’ program, but a complex amalgamation of the traditional and the modern” and that, for most Japanese of the time, he was “no less important a symbol of Japanese modernity than, say, the steam locomotive” (Kim 2011, 55).

in the state ceremonies that were concrete expressions of that ideology” (Tsukahara 2013, 237–38).

But *gagaku* appealed to Meiji period reformers more broadly because of its ability to provide a *sonorous embodiment* for the ideological forces driving the changes that Japan was undergoing at the turn of the 20th century. Deconstructing the presupposition that court music is the timeless soundtrack of Japanese traditional religiosity, a mere ‘Shinto soundscape’ was thus the necessary first step in a thorough exploration of its modern and even contemporary genealogy. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that steering away from the past was not without consequences, and that a genealogical endeavor cannot run the risk of drawing illusory lines of continuity that may paradoxically obfuscate the inner diversity of the historical processes considered. Moving the capital to Tokyo produced not only a re-location, but also a dis-location of *gagaku*. While all of the processes presented so far took place in the context of new institutions specifically created in the new ‘capital of the east’, local bearers of *gagaku* traditions in the western part of the country had to deal with a very different situation. Precipitous changes and increasingly unstable conditions characterized the latter part of the 19th century for performers of court music operating in the Kansai area. Many musicians were confronted with the real possibility of seeing *gagaku* disappear from their cities, and needed to find skillful ways to cope with such a threat. This partial fracture with the past is the subject of the next chapter, which presents the historical evolution of *gagaku*’s main groups in the area comprising Kyoto, Osaka and Nara at the turn of the 20th century.