
AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Nr. 8 Dec 2001

ASS P.O Box 1137 Leichardt NSW 2040



Greetings! Somehow it's Christmas again! In this issue is the second part of Dr. Riley Lee's M.A Thesis: (*Blowing Zen: aspects of performance practices of the Chikuhō Ryū honkyoku; University of Hawai'i 1986*), describing the history of the Chikuhō lineage, as well as various shorter articles that have come my way in 2001. There are fewer picture in this issue but next issue I hope to include some from the forthcoming **Australian Shakuhachi Festival In Melbourne 2002.**

I hope that the next year brings peace and happiness to you all.

Acknowledgement [long overdue! -Ed.] of the ASS logo above. The ASS concept and design was Patricia Lee's and the cartoon was commissioned from their daughter Marieke.

尺八

A word from our President:

Hi, everyone just some updated information about possible events we as a group could participate in next year.

As yet options are as follows:

- 1.EASTER-CANBERRA FOLK FESTIVAL.
- 2.JUNE LONG WEEKEND-NOWRA FESTIVAL
- 3.WINTER MAGIC-BLUE MOUNTAINS.

The participation in these festivals as yet is to be confirmed. If you are interested , contact me at the **AUSTRALIAN SHAKUHACHI FESTIVAL in MELBOURNE FEBRUARY 2002.**

HOPE TO SEE YOU AT THIS WONDERFUL EVENT. THE PROGRAM LOOKS GREAT!

In closing I would like to thank Graham for working so well and producing such an informative newsletter. [My pleasure.]

I would also like to express my appreciation to the hard work Margaret Tung has done behind the scenes this year. John Holmes a big thank you for getting our finances in order. So in closing I would like to wish everyone a Merry Xmas and Healthy New Year.

Best wishes to all,
Cathy Andrews.

REMINDER!!!!

**The Australian Shakuhachi Society Festival
8th - 12th February 2002.**

More details at end of this newsletter and at:

www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm

The Chikuho Ryû, continued.

By Dr. Riley Lee.

Chikuho I composed at least twenty-nine works, ranging from solo shakuhachi pieces, to piano and shakuhachi duets, to shakuhachi quartets with Japanese and western instrument accompaniment. On February 21, 1929, he published the first edition of Chikuho Ryû Shakuhachi Gaku (Chikuho Ryû Shakuhachi Music), a biannual newsletter. Newsletters in the 1970s and 1980s averaged fifteen to twenty pages in length. They report news about people and events concerning the *ryû* and information on pieces in the repertoire. Issue number 103 was published in 1985.

Chikuho I retired in Showa 42 (1967) and took the name Chikuô . His elder son, Chikudô b. 1933 became Chikuho II. Chikuho II actively disseminated the repertoire handed down by his father, leaning primarily in the direction of the Fuke Shû *koten honkyoku*. He also incorporated *honkyoku* playing techniques of other *ryûha*, a practice common among the performers of the Meiji era. Like his father, he has been active in performing modern compositions. His talent was acknowledged by shakuhachi players throughout Japan after his performances of *Chikurai Go Sho* (Five Pieces for Shakuhachi), between 1964 and 1969. This piece, composed by Moroi Makoto in close collaboration with Chikuho II in 1964, is considered by many to be one of the greatest modern compositions for solo shakuhachi. In October, 1967, Chikuho II received the Music Critics Club Award and the Osaka Cultural Award for his performance of *Chikurai Go Sho*.

Throughout the 1970s, Chikuho II continued his father's work with recitals, radio and television appearances, and LP recordings. In a fashion similar to the relationship between his father and his uncle, Chikuho II relied on the help of his younger brother, Shôdô , in managing the *ryû*. The two brothers frequently performed together, also recording a number of LP recordings together. However, Shôdô inevitably played the lesser part in any undertaking with his brother.

Despite the efforts of Chikuho I and his son, Chikuho II, the *ryû* remained relatively small, especially compared to Tozan Ryû. A recital celebrating the 65th anniversary of the founding of the sect was held on September 15, 1981. The program listed under the finale of the evening, all active members holding any rank, even those who would obviously not be attending. The names of one hundred and fifty-six shakuhachi players were listed, who were accompanied by seventy-five koto

players. This is a small number for an entire sect, if not for a single stage.

During Chikuho II's most active period, between 1964 and 1977, it seemed that the Ryû was possibly on its way to becoming a truly national organization. In 1973, a high ranking teacher of Tozan Ryû in Shikoku defected to Chikuho Ryû, bringing with him over twenty of his own students, and eventually forming new Chikuho Ryû branch in Shikoku. Other less spectacular defections by experienced shakuhachi players occurred regularly. Players came to Chikuho II primarily from Tozan Ryû in order to learn the *honkyoku* of the *komusô*, which their former sect did not have in its repertoire.

