

# Analysis of Transmission in Japanese Traditional Art Forms: Part 1, A Comprehensive Model Based on Fundamental Theories of Art and Tradition

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## Background

I began using a tripartitional model for analysis of music when I wrote my Master Thesis at the Tokyo National University of Arts in 1997.<sup>1</sup> I investigated the ornamental patterns used for the bamboo flute *shakuhachi* when performed in one of the Edo-period (1603–1868) genres of ensemble music, consisting of vocals, the lute *shamisen* and the zither *koto*. I used the same model in my Doctoral Thesis, in which I studied the construction of tradition within the genre of solo music for the *shakuhachi*.<sup>2</sup> Both the ensemble music and the solo music are regarded as belonging to the 'traditional arts' of Japan.<sup>3</sup> During that research I ventured into the realms of folklore studies, as well as a critical study of primary sources – poems, historical texts, discourses on music and cultural history – tracing the tradition back to a supposed origin. In so doing, I came to believe that the model I had applied, originally used in musicology, actually works splendidly also in the analyses of historical texts.

The attempt here is to further discuss and develop the ideas put forward in that model, and I believe that this modified version may be employed more generally in culture and art studies. For the present purpose I have limited myself to mostly include artistic aspects of culture, mainly music, but I believe that it is possible to apply the model I outline to other art forms such as visual art, theatre, and poetry, as well as to writings about these matters, that is, texts that expound and explicate the cultural context. In this “theoretical” part one, I thus expound the fundamental analytic theory and discuss how to build a model for analysis of traditional art forms, with the intent to provide a second part in the near future, in which I apply the model to a concrete case of Japanese traditional art.

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<sup>1</sup> Gunnar Jinmei Linder, “Kinko-ryū shakuhachi no gaikyoku ni kansuru kenkyū,” 1997.

<sup>2</sup> Linder, *Deconstructing Tradition in Japanese Music*, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> The ensemble music and the performance style is often referred to as *sankyoku*, but the music genre should more accurately be called *jiuta-sōkyoku*.

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## Introduction

The French-Canadian musicologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez, developed an interesting theory of semiology of music in the early 1990s. He refutes the idea of semiology being a science of communication, building on the ideas of Jean Molino: “[T]here is no guarantee of a direct correspondence between the effect produced by a work of art and the intentions of its creator.”<sup>4</sup> Nattiez and Molino challenged the idea of a ‘code’ being present, which is mutually understood by the sender and the receiver. They perceived semiology as an act of interpretation that builds more on the receiver’s context than the sender’s. Nattiez says that, “the *normal situation* in musical, linguistic, or human ‘communication’ in general is ... the *displacement* between compositional intentions and perceptive behaviors.”<sup>5</sup> Even if we can assume several stages from creation of an art object to its perception, for example those of an interpreting performer, the object is materially the same, and this may lead to a faulty view of a ‘code’ being implanted into the music or the musical notation, which then is ‘decoded’ by the listener. However, since it is the same object, the physical entity has to be subjected to scrutiny in any analysis, according to Nattiez.<sup>6</sup>

Actually, Nattiez’s theory is predated by the linguist Roman Jakobson, who already in 1960 divided – poetic, thus in a sense artistic – communication in three different dimensions. Jakobson refers to six factors that each determines a different function of language. In the below chart (Figure 1) I have put the factors above and their corresponding function below.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 1. Jakobson’s factors and functions of language.

ADDRESSER EMOTIVE	CONTEXT REFERENTIAL	ADDRESSEE CONATIVE <sup>8</sup>
	MESSAGE POETIC	
	CONTACT PHATIC <sup>9</sup>	
	CODE METALINGUAL	

<sup>4</sup> Jean Molino, “Musical Fact and the Semiology of Music,” 1990, p. 130.

<sup>5</sup> Jean-Jacques Nattiez, *Music and Discourse...*, 1990, p. 99. Emphasis in the original.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Roman Jakobson, “Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics,” 1960, pp. 353, 357.

<sup>8</sup> Conation: “... an inclination (as an instinct, a drive, a wish, or a craving) to act purposefully” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conative>, accessed on Oct. 29, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> “... of, relating to, or being speech used for social or emotive purposes rather than for communicating information” (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/phatic>, accessed on Oct. 29, 2012).

The Addresser and the Addressee experience intangible processes, one creative and the other interpretive. The four factors/functions in the middle column are all tangible in some way: they relate to the physical world. In the semiotic theory of Nattiez's the three levels we find here are referred to as the *poietic level* (creative processes), the *neutral level* or the physical trace, and the *esthetic level* (interpretive or experiential processes). The terminology introduced by Nattiez does not come natural, so I will refer to the levels as Creative (level/processes), Physical (level/trace), and Experiential (level/processes). Nattiez says that an object takes on meaning when an individual apprehends the object "in relation to his lived experience," thus including a general idea of the context,<sup>10</sup> but where he confines himself to include sound-objects, written notation, writings about the sound-objects, and so on, Jakobson's theory has a wider range, explicitly including contact and code.

Nattiez is actually criticizing Jakobson, arguing that Jakobson's schema implies that in communication the two counterparts communicate by simply encoding and decoding the message.<sup>11</sup> I interpret Jakobson as saying that IF there is to be communication we need a common meta-lingual code to understand each other (at least in verbal communication and of course then also discourse). However, Jakobson actually does say that the code has to be at least partially common to "the encoder and decoder of the message,"<sup>12</sup> but his theory of the factors and functions of language builds on a semiological foundation. On the other hand, Nattiez talks of how the poietic processes 'mark' the physical object (a kind of 'encoding' as it were), and whether to regard Jakobson's theory as a matter of correct *decoding* of the message may be debated. Jakobson's schema is a structuralistic discussion of poetics, where a 'correct' understanding of the linguistic entities can give a proper reply to his initial question "*What makes a verbal message a work of art?*"<sup>13</sup>

The terminology introduced by Jakobson is intriguing in as much as it is very similar to the schema introduced by Nattiez, and for the present paper, a useful tool for the sake of argument: Several theories, in different disciplines, have been put forward, using similar elements. Furthermore, the neutral level that Nattiez is talking about is given a wider range in Jakobson's four categories.

