

Tracing the Development of Kumi-Daiko in Canada

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a survey of the development and dissemination of kumi-daiko ensembles in Canada, with the focus on their membership, gender, drums and repertoire, and links to the Japanese Canadian community. A case study of the group Katari Taiko's formative stage is presented to highlight key issues that confronted kumi-daiko ensembles in the past. With the emergence of exclusive groups in the form of pan-Asian, all-women kumi-daiko organizations, an inspection of Katari Taiko's prominent female representation highlights gender and feminist issues and the reconfiguring of gender constructs and portrayals. I will argue that these exclusive female spaces offer a refuge for queer members as well as an avenue to express their sexual identity through creative and artistic means. This discussion is complemented by an organological overview of drum construction, general taiko drum taxonomy, and an update on contemporary taiko drum manufacturing which includes a socio-historical portrait of the Burakumin (Japan's exclusive traditional drum makers) and North American taiko drummers who are forced out of necessity to become ingenious drum makers. This thesis concludes with the referencing of traditional Japanese music in the kumi-daiko repertoire as discussed by prominent drummers and ensembles followed by an analysis of Seiichi Tanaka's piece "Matsuri" in the context of its different renditions by Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles.

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To Miyokichi Kimoto

CHAPTER I: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF KUMI-DAIKO – FROM JAPAN TO CANADA

Introduction

How did *taiko* (endearingly referred to as “the big drum”) become such a large part of my life? Good question. I first heard about *kumi-daiko* (ensemble taiko drumming also called *wadaiko*, or simply taiko) in 1997 when I met a key figure in the Canadian kumi-daiko scene at the time. We had a discussion about music and upon hearing that she was a taiko drummer; I immediately expressed my interests. She told me about an upcoming all-women taiko workshop that would be held by Sawagi Taiko and I decided to attend. There appeared to be about 25 participants in addition to the members of Sawagi Taiko. I thoroughly enjoyed my introductory workshop and when they announced that the group was looking for new recruits, I signed up.

I learned that being a member of Sawagi Taiko also entailed volunteering at the annual Japanese Canadian community festival – the Powell Street Festival. Volunteering at the Powell Street Festival and later coordinating the 1999 festival introduced me to the broader Japanese Canadian (JC) community. My contact with the JC community had always been mediated through my parent’s participation. Through my direct involvement in kumi-daiko, I found my own place in the JC community in Vancouver.

My first encounter with the “big drum” occurred during my childhood. It was at the Japanese Buddhist Church in Montreal where as a child I attended *bon odori* (Japanese folk dancing). Mr. Hayashi would play the *miya daiko*, accompanying the canned music of *sato-kagura* (Shinto folk and festival music). His wife, Mrs. Hayashi, would teach a group of approximately 25 young girls the regional folk dances from Japan.

I remember feeling excited whenever the “big drum” was unveiled to beat out the rhythms of the folk songs.

I grew up in Montreal, Canada, a mixed race child within a working class Japanese immigrant family. My parents were concerned that I should be acquainted with Japanese arts and culture. I attended Japanese language school at the Buddhist temple, participated in bon odori, studied *nihon buyo* (Japanese classical dance), *koto* (Japanese 12 string zither), and *shigin* (Japanese poetry chanting). I am so grateful to have received all of this exposure to the Japanese arts, as it created a personal sense of Japanese identity and an appreciation for my heritage.

In my late teens, I became politicized and rebellious and found an outlet in punk rock music. I lived in London, England and San Francisco while playing bass in various punk rock bands. In San Francisco, I co-founded an all-women punk rock band that was a precursor of the queer core and Riot Grrls scene. Being in an all-women group was a great opportunity to gain access to the stage in a rock context. I had experienced barriers when trying to play with the “boys.” Within an all-women group, we had opportunities to be creative and represent feminist and queer culture. After a series of exciting tours around America and Europe and the traumas and dramas of internal rock band turmoil, I left the band and returned to Canada to further my education.

In Vancouver, I re-experienced a strong sense of my Japanese heritage. The JC community in Vancouver was huge, compared to the dwindling community population of Montreal. Not only was it large, but it also appeared quite political and creative. The JC community in Vancouver proved to be a wonderful confluence of Japanese arts and culture and left-of-centre political activism. My past participation in Sawagi Taiko, an

all-Asian women kumi-daiko ensemble, felt like a natural evolution from my forays in the women's punk rock scene of the Riot Grrls. Taiko is loud and attention grabbing in its sonic power, very much "in your face." Not only was it powerful, it was also a Japanese contemporary musical performance art that was situated, in the case of Sawagi Taiko, within a pan-Asian all-women context. It felt like fate. I could integrate my political and musical interests in the context of my cultural heritage and ethnic community. The opportunity to write my thesis about kumi-daiko expanded my personal and community interests into the domain of my academic life. This document recounts how taiko became an influential part of my present life.

The process of writing this thesis led me to discover many interesting aspects of the Vancouver JC community. I became fascinated with the history of the JC community in Vancouver and in Canada. It was a meaningful personal journey for me to uncover the hidden past of my stepfather, Miyokichi Kimoto, now passed away. He was an early immigrant from Kita Kyushu, Japan and lived in "Little Tokyo¹," the historical neighbourhood of the JC community in Vancouver, presently referred to as Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. I learned more about the internment and dispersal of the JC community during WWII and was able to examine the neighbourhood where he once owned a grocery store and a home on Powell Street. I presently live close to Hastings Street Park where the JC community was initially held prior to being shipped out to internment camps around the province. I still have the horse blankets that my stepfather and stepbrothers had received at Hastings Street Park. The past started to come alive and I sensed a stronger connection to my family and the community history of Japanese

¹ Also referred to as Japantown and less politely as Japtown, as described by Albert Foote in an article on the 1907 race riots published by the Vancouver Sun Magazine in 1947, http://www.vancouverhistory.ca/archives_1907.htm; accessed 20 April 2006.

Canadians. I also learned about Asian Canadian history in Vancouver and about the race riots in 1907 and the history of political activism within the JC community during the late 1970s and 1980s.

My personal connection with kumi-daiko and my place in the JC community has motivated me to tackle Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles as a subject matter for my thesis. Writings on Canadian kumi-daiko, I discovered, were close to non-existent. At best, Canadian kumi-daiko groups were subsumed under the American umbrella and labeled North American taiko. It gives an impression that kumi-daiko is homogeneous on the North American continent. I decided to focus on kumi-daiko in Canada, out of academic curiosity. Chapter One opens with a historical overview of kumi-daiko and tackles the development of kumi-daiko in Canada, with a close examination of Katari Taiko, Canada's first kumi-daiko ensemble. Katari Taiko's development was inextricably tied to the political galvanization of the JC community in seeking redress for the internment in WWII. Taiko aided the renewal of the JC community, drawing Japanese Canadians into their culture and heritage, while the JC community aided taiko's growth and development, usually in the form of supporting community kumi-daiko groups that sprang up during the 80s. Through a case study of Katari Taiko, I hoped to highlight the processes that some kumi-daiko ensembles encounter in their evolution, especially those that emerged in the 1980s in light of Japanese Canadian redress that was taking place at the time.

Following the examination of the development of kumi-daiko in Canada is a survey of Canadian kumi-daiko groups across Canada, found in Chapter Two. I wanted to examine each group's connection to the JC community, their organizational structure, their membership (examining those of Japanese descent), gender representation, number

of drums, the rehearsal space, and the group's repertoire. I present some of my findings in a table and I have included short group ethnographies of the different ensembles. I also tackled the question of whether there was a distinctive Canadian quality to these kumi-daiko ensembles by asking each group's opinion on the matter.

Chapter Three examines taiko drums, tracing the sociological aspects of the Burakumin, the traditional Japanese drum makers. I have found the topic of organology of particular interest during my studies of ethnomusicology. When I applied some organology research to kumi-daiko, I discovered the history of the Burakumin, who are a former outcaste group in Japan, and the discrimination that has beset them. I embellished the drum making section with a look at the variety of drums and their classifications as well as interviewing contemporary Japanese drum makers for an update on these issues.

Chapter Four, an examination of gender issues, is of natural interest for me due to past involvement in women's music and experience in all-women musical groups. I was fascinated with the development of pan-Asian, all-women ensembles in kumi-daiko and their connection with feminism. This makes sense, when one can see these all-women groups emerging from the context of male-defined musical ensembles. Highlighting queer participation within kumi-daiko ensembles was of interest to me due to experience with queer core rock bands.

Chapter Five focuses on referencing traditional music in kumi-daiko music and examines the different Canadian variations of Seiichi Tanaka's piece loosely referred to as "Matsuri". As my research developed, I came to realize that the "Matsuri" variations followed the connection of those groups to Seiichi Tanaka of San Francisco Taiko Dojo. Not all groups had this connection, but still I found groups who had acquired "Matsuri".

Also, I discovered that groups had retired their version of “Matsuri” from the performance repertoire, for a variety of reasons.

Numerous taiko folks were interviewed in the process of researching this work. As such, I have included a guide, a Cast of Characters, to persons interviewed and quoted throughout this examination of Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles. Hopefully this will help shed some clarity on all the different voices that appear repeatedly throughout this work. Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles have been generous with their time and energy, supplying information about themselves. Japanese kumi-daiko groups, scholars, and drum makers have been outstanding in their cooperation and support of my work for which I am in awe. The most wonderful thing is to have learned so much about the “big drum,” taiko drummers, and the ensembles. I have developed a greater appreciation for community through my experience with kumi-daiko in Vancouver. While conducting my research on Canadian kumi-daiko groups, I experienced a sense of being part of the broader kumi-daiko community of Canada, America and Japan. It has been a rich and rewarding experience and on a personal level, a sense of returning home.

Cast of Characters

Japan

Daihachi Oguchi: The father of kumi-daiko and leader of Osuwa Daiko

Gan-Ei Onozato (stage name of Kiyonari Tosha): A founding member of Yushima Tenjin Sukeroku Taiko under the auspices of the Yushima Tenjin Shrine and the director of Nihon Taiko Dojo

Asano Taiko Co.: A well established taiko manufacturer

America

Seiichi Tanaka: The father of American kumi-daiko and leader of the San Francisco Taiko Dojo

Tiffany Tamaribuchi: The leader of the Sacramento Taiko Dan, Tozai Wadaiko, and JO-Daiko

Kenny Endo: The founder of the Taiko Center of the Pacific and leader of the Kenny Endo Ensemble

Canada

Kiyoshi Nagata: The leader of the Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble, a founding member of Isshin Daiko, and an original member of Toronto Suwa Daiko

Linda Uyehara Hoffman: A founding member of Sawagi Taiko and Katari Taiko

John Endo Greenaway: A founding member of Katari Taiko and Uzume Taiko

Mayumi Takasaki: A founding member of Katari Taiko

Eileen Kage: A founding member of LOUD, Sawagi Taiko and Uzume Taiko

Tamai Kobayashi: A former member of Wasabi Daiko

Leslie Komori: A founding member of LOUD, Sawagi Taiko, Uzume Taiko and Wasabi Daiko

Lisa Mah: A founding member of Sawagi Taiko

Naomi Shikaze: A founding member of Katari Taiko

Bonnie Soon: Artistic Director of Uzume Taiko

Shinobu Homma: Director and founding member of Chibi Taiko and a founding member of Katari Taiko and Wasabi Daiko

Jan Woo: A member of Katari Taiko

History of Kumi-Daiko

The Japanese taiko drum has experienced a remarkable renewal in recent decades with the growing popularity of the contemporary performance art of kumi-daiko. The generic term “taiko” has come to represent a wide variety of drums and the performing ensemble comprised of Japanese percussion instruments (Alaszewka 2001). The term, *wadaiko*, refers specifically to Japanese drums, differentiating them from foreign drums (Terada 2001). Taiko drums play a traditional role within Japanese Buddhism and Shintoism (*kagura* and *sato-kagura*), *gagaku* court music, and the theatrical stage of *noh* and *kabuki* (Malm 1959). Taiko has been used on the battlefields of war to command and coordinate movement, as depicted in painted scrolls and screens.¹ *Sato-kagura*, or Shinto folk and festival music, is often performed by ensembles generically referred to as *hayashi* (usually performed by one *odaiko* drummer, two *shime daiko* drummers, and a *take-bue* or *shino-bue* flutist) and is particularly significant to kumi-daiko (Malm 1959). The music and repertoire of *sato-kagura* is widely referenced in kumi-daiko.

Kumi-daiko’s development can be traced back to jazz drummer Daihachi Oguchi in 1951.² Kumi-daiko’s genesis is linked to Oguchi’s reinterpretation (requested on behalf of the Osuwa Shrine) of a 16th-century taiko war drumming transcript of the Takeda clan, uncovered by his relative (Nagata: p.c., 2005). Inspired by his jazz drumming background, Oguchi decided to perform the ancient war drum rhythms using an ensemble of traditional Japanese drums to mimic the functions of a western style drum kit. He contemporized the music by adding new rhythms, assembling a wide range of

¹Osuwa-Daiko, the first recognized taiko ensemble in Japan, preserves a taiko from the famous warlord, Shingen Takeda. “Taiko Resource: Taiko Overview and History,” in *The Rolling Thunder Taiko Resource* [Online], available: <http://www.taiko.com/resource/history.html>; accessed 15 July 2001.

²“Taiko Resource: Taiko Overview and History.”

traditional drums for different timbre and pitches, and finally dividing the rhythms into simpler multiple layers so that several people could easily play the music, thus creating the template for the kumi-daiko ensemble (Takata 1998). Motivated by this new percussive form, Oguchi continued to explore the interface between jazz drumming and traditional taiko drumming in a series of contemporary compositions (Alaszewka 2001). Oguchi's performance of kumi-daiko with his highly influential and innovative ensemble Osuwa Daiko at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics brought kumi-daiko nationwide attention in Japan, especially in the Hokuriku area where nightly performances of kumi-daiko took place at hot spring spas for the entertainment of guests (Alaszewka 2001). The growing popularity of kumi-daiko was felt by other groups around Japan, most notably Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, Za Ondekoza, and Kodo.

While Oguchi is credited as the father of kumi-daiko, Tokyo based Sukeroku Daiko played a pivotal role in the development of kumi-daiko in America. In 1959, a Tokyo based ensemble, Yushima Tenjin Sukeroku Daiko (under the auspices of the Yushima Tenjin shrine), was founded by Yoshihisa Ishikura, Yutaka Ishizuka (who received the stage name Saburo Mochizuki), Seido Kobayashi, and Gan-Ei Onozato (stage name Kiyonari Tosha). These four dedicated drummers, whose playing style was based on *edo-bayashi* (a large repertory of old Tokyo festival music) rhythms, created a style that proved influential for many North American kumi-daiko ensembles. They were festival drummers who gained infamy from the flashy style of playing they developed. The Sukeroku Daiko performance style distinguishes them from other kumi-daiko groups of their era: incorporating a side stance with a focus on speed, fluidity, power, flashy solos and a strong sense of choreography. This is in contrast to the upright playing stance

of the traditional form. A rift took place amongst the members of Yushima Tenjin Sukeroku Daiko and a splinter group was formed, Oedo Sukeroku Daiko, led by Seido Kobayashi. Oedo Sukeroku Daiko is credited as being the first professional taiko group in Japan.³

Za Ondekoza (demon drummers) was formed in 1969 by Den Tagayasu who gathered a group of disenfranchised youths and retreated to the Japanese Island of Sado, abandoning Japan's modernized urban lifestyle in pursuit of Japanese traditional arts. Initially the aim was to establish a "Craftsman University" where traditional Japanese crafts and folk arts could be taught in the context of a communal lifestyle. The formation of a kumi-daiko group was one of many projects initiated (Alaszewka 2001). Dedicated to taiko drumming as a way of life, they participated in daily rigorous training of drumming and marathon running. Za Ondekoza⁴ became famous for their running tours where they would literally run from one performance venue to another while on tour. They completed the 1975 Boston Marathon before performing on stage, gaining great renown. Za Ondekoza had their international debut in Paris in 1975, and followed that with an American tour sponsored by Pierre Cardin, which led them to international success (Takata 1998).

A division in Za Ondekoza led to a fragmentation, whereby a new group was formed in 1981 named Kodo. Kodo gained international fame in the 1980s while a new

³"Taiko Resource: Taiko Overview and History." [subsequent reference]

⁴Za Ondekoza is based on the philosophy of *Sogakuron*, where running and music are one and a reflection of the drama and energy of life. Ondekoza's unparalleled running tour began in 1990 at Carnegie Hall in N.Y. and ended with a memorial concert at Carnegie hall in Nov. 12, 1993. They had 355 performances and ran continuously for 1,071 days completing 14,910 km. Za Ondekoza web page [Online], available: <http://www.ondekoza.com/en/>; accessed 7 December 2005.

and revitalized Za Ondekoza⁵ reemerged to prominence in the 1990's (Alaszewka 2001). What is especially significant about Za Ondekoza and Kodo is the fact that they elevated kumi-daiko to new professional heights and international success with their discipline and refined performances. Takata views Kodo's influence and appeal as having pushed the boundaries of kumi-daiko from a Japanese traditionally based art form into a more universal art (1998).

Seiichi Tanaka formed the first kumi-daiko group in America, San Francisco Taiko Dojo (SFTD) in 1968. Throughout the 1970s, kumi-daiko gained popularity in America. Tanaka traveled around North America and held many taiko workshops, sharing his knowledge of taiko technique and drum construction. Many American groups are led by Tanaka's former students, hence his title as the "Father of North American Taiko". The majority of taiko groups credit a stylistic debt to Oedo Sukeroku as interpreted by the San Francisco Taiko Dojo (Terada 2001). Tanaka taught a style of taiko that he had learned from Osuwa Daiko and Oedo Sukeroku Taiko, which is a synthesis of Oedo Sukeroku Taiko, Osuwa Daiko and Gojinjo Daiko. In the prefecture of Ishikawa, Wajima's Gojinjo Daiko is a traditional drumming style from the late 16th century, infamous for its masked drummers who impersonated ghosts in an attempt to frighten marauding samurais that stole from the defenseless fisher folk of the village. Tanaka describes the Gojinjo-Daiko style akin to a metaphor of ancestral spirits screaming with anger (p.c., 2005).

Kinnara Taiko was formed in 1969 and became the first North American Buddhist taiko group. Masao Kodani, minister of the Senshin Buddhist temple in 1969, founded

⁵Presently performing as Fuji no Yama Ondekoza, since their move to the city of Mt. Fuji in Shizuoka. <http://www.ondekoza.com/en/>; accessed 7 December 2005.

Kinnara Taiko of Los Angeles. Kinnara Taiko created a unique American hybrid of Japanese American Buddhist taiko that inspired the formation of other Buddhist based kumi-daiko groups (Fromartz). The strongest concentration of kumi-daiko groups outside of Japan exists on the Pacific coast of America and Canada (Alaszewka 2001). Kumi-daiko has proliferated in America and Canada and there are currently over 150 performing ensembles (Terada 2001).

Reclaiming Ethnic Identity, Cultural Renewal, and Community Building

Kumi-daiko has gained immense popularity in Japan since the 1970s and achieved national acceptance as a new performing art. Kumi-daiko development in Japan was supported by the government's drive to reclaim Japanese cultural heritage through traditional forms related to the taiko drum. The government's significant funding in the 1970s of "intangible cultural assets" contributed to kumi-daiko's growth. The Japanese government's financial support of community arts enabled Japan to boast an estimated 5,000 kumi-daiko groups (Alaszewka 2001). In the Japanese post-war landscape where western ideals were rapidly being embraced, the Japanese government adopted an attitude conducive to the preservation of Japanese traditional arts and culture.⁶ Kumi-daiko proved adept at the efforts of renewing interest in the cultural arts.

Reclaiming ethnic identity for Japanese descendants living in post-WWII America and Canada became an important issue in the 1970s, and kumi-daiko played an important role in that connection. Taiko accompanied the Japanese immigration to North America

⁶"Taiko Resource: Taiko Overview and History."

in the early 1900s where it was performed within its more traditional function, significantly obon festival drumming, and thrived within Japanese communities until WWII. With the internment of Japanese nationals and their descendents in WWII, Japanese culture in North America was abruptly arrested and suppressed. Takata (1998) parallels the Japanese diaspora experience of reclaiming ethnic identity in America and Canada to the Japanese search for a new self-identity after their defeat and occupation of the war.

During WWII the American and Canadian governments, ignoring the rights of their citizens and legal due process, incarcerated those of Japanese descent and nationality in internment camps. In Canada, 22,000 Japanese (living within 100 miles of the BC coast) were forcibly removed from their homes in a systematic expulsion in November of 1942. Japanese Canadians were given 24 – 48 hours to vacate their homes before they were sent to “clearing sites” where they were detained until the internment camps were prepared. JCs in Vancouver and west coast towns were “herded like cattle” into Vancouver’s Hastings Park’s livestock building. Conditions at Hastings Park were appalling. Women and children were segregated from the men and forced to live in cattle stalls in squalid conditions. Families were separated and interned at various camps in the interior of B.C. and northern Ontario. JCs lost their homes, businesses, and personal property – all confiscated to pay for the expenses of internment.⁷ After the war, they were dispersed across the country and discouraged from speaking their language and forming communities (Izumi 2001).

⁷“WWII Experience – Mass Uprooting,” in najc.ca [Online], available: <http://www.najc.ca/enindex.php>; accessed 20 November 2005.

Gerhard Kubik (1994:32) describes the impetus for ethnicity movements as an ideologically programmed response to “outside aggression, deprivation, discrimination, and holocaust.... The traumatic collective experience of a group fuels the kind of consciousness called ‘ethnicity.’” He discusses the process of reclaiming ethnicity as “a social response of a particular population who have experienced ‘cultural conflict and aborted transculturation.’” The effects of internment were physically and psychologically damaging for Japanese Americans (JAs) and JCs, exerting a negative impact upon their culture. Subsequent generations of JAs and JCs shunned their heritage as a result of the wartime animosity and the experience of internment that contributed to deculturation. Susan Asai discusses the internment in America, “The internment of 110,000 Japanese American on the West Coast during World War II is an example of cultural conflict leading to complete social, economic, and political isolation. The existential trauma of first- and second-generation Japanese American internees continues to affect the consciousness and identity of the third generation” (1997: 259-260).

The civil rights movement in the 1960s provided fertile soil for the growth of the Asian American movement, stirring political activism within the JA and JC communities. JAs and JCs exercised their civil rights, calling for redress and reparations from their respective governments, and demanding justice for those incarcerated without due process during WWII (Asai 1997). Redress issues dominated the agenda for Japanese Canadians during the 1980s until the government of Canada offered an apology in 1988.⁸

⁸“WWII Experience – Mass Uprooting,” in najc.ca [Online].

The Japanese Canadian Centennial (commemorating the arrival of the first known Japanese immigrant, Manzo Nagano, who settled in Canada in 1877⁹) catalyzed the rediscovery of ethnic identity. In 1977 there was a *sansei* (third generation) youth conference that was held in Toronto, attracting many from across the country. This was the first time a Japanese Canadian event took place that focused on issues relevant to the *sansei* (Takasaki: p.c., 2005).

During the 1970s and 80s, JAs and JCs began to reexamine their culture, and the “big drum” became a symbol of their newfound ethnic pride. Susan Asai points out that the relationship of music and identity is connected and used, by immigrants of different races in North America, to retain aspects of their forebear's culture as a positive way to reinvent themselves in countering marginalization within our society. “The joining of Japanese and American musical elements link *sansei* to a Japanese past while also functioning as a statement of their social and cultural identity as Americans” (1997: 259). Leslie Komori, a *sansei* taiko drummer, elaborates further on the connection between taiko and JC ethnicity: “Given the history of Japanese Canadians in this country with internment and dispersal, the culture has been really devastated and the community fragmented. It is hard for people to think of themselves or identify as Japanese Canadian. When I play taiko, it is in the context of my family’s history of being interned in this country. All my power and all my energy comes from the breath of all that history of trauma” (p.c., February, 2005). Mayumi Takasaki adds, “It (*kumi-daiko*) was new, and knew no boundaries. It all fit into with the whole notion of creating a new sense of who we were as Japanese Canadians while linking us to JC culture. It seemed to tie in” (p.c., 2005).

