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# ‘Be a costume hanger’: the aesthetics of imperial *bugaku* dance of Japan

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## 1. Introduction

This paper explores aesthetics of dance and practitioner’s perception of body. *Bugaku* 舞楽 is the imperial court dance, which was brought from Asian continent to Japan by the eighth century and has been preserved until today. ‘Be a costume hanger’ is an instruction that a senior musician (dancer) of the imperial palace gave to his disciple in regard to how a dancer should perform on a stage. By analyzing this instruction, together with other verbal explanations given by the imperial musicians, this paper examines the aesthetics of *bugaku*, particularly focusing on the category of *hiramai*, which is an calm and slow group dance repertoire in the *bugaku*, rather than *hashirimai*, which is more active.

In terms of choreographic characteristic, the *bugaku* is classified either into ‘*hiramai* 平舞,’ literally meaning ‘calm dance,’ or ‘*hashirimai* 走舞,’ literally ‘running dance.’ The former is usually performed by four, five, or six dancers and made of slow and graceful movements, while the latter is danced mostly by a single dancer<sup>1</sup> and distinguished by its energetic and active movements. These differences in choreographic pattern and performing style has brought about different tendencies of aesthetics in the two categories; the *hiramai* pursues integrity of group performance, while *hashirimai* allows more individual creativity of a dancer.

There is another distinction in the *bugaku* repertoire; *samai* 左舞 (literally meaning ‘dance of Left’) and *umai* 右舞 (‘dance of Right’). They primarily differ

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1 A popular piece “Nasori 納蘇利” of *umai hashirimai* is performed by two dancers in the imperial court tradition in Tokyo but played by a single dancer in Nara tradition. If performed by two dancers, it is called “Rakuson 落躑” in Nara.

each other in accompanying music. *Samai* employs *tôgaku* 唐楽 (‘music of Tang China’) and *umai* mostly *komagaku*<sup>2</sup> 高麗樂 (‘music of Korea’). The dance of Left and dance of Right differ also in the color of costume. *Samai*’s costume is mostly orange or brown, while *umai* green or blue. A piece of *samai* is usually paired with a piece of *umai*<sup>3</sup> and *samai* and *umai* are alternately performed in a concert or a traditional event.

In terms of number of repertoire, *hiramai* makes up the majority both in *samai* and *umai* (Table 1). This paper focuses on the *hiramai* of *umai* and clarifies its aesthetic tendency to ‘erase’ individual creativeness, by examining the basic characteristics of choreography and performers’ perception of body control.

Table 1 List of *samai* and *umai*<sup>4</sup>

<i>samai -- hiramai</i>			<i>samai -- hashirimai</i>		
title	mode of music	costume(*mask)	title	mode of music	costume(*mask)
Shunnôden	Ichikotsu-chô	kasane	Ryôô	Ichikotsu-chô	special*
Katen	Ichikotsu-chô	kasane	Konju	Ichikotsu-chô	special*
Karyôbin	Ichikotsu-chô	special	Somakusha	Banshiki-chô	special*
Shôwaraku	Ichikotsu-chô	kasane or ban-e	Saniu	Taishiki-chô	special*
Hokuteiraku	Ichikotsu-chô	kasane or ban-e	Genjôraku	Taishiki-chô	special*
Ama/Ninomai	Ichikotsu-chô	kasane or ban-e*	Batô	Taishiki-chô	special*
Manzairaku	Hvôjô	kasane			
Goshôraku	Hvôjô	ban-e or kasane			
Katôraku	Hvôjô	kasane			
Kanshû	Hvôjô	kasane			
Shundeika	Sô-jô	ban-e			
Kishunraku	Oshiki-chô	ban-e or kasane			
Tôrîka	Oshiki-chô	ban-e or kasane			
Yôgûraku	Oshiki-chô	ban-e or kasane			
Sokô	Banshiki-chô	kasane			
Manjuraku	Banshiki-chô	kasane			
Rindai	Banshiki-chô	kasane or ban-e			
Seigaïha	Banshiki-chô	special			
Saisôrô	Banshiki-chô	special*			
Taiheiraku	Taishiki-chô	special			
Tagyûraku	Taishiki-chô	special			
Ikko	Hvôjô	ban-e			
Ikkyoku	Banshiki-chô	kasane			

2 The *tôgaku* includes *shô* 笙 (mouth organ), *hichiriki* 篳篥 (reed pipe), *ryûteki* 龍笛 (flute), *taiko* 太鼓 (big drum), *shôko* 鉦鼓 (gong), and *kakko* 鞆鼓 (small barrel shaped drum). The *komagaku* consists of *hichiriki*, *komabue* 高麗笛 (flute), *taiko*, *shôko*, and *san-no-tsuzumi* 三鼓 (hour-glass shaped drum). Among *umai* repertoire, “Genjôraku 還城樂,” “Batô 拔頭,” and “Bairo 陪臚” are exceptionally accompanied by *tôgaku*.

