

## Hongwanji Mission School students build connection with Japan sister school



HMS student carefully listens as grade 4 Keiai elementary student shares important tips on Japanese calligraphy.

On May seventh, twenty-three grade seven students from Hongwanji Mission School (Honolulu, Hawaii) arrived in Japan for a 12-day study trip. Students visited sister-school Keiai School in Moji district of Kitakyushu city, and Heian School and Hongwanji in Kyoto, before travelling to Okinawa and Hiroshima. The sister school relationship between Hongwanji Mission and Keiai schools was established in 2001 followed by annual visitations beginning in 2005.

During their stay in Kitakyushu, HMS students had a first-hand experience of home life in Japan during a 3-day program hosted by families of Keiai Junior and Senior High School students.

Interacting in English, grade 4 students of Keiai Elementary School also welcomed the Hawaii students to their classrooms, preparing Japanese calligraphy and tea ceremony workshops, and entertained everyone by performing musical arrangements on their melodicas.

At Chinzei Betsuin, Keiai Junior and Senior High School students hosted a welcome party, entertaining the guests with hula dancing and a local dish known as *yaki udon* (fried udon) was prepared for lunch.

Visitation to Hongwanji was conducted on May 15 and 16, attending the daily morning service and touring the Shoin chambers and Hiunkaku garden. With majority of HMS students going on to attend Pacific Buddhist Academy, the first Hongwanji-affiliate high school to be established outside of Japan, students also visited PBA's sister school, Heian Jr and Sr High School.

An HMS student shares, "This is my first time visiting Hongwanji, and visiting Keiai [school] was also a lot of fun."

In expressing that they were able to learn and experience a lot that can only be done by coming to Japan, Yuki Muraki, a Japanese language teacher at HMS who has been a chaperone for the study group every year comments, "This is the first visit coming to Japan for many of the students. It is our hope that this experience will remain in the hearts and minds of the students as they cherish their encounter with Jodo Shinshu."

(Hongwanji Journal, June 1, 2013, p. 2)

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Sound of the Pure Land  
***Gagaku* music and Hongwanji**

By Yasuyuki Fukumoto

**Japanese *gagaku* music**

Japanese *gagaku* (ceremonial court music) is believed to have been an imported musical fusion of Chinese *togaku* from the Tang dynasty, the ancient court music introduced via the Korean Peninsula called *komagaku* (lit., “Goryeo music”), and *rin’yugaku* (Indian music for dance) introduced from Southeast Asia.

The system of *gagaku* in Japan was initiated through the establishment of *utamai no tsukasa*, a public office based on the political system known as the *Taiho Ritsuryo* codes (701) that administered *gagaku* music. In the beginning, compositions transmitted from abroad were performed until later in the 9th century, when original pieces were written fitting to the taste of the Japanese listener.

In relationship to Buddhist practice, the *Kaigen kuyo* (lit., “eye-opening” ceremony) conducted in 752 commemorating the completion of the Great Buddha at Todaiji Temple in Nara and the first observance of the annual memorial for Prince Shotoku at Shiten’noji Temple in Osaka, are among the well-known *gagaku* performances conducted during a Buddhist ceremony.

Thus, *gagaku* has been performed during major Buddhist ceremonies since ancient times and has played an important role in Buddhist culture. *Gagaku*, is commonly associated with the Japanese Imperial Family or Shinto rituals and ceremonies, but in fact, has played a major role in Buddhist culture throughout history.

**Hongwanji and *gagaku***



The 49th Gagaku recital in honor of Shinran Shonin was performed at the Goeido (Founder’s Hall) on May 21.

Although heavily linked to Buddhism, it is rare for *gagaku* to be included into service rituals like it is performed during special observances at Hongwanji. According to Hongwanji’s historical records on Buddhist rituals, it is stated that *gagaku* was first incorporated into the service during tenure of Junnyo Shonin (12th monshu) at the beginning of the 17th century. *Gagaku* has since become essential to Hongwanji Buddhist observances. It is also likely that succeeding head priests of Hongwanji including Ryonyo Shonin (13th monshu), who played the *ryuteki* (flute) and *so* (stringed instrument), Honyo Shonin (17th monshu) and Monnyo Shonin (18th monshu) both of whom played the *ryuteki*, and Myosho Shonin (21st monshu) who was a skillful player of the *so* were influential.

At Hongwanji today, traditional *gagaku* pieces including *Bairo* (Skt., *vairocana*, lit., “sparkle”) and *Etenraku* (lit., “beyond heaven music”) are performed during special observances such as Hoonko, when priests enter the worship hall at the beginning of the service and as the *doshi* (officiant) performs the ceremonial ritual of *toraiban*. In addition, sutra chanting during special observances at times also include *gagaku* accompaniment, creating a quiet, solemn atmosphere.

**Gagaku instruments**

*Gagaku* instruments are categorized into the woodwind, stringed and percussion sections. Below, we introduce the three woodwind instruments and three percussion instruments used during Hongwanji services.

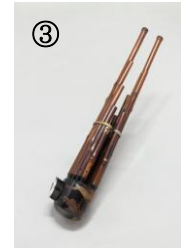
Woodwind instruments: *Ryuteki, Hichiriki, Sho*



***Ryuteki*** (lit., “dragon flute”): A side-blown bamboo flute. Its name is derived from the sound it produces, said to represent the cry of the mythical dragon. The *ryuteki* is often the first to play in a piece and also colorfully accompanies the melody played by the *hichiriki*.①

***Hichiriki***: A double-reed transverse bamboo flute, said to produce a sound similar to the human voice. In an ensemble, the *hichiriki* plays the main melody.②

***Sho***: Made up of 17 slender bamboo pipes, also called *hosho* (lit., “phoenix pipes”), due to its resemblance to the phoenix with its wings spread out. The *sho* accompanies the melody creating tone clusters.③



Percussion instruments: *Kakko, Taiko, Shoko*

***Kakko***: A relatively small double-headed drum which produces a high pitched sound. It is struck to mark the start of a piece and functions within the *gagaku* orchestra as the conductor.④



***Taiko***: A big drum with a lavishly colored leather head produces a low sound when struck with a mallet. The *kakko* is placed on a low stand horizontally in front of the musician and is struck on both sides using two slender sticks, whereas the *taiko* is placed on a stand and hangs with its head facing the drummer.⑤

***Shoko***: Although the character for “drum” is part of its name, the instrument itself is a small metal gong which adds a metal tone to the rest of the ensemble.⑥



What to listen for in *gagaku*

Among the few traditional forms of Japanese music, *gagaku* is said to be the oldest form of a musical ensemble. In comparison with western music, the largest distinction is that a conductor is not present to guide the *gagaku* musicians and therefore the flow of the piece is dependent on the combined efforts of each member.

(*Hongwanji Journal*, May 10, 2013, p. 6)

An extra word on *Gagaku*...

Gagaku, or Japanese court music is largely comprised of three sections that include the dance form of *Bugaku*, the instruments or *Kangen*, and the vocal accompaniment referred to as *Utaimono*, such as the genre known as *Saibara*.

In general, *Gagaku* that is performed during temple services is of the instrumental repertoire played by the wind and percussion instruments.

(*Hongwanji Journal*, June 1, 2013, p. 8)



Photo of stringed instrument, *So*.