⁹“WWII Experience – Mass Uprooting,” in najc.ca [Online].

Traditional taiko drumming in Japan has had an important role celebrating community events in Shinto rituals. The drums have also been used to designate the boundaries of villages – the limits were defined by whether one could hear the drums. Tiffany Tamaribuchi points out that “Traditionally, the drums themselves were used to bring people together in times of feast and famine, in celebration and in trouble” (p.c., 2002). Kumi-daiko continues the traditional function of the “big drum” to help coalesce the community.

When Vancouver's Katari Taiko (Canada's first kumi-daiko ensemble) was first formed, they prioritized the establishment of a strong community focus. The group nature of Katari Taiko has always been synonymous with community involvement. Linda Uyehara Hoffman describes the connection between taiko and community: “Well here in Vancouver, the original intent was to play at the Powell Street Festival.¹⁰ It always felt like Katari Taiko was representing the Japanese community and it was appropriate to do that. So I feel like there are strong ties to it, and there should be and we need to give back to that community and we would get support from the community. Hinode taiko in Winnipeg have a tiny Japanese community, but they are amazingly supported. So at least a lot of the groups that I know definitely have ties to the Japanese community and respect that community and those ties” (p.c., 2002). Komori explains that taiko is a perfect medium to interest JCs in their heritage and to build the community:

And so I think that seeing this really cool form is enticing and it would make you want to express your Japanese Canadian identity. In that way taiko is a way to bring people back into the community. I've played at redress stuff in the 80s - a lot in Toronto. The political stuff is just a means of building community and participating in community projects, apart from playing in taiko. I am a Japanese community person.

¹⁰ Powell Street Festival is an annual Japanese Canadian community festival of arts and culture that has been taking place since 1976 in Vancouver's historic “Little Tokyo.”

I've worked at Tonari Gumi¹¹ and Powell Street Festival. I have done all this community stuff and I really did not do that until I joined Katari Taiko, so for me they are just so linked, playing taiko and working in the Japanese community” (Komori: p.c., February, 2005).

Tamaribuchi, as a Japanese American, notes "Taiko's ability to attract Japanese descendants to their culture and offer a good representation of what Asian Americans are and can be. It's a good stereotype breaker. It's a way to really get people's attention so that they can then think about other things once they come together” (p.c., 2002).

Challenging issues of Invisibility and Racial Stereotypes

Taiko is not only a performance art form whereby JAs and JCs could reclaim and embrace their cultural heritage, it has also been an ideal medium for Asian Americans and Asian Canadians to combat issues of invisibility. Dorinne Kondo explains the dilemma of invisibility: "Like so many people on the margins, Asian Americans are generally erased from realms of cultural representation when we are depicted it is only to be stereotyped ... a kind of symbolic violence that influences not only how we are treated by others, but also how we think of ourselves” (1995: 49). Paul Yee, an early member of Katari Taiko, remarked: “For me, taiko was an opportunity to reclaim visibility. All my life, I knew I had an Asian face. Most of the time, I had wanted to hide it, deny I looked different. But here, suddenly, my Asian face let me fit into a group that was Japanese, not Chinese, a group that wielded tremendous power through music” (Katari Taiko: 1999: 11).

¹¹ Tonari Gumi is a Japanese Canadian volunteer association in Vancouver, BC.

Portrayals of Asians as quiet, non-assertive, hard working, but lacking in creativity galvanized early followers of the Asian American movement (in the late 60s and 70s) to tackle these images (Terada 2001). Traise Yamamoto outlines how the west has sexualized, infantilized, and feminized Japanese culture in the past century (1999). Taiko allows participants - Japanese nationals as well as JAs and JCs - to overturn these negative stereotypes. Deborah Wong¹² speculates that the appeal of taiko is largely due to strength, control, and loudness – all powerful components that are appealing to women as well as Asian men who have had to combat historical tropes that feminize them (2000). Kumi-daiko has proven to be effective in the construction of positive Asian American and Asian Canadian identity and pan-Asian mentality. Paul Yoon¹³ indicates how some kumi-daiko ensembles have “the ability to symbolize musically and physically the racially heterogeneous constituency and political positioning of an Asian American identity (2003: 418).” Kumi-daiko, initially a Japanese contemporary performance art, is now being remapped as a pan-Asian site for conveying alternative images of Asians.

¹² Deborah Wong’s book, “Speak it Louder: Asian Americans Making Music” (2004) has a chapter on Taiko in Asian America (195-231) where she examines the multiple sites that taiko occupies in America, from a performance of Japanese tradition, to its development as a Japanese American, into a pan-Asian American tradition, and finally into a place of inclusively.

¹³ Participation in kumi-daiko and the correlation to identity politics has been discussed by Paul J.C. Yoon’s “She’s Really Become Japanese Now!”: Taiko Drumming and Asian American Identifications” (2001). Paul Yoon, a former member of New York’s taiko ensemble Soh Daiko investigates taiko as a site where pan-Asians negotiate different identities as members of the ensemble.

Development of Kumi-Daiko in Canada

Katari Taiko figures prominently as Canada's first kumi-daiko ensemble, formed in 1979 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Since their formation, they have performed throughout Canada, often giving workshops in local JC communities and encouraging the formation of kumi-daiko groups. They (or former members) have directly influenced the formation of several important kumi-daiko ensembles in Canada: Hinode Taiko in Winnipeg, Kita No Taiko in Edmonton, Arashi Daiko in Montreal, and Wasabi Daiko in Toronto. Another important influence in Canadian kumi-daiko was the Osuwa branch of kumi-daiko, Toronto Suwa Daiko in Ontario. Kiyoshi Nagata, of the former Toronto Suwa Daiko, was instrumental in the formation of Isshin Daiko, Do-Kon Daiko, and the Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble in Ontario. Katari Taiko and Toronto Suwa Daiko, as well as Kodo from Japan, have had a significant influence in shaping kumi-daiko groups in Canada.

A case study of Katari Taiko's seminal years is presented to highlight the process of community renewal and the formation of ethnic identity taking place during the years of Japanese Canadian redress and kumi-daiko's role in these processes. I hope to highlight the challenges that many kumi-daiko ensembles face during the formative stage and the foundation that was laid and disseminated to other aspiring ensembles. Katari Taiko was inspired by the performance of San Jose Taiko in 1979 at the Powell Street Festival. Katari Taiko adopted San Jose's organizational structure, group philosophy, and elements of performance style. The story of Katari Taiko's inception would not be complete without some background information about San Jose Taiko.

San Jose Taiko was formed in 1973, originating out of the San Jose Buddhist Church community, inspired by a performance from Los Angeles Kinnara Taiko at a Buddhist youth conference.¹ San Jose Taiko's early members had ties with the Asian American movement through their involvement in the Asian American Studies program at San Jose University (Shikuma 2000). Identifying as an Asian American group, involvement with community and connections to cultural history remain important facets of San Jose Taiko. Under the direction of Roy and PJ Hirabayashi, San Jose Taiko developed their own style - drawing on musical influences from Latin sounds, R & B, jazz, and soul - that has been one of the pioneering influences for kumi-daiko in America and Canada.²

Many of Katari Taiko's founding members³ were "a bunch of friends" attending the University of British Columbia (UBC) in the 1970s who were exposed to the fields of Asian and ethnic studies that were emerging in universities along the Pacific coast. With the development of Asian American study groups, there was a growing awareness about Asian American and Asian Canadians issues and identity (Takasaki: p.c., 2005). Japanese American professor Ron Tanaka visited UBC and inspired some of the founding members of Katari Taiko by introducing them to the ideals of the Asian American students' movement (Izumi 2001). A historical JC photo exhibit, "The Dream of Riches," was assembled with students from the Asian Canadian student group that many

¹San Jose Taiko, "San Jose Taiko: Embodying the Spirit of Taiko." In *janm.com* [Online]. available: <http://www.janm.org/exhibits/bigdrum/interview/sanjose.php>; accessed 7 December 2005.

²San Jose Taiko, "San Jose Taiko: Embodying the Spirit of Taiko."

³Original founding members were Linda Uyehara Hoffman, Naomi Shikaze, Diane Nishii, Jim Wong-Chu, Mayu Takasaki, Joyce Chong, John Greenaway, Rick Shiomi, Jenny Fujita, Glen Nagano, Shinobu Homma, Lucy Komori, Connie Kadota, and Marilyn Kaga (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

Katari Taiko members were involved in at UBC. Uyehara Hoffman paints the atmosphere during the formative days of Katari Taiko:

Many of Katari Taiko founding members had known each other at UBC and were part of an Asian Canadian student group, which interestingly enough was mentored by an Asian American. They put together a photo exhibit, the history of the Japanese in Canada, and they all worked on it, the Chinese Canadians and Japanese Canadians. They were this kind of political group that was into the “movement.” These were also the people who started the Powell Street Festival, who were the first of the organizers. Rick Shiomi was the first coordinator (of the Powell Street Festival), and it came out of Tonari Gumi (TG), which is where a lot of the Wakayama Group, who were the people who did the photo exhibit at UBC - some of them were working at TG. So it was just this confluence of people and political energies that were into creating an Asian Canadian identity. The Powell Street Festival is that first expression and then Katari Taiko was the second. So it was really trying to establish focal points that could make people proud of being Asian Canadians, you know. (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005)

Not only did early members of Katari Taiko increase their awareness as Asian Canadians, but Japanese Canadian members developed a shared sense of ethnic identity through JC community involvement. Integral to the process of discovering their identity as Japanese Canadians, early Katari Taiko members participated in community organizing. Tonari Gumi, a Japanese Canadian Volunteer Association, occupies a drop-in centre used primarily by seniors that started in 1973. Many of the early Katari Taiko members were volunteers at the centre. Takasaki describes the renewal of community that transpired and how Tonari Gumi provided a space where sansei interacted with new Japanese immigrants to construct a sense of what it meant to be Japanese Canadians:

It was kind of an amalgamation of all kinds of things happening at the time, the first Powell Street Festival was being planned for the Japanese-Canadian Centennial in 1977. A lot of Sansei (third generation JC) were working at a place called Tonari Gumi that had just been founded several few years ago. There was a lot of activity in the community - a lot of people coming together. It was like a revival of our community and a growing sense of awareness of who we were as Japanese-Canadians and what that meant.... It was an odd mixture of sansei and new immigrants because for the sansei, a lot of people were just learning about what it meant to be Japanese Canadian. And for the new immigrants, they were brand new to Canada; they didn't

know what it meant to be Japanese living in Canada. So there was a great give and take of information, and sharing because the new immigrants didn't know what it meant to be a minority so they didn't have that sense of being the outsider. So for the Sansei it was like "wow these people are supremely confident in who they are." To many of the Japanese who came, they came because they didn't like what was happening in Japan or felt a need to be wanderers or try something new. They were in a sense renegades from Japan so I think there was a shared philosophy and understanding as well. So Tonari Gumi became a centre of all kinds of things, it was the kind of place where everybody could just drop in and meet people and do things like that. (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

The Powell Street Festival, which takes place in a neighborhood at the heart of the Japanese community prior to WWII internment, emerged as one of many events that celebrated the Japanese Canadian Centennial in 1977. This also included the "Dream of Riches Photo Exhibit" and a book about Japanese Canadian history. The first Powell Street Festival (in 1977) symbolized a reclaiming of the historical JC neighbourhood, referred to as "Little Tokyo," which was stripped of the JC community by the forced uprooting during WWII (Izumi 2001). The popularity of the Festival encouraged organizers to maintain it as an annual JC community event (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

The Powell Street Festival became a forum for representing Japanese Canadian culture and arts over the years and evolved into showcasing Asian Canadian arts throughout Canada. Many kumi-daiko ensembles have performed at it over the years and the annual festival features a healthy representation of Vancouver groups. Performance at the Powell Street Festival was a primary objective for Katari Taiko. Katari Taiko's ability to represent the local JC community at the festival helped to lessen the need for bringing in kumi-daiko ensembles from abroad (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

Early Katari Taiko members had been exposed to kumi-daiko from performances by Ryujin Taiko and Za Ondekoza (1978) at the Powell Street Festival, however, due to

the incredible athleticism of the Za Ondekoza form and the fact that both groups were made up entirely of men, the performance art form appeared inaccessible to many observers. Takasaki recalls:

So they (Za Ondekoza) stayed with us. I had three of them staying at my house. In our little co-op we must have had 10 Kodo or Ondekoza⁴ people staying with us. And they ran from my house in Strath, to Stanley Park, around Stanley Park, and to home in the mornings before breakfast. The most incredibly fit and wonderful people, they were a great group of people. We couldn't do that. Then you watch them play and it was amazing! We've never seen taiko like that before. But when we saw San Jose Taiko, you meet them as people as well, and they're just like other sanseis. We're all around the same age. We have a similar background and yet they get up on stage and they play taiko. Then suddenly it becomes a possibility. Well they can do it, so maybe we can, too. As opposed to when you watch Kodo (Ondekoza) play, you think, "Oh wow, I don't think I could ever do that". (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

San Jose Taiko struck a chord with early members of Katari Taiko and encouraged them to form their own group. Kenny Endo had personal connections with some of the founding members and gave Katari Taiko their first taiko workshop at the Steveston Buddhist Temple, teaching them drills and basic striking technique. There was a taiko drum at the temple (used for the obon festival drumming), which was used in addition to a bunch of old tires. The use of old tires is a rite of passage that many sprouting taiko groups (in North America) employ during their formative years prior to acquiring actual taiko drums. Soon after, Takasaki traveled down to California to renew taiko ties with Endo and members from San Jose Taiko, as well as to meet with Seiichi Tanaka of San Francisco Taiko Dojo, where Endo was a member. The Japanese formality of asking for taiko teaching took place as Takasaki recounts:

And after practice was over, we went out for the classic 'going to have a drink with Sensei (teacher).' We officially asked his assistance, '*onegai shimasu* (please), we'd like to start a group in Vancouver, do you think you can come and help us?' And we

⁴ Za Ondekoza experienced a division in the in 1981 and the group splintered in two, Kodo and Za Ondekoza. Takasaki uses the two groups name interchangeably, as some of the members from Kodo had at one point belonged to Ondekoza as well.

did the whole bowing thing to sensei. And he said okay he'd come. I think later that year he came and he stayed with us for maybe a week. He gave us our first workshops at the Strathcona Community Centre and he also showed us how to make drums. And I think he came back once or twice after that to give us more workshops. That's kind of how it started. (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

John Endo Greenaway recalls the unforgettable Tanaka experience (referring to a stern and severe teaching style) that many early members of Katari Taiko recount with colourful metaphors. "Tanaka came up and we did the whole Tanaka trip for a whole week. We worked and sweated, and went through what other people did - the fear and the pain. A few people decided it wasn't what they wanted to do. But most of us stuck it out and got enthralled. A lot of us had a problem with his teaching style. He taught us a lot in a short amount of time and set us on the path that we eventually took" (Endo Greenaway: p.c., 2005).

Shinobu Homma mentions workshops given by Tanaka, San Jose Taiko, in addition to the first given by Kenny Endo. He also notes that various members visited San Francisco and San Jose to study and share information, as well as form close ties with Seattle groups over the years (p.c., 2005). There has always been a strong connection to the Pacific Northwest and Seattle groups where the conference Regional Taiko Gathering (RTG) was held for networking and the sharing of taiko information and skills. Early members also visited California and Japan to study with groups such as Kodo (Homma: p.c., 2005).

The next rite of passage for many kumi-daiko groups in Canada, as well as in America, is the making of taiko drums. With the initial teachings received from Seiichi Tanaka, early Katari Taiko members had the arduous tasks of finding the right materials and developing skills as drums makers. They had their first practice space above a

Japanese grocery store on the 400 block of Powell Street in the former JC neighbourhood (Shikaze: p.c., 2005). With the gradual development of the group and assistance gained from the workshops given by Tanaka, the group bore down. Endo Greenaway explains: “A lot of our energy in the early years, was making drums, costumes (that came later), and trying to practise and define ourselves as a group” (p.c., 2005).

A pivotal point for development for Katari Taiko, which helped to galvanize the group, was their first performance request from the mining town of Faro, Yukon in 1981. Upon their successful debut performance, they were asked to perform for Queen Elizabeth in front of the Asian centre at UBC. Endo Greenaway describes: “And from there, it kind of steamrolled on. Through circumstance we became a performing group, which caused a whole new debate for the group” (p.c., 2005).

The founding members of Katari Taiko incorporated their political activism into the ensemble by basing the operating structure on a collective model, like San Jose Taiko and Kodo. Kodo, initially Za Ondekoza, were founded as a commune focused on learning Japanese folk arts. The collective nature of Katari Taiko was a natural evolution for the group, stemming from their political activities at UBC. The fact that everyone started out as novice taiko players set up a situation where there was no teacher who could lead the group. Many hours devoted to talking issues out led to choosing the apt name of Katari Taiko, which means “talking drum” and also refers to the African talking drums.

Katari Taiko’s collective structure remains an important aspect for the group reflecting their left-of-centre politics. Uyehara Hoffman notes that many groups started as a collective, but preferred to have a leader for simplicity’s sake, avoiding the process

of collective organization. “I think with Katari Taiko, there was never anybody that we totally trusted so it stayed a collective. I think we're also committed to the principle. It's difficult because as people leave, there are fewer core people who remain to share instructions and information. It's really hard to not have this kind of hierarchical thing. It's a tricky thing” (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

Katari Taiko Legacy

As Katari Taiko started to perform around Canada, other kumi-daiko groups began to emerge. Katari Taiko performances usually involved giving a taiko workshop to the local JC community. Often new kumi-daiko groups would emerge from the workshops. This happened in Winnipeg, Edmonton, and Montreal. Kumi-daiko ensembles from Japan and American that would visit Vancouver were often asked to give workshops to Katari Taiko – as kumi-daiko groups often share information and teachings in this way. It was an opportunity to network, learn skills and new pieces, and create taiko communities. Takasaki explains:

We would get together and just talk and learn pieces and just hang out. I think in those days anyways, part of it was creating a sense of taiko community. We were invited to play at Folk-O-Rama in Winnipeg, which I think is a weeklong multi-cultural event in Winnipeg. And each community has a pavilion and the JC community in Winnipeg has its Japan pavilion or Tokyo pavilion. When we would play, the *Nikkei* (Japanese Canadians) in the community would react much in the same way we did upon seeing San Jose Taiko play. So either we would give workshops while we were there doing a gig or they would raise the money to bring a couple of people up to do workshops and that's what I think happened in Winnipeg. And in Montreal, Naomi went to live in Montreal for about a year and while she was there, she got involved with the community. They heard she was with Katari Taiko and they wanted to start a taiko group, and so she gave taiko workshops. (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

Katari Taiko not only taught others how to play kumi-daiko, but they also shared their philosophy, drum making skills, and information about their collective organizing. Takasaki highlights: “For many groups, you’re starting from zero, there are no predecessors, and nobody knows what does or doesn't work. So they look to us in how we work and we tell them about being a collective. As time went on other groups would be formed and people would have access to seeing other groups. San Francisco Taiko Dojo obviously has a leader and so people could go and see that group and see how they function and decide whether they want to have a leader. I think a lot of groups probably may have started as collectives and decided that it just doesn't work for them” (p.c., 2005).

Katari Taiko’s significant role from a historical perspective is one of building a foundation for Canadian kumi-daiko groups to flourish. Some members have pointed out kumi-daiko would have developed in Canada regardless of Katari Taiko’s early efforts to spread the art form throughout JC communities. Still, Katari Taiko has definitely coloured the landscape that is kumi-daiko in Canada with the transmission of all of the knowledge that they gained from San Jose Taiko, Tanaka, and visiting groups from Japan. Their left-of-centre politics, emphasis on community, and collective organization may not be shared by all the groups they have taught, but they offered a model for groups at a time when there were none. Perhaps the most notable aspect of Katari Taiko is the fact that they remained a collective, despite the fact that many kumi-daiko groups have abandoned this structure. The perception was that if there was an authoritative teacher figure in the group, a hierarchical structure emerged. Naomi Shikaze expresses how Katari Taiko’s legacy is entwined with being a collective: “I like the fact that we've always tried to be a collective. For us, it’s about being able to express ourselves, but it’s also about being a

part of the community. The community is the JC community, but it's also the Asian community. I feel that it's really important to embrace the whole Asian community, but in fact, the art form, the way that we passed it along, comes from Japan. So there is that connection there and then of course with Japanese Canadians and what happened with internment and coming out of that period. I think it's really important for the community and for taiko" (p.c., 2005). Asked about her thoughts on Katari Taiko's legacy, Takasaki explains:

It's almost like a child. The Powell Street Festival is like my baby. You stand back you and you look at this child at 30 this year and you think, "Wow". It may not be the road that you would have chosen for your child or its changed in the ways that you might not have chosen for it, but that's the way kids grow up. It's the same thing with Katari Taiko, I think. We were a bunch of friends who had no intention of going public, only to perform at the Powell Street Festival. Suddenly we are playing at the Queen Elizabeth Theatre with Buffy St. Marie. It's just mind blowing. It's completely unfathomable that we did what we did and it has become what it has. I would have never thought it 25 years ago. On the other hand, it's a good feeling. And sitting with Roy and PJ (Hirabayshi of San Jose Taiko) and thinking, who would have thought that a long time ago we'd be sitting in your living room talking and this is where it would end up, with hundreds of people doing this. And taking on a life of its own, and changing in ways that you may or may not have agreed with but there it goes. I think at this point I'm just really amazed and in awe that it took a life of its own and that it just kept on going. (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

Toronto Suwa Daiko

The development of kumi-daiko in Canada was not an isolated event centred solely on Katari Taiko's impetus. On the east coast of Canada, Japanese kumi-daiko propagated by the father of kumi-daiko, Daihachi Oguchi, was garnering attention. In 1982 Osuwa Daiko performed in Toronto at a multi-cultural festival called Caravan. The Tokyo Pavilion from the festival invited them to perform for a week. The JC community

in Toronto was so impressed that they invited Daihachi Oguchi to give them workshops in the Osuwa Daiko style from the Nagano prefecture. He returned every year (sometimes twice a year) to teach workshops. Toronto Suwa Daiko was a community group based at the JC cultural center and was a licensed branch of Osuwa Daiko and considered a daughter group of Osuwa Daiko, with a repertoire based on Osuwa Daiko material (Nagata: p.c., 2005).

Kiyoshi Nagata was an original member of Toronto Suwa Daiko and stayed on from 1983 until 1993. Aside from the workshops given by Daihachi Oguchi, Megumu, and other teachers from Osuwa Daiko, he was exposed to workshops by Kodo, who were very inspirational. Nishino from Tokyo Osuwa Daiko also gave workshops. Other workshops were given by a Yokohama group called Tamako-za, a theater-based group, as well as individuals such as Fujimoto Yoshikazu, Eiichi Saito (both from Kodo) and Leonard Eto. Nagata was the director of the group from 1988 until 1993. After completing his study with Kodo in their apprenticeship program, Nagata returned to Toronto, forming Isshin Daiko at the request of Reverend Grant Ikuta of the Buddhist Church. Kiyoshi Nagata started his own ensemble, the Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble, a professional kumi-daiko group. Toronto Suwa Daiko later became Yakudo. He also assisted the Burlington, Ontario group Do Kon Daiko through his teachings. He has given workshops to numerous groups such as Oto-Wa Taiko (Ottawa, Ont.), Hinode Taiko (Winnipeg, Manitoba), Arashi Daiko (Montreal, Quebec), and two groups in Chicago. Kiyoshi Nagata also teaches a taiko class at the University of Toronto's faculty of music as well as a class at the Royal Conservatory of Music. Ontario's kumi-daiko groups are unique because they are greatly influenced by Osuwa Daiko, with the direct

transmission from Daihachi Oguchi. Kiyoshi Nagata's background with Osuwa Daiko and Kodo contributes to Ontario's distinction of having a strong Osuwa Daiko and Kodo influence, despite being surrounded by the dominant form of American Sukeroku stylized kumi-daiko (Nagata: p.c., 2005).

