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# AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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Nr. 7 Sept - Oct 2001

ASS P.O Box 1137 Leichardt NSW 2040

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Greetings! This edition is going to be a little "quieter" than the last edition but I hope that you will find the reading just as interesting. We have a serialized article from Dr. Riley Lee's M.A Thesis: (*Blowing Zen: aspects of performance practices of the Chikuho Ryû honkyoku; University of Hawai'i 1986*), describing the history of the Chikuho lineage, and a report from none other than Mr. "48 Hour Man", Paolo Valladolid, about his experiences at the 2001 Shakuhachi Summer Camp of The Rockies. There are the usual assortment of pictures, and quotes.

## A.C.T News.

On Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> September we had the inaugural session of **BLOW IN**. We had 5 players plus myself. A good time was had by all.

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## ATTENTION!!!!!!!

### Australian Shakuhachi Festival Melbourne February 2002

Registration forms are available for printing from:

[www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm](http://www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm)

More info page 8 - late email posting.

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### Guess who turned 50 ?

On Monday 30<sup>th</sup> July I arrived at Annerslie Street just after 6 pm. Instead of Margaret's warm welcome, all I received was the suspicious demand "Who is it?" This pattern of behaviour was to become the norm for the next two hours as a growing number of people gathered to await the arrival of friend, teacher and fifty-year-old, Riley Lee.

Riley's surprise birthday party was the brainchild of Margaret Tung and Cathy Andrews, both of whom were bustling about Margaret's kitchen in a school-girlish state of excitement when I arrived. I had interrupted a heated debate over the distribution of party decorations (Cathy's extravagance v Margaret's minimalist tastes). Cathy and I soon adopted a 'all or nothing' policy, much to Margaret's distress. When the last '50' balloon, glittering '50' decoration and 'happy birthday' streamer was on display, we all sat back and waited as the guests materialised one by one. Two Taikoz members heralded the arrival of the Grand Master himself, and we all waited as demurely as possible for the big event (with the exception of Marshall McGuire, who had to be physically restrained from peeping around the curtain).

Then the moment came - a knock on the door, Margaret's voice as she elegantly maintained the façade ("Yes Riley, your watch is in the kitchen"), the curtain lifted, Riley's jaw dropped, a camera flashed, and we all burst into song. *Happy Birthday, Dear Riley...*

The rest of the evening was quite a tasteful affair, despite the profusion of party decorations. The food was excellent, the company a pleasure, and the



memorize the melody of the *jiuta* or *sôkyoku* and then play the same part. The important thing was to memorize the pieces. As there was no standardized notation such as western staff notation, the shakuhachi player had to learn the pieces from the performances of a koto or sangen player. After a number of pieces had been transcribed, one could then teach the pieces to other shakuhachi players.

According to Kamisangô, these transcriptions appear simple by today's standards. However, as the general level of musical technique then was relatively low, the transcriptions were considered difficult at the time. It was enough just to be able to perform the *gaikyoku* with the koto or sangen. Kondô Sôetsu (see previous section) made the koto player Furukawa Ryûsai his successor, probably because of his familiarity with the *gaikyoku* pieces rather than his shakuhachi playing abilities. The koto player Miyagi Michio also is reported to have supported himself when he was young by teaching the shakuhachi. If one was able to transcribe the *gaikyoku* by oneself, one was not only able to become an independent teacher, but could organize one's *ryû* as well. Nakao Tozan did just that, without having studied with any particular *ryû*. Such was also the case with Fujita Matsuchô, who founded his own Matsuchô Ryû. The creation of Chikuho Ryû was also possible because of these circumstances.

On the other hand, having begun a new *ryû*, it was possible that the *ryû* would cease after only one generation unless one had the capacity to attract and keep students. In order to insure that his *ryû* outlasted himself, the *ryûso* or *soke* (head of the *ryû*) needed first of all, to create something which could not be surpassed by his students, and/or secondly, to be technically better than any of his students. Though Kinko Ryû was not founded in this era, it faced the same problem. Its thirty-six *honkyoku* acted as the "unsurpassable something", keeping the *ryû* from failing. Nakao Tozan's own compositions, which he called "honkyoku," had a similar function for Tozan Ryû. Nakao Tozan was also active in the *shinkyoku* movement "new music". In other words, the founder of Tozan Ryû took the lead in producing and performing new pieces and had the resulting organizational success. How Chikuho Ryû managed is the topic of the following discussion, based upon Kamisango's article, the official Chikuho Ryû history found in the *Chikuho Ryû Shakuhachi no Tebiki* (Chikuho Ryû Beginner's Manual), an article by Tukitani (1977:23-28), and personal communications with Chikuho I, his two sons, and other members of Chikuho Ryû between 1971 and 1985.

