

## COMPLETION REPORT

This research project studies the techniques and functions of arpeggiated drones inserted into the historical and modern lute melodies of *tōgaku* (Tang music). I have demonstrated in my research how an understanding of the changes in instrumental performance techniques can shed light on the historical development of a musical repertory. My research covers three historical periods of time. These are the periods from the early ninth to the late tenth century, from the eleventh to the late twelfth century, and from the nineteenth century to the present.

It is suggested that from the late eighth or early ninth century to the middle of the tenth, the melodies of *tōgaku* were preserved fairly well by the Japanese (Marett 2006:83). My research further demonstrates that in addition to the melodies, the lute drones, which shared almost the same forms used in Tang (618-907) China, were transmitted and preserved in a relatively stable form in Japan by the tenth century. This also indicates that the Japanese musicians were able to understand and perform advanced instrument techniques of Tang music by the mid-Heian period (794-1185).

From the late ninth to the late twelfth century, a long process of assimilation or “Japanization” of imported Tang music occurred in Japan (Nelson 2008:39). My research shows that this assimilation not only covered the theory, melodies and instrumentation of *tōgaku*, but also involved the performance techniques transmitted from Tang China. Although some attributes of Tang-period lute drones can still be seen in the *tōgaku* melodies performed after the eleventh century, many advanced plectrum techniques were abandoned. Furthermore, there was a significant decrease in the number of drones used in lute melodies performed after the eleventh century. The reason is that some drone techniques and structures were too difficult for Japanese musicians to learn and perform.

The claim that the Meiji standardization of *tōgaku* was possibly a reconciliation of performance practices of the musicians in the nineteenth century without much consideration of the Heian-period tradition appears in some recent research (see, for example, Ng 2010). The reinvention of the function of arpeggiated drones in the Meiji period (1868-1912) discussed in my research becomes an important piece of evidence that supports this argument. If the musicians who participated in the standardization had investigated the lute notations and performance practices of the entire Heian period, they would have discovered the historical functions of the drones, namely that the drones were used to signify cadential points in a lute melody. In modern performance, however, the drones have metrical rather than cadential function.

### References

Marett, Allan J. 2006. “Research on Early Notations for the History of *Tōgaku* and Points of Scholarly Contention in their Interpretation.” *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 38: 79-55.

Nelson, Steven G. 2008. “Court and Religious Music (1): History of *Gagaku* and *Shōmyō*.” In *The Ashgate Research Companion to Japanese Music*, edited by Alison McQueen Tokita and David W. Hughes. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 35-48.

Ng, Kwok-wai. 2010. “Orality and Literacy in the Transmission of Japanese *Tōgaku*: Its Past and Present.” *Ethnomusicology Forum* 20 (1): 33-56.

**Publication of the Results of Research Project :**

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

Kwok-wai Ng. "The Drones in the Lute Melodies of *Tōgaku* and their Implication for the Historical Development of *Tōgaku* in Japan." ICTM World Conference 2013. Shanghai Conservatory of Music, China. 11-17 July 2013.

(I will present my paper on 17 July 2013, in the VIID2 paper session at 16:00.)

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

Kwok-wai Ng. "Drones in the Lute Melodies of *Tōgaku* and their Implication for the Historical Development of *Tōgaku* in Japan."

(I have completed the paper and I am now searching an appropriate journal for publication. I will contact The Sumitomo Foundation once this article has been accepted or published.)

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)