Thenceforth, it is my belief that a number of theoretical frameworks, from different disciplines, can be put to use in developing a comprehensive theory of artistic communication, especially in dealing with the transmission of how to perform, whether it is an art form, a specific style, a theatrical play, a piece of music, and so forth. I also believe that it is possible to construct a generic model for analysis within cultural studies, not limited to music or even art in general. I will expound these issues below.

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<sup>10</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse...*, 1990, p. 9.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> Jakobson, "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," 1960, pp. 353.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 350. Emphasis in the original.

## **Tradition, Creation, and Appreciation**

Art is divided in different genres, such as contemporary, modern, traditional, popular, and so on. I use the term 'traditional art forms' in the title of this article, but the word 'traditional' is far from un-problematic. Lexically 'tradition' means:

- 1 a: an inherited, established, or customary pattern of thought, action, or behavior ...
- 1 b: a belief or story or a body of beliefs or stories relating to the past that are commonly accepted as historical though not verifiable
- 2: the handing down of information, beliefs, and customs by word of mouth or by example from one generation to another without written instruction
- 3: cultural continuity in social attitudes, customs, and institutions
- 4: characteristic manner, method, or style ...<sup>14</sup>

A 'traditional' art form is therefore an art form that has been handed down, but conceptually it is difficult to conceive of an art form that is not handed down, that is, that does not have any sort of predecessor. Obviously, whatever we do, we do it based on some rules, learned behaviour, or other framework. Nobody acts completely out of new decisions made every second, tradition-less, which means that anything is presently or potentially a tradition. Even though I find the term 'traditional' problematic I will use the term here with a more narrow meaning. In a Japanese context, I regard pre-Meiji-period art forms (art forms that developed before the sudden and dramatic changes of the late nineteenth century) as 'traditional.'<sup>15</sup> Another conceivable definition is that of the sociologist Edward Shils. He includes a 'life-span' factor in his notion of tradition. For Shils a belief or a practice that does not gain followers or only survives for a short time is not a tradition: "It has to last over at least three generations – however long or short these are – to be a tradition."<sup>16</sup> For the time being I find these definitions to be a sufficient definition of what I mean by 'traditional art.'

Over the years, studying a variety of texts in a large array of disciplines, I have always had a strong feeling of a commonsensical 'maker' of any given text, whether it be an historical text, a novel, a poem, a play, or even a musical 'text,' that is, a piece of music. In for example folkloristic story-telling or 'traditional' music it may not be possible to identify the creator, but somebody did create the piece or an outline of it, and after that it has been re-created and changed during series of performances and transmission processes. Both the original creator and the subsequent transmitters may be regarded as 'makers' or 're-makers.' The same may be said about older texts that have been copied during the centuries.

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<sup>14</sup> Merriam-Webster Online Resource, 'tradition,' accessed March 29, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Depending on the perspective of the locutor this time-frame is not always and generically valid in Japan.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Shils, *Tradition*, p. 15.

Roland Barthes turned the perspective around in 1967, in favour of the reader: “We know that to give writing its future, it is necessary to overthrow the myth: the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author.”<sup>17</sup> Regardless of this change in perspective I believe that the author (or composer, producer, or director of a work of art) is still at large, dead or alive. Barthes’s aim was of course to direct the attention away from the notion that the meaning of the work was to find in the intention(s) of the creator, who then constituted the key to a correct reading, and towards the reader. Presumably, Barthes did not regard intention as something void of importance but he did not find it a decisive factor in the understanding of a work of art, and he put the interpretive subject in focus.

A statement, whether written, spoken or expressed in music or other art forms, may have an explicit and obvious meaning. It may also have a less obvious or completely concealed meaning for a certain receiver of the message, for example in an ironical statement. If a person A says: “I really love that painting,” it may of course be interpreted as if the utterer loves the painting, but if I know the taste of the utterer I may interpret this statement as an implication of the opposite. I could then say: “I believe that A really hates that painting.” This would be my interpretation of the implied meaning. Would I be justified in making this statement? Staffan Carlshamre makes an interesting differentiation between a reading of a text and a claim about a text’s cognitive content. Carlshamre says that if I only present a reading without making any sort of cognitive or evaluative or prescriptive claim, then “[w]here there is no claim, the question of justification does not arise.”<sup>18</sup>

A reader of a text, a spectator of visual art, or a listener of a music performance, has an experience of a certain kind. This experience has its very foundation in that the reader (spectator or listener) is in some contact with the work of art. With ‘experience’ I include any kind of mental experience, such as a cognitive experience, an emotional experience, a spiritual one, or an experience that evokes memories or future plans (are there any more kinds?). The mental experience itself has its foundation in the reader’s perception of the work of art, and the reader’s interpretation – *reading* – of it. Thus, in some way we may, as did Barthes, say that the unity of a text “lies not in its origin but in its destination,” that is, within the interpreting reader.<sup>19</sup>

The perception of an object, a piece of art, or the reading of a book, thus gives rise to certain mental experiences. The work of art that we perceive is in itself a physical object. We can debate its content, we can talk of its structure, and we can classify some of its inherent elements. Physical qualities of a ‘thing,’ can – and I believe should – be subject to thorough investigation in order to fully understand it. The structure, elements, and content of a work of art exist in the material world due to the hands of something that Barthes probably would like to refer to as a ‘subject’ rather than a ‘person,’ but this ‘subject’ as it may be is or was a living

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<sup>17</sup> Roland Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 1977, p. 148.

<sup>18</sup> Staffan Carlshamre, “Types of Types of Interpretation,” p. 121.

<sup>19</sup> Barthes, “The Death of the Author,” 1977, p. 148.

human being, with his or her idiosyncracies, world views, aspirations, and so on. To exclude the maker of a work of art may be a way of increasing the role of the reader, but it also means to exclude a possible dimension in the interpretation of the creation of the physical object (and thus, maybe, of the physical object itself). It is not quite obvious what it is that constitutes the work of art, and I therefore find it better to talk of a physical object that is somehow the cause of our phenomenological consciousness of that object, which seem to be the cause of our mental experience(s). Thus, a physical object, a 'work of art,' has certain phenomenological features that cause us to experience something. We feel or understand what is read, seen, or heard through our senses. These notions give rise to a series of questions: Even if we may have cognitive experiences, does that experience actually mean anything? Do we 'understand' for example a play or a musical performance? Is anything communicated from the object, or the creator of the object, or should we trust in Barthes? Or, should we include the three aspects of art – creator, receiver, and the object?