However, the growth of the sect faltered after 1981, due in part to a recurring illness of Chikuho II. He gradually stopped performing and teaching. His father, Chikuho once again took over the administrative duties of the sect, with the help of a board of regents. many of the *ryû* related activities ceased and the expansion of the *ryû* experienced during the 1970s halted.

In 1985, repeating a pattern seen throughout the history of traditional Japanese music, Chikuho Ryû split into two factions following the death of its founder. One faction retained the original name and legal rights of the *ryû* under the new leadership of Shôdô, the younger brother of Chikuho II. The second faction consisted of some of Chikuho I and Chikuho II's most active members, including almost everyone who lived in the Osaka area, traditionally the center of Chikuho Ryû activity. This group took the name "Meian Shakuhachi" Do Yu Kai -The Friends of the Way of the Meian Shakuhachi, and immediately began legitimizing their status as an independent shakuhachi sect.¹

The small sect could ill afford this internal fragmentation. As with any dispute, there are conflicting explanations of the events leading to the split. Because it was not possible to question Sakai Shôdô, the new *iemoto* or organizational head of Chikuho Ryû, about the dispute directly, the following description is not completely without bias. It represents the facts available to the

¹ The premier endeavor of the Meian Shakuhachi Do Yu Kai was to organize the group's first "annual" happyokai (student recital), held in November, 1985 in Moriguchi city, a suburb of Osaka. The second act of independence will be to devise a new notation system. The group's members hope to devise a system as similar as possible to the Chikuho Ryû notation system without infringing upon the copyright legally owned by Shôdô. A radically different system is undesirable because of the frustration learning a new system would cause, particularly among the older members.

dissenting members of the original Chikuho Ryû and their opinions.

In October, 1984 Chikuho I died at the age of ninety-one years and eleven months. In the spring of 1985, all licensed teachers of Chikuho Ryû received a mailed packet from Chikuho II's younger brother, Shôdô. The packet contained three items. The first was a formal letter from Shôdô expressing the Sakai family's gratitude to all of the members of the *ryû* for the attention given to the elder Chikuho during his last days in this world, and the sympathy extended to the family during the days following his departure. It also claimed that one of the last wishes of his father was for Shôdô to become the third *iemoto* of Chikuho Ryû. It went on to describe that this wish was expressed by Chikuho I from his deathbed and witnessed by his elder son, Chikuho II. The letter concluded that Shôdô hoped that the members of Chikuho Ryû would continue to work together in making the sect a strong one.

The second item of the packet was a printed card from Chikuho II with a terse statement stating that he concurred with the information in Shôdô's letter and that the members of the sect should acquiesce to Shôdô's authority. The third item was a form to be filled out by all licensed teachers of Chikuho Ryû with detailed instructions. Information required included the name, address, dates of certification, etc., of the teacher, as updating the records of the sect. The instructions concluded by stating that those who did not return a completed form to Shôdô by April 15, 1985 would no longer be considered accredited by Chikuho Ryû; their names and the names of their students publicly expelled (*hanryû*) from the membership roles of the sect.

Approximately fifty members of Chikuho Ryû, including most of the living original students of Chikuho I, refused to comply with this directive. Doing so would have meant public acquiescence to Shôdô's claim to authority as Chikuho Ryû's new *iemoto*. In the autumn of 1985, official notice was given that those having not yet returned the completed forms were no longer members of Chikuho Ryû. At the same time, the expelled members created a new sect, the "Meian Shakuhachi Do Yu Kai."

The senior ranking teachers of Chikuho Ryû did not choose to affiliate themselves with Shôdô because they felt that he had not adhered to the proper protocol in assuming the role of *iemoto*. He apparently did not advise or seek the advice of the board of regents in the matter. The question of propriety was further complicated by Shôdô's having renounced Chikuho Ryû over five years earlier, voluntarily isolating himself and his students from the sect, until after his father's death

in 1984. The defecting members admit that Shôdô does have a claim to the *iemoto* title as the younger brother to Chikuho II, assuming that Chikuho II has agreed to relinquishing his authority.² It is therefore not the legitimacy of Shôdô's claim that is questioned by the senior members of Chikuho Ryû, but rather actions of his prior to his father's death, and the manner in which he asserted his claim.