Kodo and their previous incarnation as Za Ondekoza, continue to exert a powerful impact on future kumi-daiko players through their live performances that have been taking place in Canada since the 1970s. Kodo acknowledges that Canadian kumi-daiko groups have been "great supporters of Kodo since our early days. So, we would like to give back by sharing our skills as our appreciation" (Sugano: p.c., 2005). Virtually all the Canadian kumi-daiko groups interviewed uniformly acknowledge Kodo as an important influence. Many groups received workshops from Kodo when they performed in Canada. Kodo's teaching organization is often frequented by Canadian taiko players and over the decades many have visited Kodo on Sado Island, Japan to study and learn the Kodo way of kumi-daiko.

Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles have been shaped by the musical style and group philosophies of San Jose Taiko as disseminated by Katari Taiko, Osuwa Daiko and Kodo. The west coast groups bear greater similarities to the California style of American kumi-daiko, most significantly, San Jose Taiko. The east coast groups have a greater resemblance to the Japanese kumi-daiko groups, Osuwa Daiko and Kodo. Still, Katari Taiko's impact can be seen on the east coast in terms of group philosophies, musical repertoire, and the use of movement. Groups that emerged from the JC community since the 80s have evolved according to the various factors particular to each group history. Kumi-daiko groups that participate at conferences such as the North American Taiko

Conference are exposed to a wide range of kumi-daiko musical information and influences from around the continent and Japan. This contributes to each group's musical development.

CHAPTER 2: QUANTIFYING AND QUALIFYING CANADIAN KUMI-DAIKO

During joint discussions at the 2005 North American Taiko Conference held in Los Angeles, some of the current issues that occupy kumi-daiko ensembles were evident in the similar accounts of groups that struggle with membership retention, the difficulties of acquiring and maintaining a rehearsal space, and the problems of organizational structures. These were similar to what I had encountered with Vancouver groups over the years. I wished to further examine these issues with Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles and also broaden my investigation to include a look at membership, JC community involvement, and group repertoire. I assembled a survey to gather an idea of the numbers and natures of Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles. The questions in the survey focused on group structure and philosophy, instructions, connections to the Japanese Canadian community, membership details (especially around ethnicity and gender), numbers and types of drums, rehearsal space issues, and repertory. Kumi-daiko groups across Canada show varying degrees of support from their local Japanese Canadian community and the National Association of Japanese Canadian (NAJC) agency. Many groups have a strong connection to the Japanese Canadian community, often evident with cultural centres that support the groups by offering affordable (or free) practice spaces. Most groups have at least a small Japanese Canadian membership. My findings are assembled in a table format (see page 61) to give an across the board look at different groups. Membership issues are in constant flux and the numbers of members involved in the groups changed within a few short months of obtaining the information. The survey table gives a momentary glimpse of data gathered between the end of 2005 and early 2006. I also included brief group ethnographies to summarize information gathered from surveys or

interviews that could not be presented in the table form. The groups are listed chronologically by the year of their formation under provincial sections that begin with British Columbia on the west coast and travels across Canada. This geographical/chronological organizational format may help to highlight the dissemination of kumi-daiko in Canada, as British Columbia was the place of arrival for early Japanese immigrants, the development of early JC communities, and the first kumi-daiko ensemble.

My examination of group repertory was intended as a glimpse into the musical background of performance pieces. I noted some apprehension from groups around the question of repertoire, which undoubtedly stems from copyright concerns. There is a history of “giving songs” from established ensembles to emerging kumi-daiko ensembles, especially during taiko teaching workshops. This results in groups having similar repertoire. The issue of copyright emerged with Oedo Sukeroku Taiko’s letter in 1999, asking other kumi-daiko groups not to perform their compositions and not to use their particular style of slant stand drumming without direct permission (Wong 2004). I have noted those kumi-daiko compositions (mostly from Osuwa Daiko and Oedo Sukeroku Taiko) that have been disseminated widely, which I refer to as “classics.” I have also investigated the dissemination of Seiichi Tanaka’s “Matsuri” across Canada. My findings, including some variations by different groups, are presented in chapter five. Generally, many of the groups emphasized their efforts to expand their repertoire of new compositions.

My findings show that the Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles that do emerge remain. It is quite rare for groups to disband. Toronto Suwa Daiko, a landmark group in Toronto, experienced some changes that manifested with a name change to Yakudo. Wasabi

Daiko of Toronto dissolved after eleven years, only to reappear as Raging Asian Women (RAW) several years later. Later, there was a splintering off from RAW and Inner Truth Taiko Dojo emerged. The data shows that once a group is born, it may experience reincarnations, but there is a distinct sense of continuity. The spirit of the group can endure with the drums, group philosophy, or the transmission of repertory.

Is there a difference between Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles and the American groups? That was the question I asked of the Canadian groups at the end of the survey or interview. A majority of players said there was little difference between the Canadian groups and the American groups and many simply did not know enough about the other groups to be able to offer an opinion. Virtually all the groups cited Kodo as a great influence and many groups have connections to groups in Japan, where certain members may have received taiko instruction and acquired repertoire. One point that several people commented upon was the perception that Canadian groups appeared less flamboyant than their American counterparts. Perhaps it was that the Canadians were more serious and conservative on stage, while the Americans were exuberant and flashy (Shikaze: p.c., 2005). Uyehara Hoffman recalls transmitting the idea of being stern and serious, like Kodo, to other groups when they gave workshops, as well as emphasizing the fact that everyone should drill and work really hard (p.c., 2005).

My own sense is that the Canadian groups from Vancouver were more political in their group philosophy than other groups across Canada. This may stem from Katari Taiko's affiliation with the Asian American movement in their formative days and their left-of-centre politics. Groups such as Katari Taiko, Sawagi Taiko, RAW and Arashi Daiko had specific mandates that they implemented to define themselves. Katari Taiko

was formed by community activists who advocated collective structures to other kumi-daiko groups. Uyehara Hoffman explained that because of the emphasis on discussing taiko-related issues and concerns around representation, Canadian groups are ahead of American groups, who seem to be engaging in these very issues at the moment. She recalls trying to stimulate discussion in developing groups by asking questions: “What do you believe as a group? How are you going to structure yourselves? Is there somebody you think should be leader or do you want to work as a group? We posed all these questions to them because we had discussion as well as the workshop part. So we did try to pass that on” (p.c., 2005).

Vancouver groups display a sense of creativity. Katari Taiko, Sawagi Taiko, and Uzume Taiko were all interested in pushing the boundaries of kumi-daiko. They were willing to collaborate with other performance artists such as theatre and dance groups, and make use of poetry and vocal works. Uzume Taiko has collaborated with a cross cultural assortment of musicians from bagpipes to classical violinists. LOUD can be considered experimental because of their use of electric guitar within the ensemble. RAW has also collaborated with cross cultural artists, as they seek to use kumi-daiko in innovative formats. East coast groups appeared to be aligned more with the Japanese groups than their American counterparts. There is strong affiliation to seek out the traditional music of Japan, emphasizing music rather than the flashy entertainment style of kumi-daiko that is associated with American groups.

Certain Canadian features are evident, most notably with Arashi Daiko, who has a francophone representation within their membership and the ability to be bilingual when communicating with their audience. Their director, Mikio Owaki, is in fact trilingual,

easily switching from Japanese to French and English. Arashi Daiko performed several numbers during a televised French Canadian cooking show where Owaki, a formidable sushi chef, gave instructions for sushi making to the accompaniment of taiko drumming from Arashi Daiko. Katari Taiko has referenced First Nations arts and culture by using aboriginal designs in their Shi Shi Mai (lion) mask (see DVD – chapter 1) made by Koko and Garbanzo of “Snake in the Grass Moving Theatre.” The mask is considerably larger than its Japanese counterpart, a distinctive North American trait (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

This brings up the point of Canada’s multiculturalism and how this might be reflected in kumi-daiko groups. California groups were described as being very similar to each other by virtue of their close proximity and interaction. Canadian kumi-daiko groups tend to be geographically spread out with less interaction between the different regions. Ontario has a strong Osuwa Daiko connection that is not seen anywhere else in Canada. Nagata discusses these aspects of Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles:

Definitely in the United States, it seems like there is that huge influence from Tanaka-san. Everyone has kind of, in one way or another, been influenced by that. I think in Canada, groups haven't been so heavily influenced by that style. I see there is diversity in the different groups across Canada. I think groups in Canada sometimes look more toward Japan for their source than do American taiko groups. And perhaps the other thing is, in Canada, maybe there is such a strong multicultural influence in Canada - that a lot of our source comes from within Canada too. Consciously or unconsciously, we are exposed to native drummers, especially in Toronto - we are exposed to tabla drummers and African drummers and you can't help but not be somehow influenced by that too. I think less so in America because in America, you're American. It's a big melting pot, generally speaking. In Canada, diversity is much more apparent. (Nagata: p.c., 2005)

British Columbia

Katari Taiko (Vancouver - 1979)

Katari Taiko's formation and development has been documented in previous pages. The group continues as a non-profit folk society and has a management team, but still engages in collective processing. The group has an apprenticeship program that lasts for two years. New recruits must show commitment, punctuality and maintain regular attendance. Katari Taiko continues to provide workshops and assistance to developing kumi-daiko groups. The group is presently engaged in issues of membership retention and recruitment (Woo: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The drums are owned by Katari Taiko as a group and the majority have been purchased.

Repertoire: Katari Taiko performs traditionally based repertoire and kumi-daiko classics that includes "Ashura" (Los Angeles Kinnara Taiko), "Shi Shi Mai" (lion dance learned from SFTD and developed by Katari Taiko), "Matsuri" (Tanaka's piece), and "Miyake." "Hiryu Sandan Gaeshi" (Osuwa Daiko) and "Yodan" (Oedo Sukeroku Taiko) have both been retired. Some Katari Taiko pieces that have been disseminated elsewhere include: "Oedo" and "Mountain Moving Day" (both composed by John Endo Greenaway) (Woo: p.c., 2005).

Uzume Taiko (Vancouver - 1988)

Former Katari Taiko members Eileen Kage, Leslie Komori, and John Endo Greenaway formed Uzume Taiko in 1988. They were Canada's first professional kumi-daiko ensemble and are a non-profit society with a management team. Founding

members have all departed and the ensemble continues with Bonnie Soon, Boyd Seiichi Grealy, Naomi Kajiwara, and Jason Overy. The group also features different musicians on melodic instruments. The group's philosophy is to promote the artistic development of taiko music in Canada and to educate their audiences about taiko music and its history in Canada. Soon emphasizes that discussions about ethnicity and taiko (such as the fact that not all of the members are Japanese, but that everyone is Canadian) are encouraged in their school performances. One of the challenges for Uzume Taiko, as is the case with most other professional kumi-daiko ensembles, is financial compensation for the many hours that the musicians put into their artistic endeavors (Soon: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The Uzume Taiko Drum Group Society owns the drums with the exception of those made by Soon. Soon has refined the usage of drums made from pvc plastic sewer pipes that serve as an affordable body for nagadou drums. These are ideal for constructing cheap drums for practice purposes, and for newly emerging groups who have yet to acquire taiko drums. She has shared her drum making skills with other developing groups. Uzume Taiko was instrumental in establishing the taiko studio that many of the Vancouver kumi-daiko ensembles share (Soon: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Uzume Taiko is actively engaged in creating new compositions. The group's focus is on performing new works for taiko and collaborating with other performing artists to develop and perform multidisciplinary and cross-cultural works. They have retired their version of "Matsuri" from performance, which has been transmitted to Sawagi Taiko and Uminari Taiko (Soon: p.c., 2005).

Sawagi Taiko (Vancouver - 1990)

Sawagi Taiko was formed in 1990. The group emerged as an offshoot of Katari Taiko and the three remaining founding members trained with Katari Taiko. The group currently has nine performing members. Membership is restricted to Asian women as Sawagi Taiko initially formed with the intention of performing at exclusive women's events and addressing feminist issues. The group operates as a collective and has a mandate to serve as a strong role model to other Asian women. Sawagi Taiko is a community-oriented group that is part of the JC, Asian Canadian and queer communities. They now perform at JC events, feminist and political rallies as well as select private gigs. They have run three apprenticeship programs (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The majority of the drums and equipment are home made and belong to individual members.

Repertoire: The bulk of their repertory is made up of original compositions. Classic kumi-daiko pieces include "Ashura" (Los Angeles Kinnara Taiko) and a unique version of Tanaka's "Matsuri" (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

Chibi Taiko (Vancouver - 1993)

Chibi Taiko was formed in the fall of 1993 and is Canada's first children's kumi-daiko ensemble. Chibi Taiko was founded by former Katari Taiko founding member, Shinobu Homma and assisted by Naomi Shikaze and Joyce Chong (both former Katari Taiko founding members). The group contains many of the children from former Katari Taiko members. Current instructors, apart from Homma, include Amy Lee and John Endo Greenaway. Presently, they have fifteen members, including their apprentices.

Chibi Taiko is a non-profit organization that strives for consensus and requires participation from parents of the members. Chibi Taiko has a strong connection to the JC community, performing at numerous community events. The issue for children's groups is the inevitability of membership maturing into adulthood and leaving the group (Homma: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Chibi Taiko has made most of their drums.

Repertoire: Traditional pieces performed by the group are "Matsuri" (Katari Taiko's version), "Ashura" (Los Angeles Kinnara Taiko), "Miyake" (Kodo), "Suwako Bayashi" (Osuwa Daiko), "Chibi Shi Shi Mai" (adapted from the traditional "Shi Shi Mai" lion dance, but with a mother and baby Shi Shi and a hip hop boy/girl). The group also has original compositions as part of their repertoire (Homma: p.c., 2005).

Toki Doki Taiko (Vancouver – early 90s)

Toki Doki Taiko started out from a series of workshops that John Endo Greenaway gave to taiko players in the early 90s. Endo Greenaway continues to play and perform with the group. Several members learned to play taiko in Japan. The group operates as a loose collective and allows members to play taiko. The group rents drums from Katari Taiko and also uses drums owned by Endo Greenaway for performance. The group plays many traditional pieces (this includes Tanaka's "Matsuri") and often writes their own arrangements for performance (Endo Greenaway: p.c., 2005).

LOUD (Vancouver - 1996)

LOUD, formed in 1996, is not a kumi-daiko ensemble, but presently a duo of taiko and electric guitar. Originally the band featured Eileen Kage and Leslie Komori, both seasoned players of the Vancouver kumi-daiko scene with a background as former members of Katari Taiko, and founders of Uzume Taiko and Sawagi Taiko. Komori was also a founding member of Wasabi Daiko. Kage and Komori brought their kumi-daiko experience into the forum of contemporary sounds, collaborating with guitarist Elaine Stef, who has been active in the Canadian alternative music scene. Komori left the group in 2002 and Kage and Stef have continued as a duo. LOUD is a professional group that has been performing for many community (a mix of JC, Asian, queer, and political organizations focused on issues of anti-oppression) related events. The NAJC has supported LOUD with funding (Kage: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Most of the taiko drums in LOUD are home made, constructed by Eileen Kage.

Repertoire: LOUD's repertory is comprised of original works with the exception of traditional folk songs, "Tokyo Ondo" and a polka adaptation of "Soran Bushi." The group is actively engaged in creating new compositions for their second CD (Kage: p.c., 2005).

Steveston Tera Taiko (Steveston - 2000)

Steveston Tera Taiko was founded in December of 2000 and originally called Steveston Buddhist Temple Taiko Group. The first workshop was given by Shinobu Homma and was directed at the Buddhist Church community. Shinobu Homma and Naomi Shikaze gave guidance and instructions to the group for about two and a half years.

Steveston Tera Taiko has a senior group made up of seven members and a beginners group of approximately twelve children. The group has continued under the leadership of Doug Masuhara and members from the senior group who also assist in teaching. The group is a recreational community group and religious doctrines are not imposed on members. The group is supported by the Buddhist Temple, but is open for anyone to join. Steveston Tera Taiko continues to develop and faces the same issue as the other children's group - children growing up (Masuhara: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The group makes most of the drums and their ownership remains with Steveston Tera Taiko. Drum making skills were acquired from Shinobu Homma and a group member's parent. They learned how to make plastic sewer drums from Bonnie Soon of Uzume Taiko and her partner, Ed Arteaga (Masuhara: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Repertory of traditional pieces and kumi-daiko classics includes "Renshu," "Matsuri" (Chibi Taiko's version), "Ashura" (L.A. Kinnara Taiko), "Taiko Bayashi" (a piece from Nagoya, Japan), and the "Badger's Song" (a Japanese traditional song) (Masuhara: p.c., 2005).

Uminari Taiko (Victoria - 2001)

Uminari Taiko was formed in 2001 with a workshop that Brad Lewis organized with the assistance of the Nikkei community of Victoria. Katari Taiko went to Victoria to give an introductory taiko workshop. Boyd Grealy from Uzume Taiko came and gave the group further taiko instruction. The group is also influenced by the Taiko Center of Los Angeles, through Uminari Taiko's Marcin Sawicki, who studied with Reverend Tom Kurai of the Taiko Center of L.A for several years. Reverend Tom Kurai has also visited

Victoria to teach the group. Uminari Taiko also attended workshops by Seiichi Tanaka, Tiffany Tamaribuchi, Kodo, and Art Lee. The group has a collective organization structure. Uminari Taiko receives support from the Victoria Nikkei Cultural Society through grants and has an ongoing connection with the Society. Uminari Taiko is involved with the JC community through their performance at JC events (Shepherd: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Uminari Taiko has built several plastic sewer pipe drums, as taught by Bonnie Soon. The group has also purchased drums and received grants from the JC community for the purchase of drums. Some drums also belong to individual members (Shepherd: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Their repertory includes about five pieces from the Taiko Center of L.A. “Matsuri” (Katari Taiko’s version),” Miyake,” and “Ashura” (Los Angeles Kinnara Taiko). Repertoire acquired from Reverend Tom Kurai of the Taiko Center of L.A. includes “Oni,” “Hajime,” “Aranami,” and “Shiawase” (Shepherd: p.c., 2005).

Yuaikai Ryukyu Taiko (Vancouver - 2002)

Yuaikai Ryukyu Taiko performs contemporary taiko, but different from Japanese kumi-daiko as it is based upon the Okinawan traditional music of *Eisa*. *Eisa* instruments are used such as the *paaranku* (a hand held frame drum) the shime and odaiko drums, and the *kane* (a hand held gong). *Eisa* is a folk music and dance that is performed for ceremonial purposes during the obon festival. The Okinawan group, Ryukyu Koku Matsuri Taiko decided to create a contemporary performance art form of dancing and drumming based on the ceremonial form of *Eisa* (Hanashiro: p.c., 2005).

Yuaikai Ryukyu Taiko evolved from the Eisa group that performed for the Okinawan Kenjin Kai's New Year celebration. Original members have studied Eisa and made use of videotapes. They also received musical instruction from a member of the Ryukyu Koku Matsuri Taiko, who taught them about seven dances from her group. Their performance debut was at the Nikkei 125th anniversary celebration. Following the encouragement received at the debut performance, members bore down to perform at the 2004 Powell Street Festival. The group has continued to perform and develop. The group is made up of mostly Okinawans and supported by the Okinawan Kenjin Kai. The Japanese Canadian community also supports the group through performance opportunities. A high school in Okinawa donated the drums to the Okinawan Kenjin Kai, who share the drums with the Ryukyu Taiko group. The group has a central focus to represent the Okinawan community through musical arts. The group operates as a collective. They presently are seeking a practice space for the winter season and practise outdoors during the summer (Hanashiro: p.c., 2005).

Their repertoire includes: "Miruku Munari" (contemporary piece in the Okinawan language), "Kariyushi" (contemporary with an Okinawan folk song style), "Kudaka" (a traditional piece with *sanshin*, a lute, and kane in it), "Shishi Gon Gon" (lion dance movements with contemporary odaiko playing), and "Endo" (an old song, but not a traditional piece), Kaze no Yuibito (a contemporary Okinawan piece with karate-like movements). Yuaikai Ryukyu Taiko performs a fair portion of Ryukyu Koku Matsuri Taiko's material and choreography, but is working to incorporate some traditional instruments, such as the *sanshin* and kane, in future compositions (Hanashiro: p.c., 2005).

Yamabiko Taiko (Kelowna - 2003)

Yamabiko Taiko was formed in 2003 and has close connections with the Kelowna Buddhist Temple. The group is focused on promoting the spirit of taiko drumming and bringing awareness of Japanese music to the people of the Okanagan. The group is affiliated with Kelowna Kasugai Sister City Association. Yamabiko has received assistance in their development from Doug Masuhara from Steveston Tera Taiko, and Bonnie Soon and Boyd Seiichi Grealy of Uzume Taiko. Under the guidance of Eri Uchida who was a member of Ponpoko Taiko in Japan, the group has performed at various events around the Okanagan in British Columbia.¹

Raiden Taiko (Kamloops - 2004)

Raiden Taiko was formed in 2004 after an introductory workshop received from Katari Taiko. The group has received additional workshops by Katari Taiko, Steveston Tera Taiko, and Art Lee. The group is affiliated with the Kamloops Japanese Canadian Association (KJCA) and the NAJC's Kamloops chapter. Raiden emphasizes a strong connection to the local JC community despite being a small population. A spirit of cooperation and participation underlies the Kamloops' community. The KJCA is one of the most active cultural groups in Kamloops and the local NAJC chapter participates on a local and national level. The group is supported through by the JC community through their support of fundraising efforts, attendance at performances and words of

¹Discover Nikkei [Online], available, <http://www.discovernikkei.org/en/resources/taiko/group.php?id=92&keyword=&keywordtype=any&name=yamabiko&city=&state=&country=&x=12&y=7>; accessed 23 December 2005.

encouragement. The group is dealing with accumulating equipment and funds as well as good instruction to insure the development of taiko skills (Tabata: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The group has made six of their nagadou drums and has bought several Japanese drums. Their drum making skills have been developed through drum making descriptions on web sites such as “Rolling Thunder”² in addition to written information from Katari Taiko. Written instructions on drum making are complemented by observing and assisting other drum makers (Tabata: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Their repertory of kumi-daiko classics includes Tanaka’s “Matsuri” (as transmitted by Katari Taiko), “Ashura” (Los Angeles Kinnara Taiko’s piece as taught by Katari Taiko), and “Renshu” (from Katari Taiko). The group has its own original compositions as well (Tabata: p.c., 2005).

Alberta

Kita No Taiko (Edmonton - 1986)

Kita No Taiko was formed in 1986. They received their first taiko workshop from Katari Taiko in 1985, but struggled to get started. Dan Kinoshita, a founding member, recalled the difficulties trying to build drums and move the group to the next level of commitment and skill. Kita No Taiko also received workshops from Kodo members (Yoshikazu and Yoko Fujimoto), Daihachi Oguchi, and a group from Hokkaido. Individuals, such as Dan Kinoshita, have studied in Japan. All other current members have come into the group through Kita No Taiko workshops, which lead to an apprenticeship program that can last from three months to a year. The organizational structure has changed over the years, but presently they have an executive/ board that

² *Rolling Thunder Taiko Resource* [Online], available: <http://www.taiko.com/resource/history.html>; accessed 15 July 2001.

streamlines the process. Major decisions are generally made by consensus, with Kinoshita and/or the executive occasionally making an “executive decision” (Kinoshita: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The drums are owned by the group. Forty per cent of their drums are home made. The first drums they made were based on the diagrams from Katari Taiko for the wine barrel drum construction. Kinoshita has a connection with a drum maker in Japan who has taught them some drum making skills. They make their own bolted shime drums (Kinoshita: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Traditionally based repertoire and taiko classics include “Miyake,” “Hachijo” (from Ondekoza in 1988 as taught by Ichigo Hirue), and “Wachi” (from Kodo’s Fujimoto who taught this piece originating from his hometown). They also learned Katari Taiko’s version of “Matsuri.” Kita No Taiko also has original compositions they perform (Kinoshita: p.c., 2005).

