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Transmission and Performance of Taiko in
Edo Bayashi, Hachijo, and Modern Kumi-daiko Styles

by

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ABSTRACT

Transmission and Performance of Taiko in
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This document is a study of the history, instruments, transmission method and performance practices of three types of Japanese taiko drumming. Included are transcriptions of representative pieces, several of which have never been written down in Western notation, as taiko is generally an orally transmitted musical form. Field research was done throughout the summers of 2007 and 2008 with renowned taiko artist Kenny Endo at the Taiko Center of the Pacific in Honolulu, Hawaii.
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Most of all, I would like to thank my family for their constant love, support, patience, and encouragement.
# Transmission and Performance of Taiko in Edō Bayashi, Hachijo, and Modern Kumi-daiko Styles

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In today's diverse musical landscape, classically trained percussionists are required to learn how to play an increasingly extensive assortment of percussion instruments from a wide variety of cultures and traditions. Performing ensembles including, but not limited to, orchestras, Broadway-style theater productions, and percussion ensembles incorporate many of these ethnic instruments that extend the traditional collection of percussion instruments and performance techniques. The idea that an educated percussionist should learn more than simply how to play the basic orchestral instruments with musicality and proper technique has led to a great increase in the number of different percussion instruments that are introduced and taught to students in high schools and at the college level. In the classrooms and performance spaces of many schools and conservatories throughout North America today, one commonly finds drums and keyboard instruments from around the world. Any percussionist not aware of and knowledgeable about the plethora of performance styles and playing techniques is at a marked disadvantage.

Up until now, however, the majority of interest in non-Western percussion instruments and performance practice seems to have been focused, for the most part, on Latin America and Africa, while musical traditions and performance techniques from the Far East, i.e. those from Japan, China, and Korea, suffer from a relative lack of research and understanding. This is by no means purely the fault of Western percussionists. Learning Japanese taiko, for example, requires a considerable investment of time and energy since it is as much a culture as it is rhythms and movement. It also requires time and a certain rite of passage to earn the trust of the performers and teachers who
understand and are thus able to transmit the tradition. This is not to say that Asian music and culture has been ignored outside the professional music community. Movies such as *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, the touring Japanese group Kodo, and a recent Mitsubishi car commercial featuring taiko performers have greatly increased awareness and visibility of Asian music and culture in popular Western culture.

In an attempt to fill a perceived void in the research of Asian percussion instruments and performance practice, I decided to study Japanese taiko from a living master of this form and to document what I have learned for others to study. I am the first to admit that before embarking on this project, my exposure to taiko or any sort of Asian drumming was limited to what I had seen on television and various video clips. I have since learned that my limited exposure was restricted to only one form of taiko called *kumi-daiko* or “group drumming”, made famous by the touring group Kodo.

As I considered how to find a master teacher, my first thought was to travel to Japan and spend a summer taking private lessons, rehearsing, and performing in a taiko group. Being completely naïve, I had no idea how to find and choose a teacher so I contacted Steve Wilkes, a person I know who traveled to Japan to study drumming. Wilkes is an associate professor of percussion at Berklee College of Music in Boston. He was also awarded an Uchida Scholarship Grant from the Japan Foundation to study taiko drumming in Japan with Kodo and Seido Kobayashi. After explaining to him what I wanted to do, he strongly advised me not to begin my studies in Japan. He told me that a master teacher will generally not accept a student unless they agree to pass through an apprenticeship followed by a three to seven-year professional commitment to perform in a taiko group. He also said the language barrier could become a problem because all the
teaching was done orally without the assistance of written Western notation. Undeterred, I called some of the better-known taiko training centers in the United States and asked their advice on studying in Japan. Their responses were virtually identical to the one I received from Wilkes. I eventually realized that for my purposes, a trip to Japan was not practical or in any realistic way, possible.

One organization I called to get information about Japanese taiko schools was the Taiko Center of the Pacific, a training center in Hawaii founded by Kenny Endo, a well-known and well-respected taiko performer and teacher. At the Taiko Center, Endo and members of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble, one of the premier taiko ensembles in the United States, offer classes to the public. In addition to its regular *kumi-daiko* group lessons that run every semester to teach taiko basics, the Center was also going to offer special intensive courses during the summer on *Edo matsuri bayashi* (the festival music of Edo, old Tokyo), *o-daiko* (big drum), and Hachijo-style drumming. Each of these intensive two-week courses was designed to introduce aspects of taiko not usually taught at Taiko Center of the Pacific or at any other taiko school in the United States that I am aware of. Deciding that the courses offered were what I was looking for, I enrolled in the intensives, including an additional course to learn to play a full taiko piece called *Omiyage* taught by one of its composers, Yuta Kato. I also decided to participate in the weekly *kumi-daiko* public classes, take private lessons, and to observe each rehearsal and performance of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble.

One of the difficulties of writing a paper on an orally transmitted art form, such as taiko, is that my view is greatly influenced by my teacher, the environment I learned in, and the teaching and musical style I was exposed to during my research period. Although
some practices are commonly shared and observed throughout the taiko community (such as the basic technique and use of *kuchishoga*), every group is unique in terms of its character, repertoire list, and methods of teaching and transmitting the art. Although I did my best to try to learn how other groups practiced and performed, this paper is necessarily limited to my own learning experiences with Kenny Endo. That being said, I believe that his universal respect in the taiko community lends his teaching credence and believe my paper, while perhaps limited, is accurate and authentic in its portrayal of his teaching methods.
Chapter 2: Instruments

Prior to any discussion of taiko history or performance techniques, it is important to become familiar with commonly used drums and other percussion instruments. The types of drums I used can be divided into two categories: drums where rope is used to tension the head (*shime-daiko*), and drums with heads tacked onto the shell (*byo-uchi taiko*).

*Shime-daiko* are used in a variety of different ensembles. They play a role in *kumi-daiko* groups, temples, noh and kabuki theater, and traditional folk groups. Although there can be very large *shime-daiko*, this paper will focus on the smaller drums that originated in classical Japanese music and theater. Also known as *tsukeshime-daiko* and *fushime-daiko*, these instruments are ideally made of a single piece of *keyaki* (zelkova wood, a relative of elm) for the body, called the *do*. The heads, which are usually made of cowhide, are stretched over iron rings, which are tightened together with rope. More recently, bolts have replaced ropes on some *shime-daiko* because they are easier and faster to tighten. See Image 1 for an example of a *shime-daiko* tensioned with bolts.

Image 1: Shime-daiko (bolt-tensioned)
Within the *shime-daiko* family, there are two main types of drums: the *nagauta shime-daiko* and the festival *shime-daiko*. The *nagauta shime-daiko* is primarily used for Noh and Kabuki musical ensembles where the playing is more refined and nuanced, and the drum construction reflects this. This particular drum has thin heads (with the top head slightly thicker than the bottom) tensioned with thin orange rope usually made of hemp called *shirabe*, and is played with a thin pair of *hinoki* (cypress wood) *bachi* or *batchi* (drumsticks) in the case of Kabuki and thicker *bachi* (specifically called *futo-bachi*) for Noh. The body and rims are often painted, and the playing area is limited to the center of the head, usually on a small patch of deerskin.¹

The festival *shime-daiko* is a much more durable drum used in outdoor festivals and other folk music. The heads, as well as the iron rings they are attached to and the rope used for tensioning, are all significantly thicker. *Chogake* is the system of measurement of festival *shime-daiko* and ranges from two to five *chogake*. Although the diameter of the drum body remains fairly constant, the height of the body and the thickness of the head increase with the number. The *shime-daiko* with the lightest body and thinnest head is called the *namitsuke* (rather than one *chogake*). The thicker head is beneficial in that the drumhead can be tightened to a greater tension and played at a louder dynamic, an aspect that is especially useful in large ensemble playing. The body, skin, and tensioning rope of a festival *shime-daiko* are usually left unpainted and undecorated. One notable exception to this are the *shime* used for *Edo bayashi*, which are painted on the edges. The body of the drum, usually 9.5 to 11 inches in diameter, is slightly bowed out, and the rims are beveled to allow the head more freedom to vibrate.

The ideal sound of both types of *shime-daiko*, although differing slightly depending on the head thickness and tensioning technique, should be a clear, high-pitched tone.²

The general term for a taiko with tacked-on heads is a *byo-daiko*,³ also known as *byo-uchi-daiko*.⁴ The *nagado-daiko* (long body drum) is the type of *byo-daiko* most commonly associated with modern *kumi-daiko* performances. The drumhead is attached to this type of drum with tacks arranged in a zigzag pattern, leaving little or no space between them. The drum body, or *do*, is barrel-shaped (to eliminate standing waves that would occur in a perfectly cylindrical drum) and is traditionally made of a single piece of *keyaki*.⁵ The resilience of this body construct is well documented. In Japan, drum bodies from the Edo period (1603-1807) are still used in performance.⁶ Due to the limited availability and high cost of large pieces of *keyaki*, however, many drum-makers have recently turned to other woods, such as *sen* (related to Japanese ash), *kaede* (maple), and *bubinga*.⁷ It is common today for drum-makers and even amateur groups to make *nagado-daiko* out of wine barrels, although the sound is considered sub-standard compared to single-piece-body drums.

The drumhead of a *byo-daiko* is made of thick cowhide and is attached to the drum in a process that takes four to seven days. The heads are stretched (multiple times) using heavy-duty ratchets or hydraulic jacks that pull on rods that are passed through cuts made in the outer edge of the skin. Once the tacks are put in place, the ratchets are

² Bergstrom and Kameda, “Tsukeshime Information.”
⁵ Bergstrom and Kameda, “Nagado-daiko Information.”
⁷ Bergstrom and Kameda, “Wood.”
released and the rods removed. *Nagado-daiko* ideally have a strong attack and a mid to low pitch, although this varies depending on the size of the individual drum. *Nagado-daiko* are often named according to their size. A small drum is called a *ko-daiko* and a medium-sized drum, a *chu-daiko*. A common sized *chu-daiko* is eighteen inches across by twenty-two inches deep. See Image 2 for an example of a *chu-daiko*.

Image 2: *Chu-daiko* (on a slant stand)

The largest tacked drum in an ensemble is called the *o-daiko* regardless of size, although the term is usually used for a drum with a head three to six feet in diameter.  

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The same *nagado-daiko* placed on a decorated stand in a temple or shrine is known as a *miya-daiko* (*miya* means temple or shrine).  

Another subset of *byo-daiko* is the *hira-daiko* (shallow body drum). The only difference between a *nagado-daiko* and *hira-daiko* is the depth of the body: *hira-daiko* are wider than they are deep. That being said, *hira-daiko* can range in diameter from *chu-daiko*-sized to *o-daiko*-sized. When *hira-daiko* are hung so the heads are perpendicular to the ground, this type of drum is known as a *hiratsuri-daiko*, or “flat, hung drum.”

In addition to drums, there are several other percussion instruments, or *narimono*, that are used in taiko ensembles. The one I studied primarily was the *atarigane*, a brass hand gong that resembles a shallow dish, also known as a *chan-chiki* or *kane*. There are different sizes, the most common ranging from about four to seven inches. It is played with a mallet made of deer antler called a *shimoku*. (See Image 3 for an example of a *atarigane* and a *shimoku*.) In large *kumi-daiko* ensembles, an instrument called a *tetsu-zutsu* or *tetto* is used to create a sound similar to an *atarigane*, but at a louder volume. It is made of three pipes welded together and is known in American taiko as a “cannon.”

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Chapter 3: History

The history of taiko has two aspects, one rooted in myth and the other in fact. Although the myth is pure fiction, the truth surrounding the advent of taiko is so obscured and full of unproven hypotheses, one might consider it almost the equivalent of mythology. The basis of the legend, which is told in several variations, is a traditional story from the *Nihon Shoki*, a Japanese chronicle from seventh and eighth century BCE, considered the oldest official history of Japan.\(^{13}\)

According to the story, the storm god *Susanowo-no-Mikoto* left his sea domain and began wreaking havoc on the land. This so angered his sister, the sun goddess *Amaterasu*, that she ran into a cave, rolled a boulder in front of the entrance, and vowed never to venture out again. The other gods knew the world was doomed without sunlight, for eventually all the plants and animals would die. They coaxed and pleaded and threatened *Amaterasu* to come out. She would not. They enlisted the help of priests and magicians and strong warriors to move the rock. But it could not be moved. Finally, *Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto*, a small but wily goddess, announced she would coax *Amaterasu* from the cave. The more powerful gods sneered at *Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto*, but she smiled back at them, emptied a barrel of sake, and turned it upside down. Then, she began to dance wildly on the barrel in a way no one had ever seen. The loud, frenetic pounding of her feet created an infectious rhythm that soon had all the other gods laughing, dancing, and singing along. *Amaterasu*, curious as to what could amuse the

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gods so much as to forget their plight, rolled away the stone, bringing her light back to the world. And that is how the first taiko drum and taiko music was created. The early factual history of taiko (the instruments themselves, not the playing style) is much more complicated and often disputed. Estimates of when the first taiko-style drum appeared range from 2,000 to 4,000 years ago, but both the archeological and anthropological evidence suggest that the first drums were used as a means of communication as well as for religious ceremonies. Although some believe that taiko originated in Japan, there is far more evidence to support the theory that similarly constructed drums came to Japan from the Silk Road, trade routes linking the Far East with West Asia, Europe, and Africa. The most prevalent theory is that precursors of taiko (along with Buddhism) came from India around 500 CE. However, in the book The Way of Taiko by Heidi Varian, the author claims that there exists pictorial evidence of early taiko in a relief from a Sumerian castle dating back to 3000-2000 BCE, although no citation is provided.