*umai -- hiramai*

Shintoriso	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Kotoriso	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane
Taisôtoku	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Shinsôtoku	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Engiraku	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane
Kochô	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	special
Kotokuraku	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Hassen	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	special*
Komaboko	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	special
Ôninteij	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Hannari	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	special
Shinsoriko	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Soriko	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Avagiri	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane*
Shikite	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	ban-e
Ninnaraku	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	kasane
Chôbôraku	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	ban-e
Shinmaka	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	special
Ringa	Koma-Hyôjô	special
Hôhin	Koma-Sôjô	ban-e
Chikyû	Koma-Sôjô	kasane*
Tôtenraku	Koma-Sôjô	ban-e
Soshimari	Koma-Sôjô	kasane
Bairo	(tôgaku) Hvôjô	special

*umai -- hashirimai*

Kitoku	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	special*
Nasori	Koma-Ichikotsu-chô	special*
Genjôraku	(tôgaku) Taishiki-chô	special*
Batô	(tôgaku) Taishiki-chô	special*

The preceding studies on *bugaku* tend to explain general characteristics of the dance or analyze the patterns of movement and structure of a dance piece, using such notation as Labanotation. For example, Carl Wolz transcribed the basic movement patterns of *umai* and a whole “Nasori” piece (Wolz 1976a) employing Labanotation. In a recent study, Takuwa Satoshi tries to find an old shape of *bugaku* in the local folk traditions of *bugaku*, also using Labanotation (Takuwa 2007). On the other hand, though totally dedicated to *nihon buyô* (the dance derived from *kabuki* theatre), Tomie Hahn’s research provides many insightful viewpoints concerning sensational knowledge of body and transmission system of the dance practice (Hahn 2007).

Based on these studies, this paper will analyse how the imperial musicians

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- Usually, similar style of dances are selected and paired; for example, “Manzairaku 萬歳楽” of *samai* and “Engiraku 延喜楽” of *umai* (*hiramai*), or “Ryô 陵王” of *samai* and “Nasori” of *umai* (*hashirimai*), and so on. A paired dance is called ‘*tsugai-mai* 番舞.’
  - This list is based on the lists and descriptions by former imperial court musicians, Tôgi Shintarô 東儀信太郎 (1921-1993), Tôgi Masatarô 東儀和太郎 (1910-1993), and Ue Chikamasa 上近正 (1921- ) (S. Tôgi 1970, M. Tôgi 1970, Ue 1970).

imagine an ideal posture or movement for each choreographic pattern of *bugaku* and embody it with their body. In other words, which part of the body is most conscious of when they are making ideal postures or movements is a focal point of examination of this paper. Also, how they explain it in verbal communication is another important aspect to explore. To clarify the above, three methods are taken in this paper; 1) observation from outside, 2) interview with practitioners, and 3) experience *bugaku* as an insider. The methods 2) and 3) are often applied simultaneously in participating in the practice of *bugaku*.

## 2. Preliminary observation from outside

There are some aspects, which can be grasped by the observation from outside.

### 2-1. tempo of music and general characteristic of *hiramai* dance

When watching *hiramai* performance carefully, one can find that dancers move arms (hands) or feet from a particular point to another in a space with an elegant and dignified manner. The tempo of accompanying music (*tôgaku* or *komagaku*) is slow in general<sup>5</sup>.

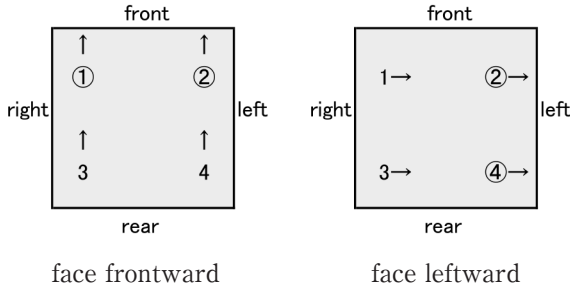
The *bugaku* stage is usually surrounded by an audience. Therefore, dancers are watched from all directions. In addition, dancers themselves change their direction of facing during a performance. Thus, dancers must be careful of the gaze from side and behind as well as from front.

There is a hierarchy among dancers, which is determined by seniority. On a stage, first and second dancers usually stand in front and the third and fourth in back. In principle, junior dancers must follow senior dancers in a performance. But, in case all dancers face leftward, for example, the second and fourth dancers lead the performance and the first and third follow them (Figure 1).

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5 In general, the music of *hiramai* starts at approximately ♩ = 30-40 and ends at ♩ = 60-70.

Figure 1 positions of *umai* dancers on stage  
(Dancers marked with a circle lead performance.)



## 2-2. choreographic patterns

In a piece of *bugaku*, similar patterns appear repeatedly. With the aid of notation, one can find that there are a number of basic small patterns and these patterns are combined to make larger patterns.

For *umai*, 43 choreographic patterns are recognized in the imperial tradition. The patterns are given names (written with *kanji* character) and a notation for a *bugaku* piece just simply writes down these names with an additional sign indicating *taiko* (a big drum) beat (Example 1). It is extremely difficult even for the imperial dancers to reproduce movements from this notation, largely because it lacks time indication. Therefore, it is common that the dancers themselves invent more detailed notations to record movements.

