

## Viols in Japan – Edo era to Today- for web proceedings

Faculty Forward at Conclave of VdGSA on Sunday, 22 July 2007  
University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, WA  
Pan-Pacific Gamba Gathering on Thursday, 2 August 2007  
University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu, HI

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In 2000, I gave a paper on “Viols in Japan in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries”, in the *Journal of VdGSA*. There I reported the descriptive evidence which proved viols had been brought by Portuguese missionaries in 1561 and used in consort form mainly for sacred purposes for about fifty years in Japan. This history shows surprisingly similarity with that of Europe. Today I present the sequel, up to the present, about 400 years later.

During the Baroque era in Europe, Japan was isolated from European culture by the strong government in Japan. In 1587, when the warlord Toyotomi Hideyoshi detected that Portugal and Spain had approached Japan with territorial ambitions, he immediately restricted diplomatic relations. He not only prohibited Christian missionary activities, but also prohibited Japanese from traveling and returning from abroad during the Edo era for 265 years. People who violated the law were executed. European music and related musical instruments were totally destroyed. Therefore, Baroque, Classic and early Romantic music could not be heard in Japan. However, Japan wanted to trade with other countries, and opened a gate to the Dutch and Chinese. For the Dutch it was a little peninsula called Dejima of which we have a picture with a viol. Because of the disconnection from European culture, Japanese original music and musical instruments had evolved differently.

Traditionally, we had plucked string instruments, coming from central Asia via the Silk Road since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, but there was no bowed string instrument in Japan. Interestingly, the description about the Japanese only bowed string instrument “Kokyu” appears at just the same time with description of viol making at Nagasaki. So there is a hypothesis about the origin of “Kokyu” coming from the viol. But there is scholar who thinks this is wrong; this is not yet clear.

### **Edo era (1600-1868)**

Edo is today’s Tokyo. Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu (1543-1616) lived in Edo castle and made Edo the most important city in 1603. Generally, the Edo era was a peaceful era as the Pax Romana had been. Concerning records on viols are the following matters:

#### **1) Namban Byobu: “Southern barbarian” folding screen, - Italian/Portuguese/Japan connection -**

- 1) Yojin-sogaku Zu Byobu: Unknown, fl. 1600. MOA Art Museum, Atami. Painting, color on paper; 112.4x302.4cm each.

- 1a) Detail of above: Lute? is next to a long-neck bowed string instrument.
- 1b) Detail of another Yojin-sogaku Zu Byobu: Unknown, fl. 1600, Eisei Bunko Collection, Tokyo. Painting, color on paper.
- 1c) Detail of 1b): long-neck bowed string instrument.

A certain Italian, P. Giovanni Cola came from Rome to Nagasaki to teach at an art school of a Christian seminary and college in 1582. Under his instruction, Japanese Christian students made many *namban byobu* for to sell as gifts to feudal lords. These paintings imitate European styles from around 1600, depicting European musical instruments. The subjects were usually pastoral and everyday life in panoramic views. It is said that he taught also instrument making. The third bishop of Japan, Luis Cerqueira, a Spaniard, wrote in 1603: Japanese Christian students also made biguelas de arco besides organ and cravo, with which they celebrated the divine offices. These activities are reported from Nagasaki but the historical investigation of instrument and picture are 100 years gap. This instrument is long-neck style, no separate fingerboard as we find in the Iberian Peninsula before 1500.

## 2) Description of Dictionary -Portuguese/Japan connection-

*Vocabulario da Lingoa de Iapam*, Nagasaki 1603-4, uses again the words viola, rabeca and viola de arco to explain Japanese musical instruments. This dictionary was intended for Portuguese to learn Japanese, edited by Jesuit missionaries under license of Padre General of Rome and approval of the bishop at Nagasaki. The explanations are, "Instrumento musico como rabeca" for Vagon, "Certo (certain in English) instrumento musico como viola de arco" for Azzumagoto. Vagon and Azzumagoto are 6-string plucked instruments which could be used by only imperial family members, in other words, God's instrument in Japan from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. It may not only be me who is reminded of the description by Johannes Tinctoris (1445-1511), *De inventione et usu musicae*, c.1470.

## 3) Nagasaki Rankan Zu -Indonesian/Dutch/Japan connection -

- 2) Map of Kyushu Island-Nagasaki
- 2a) Dejima: little artificial peninsula of 13,117 square meter, used from 1636-1860, Kawahara Keiga, Leyden National Ethnological Museum, colour on silk, 27.8x41.4cm.
- 2b) Nagasaki Rankan Zu: The Dutch Factory at Dejima, detail, Unknown, fl.1700, Kobe City Museum. Handscroll, color on paper; 36.0x400.3cm.
- 2c) Detail of 2b). Six string bass viol with f-hole. Players' costume and dark complexion suggests Indonesian.