Another theory is that taiko came from the Chinese dramatic form of Gigaku theater. This was a popular form of entertainment in the Wu Kingdom during the Asuka era (600-710 CE) in which characters such as a bird, a lion, and the Lord of Wu dance and mime accompanied by a group of instruments that included comparable drums. Even

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14 This is my retelling based on several different versions of the story.
17 Varian, The Way of Taiko, 21
today in Kabuki music, drums are used in similar ways to evoke images of wind, the sea, and snow.¹⁹

The earliest physical evidence of early taiko is a haniwa, or small clay burial statue, from the sixth or seventh century which was discovered in Gunma Prefecture, an area physically in the center of Honshu, Japan’s largest island.²⁰ The figurine appears to be a man holding a double-headed drum and playing it with one stick. This find bolsters the idea that similar drums came to Japan from the Chinese mainland, for the single stick style of performance can still be found in China and Korea.²¹

As the Kamakura era dawned around 1192, Chinese and Korean cultural influence gradually gave way to uniquely Japanese art forms.²² In the Muromachi era (1335-1573), Kyotsugu Kannami and his son Motokyo Zeami invented Noh, a dramatic form that incorporated sacred chanting, popular music, and different styles of dance.²³ The instrumental group that accompanies a Noh drama is similar to the drum and flute ensemble used in Edo bayashi. The Noh hayashi (ensemble) is made up of one shime-daiko, a ko-tsuzumi (a rope tensioned, hourglass-shaped drum played on the shoulder), an o-tsuzumi (a larger version of the ko-tsuzumi played from the hip), and a nohkan (transverse, six-hole flute). The musicians also interject vocalizations called kakegoe into their performances, a technique still practiced by some modern kumi-daiko performers.

In the Edo era (1603-1867), Kabuki evolved from classical dance and Noh dramas, and with its historical, moral, and romantic themes, quickly became popular with common

¹⁹ "Taiko: Myth and History."
²⁰ "Taiko: Myth and History."
²² "The History of Taiko: The Heartbeat of Japan."
people. In Kabuki, drums are played onstage, along with *shamisen* (instruments resembling a banjo) to accompany songs, as well as offstage in a *geza* ensemble, where musicians create sound effects including rain, waves, and wind, in an area hidden from the view of the audience.

*Kagura*, or sacred Shinto music, is another point of taiko origin. It combined songs and dances often performed with single drum. More than just entertainment however, the drum played a major role in village life. It was played to warn that a storm was coming, to call fisherman in from the sea, and to send hunters out on a successful trip. The drum was also played at harvest and festival time to encourage the spirit of rain by imitating the sound of the thunder, while at the same time scaring away evil spirits that might threaten the village.

The drum was also used to deal with more tangible threats. Early taiko were used to intimidate enemy armies and scare away insects from farmers’ crops. In the fourteenth century, large drums were used to give military commands and coordinate troop movements. In peacetime, it was said the distance a drum’s sound carried delineated the boundaries of a town.

The most direct predecessor of *kumi-daiko* is a combination of festival music (*matsuri bayashi*), folk music, and the *Obon* ceremony. The *Obon* (or simply *Bon*) is a 500-year-old Japanese Buddhist ceremony meant to honor ancestors’ spirits. The main

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feature of the celebration is the *Bon* dance or *Bon odori.* I was fortunate to attend and take part in a *Bon* ceremony and dance on the North Shore of Hawaii in the small surf town of Haleiwa at which I witnessed a *Bon hayashi* (ensemble) perform. On a high wooden scaffold called a *yagura* was a stage where eight performers played on an array of drums and flutes. The stage area was quite small, but they used some motions similar to those found in modern *kumi-daiko,* and one could clearly make a connection. In fact, some of the original professional *taiko* groups in Japan got their start playing during the summer at *Bon* dances.

It was not until the middle of the twentieth century that *taiko* drums transitioned from their solo and supporting role to become the lead voice in an ensemble. Daihachi Oguchi returned to Japan in 1947 after his release from the Chinese prison where he was held during World War II and took a job playing in a jazz band in Suwa City, Nagano Prefecture. Two years later, a relative presented him with an old piece of *taiko* music recently found in a soybean warehouse. Oguchi could not read the music, which was written in traditional Japanese notation, but found an older man who had played the piece, and with his help, eventually transcribed it. The piece was rather simple, so to make it more interesting Oguchi added additional rhythms, and rescored the work for a group of *taiko* players. Using different sized *taiko* to play different musical roles, the concept of *kumi-daiko* was born. *Shime-daiko* were used to play a constant background rhythm, the *o-daiko* played a simple rhythm meant to establish the pulse, and the *chu-daiko* played the lead role, using complicated, rhythmic passages to drive the music.

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forward. Because many of the performers Oguchi recruited were not professional musicians, the more complex rhythms were often split between several people. Additionally, each player performed on multiple drums, arranged much like a drum set. The tetsu-zutsu or tetto (cannon) was also invented at this time, adding a piecing metallic sound to the group. By 1951, Oguchi was appointed the seventh grandmaster of Osuwa Daiko, a festival performance group with a 400-year history.30

Word of this new style slowly spread, and by 1957, other similar groups, such as Hokuriku O-daiko Enthusiasts and Hokuriku Taiko Association had started to appear. The most innovative group with the greatest lasting influence began in 1959 as a group called Yushima Tenjin Sukeroku Daiko, based out of the Yushima Tenjin Shrine in Tokyo. The group eventually broke up, but a junior member of the group, Imaizumi Yutaka, soon created the Sukeroku Daiko Hozonkai (A hozonkai is “a Japanese organization dedicated to preserving and handing down a particular tradition,” in this case a specific regional type of taiko music.)31 Another member of the original group, Seido Kobayashi later created a new group called Oedo Sukeroku Daiko. The group was originally a Bon drumming group, which performed only during the summer festivals. The four members of the group, Seido Kobayashi (the senior member), Yutaka Ishizuka, Ganei Onozato, and Yoshihisa Ishikura, were all champion Bon drummers, and decided to branch out and study different aspects of taiko. Between them, they studied hogaku (Japanese classical music), Edo matsuri bayashi (festival music of old Tokyo), as well as many different drumming styles from around Japan including Hachijo Taiko from

Hachijo Island, and Oni Taiko from Sado Island. The evolved Sukeroku style incorporated speed, fluidity, and dynamic movements never before seen in *kumi-daiko* drumming.\(^{32}\) In addition to the movements the group devised, they also invented and held patents for two drum stands—a slant stand now widely used for *nagado-daiko*, and an *o-daiko* stand. The patents always existed in a grey legal area. Although the stands were invented in the 1960s, the patent was not applied for until 1987 and not granted until 1989. In either case, the patents ran out in 2003, nullifying any further questions.\(^{33}\)

*Kumi-daiko* burst onto the world stage in 1964 at the Olympic Games in Tokyo when it was featured in the “Festival of Arts” presentation. Soon after its international debut, Oguchi was invited to teach the new *kumi-daiko* style all over the world. He established groups not only all over Japan, but also in Canada, France, Indonesia, Singapore, and the United States.\(^{34}\)

The next step in taiko performing and training was in 1969 when Tagayasu Den assembled a group of young taiko players who agreed to dedicate every aspect of their lives to taiko. The group took the name Za Ondekoza and moved to Sado Island, off the West coast of Japan. Their training regimen included long-distance running as well as rigorous training in taiko and other traditional Japanese instruments and musical styles. This was the first Japanese taiko group to tour the United States, giving their debut performance in 1975 just after running the Boston Marathon. The group lasted until 1981, when the majority of the members split from Den and started the group *Kodo*. *Kodo* continued the intense running and training schedule, while living a communal

lifestyle on Sado Island. Kodo is given credit for popularizing taiko around the world with almost constant tours and collaborations with other musicians.\textsuperscript{35}

Taiko drums brought to the United States before 1968 were primarily used in religious services or various martial arts dojo. As early as 1910, Bon Odori were taking place in Hawaii, and by 1930 taiko as a musical instrument was beginning to appear on the West Coast.\textsuperscript{36} World War II brought an abrupt end to any celebration of Japanese culture, and taiko performances were indefinitely put on hold. However, in 1967 a young man named Seiichi Tanaka (originally from Nagano Prefecture) attended the Cherry Blossom Festival in San Francisco. He was shocked that there were no drums to accompany the dancing as there were in Japan. In 1968, Tanaka borrowed drums from several temples and appeared as a solo drummer in the festival. Later that same year, he founded the San Francisco Taiko Dojo, the first \textit{kumi-daiko} ensemble in the United States. One year later, Sukeroku Taiko performed in California and met Tanaka. The meeting, and the partnership it formed, played a large role in shaping the development of American taiko.\textsuperscript{37}

Seiichi Tanaka continued his education by studying with Daihachi Oguchi, as well as many other taiko masters in Japan, while continuing to develop the San Francisco Taiko Dojo. Additionally, he brought taiko into the public consciousness by performing with members of the ensemble in the soundtracks to movies such as \textit{Return of the Jedi}, \textit{Rising Sun}, and \textit{The Right Stuff}. As evidence of his influence, in 1993, a taiko dojo opened in Japan based on Tanaka's teaching, putting him in the unique position of

\textsuperscript{35} Varian, \textit{The Way of Taiko}, 29.
\textsuperscript{37} Varian, \textit{The Way of Taiko}, 31.
"exporting taiko back to Japan." In 2001, Tanaka was awarded the prestigious National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship. 

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Chapter 4: Endo Sensei

One interesting aspect of my studies with Kenny Endo is the direct link that it provides to the father of *kumi-daiko*, Daihachi Oguchi. Endo is a student of Seiichi Tanaka who, as previously noted, studied with Daihachi Oguchi and is and considered to be at the forefront of the second generation of American taiko artists. When studying an art form such as taiko, which relies heavily on oral transmission and minimizes the use of learning aids such as sheet music, recordings, and textbooks, it is of paramount importance to have a knowledgeable, experienced teacher. Kenny Endo, my taiko teacher, or *sensei*, is the embodiment of the consummate artist, performer, and teacher.

The term *sensei* is used the same way one would use the term “mister” in English, and is often mistakenly translated as “master.” In many Japanese arts, such as taiko and the martial arts, mastery is something constantly strived for, but never reached. Endo himself spoke of going back to Japan to supplement his already impressive ten years of training and study on numerous occasions. The word *sensei* literally means “one who has gone before.” A *sensei* is more than just a teacher; he or she is rather a “life-long guide who provides students with physical, mental, and even sometimes spiritual training.”

Kenny Endo was born in Los Angeles in 1953 and began his musical education in the fourth grade, studying Western drums and percussion. When he entered junior high he began playing drum set, at the same time continuing with school band and orchestra. In an interview given to the website Rolling Thunder, Endo states that the first time he saw a performance of *kumi-daiko* was a concert given by the *San Francisco Taiko Dojo*

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42 Ohlenkamp, “What is a Sensei?”
in 1973. The following year, Endo approached *Kinnara Taiko* of Los Angeles and inquired about joining the group. He was initially told that it was limited to members of the Senshin Buddhist Church, but a year later, in 1975, he was invited to practice with the group. Endo was a member of *Kinnara Taiko* for a year and a half, at which time they only performed during the summer Obon season. After deciding he wanted to study and perform taiko year round, he was directed to Seiichi Tanaka, the director of the *San Francisco Taiko Dojo*. After spending the summer of 1975 studying at the *Dojo*, Endo graduated from UCLA in 1976 and moved to San Francisco to study and perform taiko full time. From 1976 to 1980 he was a full-fledged member of the *San Francisco Taiko Dojo* performing group, while at the same time making a living playing drum set six nights a week in a Japantown club.

In 1980, at the age of twenty-six, Endo felt he had to make a choice between taiko and drum set. Feeling a need to “get in touch with my own roots, my own culture, [and] my own language,” Endo decided to spend a year studying taiko in Japan. However, as he began to grasp the depth of the influences and roots of taiko, that single year grew into a decade. Through Seiichi Tanaka, Endo was put in touch with Oguchi Daihachi for *kumi-daiko* study, as well as another teacher, Yutaka Ishizuka for *hogaku* instruction.

