

The Shakuhachi, the Fuke-shû, and the Scholars: a historical controversy

尺八と普化宗に関する歴史的論争

Edgar W. Pope
エドガー W. ポープ

概 要

尺八の歴史については色々な説があり、論争は江戸時代から続いているが、1970年代頃からは英語の文献にもその論争はあらわれる。英語を使用する学者が、特に禪の普化宗の歴史とその尺八との関係をどのように取り上げているかを、ここで考察する。

I. Introduction

The *shakuhachi* (尺八), an end-blown bamboo flute formerly used as a religious instrument by the *Fuke-shû* (普化宗), a sect of Zen Buddhism, has perhaps the most unusual and most controversial history of any Japanese musical instrument.¹ A particularly lively debate has surrounded the early history of the Fuke sect, up to and including the time of its official recognition by the Tokugawa Shogunate in the late seventeenth century. This debate has been ongoing in Japan for about three centuries, and in recent years, as more and more non-Japanese musicians and scholars have taken an interest in Japanese traditional music, it has been carried on outside of Japan as well. In English-language publications the controversy has been taken up during the past thirty years or so, often with vehemence, by scholars and musicians whose positions reflect a variety of allegiances and attitudes toward the shakuhachi and its history.

Before describing and discussing this debate among English-language writers, it will be useful to summarize both the generally accepted and the controversial aspects of the history of the shakuhachi during the period of interest. The shakuhachi originated in China, where

¹ In addition to the issues to be discussed here, there are a number of other interesting and controversial topics that arise in the literature on the history of the shakuhachi. Among these are the organological development of the shakuhachi and its relationship to other, similar instruments; the histories of the various Fuke temples, and the distribution of political, religious, and musical authority among them; and the relationship between the Fuke sect and the secular shakuhachi schools.

it was called the *ch'ih pa'*. It was introduced to Japan during the Nara period (eighth century A.D.) and was used in the ancient gagaku orchestra, but in subsequent centuries it fell into disuse, and had nearly disappeared by the Kamakura period (late twelfth century). By the end of the Muromachi period (middle sixteenth century) it had appeared again, this time in the hands of wandering beggar-monks called *komosō* (菰僧, "straw-mat monks"), having probably been re-introduced from China. By the early Edo period (early seventeenth century) a sizable group of monks called *komusō* (虛無僧, "monks of nothingness") had emerged, their ranks swelled by *rōnin* (浪人), samurai who had been left without masters by the political chaos that preceded the establishment of the Tokugawa regime. The *komusō* founded temples, developed a repertoire of Buddhist shakuhachi music, and, having organized themselves as the Fuke-shū, received official recognition and certain privileges from the Shogunate.

Most scholars would agree with this outline. Regarding certain finer points of the story, however, there is substantial and often heated disagreement. In essence, there are two competing historical accounts, which we can call the traditional history and the revised history. In this paper I will summarize these two versions of the history of the Fuke sect, discuss their manifestations in English-language literature, and present my own views on the historical issues involved and on the positions taken by various scholars.

II. The Traditional History

The traditional history claims a Chinese origin both for the Fuke sect itself and for its use of the shakuhachi as a Buddhist instrument. According to this history, the instrument and its religious associations were brought to Japan in the 13th century by Kakushin Hattō Zenji (覺心法灯禪師), who founded the Japanese branch of the Fuke sect. Later, in the early seventeenth century, the first Tokugawa shogun, Ieyasu, granted the sect official recognition and privileges.

The traditional account of the origins of the Fuke-shū is given in a document written in Chinese text called the *Kyotaku Denki* (虚鐸伝記). The earliest extant version of this document appears in a Japanese commentary, the *Kyotaku Denki Kokuji Kai* (虚鐸伝記国字解), published in 1795, although certain elements of the story are mentioned (and questioned) in documents dating from the early seventeenth century.² The following is a summary of the story told in the *Kyotaku Denki*, based on Sanford (p.416) and Kamisangō/Blasdel (pp.98-99): In China during the T'ang period, there was a Buddhist monk named P'u-K'o (普化, Fuke in Japanese) who was famous for running through the streets of Chen-chou, ringing a bell. An admirer of P'u-K'o, named Chang Po (張伯, Chohaku in Japanese), was a flute player, and succeeded in capturing the spiritual essence of P'u-K'o's