Todoroki Taiko (Calgary - 2003)

Todoroki Taiko was formed in Calgary in 2003, when many members were experiencing cabin fever. The group had received an introductory workshop from Kita No Taiko when the group had given a performance in Calgary. Founding member Ben Lim provided initial instruction lessons for the group, who now operate on a democratic model. All members have input and roles in the running and administration of the group. The group's repertoire comes from its various members, including several who have lived in Japan for various lengths of time. Todoroki Taiko is in the beginner’s stage of kumi-daiko development, but is receiving numerous performance requests. The

Calgary JC Association, as well as the Kaede Cultural Society, assists Todoroki Taiko with a free practice space and grants that enable the group to purchase drums. The group supports the local JC community through performance. Todoroki Taiko is dedicated to learning, evolving and performing the art of Japanese taiko drumming in the Calgary area while celebrating their Canadian Rocky Mountain heritage (Todoroki Taiko: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Todoroki Taiko's drums are manufactured taiko drums and some wine barrel drums, as well as drums on loan from members. They use rubber tire drumming for their practices (Todoroki Taiko: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire includes pieces they acquired from Japan such as "Matsuri Daiko," "Taiko Bayashi" (from Geifa-ken, Japan), "Himatsuri," "Ishikari" and others pieces that they are developing. The group hopes to compose and choreograph its own pieces in the near future (Todoroki Taiko: p.c., 2005).

Kaze-No-Rhythm (Lethbridge - 2004)

Kaze-No-Rhythm emerged out of a drum sponsorship from Lethbridge Twinning Society. The group then purchased drums from different taiko manufacturers in Japan. The group received a workshop from Kita No Taiko of Edmonton, Alberta. One of the members, Bryan Pereverseff, also received taiko instruction from Chuo Taiko Group of Towada, Japan and directs the Kaze-No-Rhythm for performances. Kaze-No-Rhythm is working to bring the Japanese culture of taiko drumming to the Lethbridge area. The JC community supports the group, through performance opportunities. They also receive a free practice and storage space courtesy of the Honppa Buddhist Temple. Maintaining

members past the one-year mark is the current challenge facing the group (Pereverseff: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Kaze-No-Rhythm repertory includes four pieces given to the group and six original compositions. They learned Katari Taiko's version of "Matsuri" as taught by Kita No Taiko (Pereverseff: p.c., 2005).

Manitoba

Hinode Taiko (Winnipeg - 1982)

Hinode Taiko was formed in 1982 inspired by the performance of Katari Taiko at the Folk-O-Rama festival. Members of the Japanese Canadian community were interested in starting a kumi-daiko groups and Katari Taiko gave two workshops conducted by Linda Uyehara Hoffman, Shinobu Homma, and John Endo Greenaway. Further workshops were given by PJ and Roy Hirabayashi (San Jose Taiko), Seiichi Tanaka, Kodo, Kevin Higa (LA Kinnara Taiko), Kenny Endo, Kiyoshi Nagata, and Soh Daiko. Hinode Taiko has a non-profit status and has a hierarchical structure on paper, but in practicality operate as a collective. They have a recreational group, Genki Daiko that was formed in 1998, which is a non-performing group made up of former members of Hinode Taiko, as well as people who have taken their taiko classes and/or people who do not wish to perform in public. Hinode Taiko has a strong connection to the JC community and is involved in community activities and events. Hinode Taiko's focus is to educate the JC community and broader public about the art of taiko drumming. The group also studies the art of taiko and raises monetary funds to fulfill their objectives (Okano: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Most of their drums are made by the group and their collection features twenty chu daikos and seven odaikos. Their drum making skills were acquired from Katari Taiko. The group practises at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre in Winnipeg (Okano: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Traditional taiko pieces and kumi-daiko classics performed are “Matsuri” (Katari Taiko’s version), “Ashura” (L.A. Kinnara Taiko), “Odaiko,” “Hiryu Sandan Gaeshi” (Osuwa Daiko), “Nimba Yatai,” “Yodan Uchi,” “Tsunami” (Tanaka), “Hachijo,” “Wachi Daiko” (Fujimoto/Kodo), “Ogi Matsuri” (Fujimoto/Kodo), and “Gezan Bayashi” (Fujimoto/Kodo). The group also has a number of original compositions in their performance repertoire (Okano: p.c., 2005).

Fubuki Daiko (Winnipeg - 1995)

Hiroshi Koshiyama, Naomi Guilbert, and Phoebe Man formed Fubuki Daiko in March of 1995 as a professional kumi-daiko ensemble. Present day members include Hiroshi Koshiyama, Naomi Guilbert, Kimi Guilbert, and Bruce Robertson. Fubuki Daiko is legally incorporated with Hiroshi Koshiyama and Naomi Guilbert as co-directors and sole shareholders (Koshiyama: p.c., 2005).

Koshiyama studied taiko in Japan and with Seiichi Tanaka of SFTD. Naomi Guilbert and Bruce Robertson also studied with Seiichi Tanaka. They have received workshops from Kenny Endo, Tiffany Tamaribuchi, and Jim Nakagawa and returned to San Francisco occasionally for further training with Seiichi Tanaka. There is also a student’s performing group, Fubuki Daiko Kagemusha, which is part of their apprenticeship program. Fubuki Daiko endeavors to maintain the spirit, tradition, and

philosophy of Seiichi Tanaka's taiko in Winnipeg and implement a *sempai-kohai* (teacher/student) hierarchy. The challenge for Fubuki Daiko is maintaining professional integrity when key members leave the group and finding new members willing to play taiko professionally when there is little financial gain (Koshiyama: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Fubuki Daiko has made the majority of their drums (drum making skills were acquired by Seiichi Tanaka of SFTD) featuring twenty chu daikos. The majority of their drums belong to the group (Koshiyama: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Fubuki Daiko's repertory is mostly comprised of original compositions. Traditional pieces that are performed are "Shi Shi Mai" (lion dance from the Wakayama school as taught by Kenny Endo), "Hiryu Sandan Gaeshi" (Osuwa Daiko), "Isami Goma" (Osuwa Daiko) and a variation of "Tsunami" (SFTD). Fubuki Daiko used to perform Seiichi Tanaka's "Matsuri" and Oedo Sukeroku Taiko's "Yodan-Uchi," but have dropped both pieces of music out of respect for Oedo Sukeroku Taiko's request that other kumi-daiko groups refrain from performing their music without direct permission (Koshiyama: p.c., 2005).

Ontario

Toronto Suwa Daiko (Toronto 1982 - 1992)

Toronto Suwa Daiko was a landmark group in Eastern Canada that was formed in 1982; a year after Osuwa Daiko had performed in Toronto at Caravan, a multicultural festival. Osuwa Daiko had generated a great deal of interest from the JC community who then invited Daihachi Oguchi to return and give workshops. The group formed as a community group that was based at the JC Cultural Centre. Toronto Suwa Daiko was a

licensed branch of Osuwa Daiko and was considered a daughter group (Nagata: p.c., 2005).

Some of the repertory that Toronto Suwa Daiko had accrued from Osuwa Daiko include “Hiryu Sandan Gaeshi,” “Suwa Ikazuchi,” “Isami Goma,” “Suwa Onbashira Kiyari Daiko,” “Misha Guji Yabusame,” Oguchi’s solo piece called “Ashura,” “Daikagura,” and many other songs that belong to the vast repertoire of Osuwa Daiko (Nagata; p.c., 2005).

Wasabi Daiko (Toronto 1984 – 1995)

Wasabi Daiko was formed by former members of Katari Taiko: Shinobu Homma, Lucy Komori, Leslie Komori, and Rick Shiomi. They were the only group in Ontario that performed the California Sukeroku style of kumi-daiko. The group had a similar group philosophy and collective processing as Katari Taiko. The group had significant membership changes and emerged as an inclusive group, but over time became an exclusively Asian group. The original members had left by the 90s, replaced by new members that had been trained within the group. During the 90s, the group developed into a queer identified membership. Wasabi Daiko has always been engaged in political activism through their support of Japanese Canadian Redress and other various organizations (Kobayashi; p.c., 2005).

Drums: The original members made their own drums from wine barrels.

Repertoire: Wasabi Daiko repertoire included Katari Taiko’s “Matsuri,” “Mountain Moving Day,” and “Renshu.” The group also performed “Miyake,” Oedo Sukeroku Taiko’s “Yodan-Uchi” and their original compositions (“Protractor” and “Freedom Song”), which has migrated with RAW and Inner Truth Taiko Dojo. Despite the group’s

dissolution in 1995, Wasabi Daiko left an impact in Ontario with their musical style, group philosophy, and repertoire (Homma: p.c., 2005).

Oto-Wa Taiko (Ottawa - 1989)

Oto-Wa Taiko was formed in 1989, initially with the help of monthly instructions from Terry and May Yasunaka, and Masa Munemori of Arashi Daiko in Montreal. Dave Sunahara of Edmonton's Kita No Taiko moved to Ottawa and became a teacher figure for the group for a while, teaching repertory and drum making skills. The group later made contact with Toronto Suwa Daiko for instruction and acquired some Osuwa Daiko repertoire. Oto-Wa Taiko has a student group and is considering the launch of a children's group due to the number of children within their taiko community. The group has received support from the NAJC with grant funds. The group's primary interest is to enjoy taiko and to transmit the understanding and appreciation of Japanese culture to the broader community, especially to youth through school performances. The group eagerly pursues taiko as a vehicle to fulfill the NAJC mandate to use endowment funds towards community rebuilding in the light of internment (Watanabe: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Oto-Wa Taiko has made half of their drums from the wine barrel model. They acquired their drum making skills through Sunahara from Kita No Taiko and from a workshop they did with Mark Miyoshi. The other half of their drums were purchased from taiko manufacturers (Watanabe: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Repertoire received from Toronto Suwa Daiko includes "Suwa Ikazuchi," "Ama No Naru Tatsuo Daikagura," "Isami Goma," and "Hiryu Sandan Gaeshi" (learned from Arashi Daiko). Oto-Wa Taiko has repertoire that they learned from Kodo's

Fujimoto Yoshikazu, which includes “Wachi Daiko,” “Gezan Bayashi,” and “Ogi Matsuri.” They also perform “Matsuri Daiko” (as taught by Arashi Daiko), “Morioka Sansa” (a traditional piece), “Zoku,” “Miyake,” “Yatai Bayashi,” and “Hachijo” (as taught by Sunahara when Ondekoza gave Kita No Taiko a workshop). The group also has several compositions from members of the group (Watanabe: p.c., 2005).

Yakudo (Toronto - 1992)

Yakudo is the current incarnation of the original Toronto Suwa Daiko, who branched away to create their own music, releasing a CD in 1992. They are a non-profit organization with a board of directors. Yakudo has an apprenticeship program and rehearses at a professional rehearsal space. The group’s objective is to promote awareness of taiko and Japanese culture through the performance and teaching of taiko (Yakudo: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The group has purchased all their drums from traditional drum makers in Japan. Four of the drums were donated by the JCCA.

Repertoire: Some of the classic Osuwa Daiko compositions that they have inherited includes “Suwa Ikazuchi,” “Yabusame,” “Isami Goma,” “Hiryu Sandan Gaeshi,” “Kiyari Daiko,” “Daikagura, Hara Kuri Bayashi,” and “Suwa Onbashira Amano-terasu Daikagura.” The group also performs “Miyake.” The group also has a large repertoire of their own compositions created by group members (Yakudo: p.c., 2005).

Do Kon Daiko (Burlington - 1995)

Do Kon Daiko was formed in 1995 at a karate dojo for their members who were interested in taiko and asked Kiyoshi Nagata for regular instructions to get started. The group also participated in two Kodo workshops over the years. Group members operate by collective consensus. They support the JC community by performing at many special events. Do Kon Daiko members participate in kumi-daiko for the enjoyment of taiko drumming and attempt to reflect this spirit in their performance. Acquiring equipment and maintenance of instruments are concerns that occupy the group (Narula: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The group is borrowing an odaiko (from the Rotary Club) that was presented as a gift by Mr. Ken Nakazawa (a citizen of Burlington's twin city, Itabashi) who purchased the drum from Miyamoto Unosuke Taiko. Six drums are home made whiskey barrels constructed by one of their Karate instructors. A higher pitched drum was made by a local drum maker. The barrel drums and the high pitched drum belong to the group.

Repertoire: Do Kon Daiko has repertoire that includes traditionally based pieces such as "Ogi Matsuri," "Gezan Bayashi," "Miyake," "Yatai Bayashi," "Ayako Mai Kashiwazaki," "Matsuri Daiko," and "Yamada Hanya Bushi". Kumi-daiko classics include "Zoku" (from Kodo), "Suwa Onbashira Keyari Daiko" and "Isami Goma" (both from Osuwa Daiko). Their repertoire is enhanced with numerous original compositions by Kiyoshi Nagata (Narula: p.c., 2005).

Isshin Daiko (Toronto - 1996)

Isshin Daiko was formed in 1996 with the impetus of Reverend Grant Ikuta of the Toronto Buddhist Church, who approached Kiyoshi Nagata to help start a kumi-daiko

group at the church. Reverend Ikuta was interested in the formation of a kumi-daiko group as a way to reach younger members of the church and open up the church to the broader community. A children's kumi-daiko group, **Jyakurai** (formed in 2001), is also under the auspices of the Toronto Buddhist Church. Isshin Daiko received instruction from Nagata and workshops from Oto-Wa Taiko, Kodo and Leonard Eto. They have an apprenticeship program that lasts two years, which is divided into a six months probationary period followed by the apprenticeship stage. Isshin Daiko operates as a collective with a philosophy to "play with one mind, one heart." Isshin Daiko, as church members, has performed for many JC community events. The group strives to keep experienced members engaged with new material while they teach existing repertoire to newer members (Isshin Daiko: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Eight of their drums belong to the Toronto Buddhist Church and the remainder belongs to Isshin Daiko. A former Buddhist Church member made four of these drums. All the other drums have been bought from Japan and the U.S.

Repertoire: Traditionally based pieces include "Ogi-Matsuri," (arranged by Kiyoshi Nagata), "Kiyari," "Gezan-Bayashi," "Isami Goma," "Miyake" (partly arranged for Isshin Daiko by Kiyoshi Nagata and Wasabi Daiko), "Zoku," (based on an arrangement by Leonard Eto), "Renshu" (arranged by Shinobu Homma), and "Yatai Bayashi" (arranged by Kiyoshi Nagata) (Isshin Daiko: p.c., 2005).

Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble (Toronto – 1998)

Kiyoshi Nagata formed his professional ensemble in 1998. The ensemble is built around a core membership made up of Nagata, Aki Takahashi and Heidi Chan. He has a

professional manager and a booking agent in Italy, but personally attends to much of the administrative work. Nagata is interested in exploring the possibilities that exist within the framework of wadaiko by examining the Japanese traditional forms of music. One of the challenges that Nagata faces is asking his musicians to commit to the high demands of performance bookings that are years in advance (Nagata: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Nagata owns all of the drums in his ensemble. Many of these drums were bought from taiko manufacturers in Japan, while others he received from his taiko sponsors. He also made fifteen of his miya daikos from staved barrels for use only at his University of Toronto and Royal Conservatory classes. The University of Toronto recently awarded the taiko class with grant money towards the purchase of kumi-daiko drums from Japan. He learned how to make his drums from Osuwa Daiko's main player Tomomatsu Mizawa, who would make hand carved drums for Daihachi Oguchi (Nagata: p.c., 2005).

Traditionally based repertoire: "Gezan Bayashi" is a piece that Nagata learned from Kodo, which he rearranged. "Ogi Matsuri Daiko" from Sado is another piece that Nagata has brought to the performance stage. The bulk of the ensemble's repertoire is original compositions created by Nagata (Nagata: p.c., 2005).

Raging Asian Women Taiko Drummers (RAW) (Toronto - 1999)

Raging Asian Women (RAW) Taiko Drummers was formed in 1999 after the dissolution of Wasabi Daiko. Several former members of Wasabi Daiko decided to form another taiko group (which would become RAW) using the drums and repertoire of Wasabi Daiko (Lem: p.c., 2005). Membership has changed over the years and members from Wasabi Daiko no longer remain in the group. RAW has attended workshops from

Kodo and received instruction from senior members of RAW. Aki Takahashi and Heidi Chan, both members of Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble have provided instruction to the group. RAW is comprised from a group of East and Southeast Asian women who carry on the North American taiko drumming tradition while promoting social justice. RAW believes in the importance of building community, being a voice for East Asians, and raising awareness around the histories and struggles that Asian people have had in North America (RAW: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Present day members of RAW have made all their drums (with the exception of the shime) from wine barrels.

Repertoire: Traditionally based repertoire includes Katari Taiko's "Matsuri," "Yodan-Uchi" (Oedo Sukeroku Taiko), "Mountain Moving Day", "Miyake", and "Isami Goma" (as taught by Aki Takahashi). The group is interested in cross collaborating with other musicians and artists (Hung: p.c., 2005).

Inner Truth Taiko Dojo (Toronto – 2004)

Inner Truth Taiko Dojo was formed in 2004 by Brenda Joy Lem, a former member of Wasabi Daiko and a founding member and teacher for the first five years to members of RAW. The name INNER TRUTH is a translation of "Chung Fu" which comes from the I Ching symbol of wind over lake. Two solid lines on top, two broken lines in the middle, and two solid lines on the bottom represent the symbol. Open in the middle, like a drum, it indicates a heart free of prejudices and therefore open to truth. Lem distinguishes Inner Truth Taiko Dojo from a kumi-daiko group and emphasizes that the taiko that she teaches is set in the context of a dojo integrating

internal energy work and meditation to create a body centred spiritual taiko practice. Self-awareness and understanding is developed through the practice of taiko drumming. The group is inclusive to all people who are interested in a dedicated practice. Lem is working with a core group of her taiko students for performance and is at a stage of musical exploration. A kumi-daiko group may develop in the future as Inner Truth Daiko Dojo is in an early stage of development (Lem: p.c., 2005).

Drums: The drums of Inner Truth Taiko Dojo are mostly home made, constructed by members of Wasabi Daiko. When Wasabi Daiko disbanded, the drums were used by RAW. Currently, Lem uses these drums with Inner Truth Taiko Dojo. Some drums have been purchased to complement the home made drums.

Repertoire: Repertoire is based upon Wasabi Daiko pieces that Lem learned with Wasabi Daiko's original members and includes "Renshu," "Matsuri," "Yodan-Uchi," "Miyake," "Protractor," "Freedom Song," and "Mountain Moving Day". Lem is currently incorporating taiko with the jazz sounds of Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald (Lem: p.c., 2005).

Quebec

Arashi Daiko (Montreal – 1983)

Arashi Daiko was founded in 1983, largely by the instigating efforts of Terry Yasunaka, May Yasunaka, and Rei Nakashima. The group emerged from a workshop given by Naomi Shikaze of Katari Taiko, as an activity of the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre of Montreal (JCCCM). She taught the group weekly for several months while she lived in Montreal and Katari Taiko also gave workshops (Shikaze: p.c., 2005). They also received a workshop from Toronto Suwa Daiko, Katari Taiko, as well as Kodo. Arashi

Daiko holds three public workshops during the autumn season. Arashi Daiko continues to practice at the JCCCM. The group in turns supports the Centre as much as possible, through performances and donations. Mikio Owaki, present day director, joined the group in 1987. Group philosophy, community work and commitment are important issues for the group. Mikio Owaki describes the group as an ambassador of Japanese culture. Arashi Daiko's philosophy of respect, consideration, and appreciation are a central focus for the group. The group is under the umbrella of the JCCCM as a non-profit organization and operates as a collective (Owaki: p.c., 2005).

Drums: Arashi Daiko owns the drums. One of the drums is from the Japanese consulate from the Expo (held in the 70s) Foundation. Most of their drums are from taiko manufacturers in Japan. Their very large odaiko is an okedou made from a workshop participant (Owaki: p.c., 2005).

Repertoire: Their repertory of traditionally based music and kumi-daiko classics is extensive and includes "Hiryu San Dan Gaeshi" and "Isami Goma" (as taught by Toronto Suwa Daiko), "Matsuri" (Katari Taiko's version as taught by Naomi Shikaze, which they no longer perform), "Oedo" (from Katari Taiko), "Tsunami" (SFTD), "Ogi-Matsuri," "Wachi Daiko," "Yose Daiko," "Miyake," and "Yatai Bayashi." Arashi Daiko also has several compositions by group members and some works in progress (Owaki: p.c., 2005).

TABLE OF KUMI-DAIKO SURVEY

	A	B	C	D	E
2	Group	Year	Group	Age Range	Members
3					
4	Arashi Daiko (Montreal, PQ)	1983	community	25 - 50+	11
5	Chibi Taiko (Vancouver, BC)	1993	children	8 - 19	15
6	Do Kon Daiko (Burlington, ON)	1995	community	17 - 59	5
7	Fubuki Daiko (Winnipeg, MB)	1995	professional	34 - 41	4
8	Fubuki Daiko (student)		student	14 - 55	20
9	Hinode Taiko (Winnipeg, MB)	1982	semi-professional	n/a	14
10	Inner Truth Taiko Dojo (Toronto, ON)	2004	taiko dojo	20s - 40s	5
11	Isshin Daiko (Toronto, ON)	1996	Buddhist	25 - 57	9
12	Jyakurai (Toronto, ON)	2001	Buddhist children	8 - 18	11
13	Katari Taiko (Vancouver, BC)	1979	community	20s - 60s	7
14	Kaze-No-Rhythmn (Lethbridge, AB)	2004	community	16 - 70	22 - 27
15	Kita No Taiko (Edmonton, AB)	1986	mateur profession	19 - 50s	18
16	Kiyoshi Nagata Ensemble (Toronto, ON)	1998	professional	26 - 36	9
17	LOUD (Vancouver, BC)	1996	professional	40s	2
18	Oto-Wa Taiko (Ottawa, ON)	1989	community	30 - 74	12
19	Raging Asian Women (Toronto, ON)	1999	women's group	29 - 60	6
20	Raiden Taiko (Kamloops, ON)	2004	community	17 - 60s	7
21	Sawagi Taiko (Vancouver, BC)	1990	women's group	30s - 60s	9
22	Steveston Tera Taiko (Steveston, BC)	2000	Children	6 - 22	19
23	Todoroki Taiko (Calgary, AB)	2003	community	31-58	9
24	Toki Doki Taiko (Vancouver, BC)	early 90s	community	n/a	4
25	Uminari Taiko (Victoria, BC)	2001	community	30s-50s	12
26	Uzume Taiko (Vancouver, BC)	1988	professional	30-48	4
27	Yakudo (Toronto, ON)	1992	professional	14-40	16
28	Yamabiko Taiko (Kelowna, BC)	2003	community	17-52	15
29	Yuaikai Ryukyu Taiko (Vancouver, BC)	2002	community	19-57	15
30					

TABLE OF KUMI-DAIKO SURVEY

	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N
2	JC	JC Hapa*	AC	Other	Male	Female	Other Drums	Odaiko	Chu-daiko
3									
4	6	0	1	4	5	6	20-25		
5	3	12	0	1	6	9	2 uchiwa	3	6
6	1	0	0	4	2	3		1	6
7	1	2	0	1	2	2		3	20
8	0	2	1	17	7	13			
9	5	4	0	5	30%	70%	3 okedous	7	20
10	0	0	3	2	0	5			4
11	4	0	1	4	4	5	6 okedous, 1 hire, 2 uchiwa		7
12	9	0	1	1	6	5	6 okedous, 1 hira, 2 uchiwa		7
13	3	1	1	2	2	5		2	6
14	7	0	0	15 - 20	8	14		3	2
15	3	2	4	9	50%	50%	6 okedous	2	12
16	5	0	2	2	4	5	1 eisa, 6 uchiwas, 7 okedou	1	21
17	1	0	0	1	0	2			3
18	8	1	1	2	7	5	3 okedous	2	15
19	0	0	6	0	0	6		1	4
20	4	2	0	1	3	4		0	7
21	2	4	3	0	9	0		1	6
22	15	11	1	1	7	12		3	8 pvc
23	0	1	3	6	3	7		1	5
24	0	1	0	3	2	2			
25	2	2	2	6	5	7		1	6
26	1	1	1	1	2	2		1	7
27	7	3	2	4	6	6	1 okedou	1	12
28	4	3	0	8	6	9	several practise pvc drums	1	4
29	10 Okinawans	0	1	2	5	7	15 paaranku	6	
30									

TABLE OF KUMI-DAIKO SURVEY

	O	P	Q	R
2	Ko-daiko	Shime	Practise	Space
3				
4			3 x a week in summer, 1 x a week in winter	JC Centre
5	1	2	1 x a week	JC Centre
6			1 x a week	Karate Centre
7	2	4	3 x a week	Anglican Church
8				
9	2	6	2 -3 times a week	JC Centre
10	3	3	2 x a week	Kung Fu Club
11	1	2	1 x a week	Buddhist Church
12	1	2	1 x a week	Toronto Buddhist Church
13		4	3 x a week	Uzume Taiko Space
14		4	1 x a week	Buddhist Temple
15		7	2 x a week	JC Hall
16	2	6	2 x a week	Rehearsal studio
17	2	1	1 -2 a week	Residential home
18	6	4	1 x a week	Hockey ring
19	2	1	2 x a week	Cabbagetown Community Arts Centre
20	0	2	2 x a week	Judo Centre
21	1	2	6 x a month	Uzume Taiko Space
22	0	3	1 x a week	Steveston Buddhist Temple
23	2	0	1-2 x week	Calgary JC Association
24			1 x a week	Uzume Taiko Space
25		2	1 x a week	Judo Dojo
26		3	3-4 x a week	Uzume Taiko Space
27	4	2	3 x a week	professional rehearsal studio
28	0	2	2 x a week	Kelowna Buddhist Temple
29		4	2 x a week in summer, 2 x a month in winter	outdoors
30				

CHAPTER 3: AN ORGANOLOGY MOMENT

How can one talk about music without discussing the instruments from which the sounds are produced? Nothing is more important to taiko players than the “big drum” itself. Japanese drums are linked to the spirit world in Buddhism and Shintoism (Japan’s indigenous animistic religion) throughout Japanese history, placing them in a position of veneration. However, traditional drum makers of Japan have not received such honors, belonging to a former outcast group in Japan known as the Burakumin. Japanese drum makers have a long history that is shaped by sociological issues of caste systems and specialized hereditary occupations. The origins of Japanese drums and the caste system that relegated the Burakumin to outcast status may be traced back to India and this will be examined in this chapter. From drum makers social systems and their drums, Japanese drum organology will be approached. The drum-making discussion extends to address the fact that many taiko drummers in America and Canada, out of financial considerations, have become drum makers, reinforcing the significance of drums for these musicians. Knowing how to construct taiko drums from wine barrels has been an invaluable skill for kumi-daiko groups outside of Japan.