In Japan, Endo mainly studied three genres of taiko: *hogaku* (classical music), *matsuri bayashi* (festival music), and *kumi-daiko* (group drumming). At the *Mochizuki School*, the largest of the three or four schools that specialize in *hogaku hayashi*, Endo studied with Yutaka Ishizuka, one of the four original members of Sukeroku Daiko. This

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44 Leong, “Interview with Kenny Endo.”
was a good match, for Ishizuka, like Endo, was a kumi-daiko player who wanted to develop more musically, so he began studying hogaku. It was also through Ishizuka that Endo was introduced to his Edo matsuri bayashi teacher, Kenjiro Maru, as well as the head of the Mochizuki School, Mochizuki Bokusei, who later bestowed upon Endo his hogaku stage name, or natori. Endo is the first Japanese American to receive a natori in hogaku hayashi, and its significance cannot be overstated. Primarily, it is considered a combination stage name and Master’s degree in Japanese classical drumming. Endo expands that description: “First . . . a stage name, to continue on the tradition within that school, and second it is a kind of license, or official recognition that you are able to pass the tradition on.” In addition to this Japanese title, Endo also earned a Master’s Degree from the University of Hawaii in Ethnomusicology.

Today, Endo is recognized as one of the most influential performers and teachers of contemporary taiko. In addition to running the Taiko Center of the Pacific and acting as the artistic director of the Kenny Endo Taiko Ensemble, he has soloed with orchestras from Honolulu to Hong Kong, headlined the opening ceremonies at the National Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, D.C., and been an artist-in-residence at the Smithsonian Institute and the Lincoln Center Institute. In 2002, Endo received the Hawaii State Foundation on Culture and the Arts Individual Artist Award, the state’s highest artistic award, and in 2005 a documentary called the Spirit of Taiko was produced about Endo, Seiichi Tanaka, and Masato Baba, a “third generation” taiko artist. In short, there is

46 Leong, “Interview with Kenny Endo.”
47 Leong, “Interview with Kenny Endo.”
49 “Kenny Endo Biography.”
50 “Kenny Endo Biography.”
presumably no better sensei I could find, and certainly no one who would be more available and accessible than Endo was to me.
Chapter 5: Transmission and Performance Practices

The Taiko Center of the Pacific is a training center in name rather than a physical place. Classes are offered under the auspices of Kapiolani Community College and take place in the KCC Annex Building, better known as “the Chapel.” The main sanctuary/rehearsal space is approximately 50’ by 70’ of meticulously maintained hardwood floor.

When I think of a musical rehearsal space, I often think of a sound-treated room, with, at bare minimum, some sort of sound isolation between the room and the outside world. When classes were held in the chapel, the eight enormous windows on either side were opened, a dozen oscillating fans were turned on, and the front doors were usually left open. It was definitely not the traditional learning environment I was accustomed to. That being said, every person I encountered treated this space with the utmost respect. Shoes were removed before entering, and everyone, students and instructors alike, bowed before entering and exiting the *dojo* every time. Also, before the beginning of each lesson, students in the group would sweep the entire floor, retrieve the drums from the closet, and set them up on stands. Respect for the *dojo* was one of the five rules taught in the very first lesson. Although it was never explicitly stated that the *dojo* was a “sacred place,” on several occasions Endo and others would talk about feeling the presence of “spirits” at various times inside the chapel.
A. Edo matsuri bayashi

Although there is obviously some overlap in the playing techniques and instruments required, each different style of taiko I studied had distinct teaching and learning methods, specific instruments, and different exercises associated with it. The first taiko style I was exposed to was Edo matsuri bayashi, or festival music of Old Tokyo. Before class started, we were instructed to remove and stow our shoes before entering the sanctuary area of the chapel that served as the dojo. Additionally we were told to bow upon entering and leaving (always facing the front of the dojo) as a sign of respect. As the class of about a dozen people entered, everyone helped set up the dojo for the upcoming class. After the floor was swept, lightly padded mats were placed in two rows forming a semicircle facing the front of the room. Then, shime-daiko were placed on three point stands called teren-dai in front of each of the mats with the drums angled toward the players.

Before beginning each class, a ritualistic greeting was performed. First, the sensei and students would sit facing each other in the seiza position, kneeling on the floor with the legs folded underneath the thighs, sitting on the heels with the tops of the feet flat on the floor. Then, the class and the sensei would bow to each other, placing the hands flat on the floor with thumbs extended, so that the tips of the thumbs and index fingers would touch, creating a triangle. Finally, everyone would recite the greeting, “Yoroshiku onegaishimasu” in unison, which means “please look kindly on me/take care of me.”

On the first day of class, Endo told us that we should learn how to tie/tune the shime-daiko. Although it sounds like a simple procedure, to a beginner it is an incredibly

disheartening process. The *shime-daiko* we used were held together and tensioned with an intricate series of knots, and tuning the drum to its optimum pitch was quite a complex procedure. After an exhaustive search both in libraries and online, I could not find written instructions anywhere on the topic of *shime-daiko* tuning, for it is an art that must be passed down in person from teacher to student. In addition to the complexity, the process is also physically taxing. Sitting face to face, two people hold the drum between their feet, and using that leverage, attempt to pull the ropes tight while tying a series of knots and never letting the rope slack. Endo showed us another tensioning technique consisting of one person standing on the *shime-daiko* tightening the ropes using a long piece of wood for leverage, but after one hour of direction and demonstration, the class, which had previously disassembled several drums, was left with several badly tuned *shime-daiko* and even more frustration. However, Endo patiently fixed our mistakes and soon had every *shime-daiko* in acceptable playing condition. He later told us that true mastery of this process would require tying a *shime-daiko* every day for a year. I don’t believe he was exaggerating.

Later, I gained some insight into why he asked us to take part in that demoralizing process. In an interview, Endo was asked about his time studying in Japan and said,

The teachers were very strict with me! For example, at the start of one particular lesson, I was presented with a drum that was not put together and the teacher said, ‘You want to play this drum, but do you know how to tune this drum?’ When I replied that I didn’t, he said, ‘Watch very carefully, I am going to show you.’ Then he showed me a very complicated process, which involved lashing and
intricate knots. I vividly remember sitting on my knees – very uncomfortable for westerners – and trying to absorb the information through the pain. Of course I couldn’t remember the process at the next lesson and had to be shown again. One might think he was being strict, but can you have a teacher follow you around to concerts to tune your drum? Obviously not.\footnote{“Innovation from Tradition,” 40.}

Endo had no intention of the class gaining proficiency in tuning the drum, but he did make a point, demonstrating to us the amount of work it would take simply to learn the \textit{shime-daiko} tensioning process, the same way it had been shown to him.

Another challenging aspect of this particular class, which Endo alluded to in the preceding quotation, was sitting in the \textit{seiza} position for long periods of time. For the greeting and closing of the lesson, sitting \textit{seiza} for a brief period of time was not really an issue. However, when one is required to kneel in this position for a two hour class with minimal breaks, it becomes excruciating. Beginning with slight pins and needles, the sensation moves onto waves of hot and cold, followed by complete numbness throughout the legs. To help counteract these effects, the TCP had a selection of small \textit{seiza} stools, which are tucked between the feet. By slightly reducing the pressure in this way, \textit{seiza} is more tolerable for longer periods of time.

In the same manner as the class, the instructor also sat \textit{seiza}, facing the students. Instead of playing on a \textit{shime-daiko} like everyone else, however, Endo played on a \textit{hyoshi-ban}, or small wooden box made from \textit{keyaki} wood (Japanese elm) with \textit{haruyogi} (leather-wrapped paddles). The inside of the paddle is made from plastic, or more
traditionally, bamboo, and makes a sharp slapping sound, easily heard over the din of a group of drums.

One of the biggest differences between Western-style instruction and this traditional style of teaching was the manner in which Endo would demonstrate the stickings of each rhythmic pattern. Instead of playing with the proper combination of right and left hand strokes, he would reverse them so the students could see a mirror image of themselves. Although this seems, in theory, a good idea and was no doubt useful for the less experienced students in the class, for me it was a source of constant frustration. After years spent looking at a teacher across from me play the “correct” stickings for a piece and mentally reversing them in my head, I had to retrain myself to simply look and mirror what I saw. I was consistently impressed by the technical control that Endo exhibited by playing the passages with either hand as the lead. Whether the rhythm was fast or slow, dense or sparse, he could effortlessly play it.

The idea of playing something with either hand as the lead is not, in itself, groundbreaking; when I practice scales on marimba or rhythms on drum set, I try to practice both hands on all parts. However, sticking reversal is usually more of a practice tool than a teaching device. Part of that has to do with logistics: the accidental and natural keys on a marimba are different heights, making it impossible to use the same technique, and many timpani pedals are set up either for German or American style and are not interchangeable. Nevertheless, in many lessons with many different teachers, I cannot recall any of them standing across from me playing rhythms with the opposite hand lead. The “mirror” style of teaching may also be a function of the fact that there
was very little written music for the exercises and pieces we learned and everything was taught by rote, in which case mirroring was probably a faster way to learn.

We began each session with some exercises to develop basic shime-daiko technique. The grip used on the *bachi* (sticks) when playing this instrument is very similar (if not identical) to a matched snare drum grip. The fulcrum is between the index finger and thumb, with the rest of the fingers naturally relaxed and curled lightly around the *bachi*, allowing some movement so as not to choke the natural sound of the *bachi* or the drumhead. The *bachi* itself is made out of Japanese cypress, otherwise known as *hinoki*. The *bachi* I used was 12.5 inches long and had a diameter of 5/8 inch, although other, slightly longer lengths are common. There are several major differences between a Western style snare drum stick and a shime-daiko *bachi*, the biggest being the lack of a shaped head or bead on the latter. Aside from the fact that one end of a shime-daiko *bachi* is slightly more rounded than the other (to keep it from pitting or cutting through the head) the *bachi* are nothing more than finely sanded, unfinished dowels. There is also no taper to the *bachi* at either end, as this is not a necessity to weight the stick properly after creating a shaped tip.

Weighting a *bachi* properly is essentially a non-issue because of the limited rudiments a taiko performer is expected to play. Double-stroke rolls and multiple-bounce rolls are extremely common in Western music, and having a properly weighted stick allows a performer to execute these rudiments with ease and precision. In taiko music, fast doubles (repeated notes on one hand), double-stroke rolls, and multiple-bounce rolls are exceedingly rare. Although playing a dead stroke into the head is not uncommon, and doing this with force sometimes creates a multiple-bounce “buzz” on the head, there is
nothing clearly analogous to a Western style multiple-bounce or "buzz" roll. The lack of multiple-bounce rolling also dictates where the performer holds the *bachi*. When holding a snare drum stick, the optimum spot to place the fulcrum so as to achieve the best possible rebound from the drum, is roughly one third the distance away from the butt end of the stick. When holding a *shime-daiko bachi*, the fulcrum is closer to the butt of the *bachi*, with almost no length protruding from beyond the back of the hand. The *bachi* does not have as much of a natural bounce to it this way, but the style of the music does not usually require it.

Another difference between the *shime-daiko* and a Western-style drum is the playing position. A snare drum, for instance, is usually positioned so the playing surface is flat or angled slightly away from the player. A performer using traditional grip might angle the drum to the right, but the idea is the same: to minimize the angle of attack between the stick and the head. Conversely, a *shime-daiko* is angled towards the performer at a rather steep angle: approximately thirty degrees from horizontal. Although some Western percussionists angle their drum towards, rather than away from themselves, it is extraordinarily rare to witness a performer angling their drum so sharply.

Aside from the shape of the sticks, fulcrum position, and the drum angle, the playing technique is surprisingly similar: The hands are kept low and most of the motion and power originates from the wrist, and to a lesser extent, the arm. There is some help from the fingers, but overall, the wrists and arms do the majority of the work. The shoulders should be relaxed, the elbows slightly bent, and overall, tension should be kept to a minimum. Because the hands are kept so low, the angle of impact between the drum and the stick is not as great as might be expected. In my experience, we were instructed
to leave "two or three fingers of space" between the edge of the drum and our stick when it was striking the center of the head. This is equivalent to about one and a half or two inches, slightly more than is usual for a snare drum. Endo explained that the purpose of striking the *shime-daiko* in the center of the head at this specific angle was to draw the best sound from the head at all velocity levels. After establishing our basic setup and playing technique, the class began to learn exercises specifically tailored to the pieces we were going to study and perform. The first etude consisted of a repetitive RLRL (*R* = right hand stroke, *L* = left hand stroke) pattern embellished with different combinations of accents. A passage of accented and non-accented notes lies at the heart of many types of drumming, from taiko to the Western classical tradition. With no different pitched notes to work with (at least for the taiko and snare drums), properly executed accents are what create musical phrases and generally give vitality to a piece of music. The act of properly playing an accent, controlling the bounce of the stick (so as not to mute the sound of the drum, but not allow the stick to bounce too high), and finally, playing an unaccented successive note in good time and with good tone (as well as repeating the process, indefinitely alternating the hands) takes a great deal of practice. Since I am a classically trained percussionist, playing the accent patterns in the exercise did not pose a great technical challenge, but many members of the class struggled with the interdependence required to play the patterns correctly. One aspect of the instruction that I found interesting was that in all the exercises we were taught, we used both hands combined at once, with no isolation of either the right or left hand. The decision to teach this way may have been because it was a group lesson with limited time, or it may have been by design, but this aspect of learning and practicing was
very different from the Western style to which I was accustomed. When learning a complex pattern or rudiment, one of the first things I do is practice the hands separately, to remove one variable from the equation. I believe some of the students in the group could have benefited from this incremental learning technique.