² Kamisangō and Blasdel, p.101.

bell in a melody which he called Kyotaku (虚鐸 "empty bell"). This composition was passed down through sixteen generations of successors, finally reaching a man named Chang Ts'an (張參, Chōsan in Japanese). As a student of Zen meditation at the Hu-kuo temple (壺洞護国寺), Chang Ts'an met the Japanese monk Kakushin, to whom he passed on the "Empty Bell" melody and the flute tradition of Chang Po. In 1254, accompanied by four Chinese disciples who were themselves flute-playing monks, Kakushin returned to Japan, where he founded the temple of Saihōji (西方寺, later renamed Kōkokuji 興国寺) and established a tradition of shakuhachi-playing Zen monks. First and second-generation disciples of Kakushin established the temples of Ichigetsuji and Reihōji (一月寺、鈴法寺) near Edo, and Myōanji (明暗寺) in Kyōto, which became the three headquarters temples of the Fuke sect.

Another important document in traditional history of the Fuke sect is the Gonyūkoku no Watasaseraresōrō Osadamegaki (御入国之被渡候掟書), or Charter of 1614, as it is often called in English. This document was purportedly issued by the Tokugawa government and written by Ieyasu himself. The surviving versions show considerable variation, but agree in recognizing the Fuke sect as an important and respectable organization, and in granting its members certain privileges, such as exemption from local jurisdiction, freedom from travel restrictions, the right to carry weapons, and free admission to plays and other public events. Some versions explicitly recognize the sect as a religious refuge for rōnin, restrict its membership to the samurai class, and state that komusō may be employed by the government on "expeditions of an investigatory nature."³ According to the traditional history, this document gave long-overdue recognition to a religious organization that had already been in existence in Japan for three and a half centuries. As we will see, the authenticity of the Charter of 1614 has been called into question by proponents of the revised history; but it is generally accepted that in the late 17th century the Tokugawa government did in fact officially recognize the decree as valid and granted the Fuke sect the privileges that it specified.

III. The Revised History

The traditional history was accepted by the Fuke monks until the abolishment of the sect in 1871, and continued to be generally taken as historical fact into the early 20th century. Even today there are many who adhere to it, especially among those shakuhachi players who have continued to perform and to transmit the music of the Fuke sect. But beginning in the 1930s many scholars have questioned the accuracy of the traditional history and the authenticity of the documents on which it is based, and from the work of these scholars a revised history has emerged. According to this version, both the Fuke sect itself and the use of the shakuhachi in a religious context originated in Japan, and probably no earlier than the seventeenth century. The traditional story of a Fuke lineage in China, say the re-

³ Sanford, p.418.

visionists, was concocted by the Fuke monks at this time in order to create a distinguished genealogy for their order. The supposed recognition of the sect by Ieyasu was similarly falsified, and was eventually accepted by the Shogunate only as a way of gaining control over the sect and the service of its members as spies. In other words, according to the revised history, the *Kyotaku Denki* is a work of fiction and the Charter of 1614 is a forgery. Both fabrications were carried out by members of the Fuke sect as part of a project of legitimization which they undertook around the beginning of the seventeenth century.

The two most detailed and carefully argued histories of the Fuke sect in English are *Kamisango/Blasdel (1988)* and *Sanford (1977)*. Both refer to the work of *Nakazuka Chikuzen (中塚竹禪)*, who in the 1930's examined the documents of the Fuke sect at *Myōanji*, as well as the diaries of *Kakushin* at *Kōkokuji*. *Nakazuka* was himself a dedicated shakuhachi player, who had no doubt of the veracity of the traditional history when he set out on his research. With regard to the story told in the *Kyotaku Denki*, however, he discovered that (1) *Kakushin's* diaries contain no mention of the shakuhachi, P'u-K'o, or *Chang Ts'an*; (2) the four "disciples" who accompanied *Kakushin* on his return to Japan were in fact servants, not flute-playing monks; and (3) although *Kōkokuji* was indeed founded by *Kakushin*, its supposed connection with *Myōanji* was fabricated by monks at the latter temple through forgery in the eighteenth century.⁴