## **Art and Communication**

Is art a communicative act? I would say that at least it can be, and in many cases I believe it is. Below I discuss communication in relationship to written and spoken language, and in relationship to sound.

## **Communicative Language**

Communication is an act or a process of transmitting information through a system of signs that is mutually understandable for the individuals involved.<sup>20</sup> A sender intends to convey a meaning by uttering something by means of natural language, verbally or in writing. The sender attempts to convey something to a receiver, and assumes that the receiver not only perceives, hears or reads, the utterance, but also understands the intended meaning. This would be obvious from the everyday usage of language. If I say, "There is a cat in the park" I would assume that the person I am talking to believes that I intended the meaning that there actually is a cat in the park. To understand my utterance, there are two requirements that need to be met: The person I talk to must understand English, and s/he must believe that I have some reason to utter this. If I wake up in the morning and say to my partner "There is a cat in the park," the natural reaction would probably be to think that I have been dreaming about a cat. We thus need a context that is correlated with the utterance; the circumstances have to be such that there is a reason to believe that I actually mean that there is cat in the park. This utterance is however such that it assumably relates a fact in the physical world. We should be able to ratify (or nullify) my utterance.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/communication>, accessed on March 27, 2013.

This utterance is however yet not an artful one. It only purports to describe something 'real.' If I on the other hand write a haiku:

Sun is rising  
A cat in the park  
Yawning

Here the abbreviated version of my initial utterance is not a statement about a fact, but rather it attempts to evoke a certain sensation within the reader or listener. I hope that the receiver will imagine a morning, a park, and a cat. And then that the cat is not meowing but yawning. My intention here is of course different than in the case above. I do not wish the receiver to go looking for a tired cat in the park. My intention is to evoke the sensation, and I hope that the receiver will understand this intention of mine. For me it is of less importance to know what the receiver actually experiences, but the receiver should understand that I had some kind of intention of evoking an experience. He or she also have intentions: by picking up the paper on which the haiku is written, or by sitting down listening to when I read it, the receiver has the intention of understanding my intended meaning, at least that I intended to evoke some sensations. The mutual belief of the existence of some intention seems to be a prerequisite for an artful communication, even if the receiver gives no second thoughts to what I had in my mind when I wrote the lines. The experience that the receiver has is not correlated to my state of mind when I wrote the haiku, but (1) the intention of evoking, and (2) the understanding of this intention, and (3) the intention to be stimulated into having some kind of sensation must exist in order for this communication to work.

## **Communicative Sound**

To explore the issue of sound as communication I will mainly discuss the case of pure music, which in several ways is the most complicated art form due to its lack of verbal messages. Songs, that is, words accompanied by sounds, are in some ways closer to language than to music when it comes to communication, even if the musical aspects cannot be neglected. Songs therefore need to be analysed 'double,' both the verbal content and the musical content has bearing on the totality of the communicated message (if any such exists).<sup>21</sup> Musical sounds appear in a variety of cases, as on-stage performances, where the audience is listening to the music as an art in itself, as off-stage performances, where the sounds accompany some other message, as non-performance sounds, and in the act of transmission. Thus, musical sounds can occur as:

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<sup>21</sup> This aspect is beyond the scope of the present, but I hope to return to the issue of songs in future writings.

- (1) on-stage performances of composed and duly notated pieces.
- (2) on-stage performances of orally transmitted, un-notated pieces.
- (3) transmission of composed and duly notated pieces.
- (4) transmission of orally transmitted, un-notated pieces.
- (5) on-stage improvised performances.
- (6) off-stage performances (commercials, movie soundtracks, vendor's music, etc.).
- (7) non-performance instances of musical sounds (singing in the bathroom, singing to put a child to sleep, humming a tune while driving, and so on).

If we assume that musical sounds may constitute an act of artistic communication, the communicated content will be different depending on what kind of musical sounds we are dealing with in a specific case. Non-performance instances of musical sounds may be communicative, but normally not artistic: we sing for a baby without any artistic aspirations but we hope to convey a sense of calmness; we probably do not intend to convey any message if we sing in the shower, even if it makes us feel good. Transmitting a piece of music is akin to – but simultaneously different from – a staged performance of the same piece. Regardless of whether a performance is improvised, a notated piece or un-notated, the music affects us, it talks to us, it makes us feel a certain way (happy, sad, weary, angry, and so on), or it makes us understand something, completely regardless of whether the performer of the music intended to affect us in such a way. We may say that we need the performance to have the experience, or as a means to trigger the experience, but the performance is not necessarily that which we experience. It could well be that we realize something that was within ourselves from the very beginning, but the performance brought it out, so to speak. That in itself is not necessarily so far from other types of communication, for example in reading a book or talking to a friend. Thus, that there is an act of communication – in a broad sense of the word – during a musical performance is not a very bold statement, but one with important implications. In a communicative act between two people we find one person dispatching some kind of message, and one person who receives the message. The message itself can of course be audial (as in music or a conversation) or visible (as in a musical notation, the text in a book, or sign language), that is, it is either heard or seen.<sup>22</sup> In turn, this implies the necessary existence of a physical entity between the psychological state of mind – or processes – leading to the creation of the message in the first place, and the psychological or cognitive state of mind – or processes – constituting the receiver's interpretive reaction: the perception leads to an emotional or cognitive experience of, or because of, the perceived physical entity. Thus, we have two intangible states or processes in each far end of the communicative act, and a physical entity in-between. The physical material is in itself not crucial to the processes that are the foundation of it (creative processes), and neither so to the emergence of an emotional or

<sup>22</sup> I am here disregarding braille, which relates to the somatosensory system.



cognitive reaction on behalf of the receiver (interpretive processes).

The folklore scholar Dan Ben-Amos was to my knowledge first to define his subject-matter in terms of communication, in an attempt to free folklore from the cumbersome notion of 'tradition,' which, for about a century, had implicated his field of study with something old, unchanging, rural, yet genuine and authentic. Ben-Amos's way out of this was to define folklore as "artistic communication in small groups."<sup>23</sup> I do not believe that Ben-Amos perceived this communication as a matter of a simple 'coding/decoding'-process, but rather that he envisaged a situation of mutual influences within the small group, including but not limited to the performer. At least, this aspect of communication has been further discussed by other folklore scholars close to Ben-Amos, and I will return to this issue below.