That being said, I thought the exercise was a particularly good one, with a combination of loud and soft playing, consecutive and individual accents, and on-the-beat and syncopated rhythms. Although the class learned it by rote, in Example 1, I have transcribed the exercise into Western notation:

Example 1

Although the exercise is easily notated, a phonetic system known as kuchishoga (also kuchishoka or kuchishowa, depending on the region) is employed to verbalize the rhythms and accent patterns by articulating the drum sounds. With few exceptions, the system is fairly standardized throughout the taiko community both in the United States and Japan. Different syllables are used depending on the type and size of drum (because of the different sounds each drum produces) but at this point we will only cover the kuchishoga used when playing the shime-daiko.

A moderately long and loud to very loud single stroke on a shime-daiko is articulated ten, and carries no indication of sticking. Most often patterns are begun with
the right hand, hence the pattern ten ten ten ten would be played R L R L. Two (or more) notes played consecutively are pronounced te-ke (or te-re depending on the feel and tempo of the piece). The analogy could be made that if ten is the quarter note, then te-ke are two eighth notes. Although this conveys the relationship between the two in the most basic sense, it fails to take into account the tempo of the piece. There are many times at faster tempi when the rhythm of te-ke te-ke te-ke te-ke might be more akin to a series of sixteenth notes than eighths.

Used in the same manner as te and te-ke, the syllables tsu and tsu-ku represent softly played notes. Although there are many gradations in stroke velocity within a specific exercise or piece, these are the only two syllables used to communicate shime-daiko notes (excluding notes played on the rim). This is one major shortcoming of the kuchishoga system and necessitates the need for a sensei to define the dynamics of each note in a passage.

The syllables su and i-ya are both used to represent rests. Although it was never explicitly stated, I observed that su could be used to represent both quarter and eighth rests, whereas i-ya was reserved for quarter note rests in slow tempi where subdivision would be essential for a clean attack among two or more musicians. The pronunciation presented a slight problem for me when learning this particular kuchishoga, as tsu and su sounded, to my Western ears, almost identical. For a while I assumed that su notes were sometimes played lightly and sometimes not played at all, depending on the taste of each individual performer. It was only after I saw the syllables written out that I realized that they were two distinct syllables.
Another problem I experienced with kuchishoga was when rhythms were combined into phrases in which the basic syllables were changed. One specific example was the pattern: \[ \text{\textbf{H}} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \] or \[ \text{\textbf{H}} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \text{\textbullet} \] depending on the tempo. The kuchishoga was pronounced stetsku, an abbreviated version of tsu-te-tsu-ku, or a series of soft-loud-soft-soft strokes. I saw no problem with the idea of abbreviating the syllables, but the resulting pronunciation did not accurately reflect the rhythm that was played. Because the tsu syllables were shortened to an s- sound, they were not pronounced on the beat, but rather, just before the following 16th note of the grouping, almost like a grace note. The strength of kuchishoga is not in its ability to accurately translate the fine musical details of a piece, but the fact that it promotes the internalization of rhythms through verbalization, improving both the performer’s time and feel.

Mikoshi bayashi

The first piece the class learned was called Mikoshi bayashi. A mikoshi is a portable Shinto shrine that is carried using two poles during a matsuri or Japanese festival. Bayashi is a more general term meaning song or music. During the matsuri, the mikoshi is carried through the streets while a musical ensemble called a hayashi, pulled in a wooden cart called a yatai, performs music to accompany the movement of the shrine. Although hayashi is a generic term for a musical ensemble that includes drums, in matsuri bayashi, the group usually consists of two shime-daiko, one o-daiko or sumo-
daiko, one atarigane or kane, and one flute called the fue or shinobue.53 The group is arranged in a very specific order and all kneel in the seiza position. In the front row, from the audience perspective, the o-daiko is on the left and the two shime-daiko are on the right. Slightly behind and outside of the first row, the fue is on the right and the atarigane is on the left. I was never told a specific reason for this seating arrangement except for the fact that it was traditional.

The matursi music is very upbeat, and comparable to a marching band cadence: it provides music for the procession. The pulse is consistently in a duple meter and the music is fairly repetitive, with the drums following audible cues from the fue regarding form and length. Like most taiko pieces, Mikoshi bayashi is built around a base rhythm called a ji-uchi, or ji. The concept of a base rhythm is used in all three styles of taiko that I studied. Although there are no specific rules regarding which rhythms can be used, I observed ji to be repetitive, fairly simple, and often thought of in eight-beat patterns (eight quick eighth notes, not eight quarter notes). The ji pattern for Mikoshi bayashi is more difficult than that of both the kumi-daiko and Hachijo styles I studied because of its fast tempo and syncopated accents. Example 2 is the ji transcribed into Western notation:

Example 2

53 Malm, Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments, 58.
To translate this using the principles of *kuchishoga*, it would look like this:

\[ \text{te tsu te re tsu ku tsu ku te re tsu ku tsu} \]

However, when we learned the piece, Endo demonstrated the rhythms using the *kuchishoga* as follows:

\[ \text{ten -- te-re tsu-ku tsu-ku ten -- s ke-ten -- --} \]

(The two dashes together are in place of an unstated but softly played tsu or ku note.) These differences further demonstrate that *kuchishoga* is not supposed to be a substitute for musical notation, but rather a tool to help in the transmission of taiko technique.

Following the syllabic nomenclature established above, the first note should be pronounced *te*, not *ten*, as the note takes up the same amount of time as the following *te*, *re*, *tsu*, and *ku* syllables. As a listener however, one is likely to hear the first strike as a long note, akin to a *ten*, because of the quiet note after it. For the following two notes, *te-re* are used instead of *te-ke* because the syncopated position of the final note places it on a weak beat. Similarly, the final two accented notes, *ke-ten*, keep the *ke* and *ten* in their respective places as fourth and first sixteenth notes of a one beat pattern, and provide the final downbeat, *ten*, with the appropriate length and musical weight. In a practical sense, trying to pronounce the former *kuchishoga* would be extremely difficult and would not convey the musical line nearly as well as the latter.

Because a *hayashi* is made up of five performers who remain in the *seiza* position, its appeal and strength lie not in impressive volume or graceful choreography as in *kumi-*
daiko, but in its musical subtleties. Near the beginning of my private studies with Endo, he taught me the Mikoshi bayashi ji. As a trained percussionist, I learned the basic rhythm very quickly. Over the next half hour, however, Endo picked apart each note of the pattern as he tried to teach me the musically sensitive way to play the line. I had read that many types of Japanese music were very stylized, yet I did not fully understand what that meant until that particular lesson. I believe people are often tempted to think of an orally transmitted art form as unsophisticated or unrefined, where the basics are passed along but the subtleties are lost in the transfer. Working one on one with Endo, I began to see why the sensei/student relationship is so necessary and why it would have been so difficult for me to get connected with a teacher in Japan without any formal introduction. It takes faith on the part of the student to trust the sensei to give the correct information, and trust on the sensei's part to provide students with knowledge of the art form with an implicit knowledge that they will pass it on to the next generation of artists.

Most of what Endo took issue with in my playing of the Mikoshi bayashi ji was my interpretation of the hierarchy of accents. After learning the rhythm, I played it utilizing two dynamic levels: a high, approximately nine-inch stroke for the accented notes, and a low, approximately three-inch stroke for the inner, non-accented notes. In my Western style training, I have been taught two ways to interpret percussion passages with accents. The more common technique is for the performer to play the accent one dynamic level higher than the rest of the passage. For instance, if the passage were written in a piano dynamic, any accent would be played at mezzo piano. Similarly, if the passage were written at mezzo forte, the accents would be forte. This keeps individual notes from obtrusively popping out of the texture. The other means of approaching
accent patterns (primarily those played on drums) is to treat the unaccented notes as ghost notes (notes played extremely quietly) and play the accented notes at a significantly louder dynamic (usually mezzo forte or forte). This technique is beneficial because it keeps an underlying, implied pulse to the music, even as some of the notes are barely audible. This was the technique I applied to the Mikoshi bayashi ji. As he corrected each individual stroke, Endo explained that he thought of dynamics in three tiers, with three levels in each, so each stroke could be assigned a “number dynamic,” one through nine. Example 3 is the Mikoshi bayashi ji in Western notation with Endo’s prescribed number dynamics:

Example 3

As with the second accent technique discussed, the soft notes are barely audible and the accented notes make up the main musical line. However, unlike that system, the subtle dynamic differences create a much more musical line than merely a series of loud and soft notes. The first note is almost at the top of the dynamic range, followed by a note conversely close to the bottom of the range. The next two notes are set up to emphasize the syncopation on the last sixteenth note of the first beat. Although it may seem like a miniscule difference to the untrained ear, these subtleties in time and dynamic make internal patterns clear and thereby facilitate musical understanding.

The next beat of sixteenth notes are all soft notes, but within the soft dynamic there are slight emphases on the second and fourth notes. This subtle difference serves
two purposes. One, there is a greater dynamic contrast between the previous note (at level 7 dynamic) and the first sixteenth of the second beat, creating the ghost note effect discussed previously. Second, by playing the second and fourth sixteenth notes slightly louder, it implies a slight lilt or uneven beat, making it less static. The second two beats, when combined together, create a sense of stability as both downbeats are loudly accented. The two adjacent accented notes, with the second sixteenth played slightly louder, creates forward momentum that drives to the downbeat.

*Edo matsuri bayashi* is performed in a style very similar to American jazz, although the two are completely unrelated. In fact, Endo described it as “the jazz of Japan” because of the swing feel, the extensive syncopation, the fast tempos, and its use of improvisation, which is not common in Japanese classical music. Swing is a difficult concept to bring to life because there are many subtle variations and no accurate way to notate it. Basically, swing is when one thinks of playing eighth notes (one and two and, etc.) but instead of making them even, the first note of each beat will be twice as long as the second. (See Example 4.)

Example 4

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{\textbf{Mikoshi}}
\end{array}
\]
bayashi, the first note is only slightly longer than the second note, and the subtle changes in accents in both soft and loud dynamics accentuate the swing rhythm.

In addition to the ji, the shime-daiko performers alternately play a pattern called the sashide. If the ji is the background beat, then the sashide can be considered the solo rhythm. (A fue plays the melodic line of the piece, but for the purposes of this paper, we will concentrate on the percussive aspects of this and other Edo matsuri bayashi pieces.) The sashide is a (mostly) syncopated twelve beat pattern played near the top of the dynamic range of the drum, in Endo’s dynamic system an 8 or 9, in order to cut through the repetitive pulse of the ji. Whereas the ji is played constantly, however, the sashide is expected to enter at random times so it is not constantly heard. This is part of the improvisatory nature of this piece. One shime-daiko player plays the ji constantly, and the other plays the ji only when not playing the sashide. In Example 5, I have transcribed the sashide rhythm into Western notation:

Example 5

One interesting aspect about the improvisatory nature of this piece is the fact that several instruments are improvising independently at the same time. Additionally, many of the phrases in each instrument’s improvisational palate are different lengths, maximizing the potential for different rhythm, accent, and instrument combinations. The instrument with even more improvisational latitude is the o-daiko, also called the sumo daiko or sumo for short. The o-daiko player does not freely improvise rhythms, but
rather decides when to play one of several pre-composed patterns. The o-daiko patterns can be considered the counter-rhythms to the main shime-daiko line. Like the sashide, the o-daiko is not played constantly, and the patterns are usually played with slightly less frequency than the solo rhythmic line. Examples 6a-c are the three o-daiko patterns the class learned, transcribed into Western notation:

Example 6a

Example 6b

Example 6c

The o-daiko is played at a fairly constant dynamic, loud enough to be heard, but not louder than the sashide. The syncopated nature of this piece is especially obvious in the first two o-daiko variations. The first note comes in on the sixteenth note after the downbeat, drawing the listener's ear to that rhythmic line by not only punctuating the syncopation, but also adding a new, lower pitched sound that does not coincide with any other instrument.
The *atarigane*, or hand gong, is the final percussion instrument in the ensemble, and because of the unique sounds it can produce, it utilizes a different set of *kuchishoga* syllables. The *atarigane* is generally held in the palm of the left hand, kept in place with the thumb and pinky finger and struck in the center with a mallet made of deer antler called a *shimoku*, which is held in the right hand. This one-handed playing style allows the performer to create a staccato sound using the middle three fingers to dampen the body of the gong, or to produce an open tone by not touching the back of the instrument. The open tone is spoken *chan*. As with the *shime-daiko* syllables, the *chan* can signify a quarter note or an eighth note depending on the tempo of the music. The other tone produced by the *atarigane* is represented with the syllable, *chi*, or sometimes *ki*. Although the sound of this syllable implies a shorter tone, the note can be the same duration as a *chan* note, just with a different quality of sound. The *kuchishoga* for two eighth- or sixteenth-notes in quick succession is *chi-ki* for straight eight-notes or *chi-ri* for swung eight-notes. When playing repeated successive notes such as these, the performer strikes either side of the *atarigane* in a side-to-side playing motion. A typical *atarigane* pattern uses a combination of the three types of strokes (*chan*, *chi*, and *chi-ki*) to create what can be considered an extension of the *ji*. Although it does not play the same rhythm as the *shime-daiko*, the *atarigane* is used to establish the background pulse and keep the ensemble together by cutting through the din of the drums with its high-pitched metallic sound. In a *hayashi* ensemble, the *atarigane* performer is the most free to embellish the part in a relatively unsyncopated manner. Examples 7a-d are four patterns commonly used in *Mikoshi bayashi*. 
Key

+ = dampened tone

o = open tone

← = strike left side of atarigane

→ = strike right side of atarigane

Example 7a

Example 7b

Example 7c

Example 7d

The first example was the most commonly used, and oftentimes the first and second examples are repeated as a pair. Although the performer is free to embellish on the
patterns, as with any sort of improvisation, there seemed to be some unwritten rules. For instance, I never heard any eight beat pattern begin with any rhythm other than two eighth notes. This helps establish the tempo and provides a solid foundation for the numerous syncopated lines occurring in the other drums.