Example 1 the traditional notation of a piece “Shikite” (beginning section)<sup>6</sup>

百 ← *taiko* beat

搔合 左足立 踏 披 右足 岐呂利 左足摺 合 左足立 ← patterns

(Togi 1986: 326)

6 The original notation is written vertically, from top to bottom, right to left.

Out of 43 patterns, 36 patterns are listed in the imperial formal notation *Meiji-senteifu*<sup>7</sup> and seven are conventionally used. The patterns are classified into small basic patterns for hands (arms), feet (legs), or a head (gaze)<sup>8</sup> (Table 2-1), or complex larger patterns (Table 2-2). For example, a complex pattern '*fusegai*' consists of small patterns as follows (Example 2).

Example 2 the pattern of '*fusegai*'

Traditional description (Tôgi 1989: 237, numbers put by Terauchi)

伏肘

(右足披-両手披) 1) 落居、2) 左足寄、3) 左足突、4) 左足披—5) 左手少下、6) 左手少し上げて伏せ、7) 右足披—8) 両手右下、9) 左足寄せ、両手上げ (右指)、10) 右手伏-11) 左手腰に付け、12) 左足立

English translation (by Terauchi)

(from the position of both hands and feet spread) 1) *ochiiru*: upper body sinks, 2) *hidari-ashi yoseru*: left foot arrives at right foot, 3) *hidari-ashi tsuku*: left foot stamps, 4) *hidari-ashi hiraku*: left foot spreads—5) *hidari-te sukoshi sageru*: left hand down a little, 6) *hidari-te sukoshi agete fuseru*: left hand up and covers in front, 7) *migi-ashi hiraku*: right foot spreads—8) *ryôte migishita*: both hands down to right, 9) *hidari-ashi yose, ryôte age (migi-sasu)* left foot arrives at right foot and both hands up (to right), 10) *migi-te fuseru*: right hand covers in front, 11) *hidari-te koshi ni tsuke*: left hand goes to waist, 12) *hidari-ashi tateru*: left foot stands on a heel<sup>9</sup>

7 '*Meiji-senteifu*' is a collective name for the imperial *gagaku* notations compiled in 1876 and 1888, which actually consists of notations of instruments, songs, and dances. The *umai* dance notation contains *Umai-fu volume 1*, *Umai-fu volume 2*, and *Taikyoku umai-fu*.

8 In addition to these, there are several terms to indicate direction (of facing) or dancer's position on a stage. See Wolz for Labanotation of these patterns (Wolz 1976a).

9 A same complex pattern is realized in several different ways according to the context of an actual performance.

Table 2-1 List of basic patterns of umai

1. The patterns marked with \* are not written in *Meiji-senteifu* but conventionally used among imperial musicians.
2. The movements' description is based on an article 'mai-myōmoku (patterns of dance)' in *Gagaku jiten* (*Encyclopedia of gagaku*) written by a former court musician Tōgi Shintarō (Tōgi 1989: 230-239).

original term		literal meaning of the term	part of body concerned	movements' description
pronunciation	kanji			
<i>miru</i>	見	look	head	turn a head a little to right or left and then swiftly and clearly turn it to the opposite direction
<i>awasute</i>	合手	bring together	arm	put fingertips of both hands together in front of chest
<i>hiraku</i> *	披	spread	arm/feet	spread both arms at shoulder height / smoothly spread a foot to side
<i>hirakute</i>	披手	spread	arm	spread both arms at shoulder height
<i>girori</i>	岐呂利	fist rotation	hand	twist either or both wrist(s) and rotate swiftly
<i>uchikuwau</i>	打加	add	arm	spread both arms and bend an elbow to bring a hand in front of chest, then bring the other hand from up on the hand
<i>makute</i>	巻手	circle	arm	circle either of arm
<i>sutsurute</i>	捨手	throw away	arm	throw both hands from front to either left or right
<i>ken'in</i>	剣印	sword sign	hand	fold fingers except for index and middle fingers extending
<i>fuseru</i> *	伏	cover	hand	bend either of arm to front at shoulder height
<i>ochiiru</i>	落居	fall	foot	spread both legs and sink upper body
<i>hizaori</i>	膝折	knee descend	foot	bend knees, either of legs come in front, the other rear, sink body
<i>odoru</i>	踊	jump	foot	jump (both legs together) /raise a foot vigorously
<i>yoru</i>	寄	arrive	foot	a foot arrives at the other foot
<i>tateru</i>	立	stand	foot	stretch a foot forward and stand it on a heel
<i>fumu</i>	踏	tread	foot	stretch a foot forward and stand it on a heel, then tread and shift the weight on the foot, making a body leaning forward
<i>suru</i>	摺	rub	foot	stretch a foot forward and stand it on a heel, then make foot slide to side (and open)
<i>tsuku</i>	突	stamp	foot	raise a foot and stamp
<i>hizamazuku</i>	跪	knee standing	foot	knee standing on either leg
<i>tobu</i>	飛	leap	foot	jump to front or rear/ jump vertically with both legs
<i>hashiriyuku</i>	走行	run	foot	go forward with mincing steps
<i>oshiashi</i>	追足	pursuing foot	foot	a foot steps forward and the other foot follows it
<i>oiashi</i> *	押足	pushing feet	foot	raise toes and bend a body a little forward, then stamp with whole feet and make body upright