## **Oral or Semi-oral Traditional Art Forms**

The folklore scholar Robert A. Georges introduced the concept of 'storytelling events' in 1967, which he defined as "the message of complex communicative events."<sup>24</sup> Another folklore scholar and an anthropologist, Roger D. Abrahams, holds that, "[a] full analysis of a genre or tradition requires the study of organizational elements of both items and performance,"<sup>25</sup> and the items are what he refers to as 'expressive folklore.'

For Georges, communicative events have a sender who directly communicates a coded message to convey a cognitive or emotional content to at least one receiver, who in turn interprets the conveyed message. The event is a social experience, where all the participants establish specific identity relationships, and assume social identities for the purpose of the event. The participants also act in accordance with their established and assumed identity relationships. The event itself is of social value for the participants, and its impact can be communicated outside of itself to non-participants, with possible social effects also on the external community. An event is a unique occasion in time and space, and it generates nonreversible effects for the participants and in the larger society surrounding it. Each event exhibits various degrees of similarities, whereby individual events can be grouped together as a certain type of event. The criteria for how to group such events are culturally determined, which means that different groups with different value systems are likely to make different compilations of events.<sup>26</sup>

From these postulates, Georges finds that the linguistic entities cannot be regarded as 'traditional entities,' originating in a long past through the efforts of anonymous creators, and then persisting through time and space. I assume that this would hold true also for aural

<sup>23</sup> Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context," 1971, p. 13.

<sup>24</sup> Robert A. Georges, "Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events," 1969, p. 316. Earlier drafts of the paper were presented at the Folklore and Social Science Conference in NYC in November 1967.

<sup>25</sup> Roger D. Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," 1968, p. 145.

<sup>26</sup> Georges, "Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events," 1969, pp. 317-319.

entities in traditional music, or visual and behavioural aspects of traditional theatre. The message conveyed is not a thing that can be lifted out of its context, and it exists only as long as the individuals involved in the communicative act assume their roles. The message of an event, says Georges, “has no existence ‘outside’ the storytelling event itself. ... [It] is simply one aspect of an integral whole from which it and every other aspect of the storytelling event are inseparable.”<sup>27</sup> Ben-Amos almost reiterates this in the discussion leading up to his definition of folklore. He states that there are two social conditions for a folkloric act to occur: “both the performer and the audience have to be in the same situation and be part of the same reference group,” which implies that they are in a situation “in which people confront each other face to face and relate to each other directly.” From this he concludes, as did Georges, that “even when a certain literary theme or musical style is known regionally, nationally, or internationally, *its actual existence depends upon such small group situations.*”<sup>28</sup>

Georges’s perception of an event is very similar to Jakobson’s factors and functions of language: There is an Addresser and one or more Addressees, who are in Contact with each other in a certain Context. A Message, artistic as it may be, is being sent, and the effects of the communication may affect a surrounding community, which implies a discourse on a meta-level where the Codes need to be understood in order to make sense.

Abrahams’s notion of folklore is in some ways similar to Georges’s, but Abrahams also introduces the act, or enactment, of art. The items of expressive folklore that Abrahams mentions are guided by a system of rules, a Context that is understood by the participants, also on a so Coded meta-level. An item of expressive culture is for Abrahams “a tool of persuasion.”<sup>29</sup> In order to allow for the participants to be able to interpret and appreciate the expressive elements of an event, even the techniques employed in the performance have to be in line with something that is preconceived – or at least within the boundaries of what is expected – by the audience. The participants will reflect on the creativity of the performance, how much invention is invited into the performance, but also how much would be permitted or demanded from the given context. An argument will not be persuasive, and the listener will not accept persuasion, if it is not comprehensible to him or her. A performance may not be accepted as a ‘performance’ if the content of the performance is in conflict with the expectations of the audience, which implies that the listener evaluates the levels of ‘creativity’ and ‘traditionality.’<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 323.

<sup>28</sup> Ben-Amos, “Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context,” 1971, pp. 12–13. Emphasis added.

<sup>29</sup> Abrahams, “Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore,” 1968, p. 146.

<sup>30</sup> Even in performances of contemporary music, with an audience supporting this music, it occurs that the audience reacts with dismay if not able to comprehend what is going on. John Cage’s piece ‘4’33’ is a piece in which a pianist enters the stage, sits down at the piano, and then does nothing for 4 minutes and 33 seconds, then closes the lid and leaves the stage: the piece consists of nothing but silence. Commenting on the first performance of his piece, John Cage says: “People began whispering to one another, and some people began to walk out. They didn’t laugh – they were just irritated when they

To give an aesthetic experience or a persuasive argument to an expecting audience does, however, require that the prescriptive elements guiding the performance are less fixed than in some other situations. Abrahams distinguishes between different types of what he refers to as *enactments*, or intensified events, stating that in performance individuals “take aesthetic responsibility for the enactment,” and while viewing play as a different type of enactment, still finds that “[p]laying, whether in game or performance, is unique in its capacity to rearrange features and factors of behaviour.”<sup>31</sup> The different types of enactments may cross over and into each other, but in general, the four types of enactments that Abrahams concludes – play, games and sports; performances; rituals; and festivities – are discrete entities, because they occur at different situations, and they require different conventions, roles, and relations. He contrasts performances with rituals, in which the sequence of actions taken by the performer is stereotyped. Abrahams states that:

[In ritual there is] a rendering of transition through an (almost) invariant sequencing of symbolic or “deep” actions, images, and use of objects; expressed in the most self-consciously employed and monitored expressive codes; and ritual “offices” or roles involved in carrying out that experience.<sup>32</sup>

The situation and stylized behaviour decide the type of enactment, but this does not mean that they are not interrelated. Thus, a performance may have ritualistic aspects, or playful ones, and a ritual may, and often does, include festive parts, for example, the celebration after a wedding ceremony.