Even with its overlapping phrases and individual improvisations, *Mikoshi bayashi* has a clear sustained duple pulse that can continue on, uninterrupted, for as long as the performers see fit. The most obvious change comes in the ending or *age*. Although the *age* could be compared to a *coda* in Western music, the sudden and drastic change of tempo, meter, and instrument roles differentiate it from that designation. The *fue* signals the rest of the ensemble when to begin the *age* by playing an exceptionally high, short note at the end of one of its melodic phrases. Example 8 contains the indicator phrase in Western notation:

Example 8

Following this phrase, both *shime-daiko* establish a new tempo that is roughly equivalent to the eighth note equaling the quarter note triplet of the previous tempo. This is, without question, a very Western method of figuring out the new tempo. The instruction the class received was simply “play the *age* slower,” and we eventually internalized the correct tempo through repetition. While rehearsing *Mikoshi bayashi*, the tempo ranged from seventy to one hundred beats per minute; however, the relationship
between the main body of the piece and the *age* was fairly consistent at one-third the initial tempo.

The other striking feature of the *age* is that the meter becomes indiscernible. Below, I notated it the way I heard and felt it as a performer; however, there are admittedly many possible ways to notate it.

Example 9

![Notation Example](image)

It is clear from this example where the oral tradition and the Western tradition are not entirely compatible. It is fairly easy to hear and replicate these patterns on the different drums, but when transcribed, the bar lines tend to obscure the idea that this is one long rhythmic line. The music should not be broken up with a different time signature every bar or move between simple duple and compound triple time.
Edo bayashi: Yatai, Shoden, Kamakura, Shichome, Yatai

In many matsuri celebrations, it is common to find a series of pieces that are played in a specific order and are repeated as often as necessary, depending on the time frame required for the particular occasion. The most popular of these sequences is a set of five pieces referred to as Edo bayashi (not to be confused with the more general term Edo matsuri bayashi). In his book, *Traditional Japanese Music and Musical Instruments*, William Malm states that “viewing the pieces on a countrywide basis, one will find that, although the titles may be the same, the melodies are often different. The names merely seem to designate broad divisions in the traditional festivals rather than specific tunes.” The five pieces that make up Edo bayashi are Yatai, Shoden, Kamakura, Shichome, and a significantly shorter version of Yatai. Each of the titles has a specific meaning, but they do not seem to reflect the music in any way. Yatai is literally translated as “parade float” or more specifically, “the cart on which festival ensembles are pulled through the streets.” Shoden (or Shoten) “can mean anything from a place of prayer or a sacred spirit to the privilege of submitting a petition to the imperial court.” Kamakura is a city in Japan, and Shichome means “Fourth Avenue.”

*Edo bayashi* was quite possibly the most difficult piece I learned, both in terms of memorizing the different sections as well as understanding the feel and the timing issues. We learned the piece (and we only covered the first Yatai, Shoden, and Kamakura in class) in the traditional way *Edo bayashi* is transmitted between teacher and student, albeit, in a class setting. It was very similar to the way we learned *Mikoshi bayashi*,

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except that it was much more difficult to feel the pulse, phrasing, and time of the music.