Various organological taxonomies around Japanese drums have led to some confusion as to the interchangeable names for some drums. Drum maker’s taxonomies serves as a practical guide to describing the different drums produced. This organology section will conclude with an update on taiko drum manufacturing. Contemporary taiko drums are being designed to serve the musical needs of kumi-daiko groups exploring new musical territories.

Taiko drums have spiritual functions stemming from Buddhism and Shintoism. Historically, only men who were granted special permission by priests performed taiko drumming for special ceremonial occasions.¹ The beating of the taiko is believed to invoke deities. It is not uncommon for drums to be considered blessed by the gods or possessed by demons in the context of Shintoism, which perceives deities to exist everywhere. Shinto folk music and festival drumming have an important connection to kumi-daiko, as much of the traditional rhythms used in kumi-daiko are derived from these musical genres. Gan-Ei Onozato (with the well known stage name of Kiyonari Tosha), director of Nihon Taiko Dojo, comments on the spiritual reverence that traditional taiko players have for the drums. He refers to the necessity of being respectful towards the taiko as they have a spiritual essence. Tosha insists that while the animal from which the drum skin is derived is dead, the cells of the hide are alive. Acknowledging that the drums have a spirit, he urges taiko players to strike the drums fully conscious of that fact and to use the appropriate *bachi* (drums sticks) for specific types of taiko so as not to injure the spirit of the drum (p.c., 2005).

Socio-Historical Issue of Traditional Japanese Drum Makers

The Burakumin have been the exclusive makers of traditional drums in Japan for several centuries (Suzuki and Oiwa 1996; Asano: p.c., 2005). The hereditary occupation of drum-makers connects to the Burakumin social status as pariahs. The Burakumin (literally “people of the hamlet”) are a minority group within Japan. Up until 1871, the Burakumin were decreed a pariah caste (outcast with a literal sense of untouchability)

¹¹”Taiko Resource: Taiko Overview and History.”

within Japan's socially stratified feudal system. Despite the popular beliefs of Japanese people, the Burakumin are not a separate and distinct racial group (Neary 1997).

Many societies around the world have some form of a stratified system that contains a pariah caste (Gould 1987). India's caste system is an indigenous social structure that is hierarchical and hereditary. Through trade, migration and the spread of Buddhism, selective aspects of the Indian social complex impacted and penetrated the cultures and social structures throughout much of Asia. Instances of genuine "untouchability" on the Indian model include the Burakumin of Japan, the *Paekchong* of Korea, and the *Ragyappa* of Tibet. Other pariah groups have also been reported in China², Burma, and Ceylon. Consequently, in the North and Northeast of Asia, there is ample evidence of pariah castes in forms analogous to that found in India (Gould 1987).

The spread of Buddhism, which contained Indian proscriptions against taking life and eating of meat, played a major role in establishing outcast traditions in other parts of Asia, especially in Japan (De Vos and Wagatsuma 1967). Japan's indigenous religion, Shinto, has at its central core belief a reverence towards nature that contains many rituals around growth and decay. While growth is viewed positively, decay is viewed negatively. As a result, dealings with blood and death are considered factors that lead to spiritual pollution (manifesting in bad karma) that is potentially contagious. Essentially, Shintoism had the kernel of a caste ethic in pre-Buddhist times. The arrival of Buddhism served to amplify and expand the ideas of pollution as well as legitimize the development of a pariah caste in a society receptive to such conditions (Neary 1997).

²Untouchability is not well pronounced in China due to a culture that emphasizes a status of achievement instead of a hereditary social status. The Chinese considered spiritual pollution to be a temporary situation. Buddhist inspired legal proscriptions concerning pariah groups had disappeared in the records by the 11th century (De Vos and Wagatsuma, 1967).

Origins of Japan's Caste System

During the Nara era (645 AD-794 AD), a social system of considerable complexity arose which would lay the groundwork for the development of a pariah caste. This complex hierarchical structure placed the emperor at the top; followed by the upper and lower aristocracy, and the peasants. At the very bottom of the structure were slaves and marginalized people (Neary 1997).

Similar to India, the origin of a caste system in Japan is interlinked with the development of hereditary occupational specializations, already in place by the ninth and tenth centuries. In the history of Japan, there are thousands of somewhat distinct social groups that can be described as classes, castes, guilds or occupationally specialized communities (De Vos and Wagatsuma 1967). The formation of hereditary occupations may have arisen as a response to Shinto's natural aversion to death, decay, and dirt as forms of pollution. As Buddhism³ permeated Japanese society during the Nara era, proscriptions around the killing and consumption of animals were legitimized. Concepts of pollution expanded to include the idea that one could be spiritually and physically defiled by contact with the bodies of dead animals and humans (Neary 1997). To insure the ongoing functioning of structured society, it became necessary for some people to work with blood, death, and burial. People engaged within this area were despised and strictly avoided by other members of society, leading to social segregation. It was at this point that leatherwork became an occupation to be abhorred. Occupations in the domain

³Buddhism was introduced to Japan during the 6th century and became widespread during the 8th and 9th centuries (De Vos and Wagatsuma 1967).

of spiritually polluted affairs were assigned to families in the lowest strata of society, possibly the ancestors of the Burakumin (Yoshino 1997).

Systemic exclusion of the Burakumin was institutionalized during the 17th century. The Tokugawa regime legally decreed the Burakumin as a pariah caste, implementing various policies that barred them from participating in the activities of normal society. Maps were drawn and circumscribed where the Burakumin were forced to live in segregated communities that were essentially ghettos. It was through the development of segregation that distinct communities of leather workers (including drum-makers) were set up on the marginal lands outside towns and villages (Neary 1997). In 1871 an emancipation decree was enacted to abolish the feudal restrictions that were placed upon the Burakumin. But the myths that led people to discriminate against the Burakumin persist. The Japanese government has laws that require citizens to be registered according to place of birth, which allows Japanese society to identify Burakumin descendents and maintain discriminatory practises (Suzuki and Oiwa 1996).

The international popularity of kumi-daiko ensembles is enabling the Burakumin to circumvent social norms and redefine new social positions through taiko drums. Taiko drums have remained a backbone for the Burakumin communities and the making of taiko drums is the most important industry for their community. Yet many Burakumin experience shame that is associated with their occupation. This is changing, as the Burakumin are empowered as drum-makers and drummers. Drums used in religious ceremonies are considered sacred instruments and performed by priests within Buddhism and Shintoism. Burakumin have been discouraged and in many areas of Japan, prohibited from playing the drums by law (Suzuki and Oiwa 1996). They are breaking

taboos that forbade them from playing taiko and transforming the shame associated with drum making into a newfound pride.

Ikari Taiko

In the face of the pervasive prejudice facing Burakumin, the kumi-daiko group Ikari (literally “anger”) Taiko was formed in 1985 in Osaka, Japan to challenge and combat the discrimination and the exclusion they experience. At the time of Ikari Taiko’s inception, many people thought the leader of the group, Akehiko Asai, had taken leave of his senses for his audacity to form a Burakumin taiko group. But Asai hoped that Ikari Taiko, in gaining recognition for drum-makers, would help to alleviate the difficulties that Burakumin experience (Suzuki and Oiwa 1996). Ikari Taiko, made up of exclusively Burakumin members, has gained increasing popularity. Asai envisions that one day, Burakumin can proudly declare themselves to be drum-makers and cast off their shame. He writes: “The taiko movement is very important. Taiko drum-makers are very easy to identify because one hundred percent of taikos are made in the buraku shops. Being a taiko-maker carries a stigma. We want to revise the negative image and say, “Listen to the beautiful sound. Who produced this?” One day we’d like to reach a point where we can say, “I’m Burakumin,” and other people will look at us with respect” (Suzuki and Oiwa 1996). Over the years, drum making has gained in prestige with its high level of craftsmanship. These days, discrimination against drum makers is seldom encountered (Asano: p.c., 2005).

History of the “Big Drums”

It is widely speculated that certain drums may have diffused from India to Japan, along with the transmission of social and cultural ideas. India’s drums include a wide variety, which are predominantly laced. Japanese drums feature diverse forms of tacked barrel shaped drums and laced drums. The Japanese laced drum, the *tsuzumi*, can be traced back to India. It is speculated that the term, *tsuzumi*, is a cognate from an ancient Indian drum called the *duddumbhi* (Malm 1986). The *tsuzumi* has an hourglass shape and is made from the hollowed out trunk of a cherry tree. One can further speculate that the *tsuzumi* has yet another connection to India, with respect to the fact that the drumhead is made of composite deerskin around the struck area (Malm 1986). This is a unique feature found in Indian drums such as the *mridanga* (Deva 1987). Further examples linking Japanese drums to India are those that have survived in the Shosoin⁴ from the early 8th century that are all hourglass shaped and commonly found in Northern India and Central Asia, perhaps an early forerunner of the *tsuzumi* (De Ferranti 2000).

The family of big barrel drums with tacked skinheads is unique to eastern Asia, originating from China. The earliest example of barrel shaped drums (*gu*) can be found at an excavation site with musical artifacts that date back to 1200 BC, the era of the Shang dynasty. At the excavation site (in the northern Henan province, nearby the town of Anyang. bronze barrel shaped drums (*tonggu*) that rested upright on four legs were found (Thrasher 2000). However, Sachs postulates that the nailed barrel drum originates somewhere between Mesopotamia and China. Ancient reliefs of giant Sumerian drums

⁴The Shosoin, built in 756 serves as a repository for objects from the Todai-ji temple and the Emperor Shomu’s household (Malm 1977).

with nailed skins date back to 3000 BC. The giant drums named *su gu galli*, 'the great bull's hide', stand approximately five to six feet with two players striking the drum with sticks. Due to the two-dimensional aspect of the relief, it is difficult to conclude whether this Sumerian drum is a frame drum, a barrel drum or a shallow drum (1940).

The barrel shaped drums in China are usually made of wood with animal skins (mostly cowhide) stretched over both ends and nailed. The drums are played by striking the skin with large sticks (Sachs 1940). The use of nailed heads on barrel drums might have originally been done for magical purposes, serving as a talisman for luck and victory (Sachs 1940). Of special interest is the large Chinese barrel drum, the *jingu*, "the kingdom drum," which originally functioned as a military instrument. The *jingu* can have a diameter of up to 6'6 feet (c. 130 cm) and rests in a frame with the drumhead facing upwards (Thrasher 2000).

There are instruments similar to ceramic drums that have been found in Japan dating back as far as 2500 BC (Takata 1998). The oldest physical evidence of Japanese taiko drums is a haniwa clay statue with the figure of a drummer with a drum slung over its neck, dating from the sixth or seventh century (Izumi). The oldest reputed use for taiko drums (both *nagadou* and *okedou* style) was on the battlefields by warlords of the 1500s, most notably Shingen Takeda, whose taiko drum is still preserved by Osuwa Daiko. It has three large holes cut into the side of a *nagadou* style drum to amplify the volume.⁵

⁵"Taiko Resource: Taiko Overview and History."

Drum Construction

Drum making is divided into two stages: the body construction, a very time consuming process, and the mounting of the skin. The barrel shaped drums, hollowed out from a single log with tacked on heads, are referred to as *nagadou*. Small barrel shaped drums (30 cm) can cost a thousand dollars and large drums (180 cm) can go as high as one hundred thousand dollars (Gould 1998). The scarcity of old-growth trees has contributed to the high price of nagadous. Types of wood used for the body are *keyaki* (zelkova serrata), chestnut, camphor, and sen. The drums are hollowed out from large trees and later skinned with the cowhide. Many taiko manufacturers⁶ order a specific sized diameter of log that must first dry out, taking about a year and a half. Then it is hollowed out and must sit drying for another three years before delivery to the taiko manufacturers. The cowhide is stretched taut by means of a hydraulic table. When a desirable tone is produced, the skin is left to dry and nailed down to the wooden barrel body of the drum by large tacks. The tacking of the drum skin onto the body of the drum is referred to as “*hyou*” (Gould 1998).

There are taiko manufacturers who are engaged in both stages of drum making. Asano Taiko Co., with a history that is 400 years long, has been going into the woods to cut specific trees for their drums. Asano Taiko Co. asserts that they have always made their drum bodies from a single tree log and that drums made from a hollowed out tree can last 100 or 200 years. Considering the longevity and hand craftsmanship of hollowed out drums, the higher cost of traditional drums is a small consideration (Asano: p.c., 2005).

⁶Mogi Hitoshi of the National Noh Theatre states that taiko drums are not made exclusively by the Burakumin as many taiko manufacturers deal only with the skin process, including the attachment of the skin to the body of the drum.

Taiko drums from Japan are so costly as to make them unaffordable by kumi-daiko groups. Early American kumi-daiko pioneers through great painstaking trial and error and sharing of information, displayed great ingenuity in creating taiko drums from recycled materials. Most Canadian and American kumi-daiko groups construct their own drums from wine barrels and cowhide while some entrepreneurs, such as Mark Miyoshi, have started their own contemporary taiko drum companies.

The history of the wine barrel taiko drums involves a few key figures with many kumi-daiko groups' cumulative experiences over several decades. The technique for construction of taiko drums from wine and whiskey barrels is credited to Reverend Masao Kodani of Los Angeles's Kinnara Taiko who pioneered this innovation in the late 1960s. These recycled staved oak barrels are dried, disassembled, reglued, sanded down, and painted or varnished. Stanley Morgan of Norwalk Taiko developed a means for disassembling barrels and regluing them, discarding the unsightly metal rings (Kim 2005). Cowhides that have been cut to size are soaked so that they can be stretched to serve as drum heads. Decades of drum building from oak wine barrels in kumi-daiko communities have generated considerable expertise and knowledge. Henry Nakata, of San Jose Taiko, assembled instructions and diagrams for the construction of the drums that has been disseminated to fledgling kumi-daiko groups throughout Canada and America (Kim 2005). Mayumi Takasaki discusses Katari Taiko's ordeal of learning how to make drums with the appropriate materials during the early 1980s when there was little drum making knowledge available:

It took awhile because we had to find the barrels. Luckily in those days Sweeny Cooperage was still around so we could get the barrels. We had to find out where to get the hides, how to deal with the hides, where to find tacks, what kind of tacks, we went through all kinds of carpet tacks, and it was just horrific. We all seemed to have

hides soaking in our bathtubs, taking them home in plastic garbage bags, trying to nail those tacks in, and it was just awful. The very first time we did it, we would leave the metal rings on the drums because we didn't know. Then you look at it and think, that doesn't look very good. So you know, it was just trial and error. Nobody really knew what they were doing. In those days there weren't a lot of taiko groups in North America yet. So we became a really tight community. (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

Taxonomy

Japanese barrel shaped taiko drums can be classified into categories by size, genre of musical performance, or body construction. Often, different classifications are used interchangeably, leading to some confusion. Referring to drums by their size categorization is a very general perspective, but one that is frequently used with designations of large, medium, and small. The big drums, *odaikos* (the largest having a diameter of 267 cm⁷) can be found throughout Japan, in addition to *chu daikos* (medium sized drums) and *ko daikos* (small sized drums).

Drum construction categories are more informative. According to drum construction classification system, drums can be identified by the way the head is fastened onto the drum: i.e. via rope tension (*shime*) or tacking (*hyou*). Exceptions to these two categories are shellless drums and drums without lug tension. Body construction is of two types, the hollowed out trunk style called *nagadou* and the stave construction called *okedou* (Gould 1998).

⁷This drum is made by Asano Drums Company.



Figure 1 (*Miya daiko* - courtesy of Uzume taiko)

The barrel drums make up the core of the kumi-daiko ensemble, as well as assorted percussion. Nagadou drums (30-180 cm) are used in sato-kagura and include *miya daiko* (Shinto temple drums rested on an ornamental stand; see figure 1). *Hira daiko* and *gaku daiko* (30-180 cm), are a shallow form of nagadou that is usually mounted like a snare drum and used in kabuki theatre and sato-kagura. *Hiratsuri* (35-75 cm) is the exact same drum as the hira daiko except that it is suspended on a stand and is used in gagaku imperial court music (Gould 1998; see figure 2).



Figure 2 (*Hiratsuri* – courtesy of Uzume Taiko)

Drums with rope tension include the *shime daiko* used in *noh* theatre and *sato-kagura*, which can also be referred to as *tsukeshime*, *fushime*, and *minyoushime* *daiko*. Drums with metal collars and lug tension bolts are available for higher pitch production. The *shime daiko* (see figure 3) is made from extra thick *keyaki* and skin producing a loud, high pitched and cutting sound (Gould 1998).



Figure 3 (*Shime daiko*)

The okedou daiko (30-180 cm) is made from Japanese cypress and cedar in a stave construction with rope tension to fasten the head (see figure 4). The counter hoop is made from metal for extra reinforcement. Because of their stave construction the okedou can be made larger and is cheaper than the nagadous. The *daibyoshi* daiko used in sato-kagura is a smaller version of okedou and is usually strung around the drummer's neck. The *uchiwa* daiko or *daimoku* daiko (30-36 cm) is a shell-less drum that accompanies Buddhist chants and is used by monks. All of these aforementioned drums are often used in kumi-daiko ensembles (Gould 1998).



Figure 4 (*Okedou* style of *odaiko*⁸ – courtesy of Arashi Daiko)

Important to mention are *tsuzumi*-style hourglass-shaped drums with rope tension. These include the various sizes of *ko-tsuzumi* (used in *noh* and *kabuki* theatre), *san-no-tsuzumi* (used in *gagaku* court music), and *o-tsuzumi* (used in *noh* theatre). *Ik-ko daiko* used in *gagaku* court music is part of the *tsuzumi* category and is played slung over the drummer's shoulder (Gould 1998).

Contemporary Issues in Drum Making

Kumi-daiko is affecting *taiko* manufacturers with the special needs related to the drums used in *kumi-daiko* performance. Asano Taiko Co., *taiko* manufacturers, has long produced three types of drum: the *nagadou*, the *okedou* and the *shimesuke*. As music boundaries expand and performance demands increase, so have the modifications to the

⁸ Arashi Daiko calls this drum an *ojime daiko*. It was made by Jean-Pierre Neveu (Arashi Daiko: p.c., 2006).

drums. Asano Taiko Co. points out that there are more players who desire different types of taiko to fit their musical form. As a result they are starting to construct new types of taiko and instruments with different designs (p.c., 2005). Asano Taiko Co. notes that in the past, small imperfections in the drum body were acceptable, but these days customers are pickier and expect visual perfection as well. The customer expects perfection in the skin and the sound the skin produces. Consequently, the quality of different taiko drums has risen considerably over the years (p.c., 2005).

Many Japanese taiko drum companies are supportive of kumi-daiko. Unlike the older traditional forms of Japanese music, kumi-daiko does not have the infrastructure that exists to support the older genres. Taiko drum-makers have contributed drums as well as financial assistance in the support and development of kumi-daiko in Japan and abroad (Asano: p.c., 2005). Through their support of kumi-daiko, taiko manufacturers are creating in essence, a symbiotic relationship between taiko drummer and drum maker.

CHAPTER 4: TAIKO AND THE GENDER AGENDA - ASIAN WOMEN KICK ASS IN TAIKO

The pendulum has shifted for Japanese kumi-daiko from a site of hyper masculine musical performance, towards a reinterpretation along the lines of feminist values for female players. Japanese taiko has evolved from a male-dominated and -defined forum into a female-dominated performance art within North America. The emergence of kumi-daiko in Japan was primarily associated with masculine performances crystallized in images of lean muscular men in *fundoshi* (loincloth) furiously drumming on large taiko drums.

Gender issues in kumi-daiko have been acknowledged and discussed among members of the kumi-daiko scene in Canada and America (Tusler 2003). Mark Tusler¹ (2003) placed the ratio of women participating, as compared to men, at 4:1 in North American kumi-daiko (2003). The city of Vancouver, British Columbia approximates this high ratio of female to male participants, although in other parts of Canada, some groups show an equal number of male and female participants.

The development of this high density of female participants in Vancouver's kumi-daiko will be discussed in a case study format, examining Canada's first kumi-daiko ensemble, Katari Taiko, and the emergence of feminist stylized kumi-daiko. Focusing on the formative days of Katari Taiko is instrumental in highlighting the framework that has continued to foster the large numbers of women engaged in kumi-daiko within the local area, if not the greater area of western Canada. Early Katari Taiko members played an

¹ Mark Tusler is an ethnomusicologist whose dissertation is a study of pedagogical aspects of performance-centered kumi-daiko, "Sounds and Sights of Power: Ensemble Taiko Drumming (kumi-daiko) Pedagogy in California and the Conceptualizations of Power" (2003), and covers the broad aspects of learning taiko within the structures of California kumi-daiko organizations.

important role in disseminating kumi-daiko throughout Canada via their performances and presentation of taiko workshops.² The taiko workshops that Katari Taiko delivered across Canada, in addition to taiko instruction, offered models of kumi-daiko organizational structure and incorporated discussions of their group philosophy (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005).

Factors that draw female participants to taiko will be examined as well as the possible reasons for the lack of male participants. Central to taiko's appeal for Asian women is the deconstruction of gender/racial stereotypes and the reconfiguration of gender constructs, issues of gaining visibility, cultural representation, and self-empowerment. Not only do women engaged in taiko in Canada contribute a majority of the participants, but there are also groups that have a membership restricted only to pan-Asian women, a uniquely Canadian feature. The presence of pan-Asian-all-women taiko groups allows them to align with feminist issues and creates a site for Asian feminist community building. The space of all-women ensembles encourages the participation of queer (lesbian, bisexual, and transgender) membership.