When it comes to the *transmission* of music I believe that the case is quite different, regardless of whether it is notated or un-notated pieces. Below, in the section “Studies of Tradition,” I will consider the meta-level discourse on music, for example, writings or verbal explications on how Mozart viewed his music, but first I will confine myself to a discussion of the musical sounds used in the process of transmission as communication. The communicated content differs from that of a performance in as much as the intention of a transmitter would not be to evoke a sensation in the receiver of the same kind as in a performance. Such a sensation may be a bonus for the receiver, but the mutual consent between the transmitter

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realized nothing was going to happen, and they haven’t forgotten it 30 years later: they’re still angry.” (Cage in conversation with Michael John White (1982), in Kostelanetz 1988, p. 66. Quoted from <http://solomonsmusic.net/4min33se.htm>, accessed November 16, 2010).

<sup>31</sup> Abrahams, “Toward an Enactment-Centered Theory of Folklore,” 1977, p. 101. Abrahams does however mean that play and performance are different, but I would hold that the similarities referred to here are in line with Abrahams own argument that “expression is designed to influence” (“Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore,” 1968, p. 146). If an expression is designed to influence, and the individual has aesthetic responsibility in his purpose of X, it seems inevitable that features and factors of behaviour may be rearranged, and thereby change the outcome of the performed item.

<sup>32</sup> Abrahams, “Toward an Enactment-Centered Theory of Folklore,” 1977, p. 110.

and the receiver must be that of correct technique, a correct expression and a correct understanding of the sounds. Thus, the receiver will assumably try to learn the techniques required, try to understand how to express the sounds, and the transmitter will assumably try to convey this to the learner.

For the purpose of the present study we may therefore add one type of enactment that I think is missing in Abrahams's list: transmission. In a teaching situation of 'traditional' music the process of transmission becomes central, whether the transmission is oral or semi-oral. The art forms in Japan that are regarded as 'traditional'<sup>33</sup> would normally be transmitted in a semi-oral fashion, and the hierarchical structure surrounding the act of transmission makes it similar to ritual.<sup>34</sup> There are, however, several differences: a ritual is often conducted on sacred ground, or at least purports to be so. In many rituals the recipients of the ritual are normally not expected to take on the same role as the officiant (a wedded couple is not supposed to become priests), whereas in a transmission event, the receiver is supposed to eventually take a similar role as the transmitter.<sup>35</sup> In a transmission-type enactment we may discern ritualistic aspects, as well as playful ones, but transmission fulfills Abrahams's conditions for something to qualify as a discrete enactment: the time, place and occasion when it occurs, the conventions surrounding it, the roles and relationships between transmitter and receiver, codes of expressivity, and rules of behaviour,<sup>36</sup> are typical for what I will refer to as the transmission-type of enactment, and different from the other types of enactments that Abrahams lists.

For Georges, each person involved in an event selects a social identity from the multiple social identities in his or her social persona: One person assumes the role of storyteller. The others (normally more than one) assume identities as listeners from their available selection. After that they act in accordance with the duties prescribed by the assumed identities.<sup>37</sup> The roles assumed are, however, not social facts, but rather a part of the social practice, or a process in line with expectations and ideals prevalent in the given context. Abrahams refers to the patterns by which roles are assumed or taken as 'schemas,'<sup>38</sup> and it seems to be fully in

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<sup>33</sup> In my definition, with an origin before 1868. If we use Shils's definition, such that has lasted for at least three generations.

<sup>34</sup> This may be debated, but the hierarchy of the *iemoto* system, with an artistic (and social) leader controlling the group, and a number of formalized behavioural patterns to learn in the process of acquiring the art, some aspects of the total social fact surrounding the learning process could maybe be analyzed as a ritual type of event. I would, however, prefer to make a distinction between 'ritual' and 'transmission.'

<sup>35</sup> The definition of 'transmitter' is rather wide: the role of transmitter is at least someone who is able to tell about the music. Normally, the transmitter is also a performer, or at least someone who is performing. The receiver is supposed to take on both these roles after completion, but 'performance' and 'transmission' are separate events, and therefore the roles of performer and the transmitter are separated, even if it normally is one and the same individual.

<sup>36</sup> Abrahams, "Toward an Enactment-Centered Theory of Folklore," 1977, pp. 100-101.

<sup>37</sup> Georges, "Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events," 1969, p. 320.

<sup>38</sup> Abrahams, "Toward an Enactment-Centered Theory of Folklore," 1977, p. 109.

compliance with his notion of schemas to use the roles 'transmitter' and 'receiver.' Likewise, I believe that Georges's storyteller could be substituted for a transmitter, and the listeners for students or receivers without falling in defiance of the theory of storytelling events. The roles assumed or taken, as a performer, listener, transmitter, or receiver, are thus related to and prescribed by the context. The same is true for the actual patterns of the enactment, which means that there is a correlation between situation and item, between the performative activity and that which is performed in terms of *how* it is performed: the prescriptive elements of the performed item.

Roger Abrahams reports four basic ways in which a work of art can be approached, regardless of whether the work of art is viewed as 'traditional' or not. The first approach is to see the work of art and the effect it has on an audience, "as by-products of the manipulative energies of the performing creator or interpreter"; the second approach views the work of art as an object, "divorcing the artist and his audience from consideration"; and the third is concerned with "the way in which the performance affects the audience."<sup>39</sup> Besides these three dimensions or levels of analysis, Abrahams also refers to a fourth approach, in which the effect the audience has on the performer is studied. In Jakobson's terms this would coincide with Addressee(s) becoming Addresser(s).

The first three approaches coincide with what is referred to as the poietic, neutral, and esthetic levels in the model put forward by Nattiez, and with Jakobson's three-column division of factors and functions as shown in Figure 1 above. The similarity with Abrahams's line-up of approaches is not a point of discussion. Nattiez, for example, states that what he refers to as poietic analysis, analysis of the neutral level, and esthetic analysis "correspond to three autonomous tendencies already present in the history of musical analysis."<sup>40</sup> The levels of analysis are already there to begin with, and the problem, the issue at stake, is how they can be connected. Nattiez suggests what he refers to as the *tripartitional approach* as a means to combine the three levels of analysis in order to reach a more complete understanding of the material under study.

Jakobson's text is concerned with "linguistics and poetics," and Nattiez discusses semiology of music. Both Georges and Abrahams are scholars of folklore, Georges writing about story-telling events, and Abrahams, as an anthropologist, is interested in the enactments of art. All four are mostly concerned with analysis and discourse of performance. When it comes to a performance of a 'traditional' art form, the performance has to be in accordance with the rules surrounding the tradition: the performance has to submit to the traditional elements of the art form. A performance is, however, a discrete occasion, and in itself it does not have any ontological status beyond its enactment. This would, of course, also be true of a transmission-type of enactment, but in contrast to a performance-type of enactment

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<sup>39</sup> Abrahams, "Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," 1968, p. 144.