The credibility of the story told in the *Kyotaku Denki* is further undermined by the absence of any confirming evidence in other written records of either China or Japan. P'u-K'o himself appears to be historical, being mentioned in a number of Chinese sources. But the "Empty Bell" flute tradition of *Chang Po*, which was supposedly carried on through at least sixteen generations of transmission, is mentioned nowhere; there is, in fact, nothing in any Chinese records to confirm the existence of either *Chang Po* or *Chang Ts'an*. In Japan, furthermore, there is nothing in records from the Kamakura period to suggest the appearance of flute-playing monks around the time of *Kakushin's* return.⁵ *Nakazuka* concluded that, while *Kakushin* himself and his journey to China are quite historical, his connection to the shakuhachi and the Fuke sect is completely fictitious, and the use of the shakuhachi in Zen practice is a Japanese invention of more recent times.

The other central document of the traditional history, the Charter of 1614, was under suspicion almost as soon as it first appeared. It was called into question by *Arai Hakuseki (新井白石)* near the end of the seventeenth century, and in the early 20th century by *Mikami Sanji (三上參次)*, who argued that the charter was not written in 1614 as it claimed, but was a forgery produced around 1680.⁶ *Nakazuka* continued the work of these earlier scholars, confirmed their results and uncovered further details.

The evidence against the authenticity of the Charter of 1614 is compelling.⁷ In the re-

⁴ *Kamisangō* and *Blasdel*, p.102; *Sanford*, pp.431-2 and footnote #29.

cords of the Tokugawa government there is nothing to indicate that it was ever issued. It first appeared in the late seventeenth century, when the Fuke sect sent a copy of it to the government; when asked for the original, the Fuke monks replied that it had been lost in a fire. There are many different versions of the document, with as few as eight articles and as many as twenty-one. There are also many inconsistencies and anomalies among these various versions.

The reasons for the apparent forgery of this decree are summarized by Sanford:

While the *Kyotaku Denki* had sought primarily to legitimize the komusô as a Zen tradition with significant pre-Tokugawa roots, the Charter of 1614 served a different but complementary function. It attempted to explain and rationalize the actual state of the komusô movement, to enumerate and justify certain widespread komusô practices. . . .
(p.420)

In other words, the komusô were probably already travelling freely, carrying weapons, and taking other liberties not available to most people in Edo period society; they felt the need to justify these practices, and so resorted to forgery. Such a move was necessary, no doubt, because of the suspicion and fear with which the government viewed the masterless samurai who made up the bulk of the Fuke sect. Knowing full well that the Charter was a forgery, the government responded rather shrewdly by recognizing it as legitimate: in this way it provided a secure refuge to an unstable and potentially dangerous group of men, brought them under its direct supervision, and probably gained their service in espionage activities.

IV. The Controversy: Gutzwiller vs. Malm

In recent English-language literature on the shakuhachi and its history, we can find instances of both the traditional version and the revised version as outlined above, and occasionally a combination of the two. Some writers have responded to the controversy by suspending judgment on certain aspects of the story; others have zealously defended the traditional version against its attackers; others have carefully presented the arguments for the revised version, apparently in an effort to convince the die-hard traditionalists; and still others have presented one version or the other as established fact, seemingly unaware of the controversy.

⁵ Kamisangô and Blasdel, p.100.

⁶ Mikami Sanji, "Fuke-shu ni tsuite" 普化宗について, in *Shigaku Zasshi* 史学雑誌, 13:4 (April 1902). Cited in Sanford, footnote #2.

⁷ See especially Kamisangô and Blasdel, pp.103-5, and Sanford footnote #35.

The discussion thus far has drawn mainly on Sanford (1977) and Kamisangō/Blasdel (1988). Both of these works argue persuasively in favor of the revised history, and are entirely consistent with one another. Both approach the subject in a dispassionate tone, with evidence neatly organized and arguments carefully constructed. Both publications appeared after those of Malm (1959) and Gutzwiller (1974), to which we turn next.

