

# Koto (箏)

Week 6



[https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy.lib.umb.edu/p\\_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=30229](https://fod-infobase-com.ezproxy.lib.umb.edu/p_ViewVideo.aspx?xtid=30229)



Wagon  
(和琴)



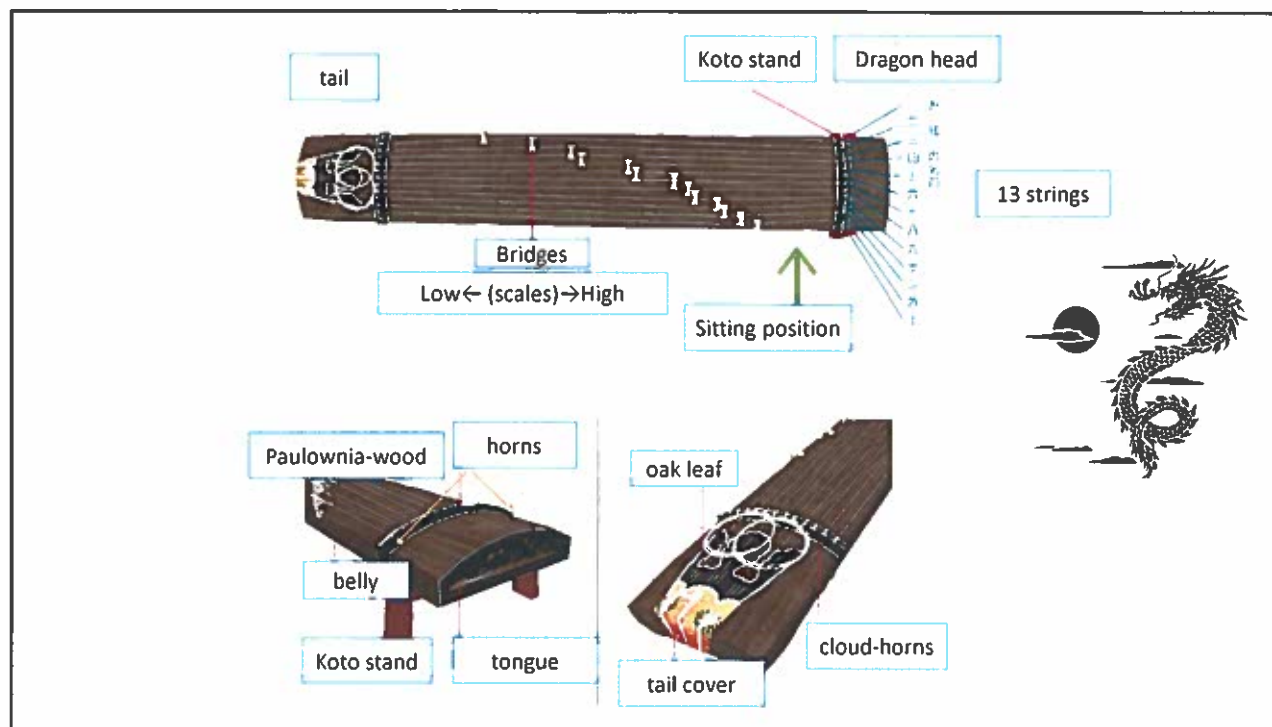
Yagumo goto  
(八雲箏)  
or  
Nigen kin  
(二絃琴)



Gakuso  
(楽箏)



17 /20/13 stringed koto  
(十七・二十・十三絃)



- What creature or animal is koto representative of?  
Dragon
- How many koto schools are there?  
Ikuta school by Ikuta Kengyo and Yamada school by Yamada kengyo.
- There are koto with different numbers of strings. List the number of strings.  
13、 17、 20、 21、 25
- Describe the history of who played koto :  
court musicians and nobles (Heian period)  
educated males (priests); scholars; noblemen  
women and blind male musicians  
high society young women  
all men and women ( and schoolchildren)
- Who are the influential and significant koto figures in koto history?  
Kenjun (a priest-musician in Kyushu) → Yatsushashi Kengyo → Ikuta Kengyo → Yamada Kengyo  
→ Michio Miyagi (Miyagi Dai-Kengyo)

## The koto music, Sokyoku (そうきょく・箏曲)

- The sokyoku players play the koto and shamisen.
  - a koto player is concurrently a shamisen player and singer.
  - shokyoku players are singers and sing the vocal part.
- The koto music( sokyoku) and shamisen music (jiuta) were developed closely each other.
  - developed by the members of the todo (当道), a guild of the blind male musicians.
  - created by multi-talented musicians.
- The instrumental trio, sanyoku (三曲) of koto, shamisen, and shakuhachi (or kokyu胡弓).



## Yatsunashi Kengyo 八橋検校(1614-85)



Yatsunashi was a master of shamisen, and he studied at Tsukushi School sokyoku with Hosui, the pupil of Kenjun.

- improved tsukushi-goto (koto) and transformed the tsukushi-goto music into koto music
  - a. new tunings (Hira-joshi and Kumoi-joshi)
  - b. religious music to artistic music
- composed 13 suites for vocal and koto(called kumiuta) , and 3 purely instrumental solo pieces (called danmono)
  - regarded as historical achievement
- distinguished from the koto of the noble and Buddhist priests
  - Yatsunashi's shokyoku was called "zokuso (secular koto) → widely propagated among common people
- created a profession for todo (the guild of blind musicians) → they played and taught

Masterpieces " Rokudan (six steps) " and " Hachidan (eight steps)."

*\*according to recent research, the works were composed by his pupils, Kitajima Kengyo and Kurashiki Kengyo.*

Yatsunashi



## Two major koto schools: Ikuta school (ryu) and Yamada school (ryu)

### Ikuta Kengyo 生田検校

Kyoto and Osaka (Kansai)  
 integration with jiuta (shamisen music)  
 instrumental techniques  
 2 shamisen +1 koto  
 Shamisen is primary and koto is secondary  
 Square plectra  
 sitting diagonally to the koto  
 derived form ornamental gaguso (gagaku koto)  
 1.91 m (8'32) in length  
 jiuta shamisen (medium-neck)  
 Singing to own's koto/instrumental musi/ shamisen  
 music played together w/koto

### Yamada Kengyo 山田検校

Tokyo (Edo)  
 adaption of uta-joruri (joruri songs accompanied by shamisen)  
 singing  
 1 shamisen + 2 or more koto  
 Koto is primary and shamisen is supplement  
 Rounded plectra  
 sitting at a right angle to the koto  
 improved koto  
 1.81m (6') in length  
 nagauta shamisen (thin-neck)  
 Ensemble of koto and shamisen

Completely different types of koto music but they are not opposed to each other



## The koto prodigy Michio Miyagi 宮城道雄 (1895-1956)

- adaption of Western music theory and instrumental technique
- invention of new koto (17-string koto, 80-string koto, short koto, etc.)
- orchestra ensemble (large ensemble w/ Western and Japanese instruments)
- collaboration with Western music → *Shin nihon ongaku* (new Japanese music)

### Kinichi Nakanoshima: Another Pioneer (Yamada School, 1904-84)

- melodies and harmony on major/minor scales
- new tuning based on Okinawa scale
- new koto technique such as hitting the strings left side of the bridges with astick

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29WpFkhv62w> 春の音

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kk1zW5odMsE> ホトトモス (山田流)