<sup>40</sup> Nattiez, *Music and Discourse. Toward a Semiology of Music*, 1990, p. 138.

transmission is conducted on a one-on-one basis, with less or no influence on the Addresser from the Addressee and a more well-defined contact between the two, less fluctuation of context, and the Addressee would – again contrary to the normal case of performance-type enactments – eventually assume the role of Addresser. Compared to a performance-type of enactment, a transmission-type of enactment would, to a higher degree, prescribe strict adherence to the rules governing the tradition, both on behalf of the Addresser and on behalf of the Addressee. A performance is expressive of some emotion or idea, it is emotive to use Jakobson’s term, whereas a case of transmission should be informative of the art form and thus cognitive rather than emotive; its aim is not to create an emotion in the Addressee, but rather to convey information in order to make the Addressee understand the material covered. Instead of examining discrete performances it is my firm belief that a study of the process of transmission, in the three layers implicitly included in the four theories discussed above, would make it possible to come closer to the central elements, and maybe the defining elements, of any traditional art form.

In Figure 2 below, I have substituted the ‘artistic’ elements in Jakobson’s table in Figure 1 with elements relating to an understanding of the material, rather than an experience of it. I have also replaced the function of the factor ‘contact,’ which Jakobson discusses in terms of a phatic function, with a ‘direct contact’: Jakobson discusses ‘contact’ as a factor of language, a way of keeping the communication going without necessarily adding any new information, but phatic relates also to social or emotive functions of language. I would regard ‘contact’ as a prerequisite for oral transmission: as a receiver you have to be in direct contact – in time and space – with the transmitter, and the function of contact thus being “direct” without delays or prolongation of the communicative act. ‘Contact’ should maybe be included within ‘context,’ but the context Jakobson is referring to is the overall contextual understanding, the denotative function of language that assures that we are talking about the same things. The social or emotive function of ‘contact’ does not relate directly the actual acts of transmission.

**Figure 2. Jakobson’s factors and functions as factors and functions of transmission.**

<b>TRANSMITTER</b> INSTRUCTIVE	<b>CONTEXT</b> REFERENTIAL	<b>RECEIVER</b> COGNITIVE
	<b>MESSAGE</b> INFORMATIVE IMPLICATIVE	
	<b>CONTACT</b> DIRECT	
	<b>CODE</b> METALINGUAL	

## Studies of Tradition

Let me now turn to the meta-level discourse on the music and its wider cultural context, including historical writings, cultural and musicological studies, verbal explications by transmitters of a tradition, and so on.

If I utter my 'cat-phrase' (used as an example in the Introduction) while walking close to a park, the person I am walking with would assume that I am stating a fact, that my intention is to state a fact, and hopefully he or she will understand what I am saying. This is, I believe, akin to a text that purportedly relates historical facts. Of course we cannot be sure that there actually is a cat in the park without verifying it by taking a look in the park. An academic researcher would need to make a critical study of several texts to be able to evaluate what is stated in anyone of the available texts.

An author of a novel or a poem is assumable not foremost interested in whether the reader believes that everything that is written has a truth factor. I do not believe that a crime was committed the way it is described in Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, or even that events described in historical novels are necessarily as they are described; the author has 'artistic freedom' to develop or change events. An author of a historical text, presumably, attempts to describe historical events as accurate as possible, and there is much less freedom to fabricate or embellish.

Hayden White turned the disciplines of history and cultural studies into narratives. His book *Metahistory*, published in 1973, had a vast influence on the disciplines of cultural and historical studies. History contains a number of events, and these events are supposedly critically analyzed and evaluated before included in a historical text. The narrative that White talks of is a made-up story based on these events, but historical events are normally not enough in themselves to really tell the whole story; the events are, in White's words, "story *elements* [and these] events are *made* into a story by the suppression or subordination of certain of them and the highlighting of others."<sup>41</sup> The way in which the story is thus built is reminiscent of what a writer of a novel or a play does, according to White, such as motific repetition, alternative descriptive strategies, variation of point of view, and so on. Whether a history is romantic, tragic, comic, ironic depends on "the historian's choice of the plot structure that he considers most appropriate for ordering events of that kind so as to make them into a comprehensible story."<sup>42</sup> Through and by the choice of narrative strategy, and thereby not only the type of story, the historian actually builds not only a supposedly trustworthy reproduction of past events, but also a "*complex of symbols*," which is indicative of an "*icon* of the structure of those events in our literary tradition":<sup>43</sup> the historian writes a description of past events in

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<sup>41</sup> Hayden White, "Historical Text as Literary Artifact," 2001, p. 223. Emphasis in original.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 224.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 227. Emphasis in the original.

such a way as to indicate for the reader what iconic style he or she is using, thereby aiming towards both the events themselves and at the same time the story-type by which they are described. The choice of events described and the choice of a suitable story-type indicate that a history writer is in fact constructing the story told.

If we disregard consciously and intentionally deceptive writings and right-out propagandistic texts, I would assume that a writer of history books or a writer of books expounding the historical background of a tradition at least has an intention of being accurate in his or her writings. The 'facts' reported may be what White calls 'story elements' but each element should be assumed to be a truth – or as close to a truth as we can get – by the writer. If an author of history makes a tragic story of a nation's history by adding together a selection of elements in such a way, a reader who shares the sentiments of the writer will probably have both cognitive and emotional mental experiences. A reader who does not share the sentiments of the writer may on the other hand have emotional mental experiences (rage, for example), but would probably not feel that he or she had learned anything. Even if the author actually does tell a story – consciously or not – based on White's story elements, his or her intention ought to be such as to write an accurate account of the events. The reader should assume that the author did have such intentions, regardless of if the reader regards history writing as a narrative.

I believe that these aspects relate to a shared contextual understanding between the historical writer and his or her readers, as well as a mutual understanding of metalinguistic code. A historical text should, almost per definition, be informative, thus the writer should have an intention of being instructive but at the same time interest the reader and by the choice of White's story-types stimulate certain emotions in the reader. The reader would presume that he or she would get factual knowledge of some past event, and the experience should therefore, at least partly, be cognitive. The reader may also expect to be entertained or emotionally aroused, whence the experience may be emotive.