This is picture of the Dutch trading house with bass viol, harp and violin played by Indonesian servants who came with the Dutch to Dejima in about 1700. Indonesia was a Dutch colony, and the Governor of the East India Company had a trading house at Jakarta (Batavia) since 1619. Indonesia had the Islamic rabab, and its players might have easily played viols.

A German doctor Engelbert Kaempfer (1651-1716, stayed in Japan 1690-92), came via Indonesia to Dejima. He wrote a two-volume History and Description of Japan. It is an important document for knowing the reality of Japan. He describes inconveniences of daily life, and the uneasy trip by the Captain of the trading house to Edo. In Dejima sacred music was prohibited even though secular music was allowed.□

#### **4) Information of Drift people -information from Russia**

Despite the strict rule are that prohibited Japanese from voyaging abroad, fishermen sometimes encountered storms and drifted helplessly far away. Two fortuitous instances brought Japan the latest information from Russia. After coming back to Japan these persons were put in prison and interrogated. Daikokuya Mitsudayu received an audience with Ekaterina II (reigned 1762-96). He came back in 1792 and reported a bowed string instrument Igyrishyka, Katsuragawa Hosyu, *Hokusa Bunnryaku*, 1794.□The illustration indicates 6 strings. Tsudayu came back in 1804 and reported another bowed string instrument Kerepuko, Ootsuka Gentaku, *Kankai Iibun*, 1807. The illustration indicates frets but the bow shape is that of the Kokyu. This is not a record of what happened in Japan, but it is a PPGG matter, I believe. These are the traces of viols in the Edo era.

#### **After the Edo era**

In 1868, Japan opened its ports and began diplomatic and trade relations with many other countries. It rushed to import all European culture to cover the long blank period. But viols were not used as Europeans did during the Meiji era (1868-1912) and Taisho era (1912-1926) for 56 years.

Around 1930, we have three matters reflecting the European boom. Kenji Miyazawa mentioned the tenor viol in his Second Collection of poems "Haru to Syura": "Therefore, you should stop choosing the plan to take piano, but you should play the middle size of viola da gamba" in *Soraakari to shoui* 1924.2.20. Keiichi Kurosawa (stayed England 1924-29□had an active musical life singing English madrigals and playing violoncello besides studying mathematics and psychology at Trinity college at Cambridge University. Kurosawa brought back a bass viol made by Dolmetsch in 1929.□Yoshitaka Sakamoto (1898-1968□saw a viol at the eleventh Olympic games at Berlin in 1936. In his report, "Fifteen or sixteen young students of the wind and string orchestra of the Ginter School played a work of Orff. This Band consisted mainly of many kinds of recorders, viol, guitar..."

#### **After the World War II (1939 - 45)**

Viol introduction in Japan followed the recorder's progress along the European revival until today. The focus was the personal encounter and viol consort.

In 1946, Mr. Leo Mario Traynor Jr. (1918-1986, stayed until 1983) came to Japan as part of GHQ (General headquarters of the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers). He is well known for initiating the composition contest for viol consort music. He played recorder, harpsichord, shakuhachi, sho and after 1963 also the viol. He was involved in various musical activities in Japan and was a founding member of the VdGSJ.

## 1950-60

Encounter of the first generation. Mr. Traynor met Toshinari Ohashi (55, number indicate the year), who was the teacher for the second generation. Noriko Takano began viol playing (55). She was a previous president of Kunitachi College of Music, Tokyo, where I now teach. The Musashino College of Music bought a viol from Mittenwald, which was played by a student, Shunichi Kikuchi (56). He taught later. Musashino College of Music now has an Amati bass viol. Takano and Ohashi had a fateful encounter with Karl Wendelstein, music teacher at Oomori German primary, Junior and Senior High School in Tokyo (62-4), who brought viols from Germany. This was the beginning of the recent history of viols in Japan. Nihon Hoso Kyoukai, (National Radio) has broadcast a Baroque music hour in the early morning every day since 62 and still continues now. Junior and Senior high schools and colleges of music near Tokyo began early music classes and introduced early music to academic societies. Ohashi came back from Basel and Yale University (67). Ueno Gakuen Junior High School began a viol class (67). Two years later, they opened an early music course for viols as main subject (69). Musashino College of Music began a class for performance practice (70). Kunitachi College of Music opened a viol class (70). Summer camp and consort increased population of amateurs. Instruments, music and strings are imported by traders. Japanese began to make viols and bows.