Table 2-2 List of complex patterns of *umai*

1. The patterns marked with \* are not written in *Meiji-senteifu* but conventionally used among imperial musicians.
2. The movements' description is based on an article 'mai-myōmoku (patterns of dance)' in *Gagaku jiten* (*Encyclopedia of gagaku*) written by a former court musician Tōgi Shintarō (Tōgi 1989: 230-239).
3. Since there are many variations in rendition for each complex pattern, the following description is only an instance among many.

original term		movements' description (combination of basic patterns)
<i>tadaashi</i> *	只是	foot movements used in <i>awasegai</i>
<i>karawatari</i> *	唐渡	foot movements used in <i>awasegai</i> with exchange of position with an opposite dancer
<i>itsuashi</i> *	五足	rub left foot and proceed forward - right foot arrives at left foot-rub right foot and spread - left foot arrives at right foot - stand left foot on a heel - left foot treads and withdraws - rub left foot and spread forward and right foot arrives at left foot
<i>kakiawase</i>	掻合	bring both hands together - rub right foot - spread both arms downward - left foot arrives - bring both hands together - rub left foot - spread both arms downward - right foot arrives - bring both hands together
<i>kakifuse</i>	掻伏	(both hands at waist, feet spread) sink - stretch left hand to rear and right foot arrives at left - bring left hand up - stand left foot on a heel - bring left hand down - rub left foot and spread - withdraw left foot - bend left arm and bring it in front of chest
<i>awasegai</i>	合肘	spread right foot - spread both arms - left foot arrives at right - stamp left foot - left foot step forward - bring both hands together - step right foot forward - bring both hands down -left foot arrives at right - bring both hands up and spread - stand left foot on a heel
<i>fusegai</i>	伏肘	(both feet and arms spread) sink - left foot arrives at right - stamp left foot - spread left foot - bring left arm down and then up to in front of chest - spread right foot - throw both hands down right - left foot arrives at right - bring both hands up and right - bring right hand in front of chest - left hand at waist - stand left foot on a heel
<i>fuseawase</i>	伏合	spread left foot - both hands spread from at waist position - right foot arrives at left - rub and spread right foot - bring right hand in front of chest - left foot arrives at right - bring left hand to right hand - rub and spread left foot - bring both arms down - right foot arrives at left - bring both hands up to in front of chest
<i>fuse-awase-hiraku</i>	伏合抜	(both feet and arms spread) sink - left foot arrives at right - rub and spread left foot - bring left hand in front of chest - right foot arrives at left - rub and spread right foot - bring right hand to left hand - both hands down - right foot arrives at left - bring both hands up - spread both arms - do 'pushing feet'
<i>fusechigai</i>	伏違	spread both arms - rub left foot and step forward - rotate both wrists ( <i>girori</i> ) - left foot arrives at right - rotate both wrists to original position - bring left hand in front of chest - spread left foot - both hands down - right foot arrives at left - both hands up - bring right hand in front of chest - bring left hand to waist - stand left foot on a heel
<i>sasute</i>	指手	same pattern as <i>sashigai</i> of <i>samai</i> : (both arms spread) rub and spread right foot - begin to move left hand to center - left foot arrives at right - bring left hand in front of chest
<i>aratamefuse</i>	改伏	after <i>sasute</i> , right foot spread - sink - right hand down - right hand spread - right foot arrives to left - bring right hand in front of chest
<i>sutegai</i>	捨肘	bring both arms left up - spread left foot - circle both hands down - right foot arrives at left - bring both hands to right - stamp right foot and step forward - sink - withdraw left foot and then step forward - sink - right foot arrives at left - stand right foot on a heel
<i>chigaigai</i>	違肘	first and third dancers play right version of <i>sutegai</i> , while second and fourth dancers play left version of <i>sutegai</i>
<i>nukigai</i>	抜肘	bring right foot backward - left hand down - left foot arrives at right foot - bring left hand up - spread left foot forward - sink a little - bring left hand down to outside of right hand - right foot arrives to left - circle right hand from inside to out and stretch to right - right foot spread - both hands down - left foot arrives to right - raise both hands and point right
<i>kehanashi</i>	計波奈志	spread left foot - left hand down - right foot arrives at left - bring left hand in front of chest - spread right foot - both hands down - left foot arrives at right - both hands up - left hand goes to hip - right hand in front of chest - stamp left foot - left hand hits hip - stand left foot on a heel - withdraw left foot - bring left hand to right hand - spread left foot - spread both hands - turn to right
<i>sarigai</i>	去肘	(left hand at waist, right arm spread) stand right foot on a heel and step forward - right hand down - left foot arrives to right - circle right hand from left down to right up and spread
<i>morosarigai</i> *	諸去肘	(both feet and arms spread) sink - both hands down around waist - bring both hands up over head - right foot arrives at left - spread both hands widely and bring them down
<i>furichigai</i>	振違	both arms spread - bring both hands in front (right wrist above the left one) - left foot step backward - both hands down - right foot arrives at left - both hands up and spread
<i>furute</i>	振手	sink - both hands down to left - stretch body upward and circle hands from left up to right down - sink - stretch body upward and circle hands from right up to left down
<i>ayatori</i>	綾取	spread left foot - spread both hands from waist - right foot arrives at left - rub right foot and stand it on a heel - bring both hands together - tread right foot - both hands down - right foot arrives at left - both hands spread downward - bring both hands together - rub and stand right foot - withdraw right foot
<i>irechigau</i>	入違	when first and third dancers face front, second and fourth dancers face rear/ or vice versa