For example a musical tradition is transmitted not only by means of technique and mode of expression, but also by means of a 'correct' understanding of the tradition. I think this is akin to tacit knowledge in other disciplines; what one is supposed to do as an academic, as a teacher, as a lawyer, and so on, and therefore, texts that relate the history and the cultural context of a tradition become important in the process of transmission on the whole.

For these reasons I think that these elements of a narrative text can and should be put in the diagram presented by Jakobson as in Figure 3 below. With 'writer' I understand (1) a writer of historical texts, purportedly true to the actual historical events or facts, or (2) a researcher writing about cultural events surrounding the tradition.

As with the relationship between transmitter and receiver in orally transmitted ('traditional' as they may be) art forms, the relationship between a writer and a reader of historical texts seems to depend on the understanding of the reported events, that is, it depends on a mutual



understanding of context. In the below Figure 3 I make a substitution for ‘contact’ as in Figure 2 above: the phatic function does not seem crucial to language that purports to describe historical events, but it is not entirely absent. However, besides the function of ‘contact’ as communication with social or emotive purpose, I regard it also as a factor that describes the contact in time and space between the writer and the reader. For historical texts, this would in all cases be indirect as far as spatial contact goes, and in time when we read a historical text written by a person who is no longer around us or belonging to a completely different time era.

**Figure 3. Jakobson’s factors and functions as factors and functions of historical texts.**

<b>WRITER</b> INSTRUCTIVE STIMULATIVE	<b>CONTEXT</b> REFERENTIAL	<b>READER</b> COGNITIVE EMOTIVE
	<b>MESSAGE</b> INFORMATIVE NARRATIVE	
	<b>CONTACT</b> INDIRECT (PHATIC)	
	<b>CODE</b> METALINGUAL	

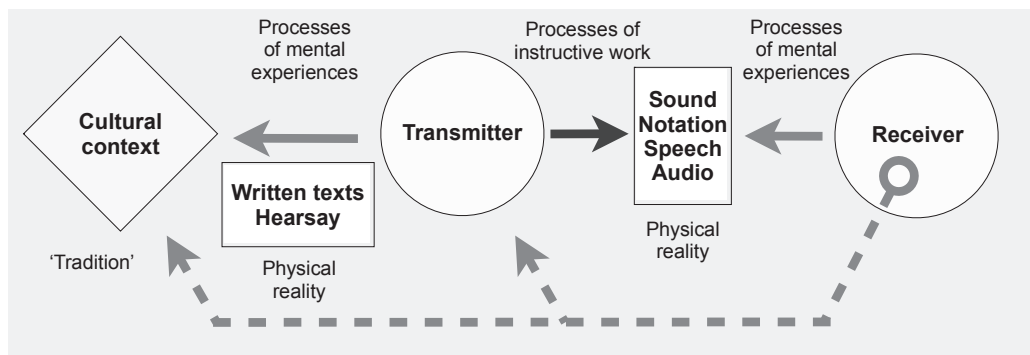
## **The Relation between Addresser and Addressee**

I argue that the relationships between transmitter (Addresser) and receiver (Addressee) on the one hand, and writer (Addresser) and reader (Addressee) on the other, are very similar in character. I will, however, discuss these relationships within the respective fields discussed above: transmission and studies of tradition.

### **Transmission of Oral or Semi-oral Traditional Art Forms**

A transmitter of an oral or semi-oral tradition supposedly transmits what has been before, in order to stay “true to the tradition.” In some meaning of the word, the transmitter needs to be in ‘contact’ with the cultural context that constitutes the origin and foundation of the tradition in question. A transmitter is supposed to have a better and more ‘true’ understanding of this context, even though it would be imperative for any follower of the tradition to try to understand its very foundation. This may take place as an interpretation of the cultural context via the transmitter, but the receiver may of course also attempt to study the background of the tradition by, for example, reading historical texts. These attempts on behalf of the receiver would, in the ideal situation, give him or her a personalized interpretation of the tradition, which also could lead to a different understanding of the transmitter and the transmitted material.

Figure 4. Relationship between transmitter and receiver on the one hand, and transmitter and the complex web of “cultural context” on the other.



The physical reality in-between the ‘cultural context’ and the ‘transmitter’ is not necessarily something that exists over time as a physical entity in itself. It could consist of hearsay, which would of course be the normal situation when it comes to an oral tradition. The transmitter, and also the receiver in some cases, would interpret the received material, and from that construct a context.

It is also conceivable that a transmitter at some point would write down the tradition he or she has received, in which case we would have to create a sidetrack to Figure 4. We would then arrive at a situation similar to Figure 3 above: The transmitter becomes the writer of a text, relating to past events.

Figure 5. Jakobson’s factors and functions as factors and functions of transmission, in relationship with the cultural context.

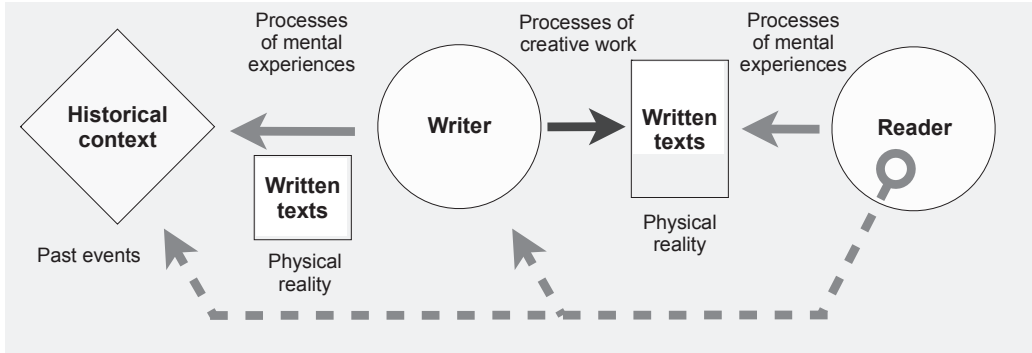
<b>CULTURAL CONTEXT</b>	<b>CONTEXT REFERENTIAL</b>	<b>TRANSMITTER INSTRUCTIVE</b>	<b>CONTEXT REFERENTIAL</b>	<b>RECEIVER COGNITIVE</b>
	<b>MESSAGE INTERPRETATIVE</b>		<b>MESSAGE INFORMATIVE IMPLICATIVE</b>	
	<b>CONTACT INDIRECT (PHATIC)</b>		<b>CONTACT DIRECT</b>	
	<b>CODE METALINGUAL</b>		<b>CODE METALINGUAL</b>	