Chikuho Ryû, with its varied repertoire, including *honkyoku*, has always remained small and is facing a serious decline today. This fact is all the more ironic to those who appreciate the Zen-inspired "main pieces" of the *komusô*, that Tozan Ryû, with a repertoire containing not one classical *honkyoku* of the Fuke Shu era, is the largest shakuhachi sect in Japan today. However, Tozan Ryû has also experienced factionalization in recent years, due to questions of succession after the death of the *iemoto*. Today, there are in fact three *ryû* derived from the original Tozan Ryû. However, even the smallest of these enjoys a membership approaching 2000 licensed teachers (Kono OC 1985). The size and quality of the repertoire of a *ryû* is not necessarily related to the size and health of the organization itself.

² In the late 1970s, Chikuho II decreed that his only child, a daughter who played the koto, would be the heir apparent. Soon afterwards, Shôdô, who has one son, left the *ryû* not to return until his father's death. Chikuho II no longer holds to this decision on succession. In an interview in August, 1985, Chikuho II implied that he and Shôdô would "work together" as dual *iemoto*. This situation is made more ambiguous by Shôdô calling himself the sansei *iemoto* (third generation), but refraining from using the title "Chikuho III".

The Big Sound and the Silent Sound

By Al Takegawa

I've been thinking about these two ways of playing for a while now and they are related to the differences between the shakuhachi and the ginashi nobekan (a.k.a. kyotaku, hocchiku, which I'll use in this mail for convenience sake). Forgive me if I tend to generalize and fail to mention things or contradict myself. I'm writing on impulse right now. Although it may be old news for some, I'm still fascinated with it since they are discoveries of gems in the wilderness for me. I apologize in advance if it's repetitive for you.

I play mainly the style taught by Yokoyama Katsuya from Kakizakai Kaoru. But also play ginashi, as taught by Okuda Atsuya. In the west, people refer to Yokoyama's style of honkyoku playing as "do-kyoku", but actually, in Japan, that term is not used so much. Yokoyama actually prefers to call it just plain "honkyoku". Do-kyoku is alluding more to Watatumido, his teacher in honkyoku. And as many people know, there was a friction between the two because Watatumido played only ginashi flutes and considered gi-ari shakuhachi to be "too vulgar and loud", therefore criticized Yokoyama often, also because Watatumido practically hated all styles where gi-ari shakuhachi were employed which included sankyoku, gaikyoku, shinkyoku, etc.

More than a particular school's playing style, it's the individual that creates a unique sound. Talking to Christopher Yohmei Blasdel recently, he mentioned that he was very moved at the ability of Yamaguchi Goro to play quietly (due to the fact that he played mostly within the sankyoku context), but with a power that had everyone in a hall enrapt in listening. But a big difference that other styles of playing don't do (at least from my observation so far) that Yokoyama does is that he plays with a lot of power and big, embracing sound, yet with great sensitivity and emotion. Yokoyama compares it to an actor on stage who must exaggerate his moves so that the audience can understand what's going on. So he applies this analogy to the shakuhachi especially when playing with an orchestra, like on November Steps. Most (if not all) of his accomplished students play in this way. Part of this lies in the design of the flutes, but most of it is in the way he blows and interestingly how he uses his skeletal structure (this is something I want to look into further!) I haven't heard this kind of sound in other styles. Yokoyama picked this up from Watatumido who played with great power. The question is, is this desirable? I think if you learn to play this way, it opens a whole new vista for your explorations of sound with the shakuhachi. Some players play loud with a hard, tight, cutting sound,

but without the open, wide sound. Others play with an open wide sound but without the power. I guess the descriptions are endless. More than just decibel levels, however, playing with sensitivity and nuance of tonal colorations is getting closer to a deeper shakuhachi experience.