*Tôgaku* and *komagaku* have the colotomy structure like *gamelan* music of Indonesia. Basically, one or two rhythmic pattern(s) is (are) repeated again and again in a piece. One section of choreography completes at the end of each rhythmic cycle, which is marked by a strong *taiko* beat. On the *taiko* beat, dancers make a static posture. The *umai* dancers listen to rhythmic patterns of percussions<sup>10</sup> and perform. In rehearsal, they dance while singing a rhythmic solmization (*shôga* 唱歌 = mnemonic sounds). Example 3 shows a popular rhythmic pattern ‘*yo-hyôshi*,’ in which a rhythmic cycle is made up with four measures. On the first beat of the last (fourth) measure, *taiko* beat is struck.

Example 3 a popular rhythmic pattern ‘*yo-hyôshi* 四拍子’ in *umai*

1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-
<i>ten</i>		<i>u</i>	<i>u ten ten</i>		<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>ten</i>
3	-	-	-	4	-	-	-
<i>ten</i>		<i>ten ten</i>	<u><i>zun</i></u>	<u><i>dô</i></u>		<u><i>o</i></u>	<i>o ten</i>

*ten* = onomatopoeic sound of *san-no-tsuzumi* (an hourglass shaped drum)

*zun*, *dô* = onomatopoeic sounds of *taiko* (on the underlined syllables, *taiko* is struck)

*u* = mnemonic sound for a silent beat

*o* = mnemonic sound for a prolonged beat

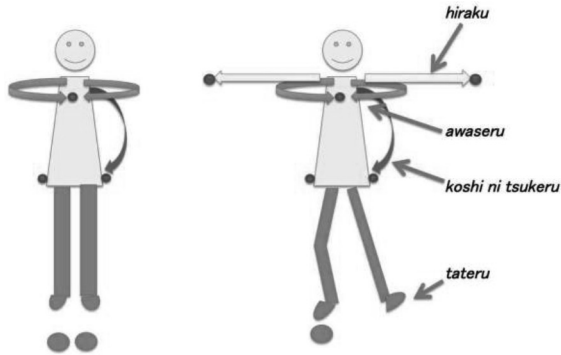
At the *taiko* beat (‘*dô*’) in the end of the rhythmic cycle, typical ending poses employed in *umai* are; 1) a dancer stands up straight and hands are put together in front (‘*awaseru* 合’) or either hand at waist (‘*koshi ni tsukeru* 腰に付る’), or 2)

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10 In *umai* dancing, a particular part of choreograph does not always arrives at the same part of music. Since dancers walk up to a stage after the main body of music starts, the timing to begin dancing on stage largely depends on the length of entranceway to the stage in each unique concert venue.

one foot stands on a heel (*tateru* 立) and another leg bends a little, both hands spread (*hiraku* 披), put together, or either hand at waist (Figure 2).

Figure 2 typical ending poses at *taiko* beat



### 3. Interview with an imperial musician

#### 3-1. interviewee

The author conducted interviews with an imperial court musician Mr. Hisatsune Sôtarô 久恒壮太郎 who belongs to Kunaichô shikibushoku gakubu 宮内庁式部職楽部, or Music Department of Imperial Household Agency (henceforth Kunaichô). He was born in 1983 in Ôita prefecture, became a trainee in 1998, and got hired in Palace in 2005 (Hosoda 2016: 1). Currently there are 25 musicians of various ages from 20s to 60s in Kunaichô and Mr. Hisatsune is in the middle-young generation in the group. He was taught *hichiriki* (reed pipe) from Master Okubo Nagao 大窪永夫 (1949-) and *umai* from Master Bunno Hideaki 豊英秋 (1944-). An imperial musician must learn one of the wind instruments, *fue* (flute), *hichiriki* (reed pipe) or *shô* (mouth organ); one string, *biwa* (lute) or *koto* (zither); all percussions, *taiko* (big drum), *kakko* (small barrel drum for *tôgaku*), *san-no-tsuzumi* (small hour-glass shaped drum for *komagaku*), and *shôko* (gong), and all songs. This fact means that imperial musicians sometimes dance,

but in other occasions they accompany the dance. In other words, they quite well understand both music and dance. Outside the palace, Mr. Hisatsune teaches *umai* dance to amateur people in Nihon Gagaku-kai society 日本雅楽会<sup>11</sup> in Tokyo. The interview was conducted during and after the lessons of Nihon Gagaku-kai. The following description is based on the interview transcription made by Hosoda Akihiro (Hosoda 2016) and the interviews conducted by Hosoda and Terauchi together in October 2016 and May 2017.

In general, a detailed explanation is not given during *bugaku* lessons in *Kunaichô*. The trainees primarily watch and imitate what their teacher is doing. Sometimes a teacher touches trainee's arms or head to bring it to a correct position.