Gender-specific Arts

Before discussing the issue of gender within kumi-daiko, I would like to make a note about gender and Japanese arts. Gender-specific art forms are prevalent in Japan as demonstrated by *ikebana* (the art of flower arrangement) and *chado* (tea ceremony). Gender-specific aspects can be found within musical genres such as female defined

² The province of Ontario has experienced its own distinctive kumi-daiko evolution, under the auspices of Japan's Osuwa Daiko. Katari Taiko has had a minor impact in Ontario, largely through the defunct ensemble, Wasabi Daiko, which was founded by former members of Katari Taiko.

performances of the *koto* (Japanese zither). The *shakuhachi* (bamboo flute) and taiko drumming genres are traditionally associated with male performers.³

An interesting historical example of a gender-specific performance art in Japan is *kabuki*, an all-male theatrical musical dance form. In terms of gender, what makes kabuki noteworthy is the fact that it was originally performed by women troupes known as *onna kabuki*. The origination of the kabuki form is credited to a priestess, Okuni, of the Izumo Shrine in Kyoto who lived during the 17th century. Her infamous renditions of Buddhist dances (*nembutsu odori*) were not traditional religious performances, but bordered on the erotic and made use of unusual costumes and dance style, subsequently earning her great fame. Her style of dance came to be known as *kabuki odori* – “kabuki” (during that era) meaning “wild’ or “avant garde” dance (Hahn 2003).

The growing popularity of *onna kabuki* was viewed as a threat to the government that feared uncontrolled and widespread prostitution, and thus banned women from the performance in 1629. The once economically lucrative and public profession of women’s dance was relegated to a hidden world of *nihon buyo* (classical Japanese dance), marginalizing the public theatrical dance performance by women. The prohibition of *onna kabuki*, led to the creation of *nihon buyo*, largely seen as a women’s dance performance for private entertainment (Hahn 2003).

There is a Japanese mythological tale of *Amaterasu* and *Uzume* that is embraced by many taiko communities. Both taiko and kabuki can draw connections to a mythological female figure, Uzume, goddess of mirth who is the “Heavenly Alarming Female.” In the tale of *Amaterasu-no-Omikami* and *Ame-no-Uzume-no-Mikoto*,

³There are also exceptions to these gender specific performances as demonstrated by the instances of men playing the *koto*. Tamaribuchi points out that there are instances Shinto priestesses drumming as well as the local drumming traditions of Hachijo Jima where the women drum (p.c., 2002).

Amaterasu hid herself in a cave due to a prank that her brother, *Susano-no-Omikoto*, had played upon her. This set the heavens into darkness. At the request of the gods, Uzume performed a comical erotic dance, stomping her feet loudly and frenetically on an overturned wooden tub and drumming up a storm, much to the delight of all the gods who burst forth laughing. The commotion lured Amaterasu out of her cave and thus returned sunlight to the heavens.

This tale highlights the significance of Japanese women in the realm of entertainment as well as the power of their performances. Uzume's dance is considered to be the progenitor of Japanese music and choreography (Malm 1959). Both kabuki and kumi-daiko (Uzume's stomping on the wooden tub casts the goddess as the first taiko drummer) can lay claim to such divinely inspired performances. Japanese dance (both kabuki and nihon buyo) and taiko drumming originates from female figures, yet women have historically been denied access to the public performance of these genres. The table has turned with the return of women to the big drum and their place of public visibility within the performance art of kumi-daiko.

Katari Taiko - The Vancouver Phenomenon

Katari Taiko's early membership included a large number of women. This set the stage for Vancouver's prominent female representation in kumi-daiko creating a self-perpetuating dominance of female taiko players. Pan-Asian women see others like themselves on stage and gravitate towards taiko. Early members of Katari Taiko were approached for their opinions on the high numbers of female kumi-daiko players in

Vancouver. Uyehara Hoffman describes her impressions of seeing women performing kumi-daiko:

And one year San Jose Taiko (performed)...and we'd seen taiko, but we'd seen Kodo, they were called Ondekoza, we had seen Ryujin Taiko that came to the first Powell Street Festival. Now Ondekoza was phenomenal. Ryujin was fun to watch, but they were all men and....you know a lot of us were women, we didn't look at them and think, "gee I'd like to do that." But when San Jose Taiko came, they were like mixed men and women. The taiko they played was different. They looked like they were having fun. Not just like power drumming. It wasn't macho. It was powerful, but yet it had fluidity to it. They moved around a lot more and they looked like they were having fun. And that's what we wanted to do. We wanted to have fun and we wanted to be strong. It was an incredible attraction for all of the women who were working on the Powell Street Festival. It was a Japanese art form that wasn't subtle, that didn't require a million years of training. It was accessible and it was loud and it called attention to yourselves. And it said, "We're here!" And that's what we wanted. It was the perfect vehicle for those of us who were looking for ways to express our heritage in a performance. And for those people who had never performed, especially the women, it was a way to be a role model for other Asian women and it was a way to break the stereotype of submissive, passive Asian women OR the whorish, heart of gold, erotic, sexy Asian women. You know, because nobody is going to take you on, if you're standing up there swinging a stick, hitting the drum really loud. No one is going to say, "cutie pie", right? I mean it was perfect and as it turned out for most American taiko groups, it attracted women. (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2002)

Takasaki offers a cross-cultural perspective on her first encounter with kumi-daiko gained from her experience of living in Japan. During her time in Japan, she studied Japanese gender-specific art forms, which allowed her to compare traditional Japanese art forms to the contemporary performance of kumi-daiko:

Seeing San Jose play really was inspiring because they were like me. I was brought up in Steveston with a large number of Japanese people. I did odori (nihon buyo) and when I was in Japan, I did tea ceremony, ikebana, koto and all those kind of things. But then I was a product of the late 60's and early 70's when the women's movement was happening. So coming back to that after Japan, being thrust into the whole rebirth of my community and then seeing this form, this musical form that had nothing to do with lovely dainty women and was so enthusiastic, fun, and joyful - it seemed like the thing to do. Yeah, let's form a taiko group. It looks like a lot of fun, you can do it with all of your friends, and there were no set boundaries. (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

With the performance of San Jose Taiko at the Powell Street Festival in 1979, a great inspirational flame was kindled in many Asian-Canadian women who witnessed their performance. San Jose Taiko members mirrored aspects of founding Katari Taiko members in several ways: many members were sanseis, engaged in community political activism, inspired by the Asian American movement taking place, and actively exploring facets of their Asian heritage as Canadians or Americans. Founding members of Katari Taiko had been exposed to kumi-daiko performances by Japanese groups and America's first kumi-daiko group, San Francisco Taiko Dojo (SFTD), founded by Seiichi Tanaka. These performances distinguished by strength and athleticism did not have the appeal that San Jose Taiko offered in musical style and group philosophy. Takasaki explains this circumstance:

Yeah, because San Jose's history is kind of like ours; it grew out of the Buddhist church and was a bunch of friends, whereas SFTD is Tanaka's dojo. While Tanaka-sensei has said that more guys should play and his suggestion to Katari Taiko was "you must get more guys to play." The style of taiko that he plays, and his group, is a high testosterone level of taiko, so obviously it is going to attract those kinds of guys. You would have to be a tough woman to think, "I can play with those guys". So a group develops a kind of a persona, you attract those kinds of people who feel that they would enjoy being a part of that group. (Takasaki: p.c., 2005)

Takasaki attributes the large number of women in Katari Taiko's formative years to the fact that many members were volunteers at *Tonari Gumi*, the Japanese Community Volunteers Association. She comments that "traditionally more women do social services work than men, more women do volunteer work than men and work with seniors" (p.c., 2005). Uyehara Hoffman and Takasaki both point out that many, if not all, early members of Katari Taiko were volunteers of the Powell Street Festival. Katari Taiko, in essence, was an extension of the various community projects that Asian-Canadian political grassroots activists were participating in during the late 1970s.

Another reason for the high female membership of Katari Taiko may be related to the fact that they functioned as a collective. Several taiko players interviewed mentioned that the lengthy discussions and processing might have discouraged men from participating.⁴ Endo Greenaway explains this further, “You had to accept the way it operated, like a collective, which is not an exclusively female domain, but had more of a sense of ‘we work together and we work out things by consensus.’ There was not a lot of tolerance for pushing things through which is a male stereotype. The whole energy, it felt, can’t say female, there was a groups-ness, the collective energy of working together. You have to have a certain mind set to be able to fit in with that” (p.c., 2005).

One of the exciting features of the stylized kumi-daiko of San Jose Taiko and SFTD, both displaying a variation of the Sukeroku style, is the strong emphasis on choreography with fluid movement. Komori notes that this movement based form of kumi-daiko may not be particularly appealing for men, “I think that taiko is like dance, taiko has a strong dance component and maybe men feel intimidated by that...that they would not feel comfortable moving in their bodies” (p.c., 2005).

In order to examine the gender question from another perspective, I flipped the question around and asked Endo Greenaway about the low numbers of Vancouver men participating in kumi-daiko. He replied that “for men there is some trepidation, almost like it’s an all female world and I think a lot of men might feel uncomfortable, especially for men who are used to being in an all male context like sports and teams. As a male in the group, you were not the majority” (p.c., 2005). An enduring male member of Katari Taiko, Jan Woo, offers a slightly different perspective. Woo speculates that the alpha

⁴ Kumi-daiko groups that engage in collective processing towards decision making, has been cited as a deterrent for men’s involvement by numerous experienced taiko drummers interviewed (Endo Greenaway: p.c., 2005; Komori: p.c., 2005; Mah: p.c., 2002; Tamaribuchi: p.c., 2002; Woo: p.c., 2005).

male personality type may not persevere for long in a female dominated kumi-daiko ensemble. Woo attributes his staying power in the group to his strong “feminine side” as well as his love for performing. He adds that artistic men tend to fare well in the group. While in agreement with Endo Greenaway that many men may find it undesirable to deal with a large number of women within a group structure, he also points out that men’s affinity for sports may explain why men may not be attracted to performing kumi-daiko. “So I think it’s way down on the list of things that a guy looks at (in terms of recreation). Then you have to deal with a lot of strong women, and not a lot of guys are actually willing to do that.... It’s not like you’re the star quarterback surrounded by a lot of cheerleaders” (Woo: p.c., 2005). Women do have access to team sports, but in a limited way compared to the avenues available to men, especially when one considers professional opportunities. Eileen Kage contributes to the sports versus taiko discussion, drawing attention to the fact that the dominant culture offers few opportunities for women to be physically and visibly powerful. In sports, men’s participation provides an outlet for physical activity that is glorified in a team effort. Taiko attracts women who long for access to a potent medium that is a display of power in a public act of performance (p.c., 2002).

Kumi-daiko’s gradual penetration by American and Canadian women was facilitated by the fact that it is a contemporary performance art (although rooted in Japanese traditional music), unrestrained by a gender specific criteria despite performances by all-male ensembles in the formative days. Kumi-daiko did not have rigid structures associated with traditional taiko drumming dictating who could perform. Shinobu Homma mentions that traditional taiko drumming was also inaccessible to most

people during his youth in Japan. Although he was attracted to playing the drums, he could not gain access to taiko drumming. The creation of kumi-daiko transgressed the boundaries of who could perform taiko drumming, but it was not until taiko reached North American shores that women stepped up to the “big drum” in large numbers. Kumi-daiko offered Asian women an opportunity to participate in an Asian performance art that combined culture and music with physical strength. Kumi-daiko, as a site of musical performance, can meet the intersection of race and gender issues for female Asian participants. Bonnie Soon, a performing member of Uzume Taiko who is a third generation Chinese-Canadian, describes taiko as a way for Asian women to be powerful and connect to an Asian heritage: “I always admired the women that I saw who were taiko drummers and thought they had a lot of power and an ability to express, kind of a side that I knew was inside me, but never let it out. And it was a time that I was looking into being Asian because I spent my whole youth trying not to be Asian. That was the first time I studied something that had any connection to my Asian heritage. I never had a lot of Asian friends when I grew up - mostly Canadian girls. My whole Asian heritage side was not formed until I got really involved with the taiko community” (p.c., 2005). Racial and gender intersections can be complex sites of negotiation as Hazel Carby emphasizes in the case of black women as jazz singers, where their experiences as cultural producers and performers in the 1920's and 1930s are subsumed within Afro-American culture and marginalized by the narrow focus of middle class white women's feminist discourse (1999). Kumi-daiko created an avenue for Asian women to explore their cultural heritage in a public forum while expressing Asian feminist ideals.

Smashing Stereotypes and Reconfiguring Gender Constructs

Probing the gender issue of Katari Taiko's formative years brings to light a central feminist theme of challenging racial/gender stereotypes and of women's self-empowerment. Tusler emphasizes how taiko is a site of self-redefinition, "...a forum for Asian American women to invert and decenter the all-too-prevalent image of the quiet, submissive, home-centered Asian female by revising and reshaping taiko's longstanding male-centered image....taiko has become a contradiction to that image" (2003: 119). Pervasive gender stereotypes are deconstructed through the performance of kumi-daiko by Asian women. Through this metamorphosis, new images and identities are constructed. Susan McClary notes: "It is in the accordance with terms provided by language, ritual, or music that individuals are socialized: take on gender identities, learn proper behaviors, structure their perception and even their experiences. But it is also within the arena of these discourses that alternative models of organizing the social world are submitted and negotiated" (1991: 21). Masumi Izumi views the performance of taiko as the antithesis of the stereotypical Asian woman's behavior, redefining Asian women through the actions of the body. Izumi lists the performing aspects of taiko which challenge stereotypes: an open leg stance, the powerful beating of the taiko drum, screaming and yelling with mouths wide open (Japanese women typically cover their mouths in public), and sweating from physical exertion (1998). Deborah Wong observes that "Taiko speaks to a certain reconfiguration of the Asian American woman's body and to a claim made on sonic and social space" (2000: 74). Wong adds that part of the appeal of taiko "lies in its redefinition of the Asian American women's body and its dialogic relationship to 'women's work' -- i.e., the nimble fingers behind the clothing and

computer industries” (74). Wong contrasts the small-contained finger movements women perform in closed off sweatshops to the large bold movements that women taiko players perform upon an open stage. Tusler (2003) mentions that there are many “big” aspects to playing kumi-daiko. Playing the “big drum” with “big” sticks, making “big” bold movements and “big” sounds, all combine to present a “big” visual and sonic experience. Women can become larger than life through the performance of kumi-daiko.

Contrasting the “big” aspects of kumi-daiko to the restrictive and contained aspects of traditional nihon buyo (Japanese classical dance) might be helpful in understanding the appeal of taiko for women of Japanese descent. In my personal experience of studying nihon buyo as a child, the difficulty in learning the subtle and graceful feminine style is epitomized by tiny steps taken (with toes slightly turned inwards; the masculine style has a wider stance with toes turned outwards). It is an expression of constraint, aided by the wrapping of the kimono around the body. The *obi* (waist band) is very tightly wrapped around the waist. I grimace at the memory of having my mother and several Japanese women all participating in grabbing opposite ends of the *obi* to secure it tightly. “But I can hardly breathe, ” I would gasp. To which my mother would reply, “Good, that’s how it should be”, and the other Japanese women would nod sternly in agreement. This is similar to the use of corsets for women of the Victorian era, and can be understood as a very physical and symbolic act of binding and restraining women.

Tomie Hahn (2004) explains that in nihon buyo, a dancer can shift through multiple roles through a process of embodiment. The enactment of a character has a powerful effect, creating multiple identities. Through the embodiment of male

characteristics in the performance context of kumi-daiko, women taiko drummers project an identity of strength and command. Taiko embodies the masculine as much of the movements, basic forms, and wide grounding stance used in kumi-daiko, known as kata (forms), are borrowed from the martial arts (1995). Good kata aids in the production of clear, loud drum strikes. It is fundamental in the basic production of sound. Tosha spent hours on teaching basic stance and single stroke execution in his workshop. He also stresses the importance (as do many other taiko sensei's) for women of learning good kata, to maximize the sonic power from their drum strikes (p.c., 2005). Kata is also an important aspect of the choreographic dimensions of kumi-daiko, with its carefully executed and synchronized movements. Tanaka first came to San Francisco to further his study in martial arts. His teaching incorporates martial arts principles and philosophies, underscored by the fact that his group's name contains the word *dojo*, a training hall for martial arts. Samurai warrior energy infuses the approach to kumi-daiko drumming. The technique for striking the drumhead with the *bachi* (large drum sticks) has been described as a sword cutting through the air by Japanese kumi-daiko teachers.

Kumi-Daiko and Feminism

Essential to taiko's appeal for most female taiko players is the concept of self-empowerment. Tamaribuchi explains that taiko represents physical power, visibility, strength, and openness - all elements that can be very enticing. For older women, there may be many appealing facets "to be powerful in ways that they thought they could never be, to be physical without being violent, to share something of themselves, and to really express themselves" (Tamaribuchi: p.c., 2002). Tamai Kobayashi adds, "Like Kodo, they

are very male dominated and for women to take up the drum, is a very powerful, symbolic act of empowerment. And also, just for women to take the stage is quite a wonderful thing to see. It's very powerful to actually take up public space" (p.c., 2005). Self-empowerment has been a rallying cry for feminists throughout the past several decades. The word "power," is inextricably linked with taiko and for women players the concept of self-empowerment is a fundamental aspect to taiko. Early members of Katari Taiko members were involved in the struggle for women's rights in addition to their concerns around Asian Canadian issues. As Takasaki points out, the civil rights movement was about minority rights and women's rights fell under that umbrella (p.c., 2005). However, feminist issues can be subsumed by other political issues to maintain group cohesion within a mixed gender kumi-daiko ensemble. Komori highlights the difficulty of negotiating the intersections of race and gender issues within kumi-daiko. She refers to the fact that Katari Taiko had a brochure from the 1980s stating non-sexism as a group value. Komori interprets non-sexism as a passive stance rather than the proactive stance of feminism: "With any type of oppression, I think being proactive is very important. Structures are in place to perpetuate power imbalances. Without forces that are more proactive, power imbalances remain. I think race politics can subsume issues of gender. I think gender politics can subsume issues of race. It's a drag to have to face sexism with mixed gender Asian Canadian groups. It's a drag to have to face the racism of white feminist groups" (p.c., Feb. 2005). Komori also points out that the high numbers of women participating in kumi-daiko does not reflect women holding key positions of power within the group. "There's women participating and then there's women taking leadership roles. Even if there are a lot of women in the group, there can

be still be very deep sexism that happens and continues to happen” (Komori: p.c., September 2005). One of the key points that Leslie Komori (and other members of Katari Taiko⁵) points out is the fact that despite the dominance of women in kumi-daiko, few were actually composing, a skill she perceives as indicative of taking leadership. “I define leadership as (creating) compositions. So Katari Taiko was a group that embraced non-sexism but not feminism. I think that stance might have allowed power imbalances based on gender to continue in the group. So I think the gender imbalances existed in Katari Taiko, especially in the area of composition. I’m not sure what the gender make up was but I would guess that it was about four women to one man. However, all the pieces were written by men. I think composing requires a person to take leadership position” (Komori: p.c., Feb. 2005).

Sexism in the broader context of popular music led to the development of an alternative music scene for women known as “women’s music” by feminists in the 1960s (Lont 1992) or “women identified music” (Petersen 1987). Lont describes that “Women’s music dared to emphasize the experiences of women in a culture that ignored, devalued, or subsumed women’s experience within males’ experience” (1992: 245). Women-identified music can be defined as music that is derived from the unique experiences of women, highlighting strong, self-reliant, and self-actualizing images of women and therefore is a political statement (Petersen 1987). The issue of women’s music connects to kumi-daiko in Canada by the development of exclusive Asian

⁵ John Endo-Greenaway, Eileen Kage, and Lisa Mah also mention this point in their interviews. Mah refers, “I had only been in the group for about a year and a half (1989) when I heard one of the female founding members (in a public interview) talk about why no women had composed anything in it’s nine years existence – even though most of the members were women. From my recollection, she said that the men had always taken the initiative to compose and that the women were a little intimidated to take on that role” (p.c., 2005).

women's kumi-daiko ensembles established during the 1990s. Canada's first Asian women's group was Sawagi Taiko of Vancouver in 1990. This was followed by the formation of the Toronto based Raging Asian Women (RAW) in 1999. There are also other informal women's kumi-daiko groups trying to establish themselves.⁶ An outstanding feature of all-women's kumi-daiko groups is a foundation built upon a strong political agenda encompassing feminism.

The demands of women's music festivals for all-women kumi-daiko groups served as a catalyst for the emergence of Sawagi Taiko, working within an Asian feminist framework. Komori describes some of the issues arising from the racial/gender intersection that Katari Taiko faced, leading to the subsequent formation of Sawagi Taiko:

In 1989, the women of Katari Taiko were asked to play at the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival⁷ which at the time only admitted women and their sons under a certain age. There was a big debate whether Katari Taiko could take this gig. Many members, men and women included, felt that playing at a women only gig discriminated against the men in the group. So not all the women decided to go. I can't remember the number. I think eight or nine women decided to go. In 1990, Michigan invited us back. However, this time members of Katari Taiko felt that the women of Katari Taiko should not be allowed to play because playing at a women's only event discriminated against the men in the group. They felt that individuals could choose to play at Michigan, however, they could not play pre-existing KT repertoire. So the start of Sawagi did mark a shift in gender politics in taiko, moving from a group that was non-sexist to a group that was truly feminist, although I don't think Sawagi ever really decided it was a feminist group. But in retrospect, it was great that sexism prevented the women from KT from returning in 1990 because Sawagi would have never formed and there would have been no imperative for a bunch of women to compose a bunch of pieces. (Komori: p.c., October, 2005)

⁶ Kiyoshi Nagata mentions an all-women group, Onna No Ko, who are an extension of one his University of Toronto group. The author participates in an Asian women's taiko practice group and assists with taiko workshops for residents of the Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Women's Centre.

⁷ Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is the largest women-only festival, started in 1976, attracting 8,000 women annually. Lont, Cynthia M, "Women's Music: No Longer a Small Private Party." *Rockin' the Boat: Mass Music and Mass Movements*, ed. Reebee Garofalo (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1992), 246.

Uyehara Hoffman's (a founding member of Sawagi Taiko) perspective illuminates further on this issue:

When Katari Taiko returned from that gig (the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival), one of the men expressed unhappiness with the fact that we had all gone off and excluded the men. I'm not quite sure why this didn't come up earlier because we'd discussed the thing. Some of the women didn't go because they didn't agree with it, but none of the men said anything. When we returned, we thought about it and at that time, we had two white people in the group who were both women. And if we were asked to do a gig that was for Asians only, Katari Taiko would have thought about that because we would have been excluding women, though we had no compunction at all about excluding the men which made us think about our attitude. So Katari Taiko decided that as a community group representing the Japanese Canadian community, it should not take any gigs that excluded any members of that community. However, knowing that Michigan was going to ask the drummers to come back, a number of the women decided that we would form a separate group. And the understanding at that time in 1989 was that Sawagi Taiko would use none of Katari Taiko's songs, and that we would do women-only performances solely so as not to set ourselves in competition with Katari Taiko. (Uyehara Hoffman: p.c., 2005)

Sawagi Taiko continued to perform at women's festivals throughout the 1990s when such women-only events were popular in the lesbian community. These included the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, the National Women's Music Festival in Bloomington, Indiana, Wimifest in Albuquerque, and Rhythmfest in Tuxedo, North Carolina. Sawagi Taiko has also supported a variety of organizations through their performances such as International Women's Day, and been allied with Asian gays and lesbians, AIDS, and First Nations groups. Sawagi's web page states: "These performances allow us not only to support the political work of these organizations, but also to reach specific parts of our audience: Asian Pacific Islander and people of colour communities; the lesbian and gay communities; and women's communities. We would

like to play for people who would be inspired by our strong Asian feminist artistic expression and share our commitment to anti-oppression struggles.”⁸

Formed in 1999, Raging Asian Women’s (RAW) Taiko group is based in Toronto, Ontario and has a group philosophy similar to Sawagi Taiko with a focus on feminism. RAW has performed at numerous feminist and queer events such as (Gay) Pride Toronto, Take Back the Night Rally, Queer Women’s Cabaret, Gay Asians of Toronto, and Lesbian Cabaret.⁹ RAW strives to be a role model as strong Asian women, having an anti-racist feminist ideology focused on “ building community, being a voice for East Asians, and raising awareness around our histories and struggles that Asian people have had in the North American context” (RAW: p.c., 2005).