For instance, the beginning of the piece is articulated, in *kuchishoga*:

```
Te-ke ten ten ten ten ten ten su ke ten ten
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We learned this in the traditional way, completely by rote. Endo sat facing us in front of the class, calling out the syllables and expecting us to repeat them. When he was satisfied with our articulation of the *kuchishoga*, he would play the rhythms (mirror-image) with his *haruyogi* on his *hyoshi-ban*. The first line alone raised many questions for me. What meter was the piece in? Was there a pick up, or did the piece start on beat one? Was there a *ritard* at the end of the line, or were the notes more infrequent, but still in a steady pulse? The most confusing point concerned the opening two notes of the passage. Although it is not evident in the *kuchishoga* above, the notes seemed to fall somewhere between two triplets or sixteenths just prior to the note on beat two coming in early (if judged by the pulse of the notes that came after it). Endo did conduct a very open class where it was permissible to ask questions, and some of the answers came fairly easily. For instance, there was no pick-up note and there was a *ritard* at the end of the line. For other questions, though, the answers were more obscure. As for my question about the opening two notes, the answer was, "listen to me play the passage...that is how it is played." Endo meant no disrespect by saying this, nor was he trying to dodge the question. When something is transmitted orally, questions on how to notate it, or how to fit it into one specific meter simply do not come up. It was irrelevant to our goal of playing the piece whether or not I could write the rhythm accurately or
whether I could relate it, in meter, to the next series of notes. Although I’m sure in a private lesson with more time Endo would have worked with me on the nuances of the feel and timing, on a basic level, learning the way we did, the rhythm made perfect sense to me as a performer.

On a far more practical level, without bar lines and without a meter, I had trouble remembering how many ten notes came before the next te-ke. It was not an insurmountable problem learning one line, but this was ten seconds out of a ten-minute piece. I’m unsure whether Endo sensed our trepidation, or whether he planned this from the beginning, but he gave out sheet music where the rhythms had been transcribed. Unfortunately for me, it wasn’t in Western notation, but in traditional Japanese music notation. Based on the kuchishoga syllables, this music is read from right to left and top to bottom in columns, like traditional Japanese writing. The notes consisted of Japanese characters that corresponded to each sound. In the following chart, I put the characters on the left and their phonetic sounds on the right. Most of the sounds correlate to the kuchishoga syllables previously discussed. (See Example 10.)

Example 10

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{天} &= \text{ten} & \text{ク} &= \text{ku}\\
\text{テ} &= \text{te} & \text{ス} &= \text{su}\\
\text{ケ} &= \text{ke} & \text{イ} &= \text{i}\\
\text{レ} &= \text{re} & \text{ヤ} &= \text{ya}\\
\text{ツ} &= \text{tsu} & \text{ン} &= \text{n}
\end{align*}
\]
The *i* and *ya* are both rests, and are usually placed together to be used as a subdividing tool. I could not find a pattern for differentiating the different uses of *i-ya* versus *su* in the music. From what I can surmise, *i-ya* is a teaching tool that performers of this piece inserted at various places they thought that students might benefit from spoken subdivision. In a performance, however, neither the *su* nor *i-ya* are spoken or played, rendering more discussion on this point moot. Another interesting point concerns the syllable *ten* versus the syllable *te* followed by the syllable *n*. The characters 天 and テン both represent the same sound, but sometimes the *n* is placed a specific distance from the *te*. This technique is only used two times in the piece: once in a series of *n*’s in the final phrase of the piece, and once randomly at the beginning of *Shoden*. I cannot find a reason why the *n* is drawn out in *Shoden*, and although I would hesitate to call it a misprint, that is the most plausible explanation I can surmise. At the end of the piece however, it appears the *n*’s are there in an attempt to show the performer that the sound of the *shime-daiko* should be lengthened or drawn out at that point. Initially, this may seem pointless. After all, when hitting any drum, after the initial head contact with the stick, there is nothing a performer can do to extend the length of the sound. However, a sensitive percussionist (whether a taiko player or an orchestral timpanist) knows that different striking techniques can cause a drum to produce a short, staccato sound, or longer legato sound. Although it is impossible to achieve the sustained quality of a string or wind instrument, not every drum strike inherently sounds the same. By adding the separate *n* sound, someone reading the music or articulating the *kuchishoga* can have a much more accurate idea of how to strike or shape the *ten*. 
Once the syllables had all been discussed, Endo instructed us to put away the music so it would not become a crutch. The class did this in varying degrees. Some completely put the music away, some snuck a glace at it from time to time, and I quickly translated it into Western notation, which I could read faster and more accurately. However, the previously discussed problems of notation slowly crept in, and I was forced to try to learn the traditional way. The remainder of the class was spent mostly trying to learn and memorize the Yatai rhythms. Like Mikoshi bayashi, there were also o-daiko and atarigane parts to learn, and we covered some of these as well.

Although I did make a conscientious effort to learn Yatai the traditional way, I also wanted to be sure that when I transcribed it for this document, it would be accurate. Unfortunately, I only had some notation that I had written down as we learned (which was woefully incomplete) and Endo’s handwritten version (the only parts of which I had obtained were the first Yatai, Shoden, and Kamakura). This was not nearly enough to get an accurate, complete transcription. One of my last days in Hawaii I met with Endo and he gave me an official version (written in the traditional notation, with additional instructions in Japanese), from the Wakayama School where he studied. Although there are many versions, depending on the specific school, region, and sensei, this was the closest I would likely come to a definitive version of the piece. Along with that, I also procured a recording of this exact version, so I could compare the notation to what the performers were actually playing, in case there were any inconsistencies, as I suspected there would be.

Transcribing the Japanese notation into Western notation was not particularly difficult. There were six columns per page and eight horizontal lines crossing the
columns in even intervals that indicated beats. I made the executive decision to notate the piece in a 4/4 meter instead of using 8/4 or 8/8, primarily because I interpreted many of the various patterns as variations on a four-beat phrase, rather than a longer eight-beat phrase. Also, in a completely practical consideration, I believe most performers find it easier to read and keep their place in bars of four beats rather than bars of eight.

The vertical columns were usually divided into three smaller columns delineated with dotted lines. The large center section was the shime-daiko part, the left narrow column was the o-daiko part, and the right narrow column with the atarigane part. Both the atarigane and o-daiko parts were simply notated with closed or open circles: closed circles for the o-daiko part and muffled atarigane part, open circles for the open tone atarigane sound. Rhythms were read by looking at where the circles or kuchishoga syllables fell in relation to the horizontal lines. If a note fell on a line it was on a beat, between two lines and it was on an upbeat. The atarigane parts were a little denser, but even in the most active sections, each beat was only divided into four notes at most.

There were other instructions in Japanese, having to do with split shime-daiko parts as well as instructions on where and when to move into a coda-like section at the end of some of the movements. I have included both the traditional Japanese notation (Appendix A) and my transcription (Appendix B) at the end of this document.

Although it was fairly easy to notate the rhythms, an accurate performance would not be possible without some additional information not included in the score. The most obvious omission is the lack of any type of tempo markings. In my transcription, I notated the tempos, in beats per minute, which I heard in the recording. I marked down

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56 The score in Appendix A is rotated ninety degrees counterclockwise, so the spine of the document is at the top of the page.
an abundance of tempos to try to give the performer as accurate a gauge as possible, although most of the time the movement starts slowly and does a gradual accelerando throughout the entire piece. This accelerando, which happens in many types of Japanese music and theater, is a concept called *johakyu*.

The other two problems I encountered had to do with the notation not accurately reflecting what was performed on the recording. As previously discussed, one of the most obvious examples of this was when the *shime-daiko* played what was written as two even eighth notes, as (approximately) the first two eights of a triplet. This not only happened in the opening *shime-daiko* part, but quite often in the *o-daiko* part as well. The most frustrating aspect I encountered when transcribing the piece was that I could not find a pattern concerning when the *o-daiko* player played the eights evenly and when they were played in the condensed quasi-triplet rhythm. There were some trends that could be established, such as when tempi were fast even eighth notes were employed, but in the slow sections, no such rule applied. In the transcription, I bracketed the notes played as quasi-triplets on the recording.

The other major discrepancy I encountered was the playing (or not playing) of the *tsu*’s and *tsu-ku*’s. When I learned the version from Endo, many of the notated *tsu-ku* notes were not played at all, like *su*’s (rests). When I listened to the recording of the published version, oftentimes the same was true. Upon conferring with Endo, I learned this is another aspect of *Edo bayashi* that required a knowledgeable teacher. Some *tsu*’s are not supposed to be played, some are played at times, and some are always played. It is really up to the discretion (and training) of the performer. In my transcription, I notated the part exactly as written according to the Japanese syllables, but put a slash
through the notes that are traditionally left out or played inaudibly so the reader has a more accurate understanding of the performance practice.

This method of transcription is obviously not without its drawbacks, and I am well aware of this. On the surface, it seems the equivalent of listening to one recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and declaring that one specific interpretation (in terms of tempos, articulation, and phrasing) the definitive version of the piece. Although there are admittedly shortcomings, I believe this technique is much more legitimate when transcribing taiko, rather than Beethoven works. For one, the vast majority of the time, these pieces are passed down using the oral tradition, which all but guarantees slight changes. The reader should understand that I believe this transcription to be an accurate, but certainly not definitive, version of the piece. Secondly, accepting the fact that there will be some discrepancies, the bulk of the piece, as well as the playing style (i.e. compressed eighth-notes) are disseminated more or less intact. If a performer played the eighth notes straight throughout the piece, it would be obvious that he or she had not studied with a reputable teacher, nor did he or she understand the style and nuance of the music. An appropriate analogy could be made with a cellist who played Bach's G Major prelude rhythmically straight, without *rubato* or accurate phrasing. Even if every note was correct, an educated listener would realize it was a flawed performance. Hopefully, my transcription will provide insight into the written notation and how it relates to the performance practice of the piece.
Part 1 - Yatai

_Yatai_ is made up of a series of named phrases. In cases where the phrase has an easily translated name, I will include that translation as well. The first phrase is called _uchi komi_. It is played by the lead _shime-daiko_ player, or _tate_, and serves as a call-to-order of the group. Although it is tempting to think of it as three bars of four beats with a release note on the downbeat of bar five, it is considered to be a thirteen beat phrase, or at very least, an eight bar phrase followed by a five beat phrase. Another aspect not in the score is that it begins fairly slowly (84 bpm in my transcription), and the last four notes get slower and slower until the tempo is almost halved by the last note. Following the _uchi komi_, there is a _fue_ solo called a _fuki dashi_ (literally meaning “blow out.” but more accurately translated as “solo”). The last two notes played by the _fue_ in this section are also articulated by the _o-daiko_, giving the _fue_ introduction a sense of finality. As the _shime-daiko_ enters to play the _kakari_ or “hook” (sometimes translated as “introduction”), a slow, steady pulse is finally established. Although the first note is written as a _tsu_, it is traditionally not played. In the next two columns in the Japanese notation, the _shime-daiko_ also avoids playing on “one” at the top of the column. When we learned this as a class, before we received music, Endo would play the notes of one column and we would repeat it back, ignoring the fact there was a rest on the first beat. Even after I realized that by adding the _o-daiko_ parts the phrases add up to eight beats, I was still convinced there were bars of seven before the start of the fourth phrase. It was only after seeing the music that I realized the music started with a rest.

The _kakari_, which starts at 55 bpm, steadily accelerates until it reaches an approximate tempo of 144 bpm at the start of the next section, the _yatai gashira_. After
four bars comes a section called *ji gashira* followed by a *ji*, which is repeated twice. Finally, the sequence comes to a close with the *musubi* section. At the end of this first *musubi*, the tempo, which is approximately 170 bpm, is still increasing, although the acceleration rate has slowed. The rhythms in the section listed above are rather simple and very similar, using only quarter and eighth notes. Adding to the syncopation, the *yatai gashira* and *ji gashira* sections begin on beat two.

After the *musubi* section, the sequence of sections is repeated (*yatai gashira, ji gashira, ji, ji*, and *musubi*). At this point in the traditional notation there is a written instruction to the players that translates to “The fifth time of *yatai gashira*, take the sign to *naka no kiri*.” The entire previous sequence is played two and a half times, at which point there is a symbol that functions as a coda sign that directs the player to skip ahead to the next section, *naka no kiri*, which translates as “middle break.” The tempo here (still increasing) has reached 194 bpm. Six bars after the section begins there are characters written in the Japanese notation that do not correlate to any drum notes. These characters, ひ, ふ, み, and よ are numbers (often they relate to a musical scale degrees) translated as *hi, fu, mi, yo*. These syllables are not spoken in performance, and are most likely a space keeping device when a student learns the piece. After another *ji gashira* and *ji*, the Japanese score has a section called *uchi awase*, which translates to “hit together.” In this column, the *shime-daiko* part is divided into two parts, the *tate*, or lead drum on the right, and the *waki*, or second player, on the left. *Tate* and *waki* actually mean up and down and side to side, respectively, but in this context, they mean first and second part. They form a hocket rhythm as seen in Example 11.
This happens for eight beats, and in the next column both drums play the same figures once again.

At this point in the score there are more instructions in Japanese, instructing the player to repeat back to the original bracketed yatai gashira section and at the “coda sign” jump to the tome or “stop” section. In the tome section, the atarigane and the o-daiko cease playing, leaving the shime-daiko to play four bars alone with the fue. The tempo has reached its high point, topping out at around 200 bpm, when, after a one beat rest, it suddenly begins a new section called the han age or “half ending,” at a significantly slower tempo (around 55 bpm) that quickly dissolves into free time. In the Japanese score, the horizontal lines delineating beats are no longer written, and the o-daiko plays six notes alone, out of time. The movement finally closes with all four percussion instruments and the fue playing two loud notes together.

Although the physical aspect of playing this piece does not pose any great technical challenge, memorizing the form proves to be quite difficult. With so many repeats, similar sounding figures, and no clear cut section markers, it is very easy to miss a section, go into the wrong section, and possibly not even realize it until it becomes nearly impossible to recover.
Part 2 - Shoden

The next movement grants the performers a bit of a respite from the ever-increasing tempo and the complex form of *Yatai*. *Shoden* is the shortest of all the pieces, and played in a constant, slow tempo, around 60 bpm. After an initial *fue* solo (*fuki dashi*), the *shime-daiko* player enters with the *kakari* (which begins on the downbeat). After two bars, the *ji* section starts. To clarify, the *ji* is not a specific pattern, but a section that changes from piece to piece and movement to movement. This *ji* is significantly simpler than that of both *Mikoshi bayashi* and the first *Yatai*. Although it is not specified in the Japanese score, when learning this piece, the eight-bar *ji* is generally thought of as two equal phrases. At the end of this section, the player is instructed (in writing) to repeat the *ji* in its entirety and then move on to the *age* (ending).

Although this is perhaps the easiest movement to understand in terms of tempo and form, there are several issues that must be dealt with concerning rhythmic interpretation. This movement contains perfect examples of how the *o-daiko* interprets eighth notes straight at times, and compressed at times, with seemingly no recognizable pattern. In the third and fourth bar of the *ji*, the eighth notes are interpreted as straight eighth notes, while in the fifth, seventh, and eighth bars, the eighth notes are compressed. I can find no explanation from this aside from tradition and traditional performance practice. Similarly, the *atarigane* rhythm, which is the most rhythmically dense, is interpreted in much the same way. However, instead of the eighth notes, the sixteenths are compressed. Even when there are four sixteenths in a row, the result sounds as though it should be notated as in Example 12.
Example 12

What makes this all the more curious is the fact that when playing *Edo bayashi* music, more often than not, the rhythms are swung, which, in actuality, creates the opposite effect of compressing rhythms. Examples 12a and 12b illustrate the difference between straight, swung, and compressed eighths and sixteenths.

Example 13a

Example 13b
Part 3 - Kamakura

The next movement is Kamakura. This movement is very similar to Shoden in that it has a slow, relatively constant tempo, sparse drums parts and lively atarigane rhythms. There are only two sections in this piece labeled by name; the others are merely labeled with a number. There is an eight beat kakari, followed by four sixteen beat phrases, and a concluding twelve-beat age. Supporting the aforementioned theory that nonsense syllables are a tool to help students keep their place in the long, rhythmically sparse sections, there are long sections of silence in the shime-daiko parts, and the same syllables as before are written. In fact, almost every time (there is one exception in the second phrase) there are three empty beats where the shime-daiko and the o-daiko do not play, the syllables ひ, ふ, み (hi, fu, mi) are inserted. The age repeats the syllables twice, with two o-diaiko notes on beats four and eight, respectively.
Shichome translates to “Fourth Avenue” or “fourth block.” The reason for this title, as it was explained to me, is that when the hayashi would pass this area of Edo, they would play this specific piece. In the Japanese score, underneath the Shichome characters are two additional sets of characters, sakidama, or first solo, and atodama, or second solo. Later in the movement when the shime-daiko play split parts, either the tate or the waki will play a solo line while the other repeats the ji rhythm. This piece is related to, and shares some similar passages with Mikoshi bayashi. In fact, the slang name of Mikoshi bayashi is “Riki no Shichome.”

This, in my opinion, is the most challenging shime-daiko piece. It reaches the fastest tempo of any of the movements, and contains a great deal of syncopation. Above the first column in the score is the Japanese character jo, meaning beginning or preface. This is the only time this character is used, and I assume this is because this passage seems like a separate introduction. It starts very slowly, accelerates very quickly (from 60 bpm to 182 bpm) and then stops. To keep time in this quick accelerando, more characters/syllables are used, this time \( \equiv --- \uparrow \), sounding yo ---- i. The fue then begins the next phrase, the ichi no kakari or “number one introduction.”