## 1970-80

The Second generation went Belgium and Switzerland to study. A. Wenzinger, HL. Mueller gave concerts in Japan (72). VdGSJ was founded with 37 members in the cause of the spread of viol in 1973. They planned seasonal newsletters, extension course, summer course, Journal Consort playing gathering. The second generation came back from Europe. Viol activities such as amateur consorts, ensemble club at non musical Universities spread nationally wide from North to South. Domestic professional players graduated. Oberlin Baroque Ensemble visited Japan (75).

The second generation of professionals was active giving recitals, concerts, broadcasting, Articles in newspaper, but the VdGSJ was dormant, lacking new ideas or innovation but reactivated afterwards. Traders of instruments, music and strings increased. Toho Gakuen College of Music opened a viol course as main subject (83?). Contemporary musical trends expanded by the first Traynor competition held by VdGSJ, first in 84 and the second in 86. VdGSA continues. World famous players

came from abroad such as W. Kuijken (87, 89 and frequently since). Early music magazine started (87). Historical literature, Jean Rousseau, *Traite de la viol*, Paris 1687 (88) was published in Japanese.

## 1990-Today

Foreign players visited Japan. According to the record of VdGSJ, Alison Crum gave extension course at VdGSJ (91). Fretwork came (91). Jordi Savall gave master course at VdGSJ (92). David Hatcher gave lecture on dance music at VdGSJ (92). Paolo Pandolfo gave master class at VdGSJ (01) Phantasm (03). Foreign composers compose specifically for Japanese viol players. Early examples include the American David Loeb (72), the French Marc Tallet (84) and the Swiss Rudolf Kelterborn (92). Japanese composers began writing for viols. The most prominent include Tsutomu Mizuno (84), Ryouhei Hirose (90), Kikuko Massumoto (94). Music festivals and summer courses took place. Historical literature translated into Japanese. Ch.Simpson, *Division Viol* (96, 02), M.Marais, *Avertissements* (97-9), S. Ganassi, *Regola Rubertina* and D.Ortiz, *Trattado* (07). Now, we count about 250 members in VdGSJ including professionals, 30 active Japanese professional performers, who studied in Japan, England, Switzerland, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, including 8 living abroad. About half of them have given recitals. JPPGG attempted to introduce these members by showing Sheets at this exhibition. Concerning to recordings, we have uncountable numbers which include viols. Albums of viol solo and ensemble are about 10.□□

## Summary

We saw how the history on viols in Japan paralleled the contemporary histories of Japan and the world. In the early seventeenth century, viols disappeared after about 50 years usage, and now it has continued for about 50 years since after World War II. What kind of new experiences will Japanese have with viols, this is the question.

Geographically, Japan is an island country sited far to the east from Europe. Traditionally, Western culture did not have an entry to Japan. Even after we began to accept it, we mixed it up to our taste and inevitably created original hybrid cultures. Two examples: our writing uses Chinese characters Kanji and Japanese script Hiragana together, or Japanese Buddhism which has changed very much compared to the Indian original form or the Chinese version which first reached Japan.

Thinking about viols in Japan today, we do not have churches made of stone, nor patrons, instruments, religion, nor the custom to hear European languages, all of which the viol environment had in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. I feel today that Japanese hear European music with very different reactions than Europeans do. It is not strange for me to create music styles which Japanese want to hear, as contemporary people of the baroque era created a new style rather than adjusting

the style of the Renaissance to their taste. I see my task as contributing to creating and realization of much appealing viol music which has originality conserving characteristic of viol.

On the other hand, Japanese put importance on conserving culture once the style has been made. Again this is because we are an island country. We are guarded from foreign enemies who might threaten us across oceans. So it is likely that authentic early music playing styles, if they exist at all, may be conserved in Japan. And perhaps you can study them in Japan one hundred years from now!

It seems to me the answer of how to keep viols alive is to have two facets: both early and contemporary repertoires. With the Pan-Pacific Gamba Gathering as a starting point, I am personally very interested in having discussions about viols in the 16-17<sup>th</sup> centuries with researchers from other Pacific locations such as India, Macao, Manila, Jakarta and Mexico. And I also find significance in exchanging information on how you enjoy viols in your way as you speak your own language, like the apostles who began to speak different languages after the Descent of the Holy Spirit.

It is my great pleasure if you get any hints from this Gathering.  
Thank you very much for listening.

PS: I present the paper without illustrations until I receive permission from the museums which own the originals.