Komori describes that participation within an all-women Pan-Asian ensemble created an opportunity for members to engage in a formidable performance medium that allowed them to express their shared histories and experiences. “I feel that some of the power is that we are coming from a similar history, so there is a power because we know what it is like to be silenced as Asian women and Asian people and to have this powerful medium to express ourselves that raises the energy up much more. So if you have a person coming from a different history, it just wouldn’t be the same symbiotic energy coming together” (Komori: p.c., February, 2005).

⁸ Sawagi Taiko web page [Online], available: <http://www.shinnova.com/part/86-sawa/>; accessed on October 26, 2005.

⁹ RAW web page [Online], available: <http://www.ragingasianwomen.ca>; accessed 28 October 2005.

The Downtown Eastside Women's Centre¹⁰ (DEWC) Women's Taiko Drummers,¹¹ coalesced from a series of kumi-daiko workshops given over the years and is a good example of how an all-women space benefits women. The DEWC's taiko drumming group offers a unique experience that women of the center can access in addition to services such as talking circle support groups and crisis management assistance offered to women who are victims of violence or are experiencing crisis in their lives. Cynthia Low has been involved with DEWC for fifteen years and decided to foster an all-women kumi-daiko group at the center as a way to bring divergent women who use the centre together. Through the practice of kumi-daiko, the women of the DEWC can break the silence and invisibility that they experience within hegemonic structures. Low notes the significance of offering taiko workshops in an all-women environment, such as the DEWC. "Women are socialized, particularly Asian women are socialized so that they don't think of themselves first, they think of collectivity, community, with a scenario around men. They tend to think about harmony and subvert their own needs for group cohesion, while men are socialized to be entitled to what they want and value – a sense of entitlement. Women-only environments are a chance for women to feel that internally for themselves. They can create that noise and make a big

¹⁰ Vancouver's Downtown Eastside Women's Centre began as a peer support for women of the Downtown Eastside about thirty years ago. The downtown eastside of Vancouver is the poorest neighbourhood in Canada with an extremely high number of intravenous drug users. It is also one of the largest urban centers for aboriginals in Canada and is part of Chinatown as well as part of the historical "Little Tokyo." The DEWC is a non-profit society that has become something of a social service provider. The mission of the DEWC is to provide resources and information opportunities for social community building, bring awareness to the issues facing the women in the community to the larger society and government (Low: p.c., 2005).

¹¹ The author assists Cynthia Low with the DEWC's taiko drumming group.

sound. The idea is to give women a space from male violence - that systemic male violence¹² and entitlement (Low: p.c., 2005).

Creative Expression in All-Women Kumi-Daiko Ensembles

Asian women working in an exclusive context can learn from strong role models. As often happens in these emancipatory groups, a collective feminist aesthetic develops that values things which present women in a position of power (Ecker 1985). Some women who participate in these groups may not be politically inclined as feminists, but simply want to play taiko with other women. As members of the group, they become exposed to the ideals of gender and cultural empowerment. Kage confirms that the numerous women festivals Sawagi Taiko performed at exposed group members to feminist ideas that might have otherwise been inaccessible to them (p.c., 2002).

Ellen Koskoff explains that “...the presence of secluded all-female gatherings are when many social restrictions regarding musical performance are lifted. This separation also serves the dual purpose of providing women a socially acceptable, if limited, forum for musical expression as well as an environment for the expression of gender identity” (1987: 9). Female members involved in all-women’s kumi-daiko, are afforded a space to develop and explore their creativity and self-expression. Komori commented upon the intimidation that many women taiko players experienced around composing and performing drum solos: “Soloing is another thing. Some women would never solo. Soloing is a technique that can be developed. A lot of solo is just ego and confidence. So that is a difference between mixed (gender) and women’s groups” (p.c., Feb. 2005). Mah

¹² Low adds that women can be violent amongst themselves, competing over the lack of resources – food and clothing or over male attention (p.c., 2005).

finds taiko attractive as a useful way to explore self-expression and as a nontraditional outlet for her emotions. She points out that taiko enables her "to scream, shout, be loud and physical, hit drums really hard, jump around, and to explore different ways of being" (p.c., 2002) - yet allows her to do something that represents herself as an Asian Canadian.

When Sawagi Taiko was formed, the women had less than a year to prepare a 45-minute set made up of entirely new compositions, a challenging feat unheard of within the realm of kumi-daiko (Komori: p.c., February, 2005). One of the compositions that came out of Sawagi Taiko's compositional frenzy is "Nobori," composed by Lisa Mah (see DVD, chapter 2). The central concept of Nobori, which in Japanese means 'to rise,' pertains to domestic violence and the message imbued within the composition is a plea for those women enduring abusive relationships to gather the courage to leave. Mah describes the concept of the different sections in her own words, "The song does go from a calm (thinking about making life-altering changes in one's life) to increased strength and courage (doing something to make the changes) and in the end, celebrating the change. On a personal level, I know what it takes to get out of an abusive situation and hope that anyone in a similar situation can build their inner strength to make changes (p.c., 2005)." "Nobori" opens with a high pitched solo fue (flute) melody that evokes a moment of longing and reflection with hopes for a bright future (Mah p.c., 2005). The fue (flute) acts as a catalyst for change, heralded by the entry of the drums. The first section is prefaced by a stream of steady quarter notes, divided into three sets of nagadou drums, gradually joined in by each set of drummers and percussion, until everyone is playing in unison. The next phrase features an ostinato pattern of accented eighth notes that cycle around with accompanied choreographed arm movements that move counter

clockwise, then clockwise, building momentum. The eighth note pattern fluctuates in and out of a sixteenth note pattern played on the rim while each set of drummers perform choreographed movements that brings the drummers from a side stance to a frontal stance, facing the drum. These all combine to create the sense of a clock ticking; tension builds as the listener eagerly anticipates a change (see figure 5).¹³

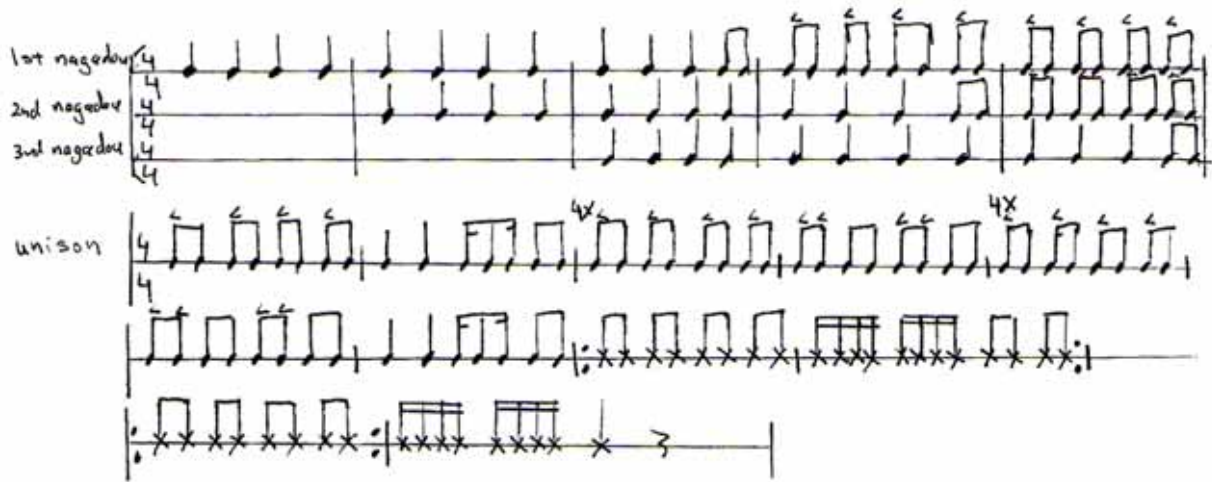




Figure 5 (Opening section of “Nobori”)

key to notation:  = strikes to drum skin  = rim shots

The next section is sharply heralded by the shime daiko that performs a ji-uchi (the basic or foundation rhythm of the piece) of running sixteenth notes, creating “...a sense of power, excitement, and determination” (Mah: p.c., 2005). Nagadou drums perform the next phrase pattern in unison (see figure 6). The crescendos help to create the sensation of gathering excitement and builds momentum within the structure of the composition.

¹³The transcription method is inspired by Malm (1959:267) and Tusler (2003:69).

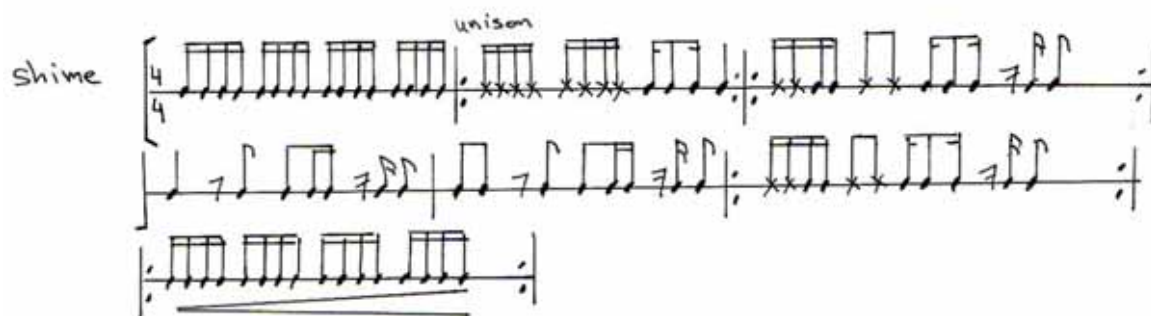


Figure 6 (Second section of “Nobori”)

The following section contains all the musical elements, from fue melody to the drum phrases (see figure 7) that will reappear in the concluding section in a reduced form, found in “Nobori.”

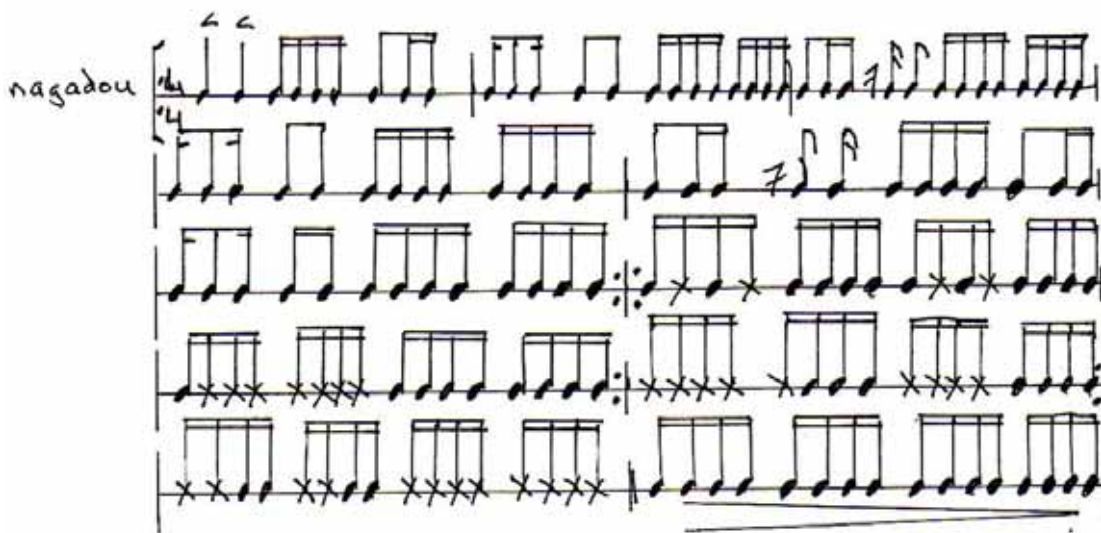


Figure 7 (Third section of “Nobori”)

As the piece builds in strength, the *ji-uchi* is taken over by the ensemble of drums while the *shime daiko* is freed to perform a solo. The *ji-uchi*, performed by the “big drums,” produces another level of anticipatory transition; drums rolling in a contained *diminuendo*, eagerly waiting to break out in an unrestrained *fortissimo*. The *shime* solo is interspersed with composed screaming *kiai*'s (vocal shouts) of Japanese numerical counting “ni, san,

shi, go” (two, three, four, five) followed by choreographed twirls by all members. This interlude is a segue into the last section. The solo fue enters to lead the charge into the last section as the drums continue to roll out the ji-uchi. The fue plays a development of the original opening motif that is faster and louder, punctuating the opening for the drum rhythms that burst out on offbeats as the drummers use wide circular arm motions, in the composition’s symbolic journey of ascension. The choreography complements the message that the rhythms are trying to convey (Mah p.c., 2005). The final section is a loud and proud declaration of the strength found in personal self-transformation and is a series of reductions from the phrase transcribed in figure 7. The performance of the final section by the drummers “...in mass unison represents power and support from others” (Mah p.c., 2005). This is a piece that Sawagi Taiko has performed regularly over the years and one that has gathered much attention from its conceptual basis. Mah has cited many occasions when women have approached her personally, teary eyed, to convey the heart felt emotion they experienced upon hearing this piece (p.c., 2002).

Many female taiko drummers interviewed express their attraction to the movement and choreography in kumi-daiko. This is evident in the repertoire of RAW and Sawagi Taiko, both groups that have movement based compositions, which is accompanied by taiko drumming. The utilization of taiko and movement is a distinguishing feature of all-women kumi-daiko ensembles. RAW has two pieces that are dance centered, “Matsuri” and “Mountain Moving Day”. RAW’s “Mountain Moving Day” is choreographed by Suzanne Liska and guest artist Shelly Sawada, and reflects the strength of women warriors. Liska describes the performance of “Mountain Moving Day:”

Shelly and I collaborated with Prithi Narayan (playing the *veena*, an Indian classical instrument) and Gein Wong (spoken word artist), along with Amy Lin on the odaiko

and Helen Luu on the shime. The musicians improvise with the dancers, accentuating the changing dynamics of the story. Shelly and I, along with Prithi's coaching, developed the dance piece through contact improvisational movement. Through our exploration we created a myth about a woman warrior whose body and spirit had been divided. The piece begins with the two parts of herself, her animal tiger side and her mountain spirit side, separate, unable to unify. (RAW: p.c., 2005)

Sawagi Taiko has performed some pieces that are entirely movement based such as Lisa Mah's "Wind". The movements in "Wind" are based on the martial arts form of *wu shu* and projects bold images of Asian women in motion. Another movement based piece is "Beached Amoeba", where members evolve from microorganisms into taiko drummers (Kage p.c., 2005).

Peterson notes that women's groups are radical and revolutionary by virtue of transmitting feminist-lesbian textual content. She reflects that feminist-lesbian texts describe, "...the expression of women's oppression by men, the celebration of the beauty of women in their struggle to overcome this oppression, and the beauty of women loving women in a sexual relationship" (1987: 206). Although kumi-daiko in general has very little textual content, a landmark precedent was Katari Taiko's use of feminist poetry in the composition "Mountain Moving Day", which is based on a famous poem by a Japanese feminist woman, Akiko Yosano from 1911 (Uyehara Hoffman p.c., 2005).

Mountain Moving Day is coming
I say so, yet others doubt it
Only a while the mountain sleeps
In the past all mountains moved in fire
Yet, you may not believe it
Oh, man, this alone believe
All sleeping women, now awake, and move
All sleeping women, now awake, and move.¹⁴

¹⁴ CD, Katari Taiko: Commotion, "Mountain Moving Day," composed and produced by John Endo-Greenaway.

Other textually based performances includes Sawagi Taiko's piece called "Bar Doors" which incorporates poetry by Helen Koyama accompanied by drumming and performed in a theatrical format set in a lesbian context by having the main character portrayed as a butch woman. Sawagi taiko's repertoire includes Eileen Kage's composition, "Ja Sawago" (Let's Raise Hell) that contains a rap on kumi-daiko *kuchi-shoga*¹⁵ referencing gender inversion in the text.

kaminoke nobashita otoko no ko (boys with long hair)

kan kan bozu no onna no ko (bald headed girls)

Feminist theatrics have been incorporated in Sawagi Taiko's past performances. In addition to "Bar Doors," they have staged a lesbian strip tease interpretation of the mythological tale of the Japanese sun goddess Amaterasu-no-omikami and the lesser goddess, Ame-no-Uzume-no-mikoto, much to the delight of their lesbian audience (Komori p.c., 2005).

Queers in Kumi-Daiko

There is a notable affiliation with queer culture in Canadian kumi-daiko (Kobayashi 1994). The numerous queer events that RAW and Sawagi Taiko have performed, supports this fact. The feminist basis of these ensembles attracts lesbian membership and provides a site for them to express queer identity. Wasabi Daiko was initially formed in 1984 as an inclusive group, but with membership changes developed into an exclusively pan Asian ensemble and subsequently became an Asian 'gay, lesbian, and bisexual' group in 1992. Kobayashi discusses Wasabi Daiko's role in a queer

¹⁵Kumi-daiko is essentially based on an oral tradition. Kuchi-shoga is a system of solmization that functions as a mnemonic device in learning repertory.

context, “We didn’t look like the traditional Asian stereotype. Like we were visible – we were taking up public space, making sound, making noise and we were playing at venues where maybe you wouldn’t have traditionally, these so called ‘not mainstream looking’ women playing at. And if you followed us, we did have a huge following in the queer community” (p.c., 2005). Wasabi Daiko, during their queer-identified era, performed at many events addressing queer issues such as Gay Pride. They communicated a strong political message of combating racism and homophobia. Kobayashi discusses the politically charged atmosphere during her time in Wasabi Daiko, “Also, we have to think about what it was back then (the 1990s). It was after the fever pitch of identity politics. We were trying to do this queer pan-Asian collective and it was very difficult. It was an utopian idea” (p.c., 2005).

As an Asian lesbian engaged with taiko drumming, Low understands that Asian lesbians are on the fringes of society, invisible and under represented. “As Asian lesbians there might be some kind of body stuff that happens you know, not being your stereotypical Asian heterosexual model whether it has been created or projected or in some ways a combination of both within our communities. If you don’t fall within that paradigm, you need a space to feel good about that and I think that taiko offers that space” (Low: p.c., 2005). Komori attempts to discern the reasons why there are a significant number of Asian lesbians performing kumi-daiko. “I think that we have to step outside of what expectations are and I think that doing taiko is outside of what expectations are for an Asian women, so I think there is a parallel there. It’s a good butch thing to do - A good expression of butch-ness. Mind you femmes play too” (p.c., Feb. 2005).

All-women kumi-daiko with membership restricted to pan-Asians is a unique aspect of Canadian kumi-daiko. In general terms, American kumi-daiko encompasses the philosophy of Seiichi Tanaka who envisions kumi-daiko as inclusive: with regard to race, gender, and age, and not the sole domain of Asians (Tusler 2003). Pan-Asian all-women kumi-daiko ensembles, allow members to develop their creativity, experiment within the conventional kumi-daiko format, and support various political and feminist agendas. As well, queer members enjoy a public space for expressing their sexual identities.

Feminine Taiko Style

Tusler views performative aspects of kumi-daiko as bridging masculine and feminine concepts. The act of powerfully hitting is conceived as masculine while the fluid movements prevalent in American kumi-daiko ensembles are considered feminine (2003). Interviews reveal that many women who engage in kumi-daiko have some experience in dance. Women observe the movements associated with the North American variant of the Sukeroku¹⁶ style and are attracted to it, and subsequently engage and re-emphasize the movements found in kumi-daiko. In Canada, the all-women groups incorporate the stylized Sukeroku form, as opposed to the Osuwa¹⁷ style.

Several female players describe what they interpret as a feminine style of playing kumi-daiko. Chabo of Shidara, a professional Japanese kumi-daiko ensemble, describes what she discerns as a feminine style of taiko drumming, as *shinayakasa* (flexible). This term has feminine associations and contains different levels of meaning. A *shinayakasa*

¹⁶ Sukeroku style refers to Oedo Sukeroku Taiko from Japan who developed the flowing movements and choreographed form of kumi-daiko.

¹⁷ Suwa style refers to the form of Osuwa Daiko.

striking of the drum can be interpreted as strong yet pliant, much the same way that bamboo can bend in the wind without breaking. A concept of adaptability and transformation has also been suggested. Chabo insists that women can strike the drum in a way that can compete with men, despite their greater physical strength (p.c., 2005). This may be similar to the idea of fluidic motion that has been used to describe the playing style of many female taiko drummers. Tamaribuchi asserts that some women have a feminine kata (form) recounting Kodo member, Chieko Kojima's performance of "Hana Hachijo," a traditional taiko piece historically performed by the women in the village of Hachijo Jima, "Chieko went to Hachijo Jima to learn the traditional style of Hachijo drumming and she adapted it to show her strength as a dancer. So it is a beautiful and fluid style of playing, but it is also quite powerful. It's a very interesting mix. Very feminine because she is playing in kimono and she is beating the living tar out of the drum - in a very fluid way" (p.c., 2002).

The growing participation of women in kumi-daiko is also taking place in Japan, mirroring the gender inversion manifest in their North American counterparts. Uyehara Hoffman points out that the presence of women in kumi-daiko outside of Japan is encouraging Japanese women to participate (p.c., 2002). This creates a cross-fertilization between Japanese and North American kumi-daiko ensembles that brings balance in gender representation. It is estimated that there are currently more women than men playing kumi-daiko in Japan.¹⁸ In Japan, many mixed-gender kumi-daiko groups can now be found. Feminine aspects of musical performance are presently incorporated in kumi-daiko. The inclusion of dance and koto are a few indications that suggest a shift

¹⁸ This has been mentioned in interviews with Shidara (p.c., 2005), Tiffany Tamaribuchi (p.c., 2005), and Asano Taiko (2005).

from hyper-masculinity towards an ethos of gender balance. Some comments suggest that the women involved in Japanese kumi-daiko prefer the more feminine parts while deferring to men for the stronger playing parts (Kunimoto: p.c., 2002). However, Tamaribuchi clarifies that many young modern Japanese women want to play as hard as men. Many of the professional working groups or the touring groups in Japan feature one or two strong women players, which is instrumental to their success. The Okinawan kumi-daiko group, Zampa Ufujishi Daiko has traditionally had strong women players in main positions. Well-known taiko drum makers, Asano Taiko sponsor an all-women group, Houno Daiko, which is comprised of three women; and Amanojaku has several women drummers (Tamaribuchi: p.c., 2002). In Japan, women in kumi-daiko can also be found in leadership positions, as in the case of Chabo, the artistic director of Shidara.

Musical genres that are differentiated along gender lines reinforce a particular social order reflecting existing power relations. Transgressing these boundaries works to subvert the dominant social order, reflecting the changes that are taking place with regard to growth in socio-economic power that women are experiencing. Lise Waxer, in *All-Women Salsa Bands in Cali*, points out that the rise of all-women salsa bands is reflective of these musicians' courage to challenge and reappropriate social conventions (2001). Pan-Asian, all-women kumi-daiko ensembles, with their fervor as feminist and lesbian-feminists, are also challenging and redefining the meaning associated with taiko. Kumi-daiko as performed by women, heralds a renewal for the "big drum," placing it back on a grand stage to create contemporary and commanding figures of pan-Asian women.

CHAPTER 5: WHAT IS YOUR “MATSURI”?

Kumi-Daiko’s Referencing of Traditional Japanese Music

Since its inception, kumi-daiko has referenced traditional forms of Japanese music, mostly from the genres of sato kagura festival drumming and folk music. Oedo Sukeroku Taiko referenced the rhythms found in a repository of festival music known as *edo-bayashi*. Daihachi Oguchi based Osuwa Daiko’s material on war drumming patterns of the Takeda clan (Nagata: p.c., 2005). Early pioneers¹ also referenced *hogaku* drumming patterns as well as the vocalizations (*kake koe*) that serve as instrumental cues (Endo: p.c., 2005). Many contemporary kumi-daiko ensembles adapt Japanese regional festival music for kumi-daiko stage performance.