Making a Big Sound

How this big sound is created takes a lot of practice, and I hear from players that this is a most desirable way to play shakuhachi. (But I'm sure not all players care to play this way.) Most players are taught to blow down, perhaps blowing about 50/50 or more of their air across the edge down into their flute. But actually the aim is to get about 20% down into the flute and 80% going over the top. This style of blowing is referred to as "soto-buki", or blowing outwardly, as opposed to "uchi-buki", playing into the flute more. So, in essence, one is blowing more "kari". This is very important in creating the desired effect. A test to see if you're doing it well is to blow the shakuhachi with the bell facing a lighted candle. If you can blow with maximum power without blowing the flame out, then you're doing it well. That means you're blowing over the top more than into the flute. Sounds impossible? Not only do you need to blow kari, but the lips must stay relaxed and controlled. Blowing kari accomplishes two things: it allows more space between the lips and blowing edged for the air to achieve the effective impact between edge, and it allows more space between lips and edge so that access to the meri position is more easier. Hitting the meri notes perfectly is very important since most people develop the habit of blowing meri, or flat, too much into the flute. One of the list members commented to me that he was trying to blow more kari, but he felt that he was getting too much of an airy sound and overtones. I told him not to concentrate on that airy sound as a negative. It is part of the shakuhachi aesthetic. But once your embouchure becomes more developed, it is possible to blow kari, and in perfect pitch while minimizing the airy sound. But don't throw away the windy sound! The tendency is to blow closer to the edge to get rid of the airy sound. This just makes you blow more meri, thus limiting your range of motion. Also, the cavity of your mouth should be wide. Kakizakai sensei often says to imagine a ping pong ball inside your mouth, and if you're having problems with a too narrow cavity, imagine you have a basketball in there! Teeth should be slightly apart. Throat should be wide open as well, not pinched, or tight. Yamaguchi Goro also wrote in one issue of the Hogaku journal about keeping the inside of the mouth wide open was important in the production of a good sound. In addition to a controlled, developed embouchure that blows more kari, the air must be pushed from the diaphragm.

Learning to blow this way may cause you to modify your flute as well. In my experience, my 2.4 was tuned at 440 in my normal first position for my bottom ro note. But when I started playing more kari, of course my otsu no ro (and every other note) was now much sharper. I was kind of worried at this point at what I should do. So my sensei said, "You must get your flute lengthened!" Wow. So I promptly sent it back to the maker and he lengthened my flute about an inch. The place where he cut the flute and added the extra bamboo has an attractive rattan binding. Now, this was very meaningful for me, since I've been trying to play kari for a long time, so I consider it a badge of achievement, that rattan binding. The fact that it was not just decorative gave me an even great sense of accomplishment. It took me a while to get used to this new way of blowing; I also did some work on the angle of the chin rest for better kari positioning, but once I could play this way with some proficiency my experience of the shakuhachi deepened considerably.

To be continued.

Al Takegawa - used with permission.



A resource is now available for all shakuhachi players with hand problems:

<http://home.mindspring.com/~shin-on/handcare.html>

This page is a program of daily exercises that can ease tension and pain arising from overuse of the hands. If they are used regularly they can promote healing and extend a player's ability to engage with the instrument. I hope this is of help to you all.

Posted by David Sawyer on the Shakuhachi news group.

Goodwill Games

By Carl Rathus

Does anyone remember the Goodwill Games? Did anyone watch the opening ceremony on TV?

This is a short story with a moral. Thanks to a recommendation from Riley, I was asked to play at the Goodwill Games opening. After initial uncertainty, it was confirmed that I was to be part of the Round the World segment, specifically the Asia section which turned out to be me and the Chinese lion dancers. I had 25 seconds; they had a couple of minutes.

The first rehearsals of the whole ceremony were a disaster, and it was amazing to see how, in the space of three rehearsals it became a smooth production line. I came on after a speech by Peter Beattie. I was already on stage, in full regalia, in the dark, behind a scrim (screen). As I started to play, the lighting changed, so that the live audience could see me through the scrim, and the lion dancers appeared in the middle of the floor. After 25 seconds I stopped playing and the lion dancers' percussionists took over. I slipped out the back. Very exciting.

When I had a chance to watch the videotape of the segment, I wasn't there. The TV cameras had focused exclusively on the lion dancers through my 25 seconds.

The moral?

Shakuhachi players should be heard but not seen.
Carl Rathus

Riley Lee plays Honyoku in Canberra.

I had the great pleasure of hearing Riley playing solo Honkyoku on Dec 1st. In this concert he played some of his favourite Honkyoku that he does not always have the chance to play in public. We were also treated to his playing of the long 3.1 instrument.

Riley played Azuma Jishi, Yamagoe, Kokû, Daha, San'ya, Tamuke and finally San'an. The audience become so quiet and concentrated during the concert that one felt that we were all meditating...

Graham Ranft.



REMINDER!!!!

**The Australian Shakuhachi Society Festival
8th - 12th February 2002.**

The music planned to be workshopped 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.

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.

3rd Australian Shakuhachi Festival

info@japanworldmusic.com
www.japanworldmusic.com/melbourne2002.htm



A little something for Christmas:

Handwritten musical notation in three columns. The first column starts with a double bar line and a '2' above it. The second column starts with a '2/4' time signature. The notation consists of vertical lines with various symbols (dots, dashes, and '甲' characters) indicating pitch and rhythm.

No .. it's not Jingle Bells...

It's:

We Wish you a Merry Christmas