William Malm is a well-known scholar of Japanese traditional music, and his book *Japanese Music and Musical Instruments* (1959) is a standard (although often criticized) introduction to the subject for non-specialists. In his chapter on the shakuhachi, Malm espouses the revised version of its history, and like the later writers cites the work of Nakazuka Chikuzen. His discussion of the forged documents, the reasons for the forgeries and the reasons for the government's acceptance of them, although less detailed than those of the later revisionist works, essentially agrees with them, while adding that "faking historical documents was a favorite pastime of Edo writers" (p.153). Unlike Sanford (1977), which appeared in a scholarly journal, and Kamisangō /Blasdel (1988), which forms part of a manual for practicing shakuhachi players, Malm's book is aimed at the general reader, and its style is accordingly more conversational and more colorful. The Fuke-shū, he tells us, was founded by "desperate men" who "sought satisfaction more in earthly revenge than in heavenly rewards" (p.105). He explains that the Fuke shakuhachi was made from the heavy root-end of the bamboo plant so that it could be used as a club (which Sanford and others agree is at least a possible explanation), as indeed it is often used by komusō who appear in historical dramas on Japanese television. He recounts the story of Otori Ichibe, an Edo period gentleman who once got into an argument with a komusō, seized his shakuhachi, and played it with "his most insulting orifice" (p.157). Thus Malm's account, while generally in accordance with the revised history, places rather more emphasis on entertaining anecdotes than on historical argumentation.

A passionately written counterattack against the revised history, and against Malm's account in particular, appears in the doctoral dissertation of Andreas Gutzwiller (1974). Gutzwiller is a shakuhachi player of the Kinko-ryū (琴古流), a school whose music is derived from that of the Fuke sect. Although he admits that the Kyotaku Denki is "usually considered unreliable" (p.15), Gutzwiller nevertheless asserts: "It is most likely that the shakuhachi had already been used in China as a musical instrument in the Buddhist context and it is also likely that the instrument came to Japan together with its religious music" (p.12). The only evidence he presents to support this assertion, however, is the following:

The book Wen-hsien t'ung k'ao, incidentally, mentions another book (without giving title or year) where the ch'ih pa' is mentioned in connection with Buddhist clerics. According to this source a monk played before emperor Hsuan Song (Japanese: Genso, reg. 712-756 AD) and presented him with an instrument" (p.5).

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This one indirect reference is the only case presented in which Chinese records suggest a Buddhist use of the ch'ih pa (the Chinese predecessor of the shakuhachi). As for Japanese sources, after admitting their "doubtful credibility," Gutzwiller nevertheless maintains that "the frequency with which the sources insist that the use of shakuhachi as a musical instrument in religious context has its roots in Chinese practice makes it unlikely that the claim is completely without truth" (pp.5-6). But frequency of assertion may have very little to do with truth. Those who invented and propagated the traditional history were no doubt hoping that their story would be accepted as historical truth if they simply repeated it frequently and insistently.

Gutzwiller similarly defends at least the possibility that the Charter of 1614 might be authentic. He does not mention the research of Mikami Sanji and Nakazuka Chikuzen, which Kamisangō/Blasdel and Sanford cite as having established that the document was a forgery. He does discuss Arai Hakuseki, the seventeenth century scholar who first raised questions about its authenticity. According to Gutzwiller, Hakuseki's objections are built upon doubts regarding the language used in the edict, which differed somewhat from the language commonly used in such documents, and regarding the authenticity of one of its three seals. But instead of refuting Hakuseki's case in detail, Gutzwiller prefers to question his motives: Hakuseki, he says, was hostile to Zen and reactionary in musical taste, and therefore likely to be hostile to the Fuke sect. Gutzwiller then adds:

It is not my intention to discredit all doubts of the 1614 edict as unfounded but they have to be evaluated with the necessary knowledge of the philosophical mood of those times. If 'faking historical documents was a favorite pastime of Edo writers' (Malm 1959: 153), then questioning the authenticity of historical documents was its complement, especially if they were concerned with matters which were suspicious to the government anyway. (p.20)

Gutzwiller seems to suggest in this passage that the government's suspicion of the komusō and their activities provided Hakuseki with an extra incentive (in addition to his anti-Zen prejudices and "the philosophical mood of the times") to cast doubt on the 1614 edict. The trouble with this argument is that the Tokugawa government did in fact recognize the document and the Fuke sect as authentic, in spite of Hakuseki's objections. They did this, apparently, because by legitimizing the sect they hoped to bring its members under their control. (Later, in the 1840s, the government "discovered" that the document was a forgery and revoked their recognition, after deciding that the Fuke monks' abuses of their privileges had become intolerable; see Sanford, p.420). Hakuseki's doubts, then, clearly were not related to a government-sponsored campaign to discredit the Fuke sect, since at that time there was no such campaign. It is of course possible, nevertheless, that Hakuseki himself

had an ulterior motive; but merely to accuse *him* of such a motive hardly constitutes a refutation of his arguments.