The founder of the Ryû, Sakai Chikuho I was born in Osaka on October 15, 1892 (Meiji 25). Given the

name Seibi at birth, he was the eldest son of Sakai Seijiro, who worked in the textile business. He grew up in the Tenjinbashi area, where the present Osaka Postal Bureau is located. As was the case of Nakao Tozan, he was greatly influenced from an early age by his mother, who frequently played the koto and the shamisen. He began playing the shakuhachi at age thirteen, participating in *jiuta* ensembles in the neighborhood.

In Meiji 43 (1910), he became a student of Fujita Matsuchô. Matsuchô was a Sôetsu Ryû player. He was a koto player and also taught the violin. He founded the Matsuchô Ryû, teaching *gaikyoku*. Chikuho received his shihan license in only one year, due to either the limited number of pieces Matsuchô knew or Chikuho's skill as a shakuhachi player, or both. He was given the name Shôdô and began teaching shakuhachi under Matsuchô Ryû. He began shakuhachi lessons with Uemura Setsuo, the highest ranking member of the Sôetsu Ryû, and Zenpo Kofu in Taishô 5 (1916). He learned approximately ten *honkyoku* of the Sôetsu Ryû, including such pieces as "Tsuru no Sugomori "The Nesting of the Crane".

In the same year, misunderstandings developed between Sakai and his teacher, Matsuchô. According to Chikuho's biography in the *Chikuho Ryû Shakuhachi Tebiki*, the initial factor for the misunderstanding was Chikuho having transcribed a newly composed *sokyoku* piece, Mizuho no Sakae after hearing it on the radio, Without, his teacher's permission. Matsuchô apparently did not react favorably when presented with Chikuho's handiwork. "After which, a deep chasm developed between them, as a result of a variety of miscrossed paths" (Chikuho Ryû:1971:5).

A prominent figure in the *sokyoku* world, Nakahira Fuku no To Daikengyô, acted as mediator between teacher and student, but to no avail. Chikuho finally left Matsuchô Ryû, and became independent with the help of his younger brother, Seiho . On February 20, in the year Taishô 6, (1917) he took the name Chikuho and founded Chikuho Ryû.

In order to avoid complaints of copyright infringement by his former teacher, it was imperative that Chikuho re-notate his music with a new system. The new notation system he devised was an attempt to synthesize the notation of the Meian lineages with the notation of more modern schools such as Tozan Ryû. The rhythmical markings became more precise than those of the Meian school, in part because of Chikuho's interest in playing the shakuhachi with the violin and other western instruments.

At this point, however, Chikuho Ryû was in many respects a sub-sect or derivative of Sôetsu Ryû. Soon afterwards, he began studying with Minamoto Unkai, a student of Katsuura Seizan (1856-1942). Chikuho learned over ten Meian Shinpô *honkyoku* from Unkai. However, with Unkai's introduction, he began studying directly with Katsuura. Between Taishô 8 to Taishô 10 (1920-1922), he learned fifty to sixty *honkyoku* of the Meian lineage from Seizan including the *hikyoku* (secret pieces) known as "Sankyorei". Chikuho incorporated these pieces into the repertoire of his own *ryû*. Consequently, Chikuho Ryû became part of the lineage of Katsuura's Shinpô Ryû with its typically Meian style.<sup>1</sup>

During this period, Chikuho also composed new pieces. Early in his career, he became connected with the *shinkyoku* movement of the Kansai area. Beginning with Miyagi Michio's pieces, Chikuho quickly included *shinkyoku* into his repertoire, expanding the domain of his *ryû*. One of Chikuho's most memorable experiences involved the first experimental radio broadcast in Osaka. His description of the event gives an interesting glimpse of the music that was popular at the time, as well as the excitement in the community caused by the advent of radio broadcasting.