### Studies of Tradition in Transmission

In the case of historical texts the writer is supposedly more knowledgeable about past events than his or her readers. The reader, on the other hand, may doubt the writings of the writer, and create for him- or herself another understanding of past events. The historical context contains an almost indefinite number of discrete events, and if we assume, with White, that a writer makes a selection of events to fit with purpose and story-type, another selection

of events may give a different description of the historical past. The writer, and the reader, may be in contact with past events partly by extant historical texts, which could prove to be crucial in validating or refuting any claim of historical truth (even if such things as 'historical truth' do not exist).

Figure 6. Relationship between writer and reader on the one hand, and writer and the complex web of "historical context" on the other.



The writer would interpret the historical context based on a wide array of historical documents or written testimonies of past events. In contrast to a writer of fiction, a writer of history would presumably make critical studies of the source texts in order to evaluate whether they are 'true' accounts of events reported, and whether they are typical and representative of the time era in question. (This is of course not to say that a writer of historical fiction would not do the same, but it would not be assumed to be done to the same extent as with a writer of historical texts.)

Figure 7. Jakobson's factors and functions as factors and functions of historical texts, in relationship with the historical context.

<b>HISTORICAL CONTEXT</b>	<b>CONTEXT REFERENTIAL</b>	<b>WRITER</b> INSTRUCTIVE STIMULATIVE	<b>CONTEXT REFERENTIAL</b>	<b>READER</b> COGNITIVE EMOTIVE
	<b>MESSAGE INTERPRETATIVE</b>		<b>MESSAGE INFORMATIVE NARRATIVE</b>	
	<b>CONTACT INDIRECT (PHATIC)</b>		<b>CONTACT INDIRECT (PHATIC)</b>	
	<b>CODE METALINGUAL</b>		<b>CODE METALINGUAL</b>	

## **Concluding Discussion**

Transmission is a highly complex process, where each act of transmission plays one integral part of a larger whole. By dividing the subject of study – transmission – in layers the overall picture becomes more clear, and by perceiving the process of transmission in the three layers presented – creative processes, interpretative processes, and physical trace – each aspect of the transmission process is given more clarity and transparency.

I have shown similarities between some analytical models presented within disparate disciplines – musicology, literature, and folklore – and illustrated how such a model may be applicable in studies of transmission of traditional art forms. I have also indicated that the same scheme can be applied to related historical and cultural studies, and I have argued that the available text material becomes an integral part of the ‘correct’ tacit understanding of the tradition that is being transmitted.

By combining the ontological status of events with enactments, or intensified events, each act of transmission becomes a non-reversible and each single act of transmission exists only as long as the individuals involved assume their roles of transmitter and receiver. Therefore, in an analysis of transmission each act has to be considered, even if individual events can be grouped together and thereby can be said to constitute a compilation of events of the same kind. In transmission, these compiled events could be referred to as transmission-type of enactments. The typical character of a transmission-type of enactment is that it is foremost informative, whereas a performance of the same piece would be expressive of that which it purportedly expresses.

The physical entities that constitute the trace are not only sounds, but also both visible and non-visible aspects of the cultural context. All the physical traces need to be analyzed in a comprehensive analysis of the material, but also the processes that ‘mark’ the trace (creative and informative processes) and those that interpret the marks (interpretive processes) need attention. The processes on the Addresser side are of course even more difficult than those of the Addressee, but they are nevertheless of great importance. To understand a traditional art form a study of individual performance-type of enactments are of course a possible way to go, but by analyzing the transmission-type of enactments the prescriptive elements of the tradition, the value system at its bottom, surfaces because a transmitter has to convey the do’s and don’t’s of the tradition. To understand these often-intangible aspects of a cultural trait I believe that a full study of all three levels will be necessary to conduct.

## **Transmission of Japanese Traditional Art Forms**

As I mention in the beginning of this article, the aim of this first part is to provide a theoretic framework for a functional model to be applied in actual analyses of Japanese

traditional art forms. By “traditional” I believe it is possible to include art that originated before the Meiji restoration in 1868, or such art forms that have evident links to a time before the Meiji restoration. The court music *gagaku*, for example, went through a reformation during the early Meiji period, and the result is what we have today. Its origin is obviously much older, going back more than one thousand years, and must naturally be referred to as belonging to the “traditional” art forms of Japan. Other forms of music, such as some styles of *shakuhachi* playing (Tozan-ryū and Ueda-ryū), were established as independent styles (or schools or lineages if one prefers) in the Meiji and Taishō periods respectively, but their origins can be traced back to the Edo period, at least as far as some aspects of music within these styles are concerned.

The main material in the second part will center around the *shakuhachi*, and the genres to which it relates. This includes the fundamental solo repertoire of the *shakuhachi*, *honkyoku*, as well as the ensemble music commonly known as *sankyoku*, or more precisely *jiuta-sōkyoku*. Both of which developed during the Edo period. The solo repertoire of the Edo-period *shakuhachi* has connections to Buddhism, since this repertoire developed as meditative pieces. The way of transmission has however changed over time, and it is of interest to investigate into both the process of transmission and the authenticity practitioners bestow on their different lineages. The genre of *jiuta-sōkyoku* developed as a kind of entertainment, a more refined entertainment enjoyed by the higher classes of society. The *koto*, a 13-stringed zither and the *shamisen*, a 3-stringed lute, began to form ensembles in the early seventeenth century. Up to the late sixteenth century the *koto* had only been used in *gagaku* and at the court, especially played by court ladies; the *shamisen* was imported from Ryūkyū (present-day Okinawa) in the second half of the sixteenth century, and soon became a very popular instrument. The *shakuhachi*, with its connection to a Buddhist sect, was officially banned from playing secular music, but from historical writings we know that it was performed in ensemble with the two string instruments.

In Part 2 I will thus apply my model of analysis to the “tradition” of *shakuhachi* to expound the process of transmission within this art form.

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