As for Gutzwiller's own motives, they are demonstrated beyond any doubt by the fury of his attack on Malm. He devotes a separate section of his dissertation to this attack, in which he blasts Malm for depicting the komusô as

...a band of 'stool pigeons' (Malm p.154) who used their instruments as weapons and were more familiar with brothels than with temples. Had they been nothing else their music would be dead and forgotten but, of course, Malm shows little understanding of this music, as we will have ample opportunity to observe later... Malm's distortion of the history of the instrument would not be worthy of criticism if they were not included in a book which, being rather popular, is most likely the first book anyone interested in Japanese music will read. If Malm, for reasons we are left to speculate about, developed a certain antipathy against the forerunners of contemporary shakuhachi players – a fact which prevents him from understanding their music – it would have been better if he had avoided the subject altogether. (pp.24-5)

Gutzwiller vents his rage at some length, but presents no convincing evidence to refute anything that Malm says regarding the history of the Fuke sect. (Malm's understanding or lack thereof with regard to shakuhachi music is a topic beyond the scope of the present paper.) Elsewhere, after admitting the likelihood that the komusô shared information with the government, Gutzwiller continues:

It is, however, unreasonable to state flatly that 'the ranks of the komuso were not drawn primarily from the seekers of Buddha's paradise' (Malm 1959: 153) and that they were granted their charter 'on condition that they act as spies for the government' (Malm 1959: 154). Such remarks are as untenable as are allegations that all American journalists working in the Far East are outright CIA agents. (p.18)

As we have seen, however, some surviving versions of the Charter of 1614 – which, although originally a forgery, was in the end accepted and made official by the government – explicitly state that the komusô were to act as government informants. To my knowledge, American journalists in the Far East have not been granted a charter by the U.S. government which obliges them to act as informants on its behalf.

I should add that I find nothing in Malm's book regarding the familiarity of the komusô with brothels.

In fairness to Gutzwiller, it is probably true that Malm's seemingly categorical denial of any sincere Buddhist spirit on the part of the komusô is unwarranted. Sanford (pp.420-1)

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argues that many of them, especially in the higher levels of the Fuke organization; were indeed ardent Buddhists who did their best to impose an appropriate code of conduct on those komusō who were not. The temple of Myōanji in particular, Sanford believes, took shakuhachi music and Zen practice very seriously as elements of the Fuke tradition. Nevertheless, the komusō did maintain a reputation for belligerence, and Sanford's discussion (like Malm's) suggests that many rōnin were indeed interested in the Fuke sect primarily as a cover under which to pursue old vendettas.

In two later publications, Gutzwiller appears to have reluctantly modified his previous stance and accepted the revised history, at least with regard to the supposed Chinese origin of Buddhist shakuhachi practice. In Gutzwiller (1983) he writes

(The Fuke sect) traced its origin back to the excentric (sic) Zen priest P'u-K'o.... As a religious sect, however, it seems to be of Japanese origin, having developed most probably from groups of mendicant lay-priests during the Kamakura period playing shakuhachi. (p.240)

In Gutzwiller (1984), he again recounts the anecdote mentioned in the *Wen-hsien t'ung K'ao* of a monk playing the ch'ih pa' for an emperor, but goes on to add: "One is forced to assume, however, that this was an isolated case and that as part of religious exercises shakuhachi-playing developed much later, and in Japan" (p.53). In this publication Gutzwiller does not mention the Kyotaku Denki Kokujikai or the Charter of 1614 by name, but he admits that

Given the conditions of the time it was a matter of survival for the Fuke-Sect to be able to boast of great antiquity and a well-known founder, and to achieve this end they did not hesitate to use forged documents. (pp.54-5)

It is worth noting here that Gutzwiller, while giving ground to the revised history, continues to play the role of defender of the Fuke sect: they resorted to forgery, but only out of dire necessity. He goes on to say:

All this has been discovered time and again by an impressive series of researchers - from Arai Hakuseki (1656-1726) to Sanford (1977: 411-440). What, however, has been appreciated all too little is the original achievement of the komusō, which consisted in having linked music to the practice of meditation in a unique manner. (p.55)

Thus Gutzwiller, by this time, seems to have reluctantly accepted the credibility of Arai Hakuseki and of the revised history in general. At the same time, he continues to show his

annoyance at other researchers, this time for having focused their attention on forgeries and such things rather than on the achievement of the komusō in developing shakuhachi music as a form of Buddhist practice. (We might note that Gutzwiller himself, in his previous work, held that this was not "the original achievement of the komusō" but rather the achievement of Chinese monks that had been passed on to the komusō. It is the revised history, not the traditional one, that establishes the originality of the Japanese komusō in this regard.)

In both his 1983 and 1984 publications, Gutzwiller cites Sanford (1977) as an authoritative source on the history of the Fuke sect, suggesting that perhaps it was Sanford's very persuasive article that finally led him to accept the revised history.

V. Other Scholars

In spite of Nakazuka's research and its reporting in English by Sanford and by Kamisangō/Blasdel, the story related by the Kyotaku Denki has continued to find its way into English language literature as historical fact. As recently as 1989, Sessan presented aspects of the traditional history (the story of Chang Po, Chang Ts'an and Kakushin) with no suggestion of doubt as to its historical accuracy. His article does not mention the 1614 charter specifically, although it does allude to a "secret agreement of mutual benefit" concluded by the Fuke sect and the government.

Harich-Schneider's brief section on the shakuhachi in her *History of Japanese Music* (1973) begins by stating without qualification that "In 1255 Kakushin had reintroduced the almost forgotten shakuhachi from China, and itinerant Zen monks had played it as a means of acquiring spiritual illumination" (p.512). Citing Abe Suenao, she states that this guild of Zen monks disappeared around the end of the Muromachi period. In fact, as we have seen, there is no solid evidence of the use of shakuhachi in a Zen context before the Edo period. If Harich-Schneider was unaware of the doubts that had been raised regarding the early history of the shakuhachi, the controversy surrounding the Edo-period komusō clearly did not escape her attention:

Actually, the komusō were suspected of serving the Bakufu and providing the shogunal police with secret information.... (The Meian-ryū) claimed to have had Ieyasu's special protection and an exclusive right to make their living as itinerant shakuhachi players. Rumour has it that the Shoguns confirmed this claim only on condition that in return secret information was gathered for the government. (p.512)

Thus Harich-Schneider quite diplomatically reports the claims and rumours as such, without passing judgment on their validity.

Blasdel (1984) discusses the Kyotaku Denki as myth rather than as fact, acknowledging that it is not historically accurate, and that its publication was part of a campaign by the

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Fuke sect to establish their legitimacy. Blasdel later (1988) translated and adapted Kamisan-gô's detailed argument in favor of the revised history.

Fritsch (1979) presents a summary of the revised history, stating that the two documents were forgeries and that the government recognized the 1614 edict in return for occasional espionage activities. Fritsch notes that the Kyotaku Denki Kokujikai "exerted a strong influence on the entire Japanese and Western understanding of Fukeshu history, even until recent times" (p.219).

Hughes, in the article on "Shakuhachi" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments* (1984), calls the traditional story of Kakushin bringing Buddhist shakuhachi practice to Japan a "justification myth," and says of the Fuke sect: "This sect was formed by ex-samurai who, finding themselves unemployed in the late 17th century, used the cover of religious asceticism to gain a government-approved monopoly on the use of the shakuhachi in begging for alms – in exchange, apparently, for serving as government spies." This is quite similar to Malm's account of the revised history, and like Malm's account it perhaps goes too far by implying that none of the sect's founders were sincere religious ascetics.

Berger, in the article on "Shakuhachi" in *The New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (1980), largely avoids the history of the Fuke sect, saying simply "The instrument was adopted by itinerant Buddhist priests (*komuso*) of the Fuke sect, who were employed by the ruling warrior class." This does not address most of the controversial issues, but "employed by the ruling warrior class" presumably refers to the government's employment of the komusô as spies.