After three columns, six bars in my transcription, the shime-daiko and atarigane play the ji phrase three times while the o-daiko player plays only the middle phrase. Next, there is a te phrase (te means hand, but it is unclear how this term relates to the piece), and then three more repetitions of the ji, followed by a tome (stop) phrase. After the tome, the o-daiko and atarigane stop playing and the two shime-daiko play the tama no kakari or “solo introduction” for sixteen beats. The next phrase is played (as usual) by
both *shime-daiko* players and is called the *tama no ji*, which translates into “solo ji.”

Above this column is a small character that means “caution,” forewarning the *shime-daiko* players their parts are about to split. The next column is labeled *sakidama* (first solo) and indicates that the *tate* play the written rhythm while the *waki* continues to repeat the *tama no ji* (solo *ji*). A peculiar aspect of the Japanese score is that directions for the *waki* to continue the *ji* part are not given where it occurs, but rather, after the column where there are written instructions that state, “*Waki* plays the *ji* until.... now.” Although this makes it clear when studying the score, for a player reading through the piece, the instructions seem to come a little late. This is further indication that the Japanese score is for instructional purposes, not for reading as a piece of music.

After a couple more columns, the *o-daiko* plays a solo for eight beats, followed by the *ni no kakari* or “number two introduction.” Similar to material previously played, there are then three *ji*’s followed by a *te*, three more *ji*’s and a *tome*. Then, there is another solo introduction (*tama no kakari*), followed by the *tama no ji*, complete with “caution” character. At this point, the *atodama* (final solo) occurs, but the *waki* plays the solo part while the *tate* repeats the *ji*. This solo is significantly longer, and, as before, it ends with written instructions that state, “*Tate* plays the *ji* until....now.” After a couple more columns, the *age* occurs. This *age* is very similar to the *age* for *Mikoshi bayashi*, and I transcribed it in 4/4 time, as it is implied in the Japanese score. Although it is not precisely the same as the *age* for *Mikoshi bayashi*, one can see two different ways of notating the passage: one that follows the feel of the music (*Mikoshi bayashi*) and one that stays in the same meter throughout (*Shichome*).
Part 5 - Yatai

The final piece (or “movement”) is a shortened version of Yatai that does not contain the fue fuki dashi, kakari, naka no kiri, or uchi awase sections. The yatai gashira, ji gashira, ji, ji, musubi sequence occurs six times, with each repeat becoming gradually faster. The piece actually begins slower than its opening “movement” counterpart (around 76 bpm), but quickly accelerates to 160 bpm by the first time the sequence repeats. When the performers reach the tome section, they have already surpassed the tempo of the opening Yatai. After sixteen quick beats of the tome section, the tempo drops suddenly and drastically in the hon age or “real ending” section. The hon age is more drawn out than the han age from the initial Yatai although it too eventually descends into free time with the atarigane playing, for the first time, a roll, notated in the Japanese score as a zigzagging line. Finally, all the instruments in the hayashi play the two quick final notes, ending the piece.

The most difficult part of Edo bayashi music is that everything is played from memory. Even when familiar with the sequence of events, keeping one’s place in the middle of so much similar sounding music and in the midst of so many repeats is daunting. The Japanese score helped me a great deal in keeping track of all the different sections, and I can only imagine how difficult it would be to learn this entire piece by rote.
B. Hachijo Style

Although the majority of my studies were based around the *kumi-daiko* and *Edo matsuri bayashi* styles of drumming, I got the chance to take a one-week intensive course from a performer and teacher named Yuta Kato on the subject of Hachijo drumming. This style, which originated on Hachijo Island, uses traditional *nagado-daiko* drums, incorporates relaxed, graceful stick and arm movements and an improvisational style not found elsewhere.

Born from Japanese immigrants in Concord, California, Kato’s early training came from *Kagami Kai*, a mochi rice-pounding and music ensemble. After gaining a solid foundation in the basics of music and movement, he joined the San Francisco Dojo’s *Rising Stars* youth ensemble in 1994. Kato continued to play taiko throughout high school and college at UCLA, where he received his B.A. in World Arts and Cultures in 2003. During this time, he spent a year studying with original Sukeroku Taiko member *Ganei Onozato* in Tokyo, and a month studying the culture and music of Hachijo Island. Upon returning to UCLA, Kato served as the Artistic Director of *UCLA Kyodo* and went on to found a second group, *Yukai Daiko*, in 2003. As a performer, Kato was an original member of the progressive group *TAIKOPROJECT* as well as the taiko/world music fusion group, the *On Ensemble*. In addition to performing, Kato has given numerous clinics nationwide on Hachijo and *kumi-daiko* drumming, served as artistic staff for *Portland Taiko*, and was the Assistant Coordinator for the North American Taiko Conference in 2003 and 2005.57

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Hachijo drumming is different from other genres of taiko for several reasons, most notably, the idea that unless one is a native of Hachijo Island, one can never fully learn the style. Kato repeatedly impressed upon the class the fact that the Hachijo style and culture of taiko can’t be taught, but rather, he could share the tendencies he witnessed when he studied and played there. The other aspect that distinguishes this style is the concept of “enjoying taiko not as a performance, but as music shared by friends and family.” When the residents of Hachijo play taiko, it is not thought of as a performance, but rather as part of a social event. In fact, one of the most popular places to find a taiko is in a bar. In the same way Americans might play pool or darts after downing a few beers, residents of Hachijo imbibe, and then play taiko.

Like all of taiko, the origins of Hachijo style are largely legend. Kato passed on to the class what he was told on Hachijo Island, but there is no way to independently verify the history or facts. During the Edo period (1603-1868) several islands in the Izu Island chain south of Tokyo were used as places of exile for criminals. Criminals were sent to a specific island depending on the crime they had committed. The worse the crime was, the farther south a criminal was sent. Hachijo was the farthest south of all these islands, but the criminals who were banished there were largely political prisoners from the samurai class. Their swords taken, legend has it the exiles used drumsticks to practice their sword-fighting skills, as well keep in shape both mentally and physically.

One of the most interesting aspects of Hachijo drumming is that women were welcome to participate from its very beginning. Most, if not all, styles of Japanese music are in some way associated or had a basis in religion. Japan was (and largely still is) a

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male-dominated society and during the Edo period women were not allowed to perform music in religious ceremonies. Because drumming on Hachijo was not associated with religion, but with exercise and entertainment, women were welcome participants. Even today, there are different traditional stances for men and women, although players of both sexes alternate between the two. Images 4 and 5 are pictures of the traditional male and female stances (both demonstrated by a woman).

Although the stances may differ, the playing style characteristics of men and women are the same. A chu-daiko is placed horizontally on a stand approximately at shoulder height. Because these taiko are often in public places for many different
players, the height is approximate. As a reference, however, the drums I played on were
on a stand that positioned the instrument fifty-one inches from the floor to the center of
the head, but not specifically designed for Hachijo style. Unlike most other styles of
taiko, players are positioned on both sides of the drum, and each person has a specific
role. One player plays a *ji*, while the other improvises a rhythm on the other side. The *ji*
is generally agreed upon before the start of a piece, and it can change depending on
where the soloist leads.

Examples 14a-c illustrate the four main types of *ji* used on Hachijo:

Example 14a

1. *Honbataki*

![Example 14a](image)

Example 14b

2. *Gionbataki*

![Example 14b](image)

Example 14c

3. *Yuukichi*

![Example 14c](image)
Many are similar to those used in *kumi-daiko* performance, but the *Honbatakiji* is uniquely associated with the Hachijo style. Every note marked with a "buzz" symbol (the mark that looks like a z on the line of the note) is a dead-stroke where the stick is left on the head after the strike. The combination of this technique and the sympathetic vibrations created when the soloist strikes the other head, create some truly unique soundscapes.

Writing about the specifics of improvisation is difficult, and for Hachijo style this is especially true. Kato told the class that when he asked about conventions and rules of the improvisation, he was told that anything was acceptable. However, as he played, more experienced native Hachijoans would correct what they perceived as flaws or mistakes in his playing and technique. From this process, Kato established a general set of "rules" from tendencies he noted by observing taiko players on the island. He built drills around these techniques and these form the basis of his workshops. Example 15 is an exercise written by Kato that combines several common phrases in Hachijo performance.
Example 15

Although the rhythms are simple, the combination of raw power and grace make a unique taiko experience. Most movement in kumi-daiko performance is based around creating sharp lines by extending the arms and sticks in a variety of different angles in relation to the drum. Conversely, Hachijo style is based upon creating circles and rounded shapes with loosely held sticks. It is much less physically demanding and lends itself to a much more relaxed, fluid playing. Each individual arm, when not in use, is dropped to the player’s side after striking the drum and raised just prior to the next note.

Hachijo drummers also use a style of sticking that differs from the natural sticking discussed previously. Although exceptions are made to the rule, constant, steady notes are usually performed RLLRRLL. This extra time for the arm at rest allows the player to add one of the graceful motions Hachijo style is known for. Although it may be tempting to think that the motions are only for aesthetic effect, according to the drummers of the island, the added motion adds to the power of the stroke. For instance, one of the most common motions is for the right arm to twirl the right hand stick in a large circle above the head parallel to the ground before striking the drum. The theory is that the extra
distance the stick travels allows the player more time to accelerate the velocity of the stick, creating a louder note. I am not convinced that this is true, but that is how the exaggerated motions are explained.

In addition to performing a rhythmic solo, it is very common for drummers on Hachijo to sing one or two verses of a well-known folk song as they play. The two verses I learned are the two most common verses sung:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse 1</th>
<th>Verse 2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taiko tataite</td>
<td>Mitsune kuranozaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitosama yosetayona</td>
<td>Saka mannaka de yona</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washimo aitai</td>
<td>Defune nagamete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kataga aruyo</td>
<td>Sode shiboru yona</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first verse is the most commonly sung, although its origins have been lost over time. The performer sings about hitting the drum to gather people, hoping to meet a special person. The famous Japanese poet Noguchi Ujo wrote the second verse in 1930 after he visited Hachijo. It is written from the point of view of a criminal’s wife, who weeps as her husband is sent back to the mainland after serving his time.\(^{59}\)

After singing the final verse there is a chant in which everyone participates. It is sung in steady rhythm as follows:

\(^{59}\) A summary of the verses is necessary due to the fact that a literal translation of the text is difficult and confusing due to Japanese syntax.
Original Japanese: Hora Imakoso

Literal English Translation: Here, now is the time

Taiko no otodayo

For the sound of the drum

Sonotewo kawasazu

Don’t mix up and cross your hands

Uchiyare kiriyare

Hit and cut the drum

Kitamata mata mattai!

Have you arrived? Not yet, not yet, now!

The final line is often shouted as encouragement for the drummer, the same way a *kiai* is used in *kumi-daiko*: to give strength and encouragement.

Although there is a general tune to the verses, much of the rhythm is improvised, making it virtually impossible to notate a “standard form.” Instead, I chose to transcribe Kato playing the song as it might be performed on Hachijo. Although it is clearly only one improvised performance, it does contain the rhythms, two song verses, and form a typical performance would contain. It can be found in Appendix C.
C. Kumi-daiko

Today, when most people think of taiko, they think of kumi-daiko. There is no set ensemble size or instrumentation, although several specific types of drums and percussion instruments are commonly used. I studied kumi-daiko through group lessons on chu-daiko, an intensive course on the o-daiko, and another intensive course on how to play Omiyage, a piece composed as a gift for the taiko community. Before classes started, I also took a private lesson with Endo where he gave me an overview of chu-daiko and o-daiko basics. The specific style (stance, grip, and basic technique) I encountered at Taiko Center of the Pacific is mainly derived from Endo’s former group Sukeroku Daiko. Endo is one of four people in North America who are authorized to teach the repertoire and style of Sukeroku, so I felt my information was coming from an extremely reputable source.

Although kumi-daiko is played on different drums in a variety of styles and positions, the chu-daiko is the principal voice of the ensemble, and the instrument I primarily studied. The playing position conceived by Sukeroku, and used almost exclusively at Taiko Center of the Pacific is a slanted drum position called naname, and consists of the center of the drumhead being positioned at half the performer’s height at a 45- to 60-degree angle. (Another common position is betta, which I witnessed but did not learn, where the drum is suspended upright, just above the ground.) The first aspect of kumi-daiko I learned was basic kata, or form. The visual element of kumi-daiko cannot be overstated, and the performance technique is just as important as the rhythms.

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that are produced. Stance, body and arm position, and fluidity of motion are paramount aspects of this art form.

Unlike most Western percussion instruction, Endo began our lesson by explaining how I should feel well balanced and connected to the earth by concentrating on my *hara* and how it connects me to the ground. The *hara* can be translated as "stomach," "abdomen," or even "gut," and can either refer to the actual stomach, or to the *tanden*, a general area two inches below the navel. Japanese think of it as the "spiritual and physical center of the human being," much the same way as Western cultures think of the heart.\(^{61}\) The standard stance for *kumi-daiko* players is achieved by lowering the hips and standing with the feet wide apart so the *tanden* is in a lower position, the body has a low center of gravity, and the player can achieve greater stability and power with which to play. To assume the correct position, I was instructed to start with both feet two or three feet apart. From there I was to slowly bend my left knee, keeping my feet flat on the floor. Then, while twisting my knee and upper body slightly to the left, I was to slide my right leg back while keeping it straight. The upper body should be upright and relaxed and the shoulders should be parallel to the floor. Like sitting in the *seiza* position, the first time one stands in this position, it can become rather painful due to the muscle strain on the legs.

The next step was to learn the basics of striking a slanted drum. The "set position" was achieved by standing (with correct stance) to the left of a drum with the left (forward) foot roughly even with the edge of the drum closest to the player and one to two feet to the left. The arms are then extended so they are straight out, away from the

body, with the tips of both sticks close to each other and the middle of the drumhead.

The head is upright and relaxed and the eyes are focused on the center of the head. (See Images 6 and 7.)

Image 6 – Set position from front

Image 7 – Set position from back
Sticks are held firmly but relaxed from the back of the hand the same way one would hold a hammer. Endo referred to this as the “fist grip” (as opposed to the “shime-daiko grip”), and it is the grip used to play most patterns on the chu-daiko and the o-daiko.

Just before starting an exercise, it is customary to assume a “ready position” known as kamaete. In the group classes, we would get into the set position, and then the instructor would call out “Kamaete!” in a loud voice. With that command, players shift their weight by straightening the left leg and flexing the right. As this happens the hands are drawn up in a circular motion around the sides of the body and come to rest just above and to the right of the player’s face (from the player’s point of view). Also, the hands are turned in so the palms face the player, and the left hand is placed just inside the wrist of the right hand. The right stick is perpendicular to the ground and the left stick forms a slanted V with approximately a 45-degree angle. (See Image 8.)

Image 8 - Kamaete
In classes, there is usually a count-off at this point. The most common was "ichi-ni-so-re!" *Ichi and ni* are the Japanese words for one and two, but *so-re* is a *kiai*, or vocalization that indicates "ready-go," although that is not a direct translation. After the *so-re*, the players "rock back" to their original positions (left leg flexed, right leg straight) and begin to play. Images 9 and 10 illustrate the striking position of the left and right hands.

Image 9 – Left hand strike
Image 10 – Right hand strike

A variation on this stance and striking technique is the X-pattern. For this, the player stands facing the drum, arms and legs outstretched like an X, and strikes the drum across the body both on the down-stroke and the up-stroke. This stance is usually used in alternation with slant-style playing within a single piece. Images 11-13 depict ready position, left hand strike, and right hand strike.
Image 11 – X-stance ready position

Image 12 – X-pattern left hand strike
Image 13 – X-pattern right hand strike

O-daiko and shime-daiko technique uses virtually the same stance, but different playing techniques as a result of the angle of the drumheads due to the way the drums are suspended. O-daiko drums are suspended horizontally and played with the arms outstretched forward and angled slightly upwards. The sticks are held vertically and parallel to each other. The stance is similar to that of the basic chu-daiko stance, but to achieve greater power, the performer’s right foot moves slightly to the right so that the upper body directly faces the drumhead. (See Images 14 and 15.)
To strike the drum, the arms are brought straight back behind the head as far as possible, then quickly forward, where the stick strikes the drumhead at the arm's full extension. (See Image 16.)
The *shime-daiko* is performed the same way as a Western style snare drum: approximately waist height, with drumheads parallel to the floor. The only major differences are that the low stance is incorporated and the arms are outstretched far forward.

Before playing, students are required to learn the basic *kuchishoga* of the *chu-daiko* (the *o-daiko* uses the same syllables). The system is similar to the one previously discussed for the *shime-daiko*, but the syllables are different because of the size and sound of the drum. A single beat (equivalent to *ten* on the *shime-daiko*) is articulated *don*. A note half the length is *do*, and if two loud notes are struck sequentially, *do-ko* or *do-ro*. The soft notes are pronounced the same as on the *shime-daiko*: *tsu* for one note, *tsu-ku* for two. The syllable for a rest is also the same (*su*). The new additions to this *kuchishoga* are *ka* and *ka-ra*. These indicate hitting the drum on the edge (*fuchi*) or body (*do*). Both of these strokes are done lightly and with the last inch or so of the *bachi* to avoid damaging the drums.

The first exercise students often learn is "basic *kata*," and it requires the performer to continuously double the notes per beat. Besides playing increasingly faster rhythms, this piece serves to improve fluidity and overall technique. The *kuchishoga* for "basic *kata*" can be found in Example 16:

Example 16