When a verbal explanation is given, it is very simple; just saying, for example, 'It is too high,' or 'Move faster,' etc. Some teachers use metaphors; 'to be a hanger,' or 'Spread your arms like a flying airplane.'<sup>12</sup> Basically, how a teacher explains what he wants to tell a trainee is largely relegated to each teacher's discretion, but the key phrase of this paper, 'to be a hanger,' seems widely shared among the imperial musicians.

'Be a hanger (*emon-kake ni naru*, in vernacular)' was pronounced by a senior musician of Kunaichô (Master Bunno) in the following context; on the debut stage of *bugaku* dance, a young imperial dancer (Mr. Hisatsune) was excited and rendered some parts a little too gorgeously in the performance, though he did not intend to. After the performance, he was criticized by his teacher; 'You did too much. To the audience, you only need to show the beautiful embroidery on the costume. You have to be a hanger' (Hosoda 2016: 32).

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11 Established in 1962. Imperial musicians are invited as instructors.

12 Both uttered by Master Bunno in the lessons to Mr. Hisatsune (Hosoda 2016: 22, 32).

### 3-2. Japanese traditional hangers and *bugaku* costumes

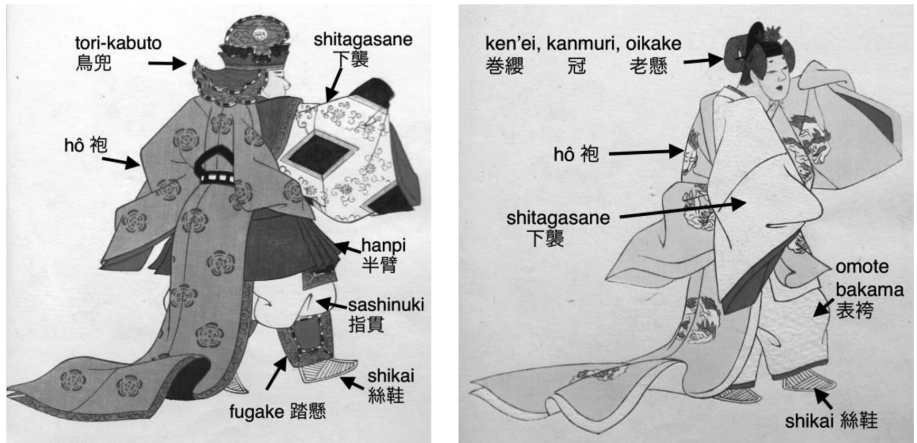
To understand the discourse ‘be a hanger,’ it is necessary to know the features of Japanese traditional hangers and costumes of *bugaku*.

A typical Japanese traditional hanger is a tall square-shaped wooden frame called ‘*ikô* 衣桁’ or just a simple long horizontal bar hanging with a small hook and a string called ‘*emon-kake* 衣紋掛け,’ both of which are suitable to keep traditional Japanese cloth in a wrinkle-free condition.

The *bugaku* costumes are basically made of silk. In *hiramai*, two types of costume, ‘*kasane shôzoku* 襲装束’ and ‘*ban-e shôzoku* 蛮絵装束,’ (Figure 3) are most commonly used, which are shared by many pieces of *hiramai* (see Table 1). Though bottom pants style slightly differ each other, both costumes include an inner robe (*shitagasane* 下襲) and an outer garment (*hō* 袍), which impress audience with the beauty of elaborated costume. The lines of cut and sew of each cloth is mostly straight. The scale of each part is somehow beyond human size; sleeves are too big and back tail is unnecessarily long. The texture of the inner robe is relatively soft (degummed silk) but the outer garment is hard and stiff (raw silk). Therefore, dancer’s bodyline is totally covered and invisible from outside, except for a face and tips of fingers.

This characteristic of costume seems to exert a significant influence on *hiramai*’s choreography. As early as in 1976, Wolz pointed out that some movements were determined by the type of costume worn. He says, ‘This is particularly true in Japan where so much movement is simply a manipulation of very elaborated costume, which sometimes even inhibit movement’ (Wolz 1976b: 5). This paper examines how the imperial dancers themselves recognize and verbalize this point.

Figure 3 'kasane shōzoku' (left) and 'ban-e shōzoku' (right) of *umai*.<sup>13</sup>



### 3-3. overall notices for performing *bugaku*

Before proceeding to examine individual patterns, it is meaningful to introduce overall notices on *bugaku*, which have been transmitted in *Kunaichō*.

According to Mr. Hisatsune, it is important to keep the center of gravity always low and stable. If the center floats up, the chest goes up (and the body looks unstable). A beautiful posture is made by removing tense from shoulders and making the neck stretch. When moving arms, an elegant (*miyabina* 雅な) and neat (*sugasugashii* 清々しい) movement is preferable. A nuance of flutter (*shina wo tsukuru* しなを作る) or artificial (*sakui-teki* 作為的) expression is vulgar (*gesen* 下賤).

From the explanations above, it is understood that stability, elegance, and some modest and natural beauty are oriented in *hiramai*.

13 “Engiraku 延喜楽” and “Tōtenraku 登天楽” from Takashima Chiharu, *Bugaku-zu (Kojitsu sōsho* vol. 3, no.18) (Takashima 1905).