Tsuge (1977) is a translation and brief discussion of the Kyotaku Denki Kokujikai. Tsuge says of this document that "its credibility as an historical source is generally questioned by historians and musicologists today... simply because there are too few historical materials... to corroborate the stories it relates." This is in agreement with Kamisan-gô, whom Tsuge mentions as a source on the subject.

Weisgarber (1968) agrees with Malm in noting that "many Edo writers had a propensity for faking historical documents" and that the early history of the komusô is therefore difficult to establish. Weisgarber seems to accept the charter of 1614 as genuine, although his statement "During the first decades of the seventeenth century the Tokugawa government – the Bakufu – granted a charter to a group of komusô authorizing them to establish a temple" might possibly refer to a different document.

Kishibe (1984; previous edition 1966) gives a very brief account quite similar to that of Berger, quoted above: "In the beginning of the Edo period itinerant Buddhist priests (Komusô) of the Fuke sect who were employed by Samurai began to use a 1.8 feet long (sic) shakuhachi for their mendicancy." Berger may have used Kishibe as a source, and again it seems likely that the samurai mentioned here are in fact the Tokugawa rulers (I have seen no evidence elsewhere that the komusô were employed by anyone other than the

Bakufu itself).

VI. Conclusions

The revised history seems to have become generally accepted by the English-speaking scholarly community during the 1970s and 1980s. The few exceptions mentioned above can perhaps be explained as follows: Harich-Schneider, writing in 1973 a brief synopsis of Fuke history as part of a much larger work on Japanese music, was probably unaware of the controversy regarding the Kyotaku Denki. Gutzwiller, himself a master of Kinko school shakuhachi, in 1974 defended his tradition with righteous indignation against what he saw as a hostile attack; later, in 1983 and 1984 (perhaps after having read Sanford's article), he realized that the weight of the evidence was against him and reluctantly accepted the revised history. Sessan, also a shakuhachi master and writing in 1989, when it would have been difficult to remain unaware of the controversy, probably stuck to the traditional history out of the same sense of loyalty that had inspired Gutzwiller.

It is important to emphasize, however, that the two sides in this controversy do not fall neatly into shakuhachi "insiders" and "outsiders". Kamisangō and Blasdel are both shakuhachi players and prominent figures in the traditional shakuhachi world, and yet both were able to accept the revised history and thus to acknowledge the unsavory aspects of the history of their tradition. Nakazuka Chikuzen, the scholar whose work in the 1930s undermined the traditional history and hastened the acceptance of the revised history, was himself an avid shakuhachi player who apparently had no doubts about the traditional history when he began his research. These writers were able to put aside traditional ideology when faced with convincing historical evidence that ran counter to that ideology.

Thus a review of this controversy, and of the resulting shift in the weight of opinion from one version of history to another, tends to cast doubt on the currently popular view that history is necessarily constructed so as to suit the socio-political position and allegiances of the historian. Such positions and allegiances certainly play a role in forming the views of historians, but so does historical evidence; the balance between the two varies among individuals and changes over time. Nakazuka Chikuzen, for example, began his research as a Kinko school shakuhachi player interested in confirming and detailing the traditional history of his instrument; the evidence that he uncovered led him to revise that history, and thus to *challenge his own tradition*. Such a revision was, of course, much more thinkable in the 1930s than it had been before the Meiji Restoration: the political necessity of the traditional history had been largely removed when the privileges of the Fuke sect were abolished. Nevertheless the Kinko school in general continued to adhere strongly to the traditional history, and Chikuzen's move to revise that history must have required some courage. Andreas Gutzwiller, as a non-Japanese who had "found his calling" in the world of Japanese traditional music, may have had an even stronger personal attachment to the traditional history than

did Chikuzen; but even he was eventually persuaded to give in, however reluctantly, to the weight of historical evidence.

The existence of different versions of history, then, does not show that all versions are equally valid, or equally biased. What it shows is that there is an ongoing tension between historical evidence and the biases of historians, and that the writing of history requires a constant effort to set aside one's biases when looking at the evidence. While "absolute" historical truth may be an unattainable (indeed indefinable) ideal, it is clear that some versions of history are more true than others, and that the business of historians is to construct the truest versions possible.

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