"Radio' broadcasting in Osaka began on January 26, in the 13th year of the Taishô era (1924). At that time, there was a week-long celebration of the marriage of the prince, the present Emperor. All of the people were excited by this event. Radio was not called radio at that time, but rather 'musen denwa' (wireless telephone). The first experimental broadcasting in Osaka was sponsored by the Asahi Newspaper Agency and lasted one week, from January 26 to February 4. It was a brilliant success. I performed on that first broadcast with my younger brother, Seiho. We performed at the Osaka Koto Kogyo Gakko (Osaka Engineering High School), the present-day Osaka University, Department of Engineering, in Sakuranomiya. The same performance was given at the hall of the Main Building of the Asahi Newspaper, before a specially invited audience. The performers in the program, besides myself and my younger brother Seiho, were Miyagawa Shôansho, a performer of *rôkyoku*, also called *naniwa bushi*; Takamine Taeko, a Takarazuka singer, accompanied by a chorus from the Takarazuka Girls' Musical Troupe; Gondô Enryû, a tenor who sang *min'yô* (Japanese folksongs); and Yamagata Juichi, who played the harmonica.

<sup>1</sup> The rest of Chapter 3 is not based upon Kamisango's article. The material presented is taken from Chikuho Ryû no Tebiki and from personal communications with Chikuho I and II.

The performance was repeated for three days before the invitation only audience in the Asahi Newspaper Hall. For the rest of the four days of the celebration, a [radio] receiver was set on a car, which was driven to intersections throughout the city of Osaka. The sound [of our performances] was amplified so that the common people could listen to it. On March 22, Taishô 14 (1925), the Tôkyô Hôsô Kyoku [Tokyo Broadcasting Company] was founded and was later renamed the Nippon Hôsô Kyôkai [NHK]. On November 30, Taishô 15 (1926), Osaka Hôsô Kyoku started its broadcasting from the roof of the Mitsukoshi Department in Koraihashi, Osaka. After that, broadcasting stations were established in Hiroshima, Okayama, and other places. At the 30th anniversary of the first broadcast, I was presented with a letter of appreciation and a gift from the head office of the NHK in Tokyo.

I have performed 154 times for radio broadcast. After the first time on the 'musen denwa', I often performed three or four times a month. When Hiroshima and Okayama stations were opened, I was invited to perform live for the opening ceremonies. Of course, at that time, everything was performed live."

(Sakai Chikuho I 1980)

To be continued.

[Ed - some of the Japanese script did not print out correctly and was edited out -cause unknown]



## Shakuhachi Camp Report

By Paolo Valladolid [Mr 48 hour - Ed]

Friends,

This is about my recent experiences at the 2001 Shakuhachi Summer Camp of The Rockies. For general information about what this camp is about and Sunrise Ranch where it takes place, check out this website:

<http://www.shakucamp.com/>. It gives a lot of essential info, but no amount of pictures can do justice to the sheer beauty of the Loveland, Colorado countryside, the cleanliness of the ranch, and the friendliness of the people who choose to live there.

I received my shakuhachi just two days before camp. Thereafter, I was known as “48-Hour Guy”. I don’t remember which instructor coined it, but I’m sure it was either Riley Lee or David Wheeler. Much of my frustration with trying to get a sound went away when I heard repeatedly from other players who took weeks or even months before finally getting a sound out of the shakuhachi.

The camp schedule was structured so that we had group classes and individual lessons on alternating days (group lessons on Friday, individual lessons on Saturday, etc.). Some comments on studying with the five instructors:

David Wheeler - I only had one group lesson with him, but I saw him around camp a lot. He did a fine job of getting me started on reading shakuhachi notation and some of the fingerings.

Yoshio Kurahashi - Had an infectious grin that just wouldn’t quit. I couldn’t help but smile when he told us in a beginner class “Please don’t worry about pitch” - he wanted us to focus more on proper handling of the instrument and breathing. He entertained us with his “what not to do” demonstrations. He suggested we try practicing while lying down - I think it was to learn how to play relaxed, but I’m not sure.

Kaoru Kakizakai - In my first lesson with him, he tried to correct my embouchure. By that time, I had been making sounds on my flute by developing my own weird embouchure which was basically making a round hole by puckering and blowing really hard. Kakizakai wanted me to start with lips in a natural, relaxed position; then blow gently with the air stream pushing out the lower lip slightly - all with the feeling of a “ping-pong ball” in the back of my mouth. I didn’t immediately understand what he meant - it took a while. He also gave us a helpful hint about the meri technique (described a little further below) by having us think of it as a variation of sliding the finger over a finger hole to change the pitch - except the “finger” in this case is your mouth and the “finger hole” is the mouth hole of the instrument. Yet another was the advice to widen the aperture of one’s embouchure to increase volume rather than just blowing harder. Finally, he suggested using a tape recorder during practice,

setting it across the room. “Your own ears are sometimes too good an audience - you play and they say ‘Hmm, this is very good’. But tape recorder (and the audience sitting away from you) may think you don’t sound so good.”