```
DON  su  DON  su  DON  su  DON  su  DON  DON  DON  DON  DON  DON  DON  DON
DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO
```
Oroshi, or single stroke rolls, are often practiced as well, simply by rolling for a specific duration of time, such as thirty seconds or a minute. Oroshi are not as refined as Western style open or closed rolls, but this does not pose a problem in performance. Oftentimes a group will roll together, creating a very thick texture as a result of the fact that few people roll at the same speed or with the exact same intensity. Endo would sometimes ask us to roll half the time with the “regular grip” and half the time with the “shime-daiko grip” in order to improve both techniques. Although the shime-daiko grip is not predominantly used for rolls, it does serve a purpose when playing more technically difficult passages.

Another technique very common in Japanese music is called yama-oroshi, or “mountain roll,” which is a series of drum strikes that start out extremely slowly, gradually building in speed until a roll is achieved. Yama-oroshi is often played at the beginning of a piece to help the group of drummers focus their energy. Sometimes, especially on an o-daiko played by two players (one on each head), the yama-oroshi starts out as alternating strikes between the two players until it gradually culminates as a roll. Although this device is sometimes used in Western music, it is difficult to notate, and not used in the same spirit. An example of this is the xylophone part in Bartok’s Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celeste. It seems obvious that Bartok was trying to write the equivalent of the yama-oroshi, but because of the limitations of Western notation was forced to use a combination of notes accelerating from quarter through 32\textsuperscript{nd} notes.

After practicing basic techniques, the class moved on to a practice piece called Renshu Taiko. This piece was initially written by Seiichi Tanaka and literally translates
to “taiko practice” or “taiko training.” The *kuchishoga* can be found in Example 17a, as well as the Western notation transcription in Example 17b, with the *kuchishoga* syllables and *kiai* (which is considered part of the piece) underneath. In the *kuchishoga*, each line is repeated once with the exception of lines 1a and 1b, which are repeated as one line.

Example 17a

1a. DON  
1b. DON - DON  
2. DORO - tsuku  
3. DON - kara  
4. DON - tsuku  
5. su - DON

Example 17b

![Example 17b notation]

Although relatively simple, this exercise contains many of the different strokes and movement techniques used in a typical taiko piece. From the *kamaete* position
discussed earlier, players “rock forward” and hit the drum with their right hand. (Like other types of taiko, everything is played right-hand lead.) After striking the drum, the right hand returns to a position similar to kamaete, except that the hands now face each other instead of overlapping. Once the piece has started, the sticks are always held parallel to each other in this new position. The elbows are slightly bent, but the sticks should be as far to the right of the player’s head as is comfortable.

A basic concept I was told was that it is usually desirable to keep the hands in close proximity to each other whenever possible. This rule is often broken, especially in fast playing, but generally, technique dictates that the hands are positioned together. The next don is played in the same way with the left hand, which also returns to the up position, bringing the hands into close proximity. The next note breaks the aforementioned rule. After hitting the third don with the right hand, the stick rebounds to a position as close as possible to the head, temporarily separating the hands. However, the situation is soon rectified as the left sticks remains close to the head after the fourth don. One aspect of the piece that is obvious in Western notation, but not the kuchishoga, is the crescendo through the next line. Line 1b allows players to practice playing softly and loudly, a crescendo, and alternating quickly from accented, loud notes to unaccented quiet notes. Line two contains more quick alternation between loud and soft notes and helps the players feel the four-beat phrase by ending don don. The third line is an exercise in playing the drum and the rim. The rim has a distinctly different feel to it and sounds much clearer and sharper, amplifying poorly played rhythms. Line four prepares players for a common kumi-daiko ji made up of an eighth note and two sixteenths, often called the “horsebeat ji.” The fifth and final line contains the fewest notes, yet is often
the most problematic. The kuchishoga syllable su is articulated in the downbeat rests to help players feel the empty space known as ma. The entire exercise is then repeated a specified number of times. Often times half the class would play Renshu, and the other half would play a steady ji so the class could practice listening to the counterpoint between the lines much like they would in an actual performance.

In most kumi-daiko pieces, there is a ji (or ji-uchi) or basebeat, and an o-uchi, or main theme. There are a limited number of commonly used ji, and they are illustrated in Examples 18a-d.

Example 18a

1. “straight ji” or “basic ji” (known as Shabataki on Hachijo)

Example 18b

2. “bounce”, “bounce basic”, “swing basic”, “bounce ji”, or “swing ji” (known as Gionbataki on Hachijo)
Example 18c

3. “galloping horse”, “horse basic”, or “galloping horse ji” (known as Yuukichi on Hachijo)

Example 18d

4. “Matsuri ji” or “Matsuri Daiko”

Renshu can be performed with the straight or swing ji. Although swing can be difficult to conceptualize, with the ji pounding away, the class was able to switch from the straight to the swing rhythms quite easily.

After learning the two basic ji’s, the class was introduced to two other short practice pieces, Oiuchi Daiko and Bon Taiko. Oiuchi is an exercise Endo learned from Sukeroku Daiko that utilizes the basic swing ji and contains standard and X-stance passages. Examples 19a and 19b contain the music in kuchishoga and Western notation.
Example 19a

1. DON DON DON DON DON DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO DO-KO
2. SU DO-DON SU DO-DON SU DO-DON DON
3a. DO-DON DO-DON DO-DON DO-DON
3b. DON DON DON DON DON DON DON DO-DON
4. DON ZU-DON KO-DON DON ZU-DON KO-DON

Example 19b

In the *kuchishoga*, the first, second, and fourth lines are repeated once (although line 3a and 3b are not, as they work as a pair), as is indicated by the Western notation, and the whole piece is repeated a predetermined number of times.
One advantage of the X-pattern is that the performer can hit the drum in both
directions, on the way down, as well as the way up. This occurs in mm. 9 of the
transcription. (See Example 20.)

Example 20

The arrows above (a notation first used by Kenny Endo) indicate the stick motion
from the performer’s point of view. Although it is not possible for an up-stroke to
achieve a sound as loud as the down-stroke, taiko players use this natural phrasing to
their advantage. The main point of this exercise is to practice placement of different
swing figures around aji, as well as getting into and out of X-stance gracefully and
quickly.

Bon Daiko is an exercise that uses various patterns that a drummer might play at a
Bon dance, although the piece itself is merely an exercise, not something one would hear
at a Bon-odori. It utilizes drum and rim strikes as well as basic arm motions that can be
incorporated into performance pieces. There are many variations on this exercise, and
Example 21 is only the most basic version.
Although the movements are not extensive, they are an important and necessary part of the piece. On the first beat of the third measure, the left arm is swung horizontally across the body until the arm is extended parallel to the drum, the stick pointing straight out. Just as the second note is struck, the left arm is brought up, as if into the kamaete. After playing the second beat, the right arm follows the left, stopping at the kamaete position on beat three. In the next measure, after playing the ka note on beat three, the right hand extends upward and the arm makes a large clockwise circle, hitting the outside, lower rim of the drum on beat one and after continuing around the circle, on beat three.

Although the preceding exercises cover most, if not all, of the performance aspects of taiko music, I felt it was important to include a transcription of a complete piece so the reader could see an actual performance taiko piece in Western music score form. In Appendix D is my transcription of the piece Omiyage, which was conceptualized, written, and choreographed by Bryan Yamami, Shoji Kameda, and Yuta
Kato of the group TAIKOPROJECT in 2004. It is immensely popular in the taiko community, and is played, in many different arrangements, by groups throughout the country. Part of its popularity is due to the fact that it incorporates many aspects of a typical North American kumi-daiko piece into a well-written piece of music. It uses common instruments: multiple chu-daiko, shime-daiko and okedo-daiko (medium-sized, rope-tensioned drums), an o-daiko, and simple kiai, and incorporates fluid movement into the piece. Additionally, it was written as a gift (omiyage means gift in Japanese) for the taiko community, and its composers have made a concerted effort to make it available to the public by offering intensive workshops, like the one I took, releasing a DVD with a "How to play Omiyage" chapter, and even developing a written notation that incorporates the movements as well as the kuchishoga, downloadable from the TAIKOPROJECT website. Although explaining the movements of the piece is beyond the scope of this paper, the transcription is accurate according to the performance on the 2004 DVD release, “TAIKOPROJECT:(re)Generation”.
Chapter 6: Conclusions

I feel very privileged and thankful that I was welcomed and accepted so whole-heartedly by Kenny Endo, the performers in his ensemble, everyone associated with the Taiko Center of the Pacific, and the taiko community at large. The whole experience opened my eyes to different concepts of music and performing, and challenged my assumptions of how an art form can expand and evolve. I gained, perhaps, the most insight by learning an orally transmitted musical form while completely immersing myself in a different musical culture. Many of the pedagogical methods I observed (both individually and in a group setting) gave me new insights and new ideas on how musical fluency can be achieved and how knowledge of an art form can be transmitted most effectively. Studying with Kenny Endo also reinforced the importance of having a knowledgeable, accessible teacher that not only passed on his craft, but his passion for it as well.

After months of research, countless conversations, and hours of recorded material, however, I am still left with many questions. Primarily, what is the essence of taiko as an art form, and can it be defined in a sentence or even a paragraph? Obviously, the drums themselves are one defining characteristic, but what beyond that? Would taiko still be considered taiko without traditional movement? Costumes? K'ai? Is learning and achieving fluency in the kuchishoga system necessary to be a taiko performer? The most pressing question I have is whether taiko can stay true to its roots as an art form, or whether it will merely turn into a form of exotic entertainment, almost becoming a caricature of itself. Can taiko groups, especially American taiko groups, keep the entertainment value of their concerts high without becoming a novelty act?
Even with these concerns, I see many possibilities for taiko that haven’t been explored yet, at least on a large scale. Music education is one area that I believe would benefit greatly from embracing taiko teaching methods. Many of the young players I witnessed had a sense of pulse, timing, and phrasing that I rarely see in any music student. This is partly because many of the children begin at a very early age, but more significantly, taiko allows even the youngest children to use large muscle groups to successfully play simple rhythms, syncopated figures, and improvisation exercises that together help to instill a clear sense of pulse and rhythm.

I hope the transcriptions in this document will allow those not familiar with the oral taiko tradition to visualize and understand a type of art they were previously unaware of. Although *Yatai* exists as a performance piece, this is the first time, to my knowledge, it has ever been transcribed into Western notation, finally allowing those not familiar with the *Edo bayashi* tradition to understand and study the score in a recognizable form. Similarly, I am not aware of any transcriptions of a Hachijo style piece. Although the transcription does not cover the movements that accompany the music, for the first time those who are literate in Western notation can comprehend what a Hachijo taiko piece might sound like. *Omiyage* has several different systems in place for *kumi-daiko* groups to learn the piece (*kuchishoga* and a pictorial graph), but both are incomplete and contain mistakes. Although it is a constantly changing work, I am confident my transcription is accurate when compared with the original 2004 performed version.

It is my sincere hope that this document will not only add to the academic record, but will give Western percussionists who have not had the benefit of intensive taiko study basic knowledge and a better understanding of what taiko music entails.
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Appendix A

Traditional Japanese Notation
of Edo Bayashi
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(図示内容)

(図示内容)
Appendix B

Western Notation Transcription

of Edo Bayashi
Edo Bayashi

Yatai
Uchi Komi
$J = 84$

Shime-daiko
O-daiko
Atarigane

(Bracketed notes are played as approximate triplets)

molto rit..

Fuki dashi

Shime
O-daiko
Atarigane

Kakari

$J = 55$

Shime
O-daiko
Atarigane

$J = 63$

Shime
O-daiko
Atarigane

$J = 80$

Shime
O-daiko
Atarigane

$J = 90$

Traditional/transcribed by Brian Vogel (2008)
Uchi awase

Shime

O-daiko

Atarigane

\( \frac{81}{4} \) \( \mathfrak{J} = 198 \)

Tome

Shime

O-daiko

Atarigane

\( \frac{85}{4} \) \( \mathfrak{J} = 55 \)

Shoden

Shime

O-daiko

Atarigane

\( \frac{90}{4} \) \( \mathfrak{J} = 55 \)

Fuki dashi

Kakari

\( \frac{95}{4} \) \( \mathfrak{J} = 60 \)

Ji
Shichome (Sakidama - Atodama)

molto accel.
"molto rit."

Shime
238
O-daiko
Atarigane

Yatai
Yatai gashira

molto rit.

242
Shime
O-daiko
Atarigane

Ji gashira

246
Shime
O-daiko
Atarigane

251
Shime
O-daiko
Atarigane

Ji
Ji
Yatai gashira

Shime

O-daiko

Atarigane

Ji gashira

Shime

O-daiko

Atarigane

Ji

Ji

Musubi

Shime

O-daiko

Atarigane
Shime O-daiko
Atarigane

Hon age

Shime O-daiko
Atarigane

molto rit.
(out of time)
Appendix C

Hachijo Style Piece Transcription
Hachijo Style Piece

As played by Yuta Kato and Brian Vogel, July 2007
Transcribed by Brian Vogel
Appendix D

Omiyage Transcription
Omiyage (2004 Version)

Written by Shoji Kameda
Transcribed by Brian Vogel