### 3-4. experiencing *hiramai*: ideal postures and movements and body control

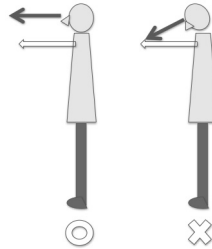
If one actually experiences *bugaku*, it is easily realized that stronger muscles are needed than it looks. In making a particular posture or movement, our attention often goes to muscles loaded, but a concentration should be toward other parts of the body to polish the posture or movement into an ideal shape. The following postures or movements are very basic patterns of *bugaku* and therefore it is extremely important for the dancers to perfectly master them.

#### static postures

'*Hiraku* 披,' or 'spread or open' is a basic posture of arms or feet (Figure 2, right). In the '*hiraku*' pattern of arms, a dancer should extend both arms so as to make shoulders, elbows, and hands arranged in a straight line. Taking this posture, we notice that certain parts of our shoulder muscle are loaded. But, Mr. Hisatsune says, 'Stretch your both arms, imagining as if tips of the fingers were pulled outward.' So he concentrates on the fingertips, not on shoulder, in the pattern of '*hiraku*.' By doing so, he tries to make it easy to create a perfect straight line from shoulder through fingertips.

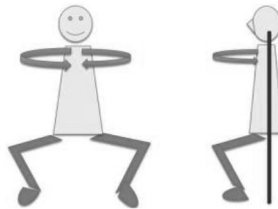
For '*awaseru* 合' or 'bring together' pattern, a dancer puts both fingertips together in front of the chest at shoulder height. The '*awaseru*' pattern often comes after or before the '*hiraku*.' If we compare '*awaseru*' with '*hiraku*,' we feel that our back is more loaded in '*awaseru*,' because the center of gravity shifts forward by moving arms in front of the chest. For this position, Mr. Hisatsune warns, 'Do not make your hands down, keep it in the same level of your shoulder.' If told so, an amateur dancer often looks at his/her fingertips. But it is a wrong action, because, if one looks at one's own fingertips, the face gets down. Then, another instruction comes; 'Don't look down and gaze straight forward.' It seems important for the '*awaseru*' pattern to keep face straight up and look into distance (Figure 4).

Figure 4 'awaseru (bring together)'



'Ochiiru 落居' is a posture that a dancer's legs are widely spread and upper body is falling (sinking) as if he were sitting on a chair (Figure 5). In this posture, we have a strong tense in our thighs, but our consciousness should go to our back. By saying 'upper body should be bolt upright form as if it were on the extension of a pole sticking out from the ground,' Mr. Hisatsune tries to call our attention to our back. But, perhaps, we should keep our attention on the gaze too. To keep our back straight is almost equivalent to keep our gaze straight forward, looking in distance.

Figure 5 'ochiiru (fall or sink)'



## movements

Mr. Hisatsune also gives us several comments on movements. Regarding the pattern '(te wo) hiraku (spread arms),' he says, 'Hands should draw a natural arch without a strain. An artificial showy performance is not good'. 'If a movement is preceded by a small preparatory motion, it should be very subtly softly rendered. Over-action is not good'. Here, a stress is put on the 'natural-ness'



removing 'artificial' showy taste.

'*Ashi wo dasu* 足を出す (step forward)' is a very basic movement for walking or moving to next position on a stage.<sup>14</sup> This pattern includes a preparatory motion to shift a whole weight on either of feet so as to the other foot can be freely stretched out. He says, 'The portion of the shift of weight on a foot (in the preparatory motion), which directly affect the depth of sinking of the body, decides the distance of a step stretching out' (Figure 6). In other words, vertical movement downward (of body sinking) is converted to a horizontal distance (of a step). What Mr. Hisatsune wants to emphasize here is to set a goal first and then act. If the goal to reach is fixed in advance, we can determine the depth of sinking in the preparatory motion. The deeper we sink, the further a step can reach.

Figure 6 '*ashi wo dasu* (step forward)' movement



He also claims, 'It is important to grasp a precise time to reach a goal of movement (= static posture point). The movement starts slowly, then gradually accelerates and finally comes to a complete stop at the static point. A dancer should control the timing to move.'

The movement of *bugaku* is rather simple and highly patterned. In general, virtuosity is not required. But Mr. Hisatsune's statements suggest that even in

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<sup>14</sup> This pattern is so common and taken for granted that it is not selected in the dance pattern list of *Meiji-senteifu*.

these relatively simple-looking movements, there is a very subtle control of timing and energy (and perhaps breathing<sup>15</sup>).

### integrity as a group dance

Another difficulty in *hiramai* lies in that it is a group dance. When dancing together with other dancers, a dancer should not stand out. A perfect synchronicity in posture and movement is required and personal creativity or individuality is not expected here. As already mentioned, Mr. Hisatsune was criticized by his teacher for his 'outstanding' performance on his debut stage and told to become a mere hanger to display the costume. To achieve the synchronicity, the knowledge for each position in a space and speed control of movement must be shared among the dancers. The knowledge should not only be understood in head but also learned in the level of body sense.

### 4. What 'be a hanger' means

Based on the above examinations, the instruction 'be a hanger' could be interpreted in the following ways;

1) A 'hanger' could indicate an ideal posture in the pattern of '*hiraku* (spread arms).' The shoulders, elbows and hands should be arranged in a straight horizontal line, like an *emon-kake* hanger. This figure can display the beautiful big sleeves of *kasane shōzoku* and *ban-e shōzoku* effectively to audience.