Riley Lee - Impressed on us that notated music is just a mnemonic device - in the end it’s really all about listening and playing what we want to hear.

In my first group lesson with him, he taught us an entire piece from Honkyoku (the classical solo shakuhachi repertoire) without written notation by having us listen, watch his fingering, and repeat phrases from the piece over and over again. He really worked on me getting rid of my puckering habit, which turned out to be the cause of me repeatedly running out of breath and getting light-headed in the Colorado altitude. One advice that helped was using a “flashlight in the dark” analogy to work on getting a long, steady stream of air going and moving the shakuhachi around until the sound materialized. After working with both Lee and Kakizakai, I realized they were both describing the same embouchure/blowing technique, just from different perspectives. Lee has a way of reminding you how far you have yet to go on the road to getting a handle on the instrument yet at the same time inspiring you and making you want to practice and play. He told me he expects to hear me play a piece next year. I think he really means it.



Massed Shakuhachi Players

Michael Gould - Advised us to start working on meri (the pitch-bending technique achieved by nodding the head down) as soon as possible. Also showed us a vibrato technique involving shaking the head side-to-side and also advised us to work on this as soon as possible. He assured us if we worked on these right away (slowly at first, of course) it would save a lot of time in our development as shakuhachi players.





Riley.. "This won't hurt a bit..just relax..."



Just when you think you are running out of breath Riley squeezes that last little bit out of you...



"Fallen tree in the lagoon:  
cormorant stands guard  
over reflection of moon..."

Quoted with kind permission of Bud.



**A few interesting Web sites.**

<http://members.aol.com/emptyflute/>

<http://www.jmbamboo.com/links.htm>

<http://www.lewisbamboo.com/favmoso.html>

<http://www.franklinshop.com/shakuhachiforsale/>

<http://www.higherpathways.com/>



I have added the following to remember all those who have died in the appalling tragedy in USA.

**TAMUKE  
Prayer for Safe Passage**

The term Tamuke refers to making spiritual offerings to the Buddha. Originating from the Ise district of Japan, Tamuke combines the elements of the requiem and the elegy of Western music. It is a prayer for safe passage through life and through death.

In Japanese language, 'Tamuke' means to make offerings to Gods, Buddha or the dead, or simply the offered things themselves. This piece was played by Komuso, literally as 'Tamuke' to the dead. Even nowadays, it is sometimes played in this way.

In koten honkyoku there are other types of religious repertoire played in specific ceremonies, "Shokomon", "Zangemon", "Kuyo no kyoku", "Eko" etc., as well as "Tamuke." though it is rather a short piece, it is well organized as a tune, and a formidable masterpiece. The melody, carrying sorrow in its stillness contains love and grief to the dead and pull delicately at the listener's heart.

The meaning of Tamuke is an offering to the gods or to the Buddha. This piece is played during the Buddhist service for the dead.



The following score is the first column of Tamuke.

**MELBOURNE 2002 - 3RD  
AUSTRALIAN  
SHAKUHACHIFESTIVAL**

Dear enthusiasts,

We are pleased to make two announcements about The Australian Shakuhachi Society Festival which will be held from 8th - 12th February 2002.

Firstly, we are pleased to announce that **Toshimistu Ishikawa** from Osaka will also be attending our festival as a teacher.

The music planned to be work-shopped will include:

Sanya (Mountain Valley)  
Sanya (Three Valleys)  
Daha no Kyoku  
Tamuke  
Ryuhei (Exile)  
Azumah Jishi  
Kumoi Jishi (shakuhachi duet)

Improvisation workshops

New commissioned work, by Anne Norman, for many shakuhachi, to be performed at the Gala Concert.

Yabe no sato (Miyata)

There will be a range of ensemble pieces to play with koto, and those will be decided soon.

Upon registration, both detailed scores and the festival CD containing these pieces can be received. The music can then be carefully studied prior to attending Melbourne 2002.

Please visit the web site below to find out more and to download the booking form if you wish.

Very best wishes

Organising Committee Melbourne 2002  
3rd Australian Shakuhachi Festival

[info@japanworldmusic.com](mailto:info@japanworldmusic.com)

[www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm](http://www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm)



**Practice non-violence in the small things and  
Peace and harmony will manifest in the world.**