2) 'Be a hanger' could be interpreted as refusal of 'human' movement, since a hanger is a straight-lined physical object. 'Human' in this case could mean, 'unnatural (artificial),' 'exaggerated,' 'fluttery,' or 'efleminate.' This 'human-ness' should be stripped of in the *hiramai* performance. As Mr. Hisatsune claims, the movements should be rendered not in an artificial or fluttery way, but in a

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15 In my experience, dancing *hiramai* requires more energy than it looks. Some particular movements are closely related with breathing in or out, like Chinese *taijiquan*.

natural, simple, and orderly manner. The 'human-ness' could also mean 'unpredictable' or 'aimless,' and this is again not recommended in *hiramai*. Each movement in the *hiramai* choreography is always aiming directly, without detour, at a certain point in a space predetermined. In that sense, the goal of every pattern of movement in *hiramai* is to some extent 'predictable.'

3) Every dancer holds personal habits of moving that derive from his physical traits and sometimes a dancer wants to express his own artistic feeling in dance. However, *hiramai* is a group dancing and each dancer is expected to 'erase' personality or creativity. A perfect synchronicity in posture and movement of all dancers is thus importantly valued in *hiramai*.

These orientations suggest that the choreography and performing style of *hiramai* are designed to display the costume at its finest. This characteristic becomes clearer if we compare *hiramai* with *hashirimai*. *Hashirimai* is mostly performed by a single dancer and the dance involves more energetic, active movements than *hiramai*. This characteristic allows a dancer to express his own creativity in performance. Although costumes for *hashirimai* are also gorgeous and beautiful, they fit more tightly to dancer's body. Thus, in *hashirimai*, an audience's attention goes to a dancer himself or his moving body rather than costume.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, another discourse transmitted among imperial musicians is introduced. 'The tail of the costume worn by an excellent dancer always remains neat during a performance and it spreads flat and straight when the dancer walks off the stage' (Hosoda 2016: 71). During a performance, dancers often make turns, which makes the tail twisted or entangled with dancers' feet. The discourse suggests that a good dancer should acquire a skill of expertly footwork to manipulate a long tail of the costume. In other words, a dancer should pay attention not only to

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16 The end of the sleeves and bottom of the pants are gathered by strings and more tightly attached to a dancer's body.

his body but also even to the very end of the hemline of his costume's long tail. The costume is a part of his body.

The discourse also seems to emphasize the importance of the appearance from behind. When a dancer gets down from the stage, the neat and graceful long tail does matter. A beautiful back figure with a long tail straightly spread is a result of his excellent performance on the stage. Namely, costume's appearance from behind symbolically expresses the quality of dancing that he has just completed.

### Conclusion

Thus, the imperial dancers have definitely established some criteria for the beauty and understand them in the level of physical body. They try to hand this sensational knowledge down to the next generation, sometimes through verbal communication. The aesthetics of *hiramai* primarily pursues a refined beauty in simple, orderly, and natural looking movements or postures. It also highly evaluates the integrity as a group performance, a synchronicity of movements and positions, removing each dancer's individuality. This style of choreography enables dancers to show the beauty of elaborated costumes at its finest and has brought about a discourse that an excellent dancer's costume tail always remains neat during a performance and it spreads flat and straight when he walks off the stage. To the imperial musicians, the costume's appearance is so important even to the extent that its condition during and after a performance has become an indicator of the quality of dancing. I am not sure that an excellent dancer's costume tail is always perfectly neat in an actual performance but they will probably maintain this ideal for performing *hiramai* and keep trying to achieve it in future too.

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## 'Be a costume hanger': the aesthetics of imperial *bugaku* dance of Japan

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This paper explores aesthetics of dance and the practitioner's perception of body. *Bugaku* is the imperial court dance, which was brought from Asian continent to Japan by the eighth century and has been preserved until today. 'Be a costume hanger' is an instruction that a senior musician (dancer) of the imperial palace gave to his disciple in regard to how a dancer should perform on a stage. By analyzing this instruction, together with other verbal explanations given by the imperial musicians, this paper examines the aesthetics of *bugaku*, particularly focusing on the category of *hiramai*, which is a calm and slow group dance repertoire in the *bugaku*, rather than *hashirimai*, which is more active.

The analysis found three possible meanings for 'be a hanger'; 1) A 'hanger' could indicate an ideal posture in the pattern of '*hiraku* (spread arms)'; the shoulders, elbows and hands should be arranged in a straight horizontal line, like an *emon-kake* hanger. 2) 'Be a hanger' could be interpreted to suggest that the movements of *hiramai* should be rendered naturally, simply, and in an orderly manner, stripped of an 'artificiality' or 'fluttery', 'effeminate' style; 3) In *hiramai*, each dancer is expected to 'erase' personality and lose creativity and thus a perfect synchronicity in posture and movement of all dancers is importantly valued. These orientations suggest that the choreography and performing style of *hiramai* are designed to display the gorgeous *bugaku* costume at its finest.

*Keywords:* *bugaku*, *hiramai*, aesthetics, choreography, body sensation

キーワード：舞楽、平舞、美学、振り付け、身体感覚