The ensembles that perform music for *matsuri* (festivals) are referred to by the generic term *hayashi*, but when specified by regional styles are named by the cognate *bayashi*. Regional differences in musical style are named by geographical locations such as kando-bayashi, chichibu-bayashi, and edo-bayashi. Often the hayashi is comprised of three taiko drums and a fue, and the festival drumming is accompanied by folk dances. Both the music and the dancing are highly repetitive (often in cycles of three or nine, as three is an auspicious number in Japan) as their original presentations were not intended for audiences, but for the deities (Malm 1959).

Tamaribuchi relates some important aspects of festival drumming to kumi-daiko’s reference of traditional music. Festival pieces are repetitive for usage in ceremonial

¹ Kenny Endo, who studied hogaku drumming in Japan and trained with Oedo Sukeroku Taiko, is influenced by *hogaku* and edo-bayashi rhythms. Endo makes use of *kake koe*, vocal patterns, that originate in *noh*. By using different mallets and tapered sticks, Endo reproduces many different sounds found in kabuki theatre (p.c., 2005).

function, which might continue for hours (or days) on end. The drumming accompanies other elements of the festival, such as the carrying of the *omikoshi*, a portable shrine that travels around the village. Visual considerations are not important in traditional festival drumming, as often the drummers may not be visible to the celebrants. The arrangements of the traditional pieces are often assembled in an innovative manner for stage performance. Beginnings and ends are composed, and often interludes will be created for solo drumming (Tamaribuchi: September, 2005). Tamaribuchi outlines some of the considerations involved in adapting traditional music (in this case using “Miyake” as an example) for kumi-daiko performance:

From what I understand, during the festival the basic rhythm pattern (tsuku-don tsuku-don tsuku-don don -- tsuku-don tsuku-don tsuku-don don su doko don don sutetekoten don) gets repeated over and over again as they carry the *omikoshi* from place to place. People rotate in and out and they pretty much play the same patterns associated with the festival continuously throughout the festival. There are very specific *kata* (forms) that exemplify strength and agility and might be intended to entertain *kami* (deities) or show one's own strength and abilities, but there's also the intention to capture the form or feeling of hawks, or eagles in flight with one's body. The style is very low to the ground, and it's quite amazing to see the strength and flexibility of someone playing the traditional way. Being low to the ground and with fairly linear movements from side to side, there's not much you can see on stage if someone is playing it. Since people couldn't really see all that much, they changed the angle of their arms and *bachi*. Since one drum wasn't particularly loud or much to look at on stage, they had several people on a few drums playing at the same time. Since the pattern was repetitive, they split up into groups and had people take turns playing the pattern and then added improvised solos. Since the pace was kind of slow, they gradually picked it up a bit up, during and after the solos. Since it's not the sort of thing with a clear starting point and big bang finish, they gave it a definitive starting and ending point, emphasized by choreographed *kata*. (Tamaribuchi: September, 2005)

Kodo has referenced specific styles of traditional festival music for kumi-daiko stage adaptation. Kodo's process is to visit a certain region in Japan and obtain permission from local musicians to use their music for kumi-daiko performance. Upon receiving permission, they then learn the piece in its traditional form, make appropriate

changes for stage performance, and finally return to the master to check if their adaptation meets his/her approval (Sugano: p.c., 2005). Shidara, a professional kumi-daiko group from Japan was interested in how to adapt a local festival piece, “Hana-Matsuri” (designated an important national folk cultural property of Japan) for their stage performance. Festival participants taught the traditional basic parts of the matsuri, such as the odori, fue and taiko parts. Once Shidara learned and adapted the piece, they were asked by the festival participants to perform the “Hana-Matsuri” as part of their repertoire, thus receiving permission from the traditionalists. There are several dances associated with “Hana-Matsuri” that the group has arranged for stage presentation as well. They have performed such kumi-daiko traditionally based classics such as “Yatai-Bayashi” from Chichibu, and pieces originating from Miyake Jima and Hachijo Jima (Shidara: p.c., 2005).

Some unexpected difficulties in adapting traditional festival pieces for kumi-daiko stage performance are the potential for misinterpretation of important musical nuances. Kiyoshi Nagata gives an example using “Gezan Bayashi”; a piece he learnt from Kodo and rearranged:

(Gezan Bayashi) is a traditional piece and the spirit is very hard to replicate. In that region, the way they would play one of the patterns, the *kuchi shoga* would be don suko suko suko don suko don don. Normally most people in wadaiko would go don dokodokodoko don doko. Right there it’s kind of a really interesting thing. In this area, the *kuchi shoga* reflects the nature of the people and how they would interpret the music. So to me, don suko suko suko don suko don don has a really laid back feeling. When you kind of translate that into playing don doko doko, it has a much more of a staccato kind of very rough thing. That’s one way in which you take a piece, and even though you might not understand the language of how they hear the music, you translate it or you put it in your own terms and it would naturally come out differently, so that’s one way. (Nagata: p.c., 2005)

Nagata realizes that once a traditional piece of music is taken out of the context of the local area and its original function, it loses its traditional roots and the concept of replicating the piece loses relevancy. Nagata seeks to find the heart and spirit of the traditional piece and recontextualize it for specific settings. Nagata discusses his adaptation of the traditionally based piece, “Ogi Matsuri” from Sado Island, “In Ogi Matsuri, there is a part where we do vocal shouts, ‘ha ha ha,’ all off beat shouts. This isn’t in the original version but this was something that we thought kind of added a nice texture to the piece and worked as a nice bridge between the different rounds after we play. Things like that, just kind of reinterpreting it or taking smaller liberties with the piece but again, as the heart and the soul of the song is still there, I think that’s really important. I try and maintain the main body of the piece (p.c., 2005).”

Seiichi Tanaka’s “Matsuri”

American kumi-daiko is strongly influenced by Oedo Sukeroku Taiko whose music is based on the festival music of the Yushima Tenjin Shrine of Tokyo. This is due to Tanaka’s associations with Oedo Sukeroku Taiko. Many of Sukeroku’s rhythms are from a genre of sato-kagura known as edo-bayashi, a very popular form that encompasses the old festival music of Tokyo (formerly known as Edo). Kiyonari Tosha, who started playing taiko with Sukeroku in 1966, explains that there are many pieces of edo-bayashi repertoire such as “Shiraume Taiko” and “Matsuri Taiko” (edo-mae style). An example of rhythmic patterns found in edo-bayashi are provided with Kiyonari Tosha’s example of obon festival drumming piece taught during his workshop at the North American Taiko Conference in Los Angeles of 2005 (see figure 8).

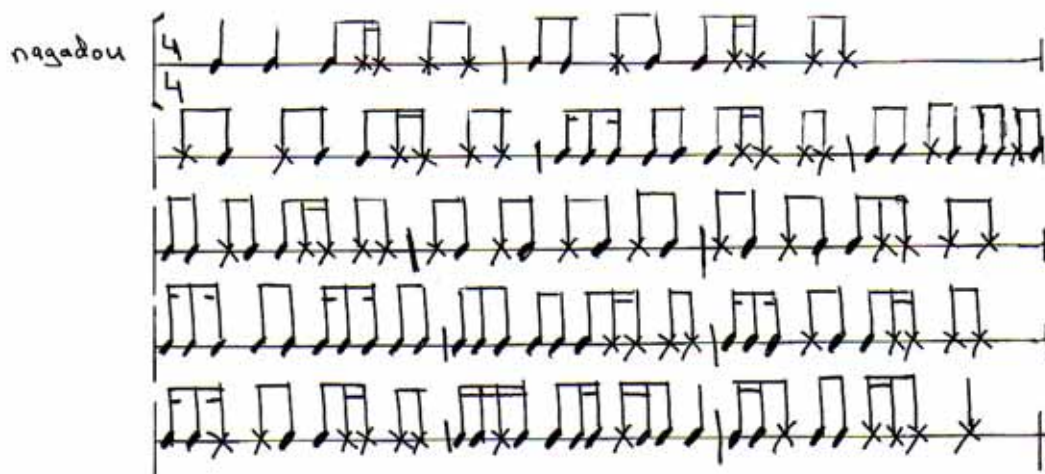


Figure 8 (Kiyonari Toshi's obon drumming pattern)

A kumi-daiko festival piece that has been circulated in North America, largely by Seiichi Tanaka, is "Matsuri" (also called "Matsuri Taiko" and "Matsuri Daiko"). But who composed the "Matsuri" that Tanaka from SFTD has taught around America and in parts of Canada? Terada describes "Matsuri" as Seiichi Tanaka's composition, which has been widely disseminated across North America (2001). When I asked experienced taiko drummers about the compositional origins of "Matsuri," I was given contradictory accounts. Some of Tanaka's students at SFTD claimed that they were told by their sempais (teachers) that the piece was Oedo Sukeroku Taiko's composition. Going directly to the source, Tanaka stated that his "Matsuri" is based on "Yagibushi." Tanaka's elaborates that he used simple rhythms that people could dance to and gave the song "Matsuri" to everyone so that it would endure (p.c., 2005).

Tiffany Tamaribuchi, a former student of Tanaka, explains further that SFTD's "Matsuri", is an arrangement of Seiichi Tanaka, which is based on "Yagibushi" (a festival piece), "Midare-Uchi" (Oedo Sukeroku Taiko's piece), and Fukushima Ondo (a festival

piece). Tamaribuchi discusses the origins of SFTD’s “Matsuri,” singing² the main body (p.c., 2005):

don don don kara ka ka
 don don su don don kara ka ka
 ka don ka don don kara ka ka
 doron kara don don kara ka ka
 dokokara don don don kara ka ka
 don do ko do tsu don
 don do ko do tsu don
 don do ko do tsu don don – ka (see figure 9)

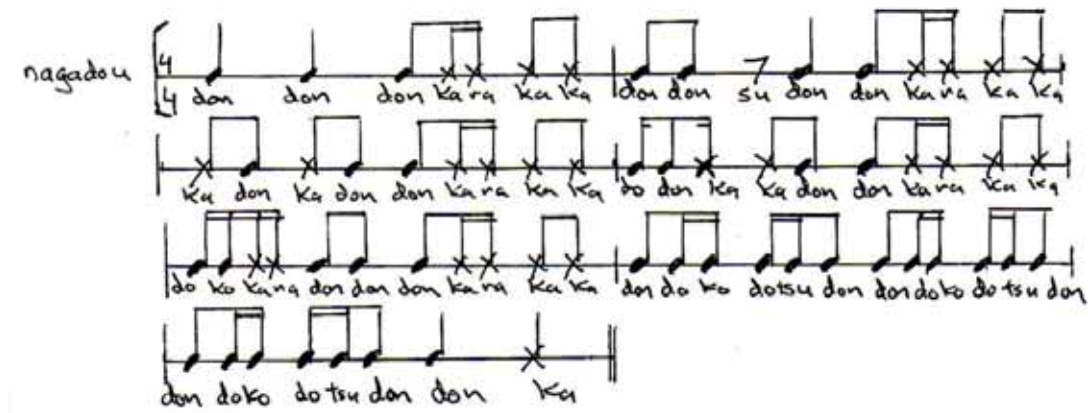


Figure 9 (SFTD’s “Matsuri” as sung by Tiffany Tamaribuchi)

Tamaribuchi describes this rendition as the piece that she learned when she studied with Tanaka at the SFTD. This is the version that Tanaka taught around North America during the 1970s and ’80s at the many workshops that he gave. Tamaribuchi explains:

He’s the one that arranged it, but it may be that other senior student senpais in SFTD that were playing with him at the time also put it together. Tanaka says his version is based on “Yagibushi” and it’s a Sukeroku Taiko based song because it has Sukeroku rhythm and that’s where he trained. We learned it was that it was based on “Yagibushi,” which goes:

don don don kara ka ka
 don don su don don kara ka ka
 don don su don don – don
 don sore

²For further details on the oral neumonics of taiko, see Mark Tusler’s thesis titled, “The Los Angeles Matsuri Taiko (1995: 58-60).

don don don
 don don su don don
 don don su don don – don
 don ahhh” (singing) (see figure 10)

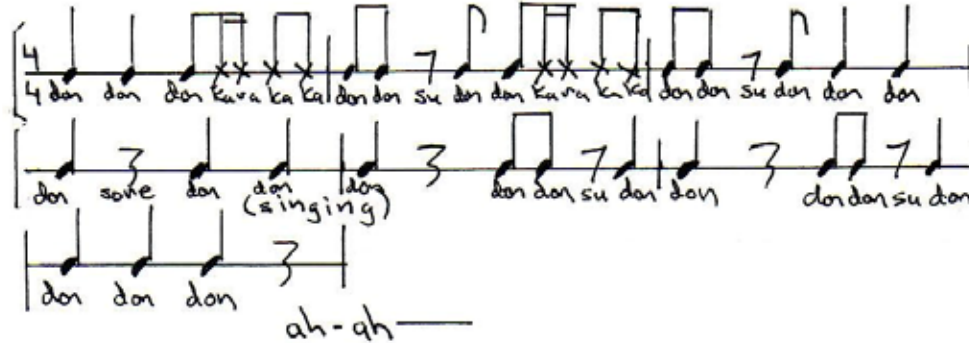


Figure 10 (“Yagibushi” as sung by Tiffany Tamaribuchi)

It goes from there, so that was kind of his blanket story, but the

don doko do tsu don
 don doko do tsu don
 don doko do tsu don (see figure 11),

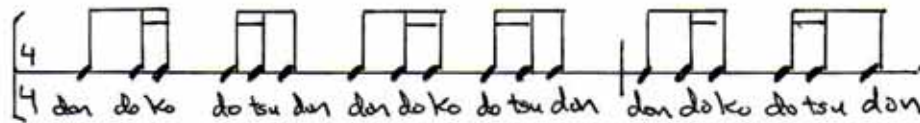


Figure 11 (Oedo Sukeroku pattern)

that pattern is an Oedo Sukeroku pattern and certainly SFTD plays “Matsuri Daiko” on Sukeroku style drums and the piece that this comes from is a piece called “Midare-uchi.” “Midare-uchi” just means crazy drums or improvised drums and it’s their rendition of obon dance drumming and comes from the history of their group playing at Yushima Tenjin and all the other shrines and obon festivals. They explicitly state that “Midare-uchi” is based on bon dance drumming, but they don’t say what specific pieces or what specific tradition. The way that Sukeroku plays it now, it’s a piece where two drummers come out to a drum and will do free solos. One person will accompany and one person will solo and they tend to switch out or rotate it. It follows along the tradition of obon lasting all day long or days and days and they just play the same thing and people just keep dancing and the drummers switch in and out. And what the ji-uchi for that is:

Don tsu ku tsu
 Don don tsu ku tsu
 don don tsu ku tsu
 don don (see figure 12) (Tamaribuchi: p.c., 2005)

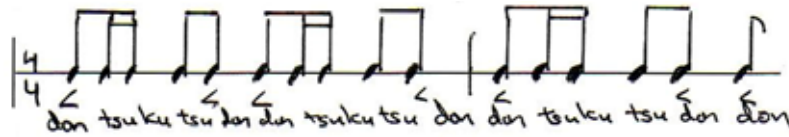


Figure 12 (ji-uchi)

Tamaribuchi also links “Fukushima Ondo” (also known as “Soma Bon Uta”) a folk song from the Fukushima prefecture that has been played in Hawaii for approximately eighty years, to Tanaka’s “Matsuri”. The common element to “Matsuri,” “Yagibushi,” and “Fukushima Ondo” is the same ji-uchi that can be found in all three pieces (p.c., 2005). My own examination of different Japanese folk songs finds this ji-uchi pattern in many other pieces as well. It would be a safe bet to say that the rhythms from the composition “Matsuri” comes from myriad obon taiko drumming sources and that Tanaka has arranged them into the form that he and his students have disseminated. Often, these arrangements of “Matsuri” incorporate a “Midare-Uchi” segment to feature soloists.

Examining Canadian Variations of “Matsuri”

Many groups perform “Matsuri” across America and Canada. When teaching basic pieces like “Matsuri” to new groups, Tanaka instructed them to make variations, adding their own “*aji*” (taste) to differentiate from his own version (Tanaka: p.c., 2005). Katari Taiko’s “Matsuri” variation has been taught at numerous workshops across Canada. Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles, who have received “Matsuri” from Katari Taiko, have made their own adaptations and arrangements.

Katari Taiko received their “Matsuri” directly from Tanaka and placed a prelude to the main body of the song and a minor alteration to the main body. The prelude is an excerpt from a San Jose Taiko piece and the main body features a “Midare-uchi” solo. The San Jose Taiko prelude into “Matsuri” (as transcribed from a Chibi Taiko performance) inverts a pattern that alternates between rim shots and drum strokes to form two patterns (A and B) that are played simultaneously on two sets of drums. Each set of nagadou drums alternates the A and B pattern four times. The nagadou drums then performs section C followed by section A in unison (see figure 13). From this prelude, the piece moves into the main body (see DVD, chapter 4).

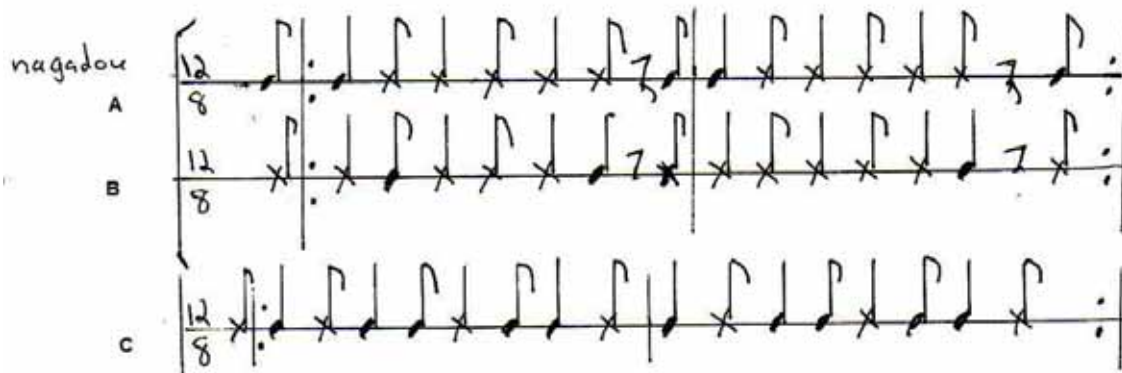


Figure 13 (San Jose Taiko prelude)

Edmonton’s Kita No Taiko has retained Katari Taiko’s variant of the main body (see figure 14) and perform a kuchi-shoga version (see DVD, chapter 3).

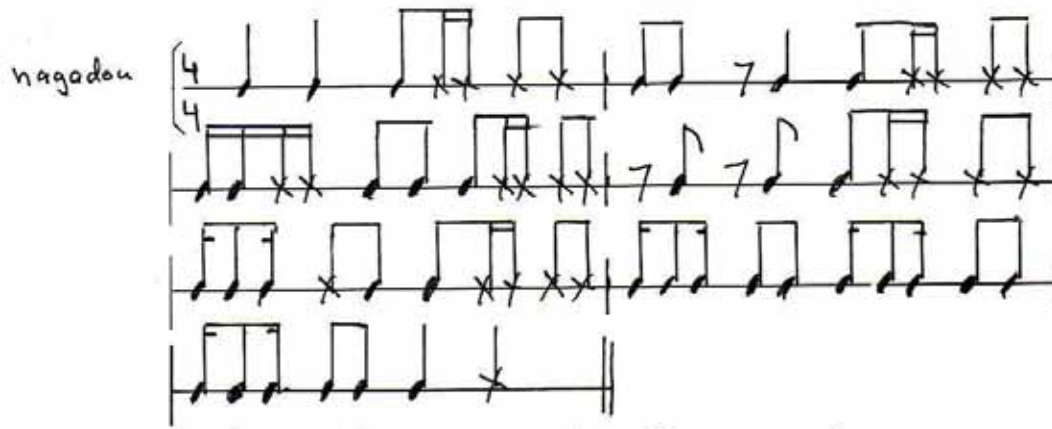


Figure 14 (Katari Taiko's "Matsuri")

Sawagi Taiko's "Matsuri" migrated from Uzume Taiko, who no longer performs the piece. Eileen Kage and Leslie Komori brought Uzume Taiko's rendition over to Sawagi Taiko to perform. Kage recalls that when she was with Uzume Taiko, she was assigned to compose a variation of the piece for performance (see figure 15). Sawagi's "Matsuri" has an arrangement that features a vocal prelude of a Japanese folk song, "Mogamigawa Funa Uta" from the prefecture of Yamagata-ken with additional vocal excerpts of "Yagi-Bushi" that cues the drums entry (Yamaguchi: p.c., 2005). The piece also has a "Midare-uchi" solo with two drummers on one drum. Sawagi Taiko's "Matsuri" concludes with a refrain from "Mogamigawa" as well (see DVD, chapter 8).



Figure 15 (Sawagi Taiko’s “Matsuri”)

Arashi Daiko has sadly retired their “Matsuri,” which they so kindly performed a kuchi shoga rendition after their performance in Fleurimont, Quebec (see DVD, chapter 6). Their variation was taught to original members of Arashi Daiko by Katari Taiko’s Naomi Shikaze and is a close version of Katari Taiko’s rendition that includes the San Jose excerpt as a prelude. They also have a variation of the bridge between the repetitions of the main body of the composition (see figure 16). The original Katari Taiko bridge (found in measures 9 –10 in figure 16) is further embellished and expanded upon with Arashi Daiko’s version of “Matsuri.”



Figure 16 (Arashi Daiko’s “Matsuri”)

Arashi Daiko transmitted their rendition of “Matsuri” to Oto-Wa Taiko. Oto-Wa Taiko customized the piece by adding a fue part that is played throughout the piece. The fue melody is an interlude from the Japanese folk song, “Yagibushi” from the prefecture of Gumma-ken (Watanabe 2005). The main body is the same as Katari Taiko’s variant. Oto-Wa Taiko plays the body three times and inserts two similar bridges (see figure 17) before returning for a final rendition of the main body. They incorporate unique drum arrangements and choreography (see DVD, chapter 7).

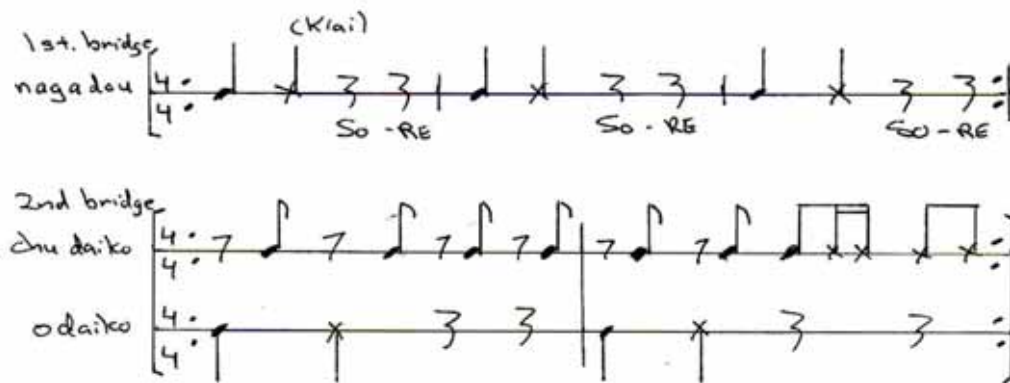


Figure 17 (Oto-Wa Taiko’s “Matsuri” interlude)

RAW is the only group that performs Katari Taiko's version in Toronto. This is due to the fact that the group has its roots in Wasabi Daiko, made up of early Katari Taiko members. Their "Matsuri" is distinguished by the fact they perform a theatrical mask piece accompanied by the basic beat of the San Jose Taiko prelude prior to drumming the main body. They also play the full San Jose Taiko prelude and have kept Katari Taiko's main body intact. They have a bridge of call and response patterns (see figure 18) that segues into the "Midare-uchi" solo before a final rendition of the main body (see DVD).

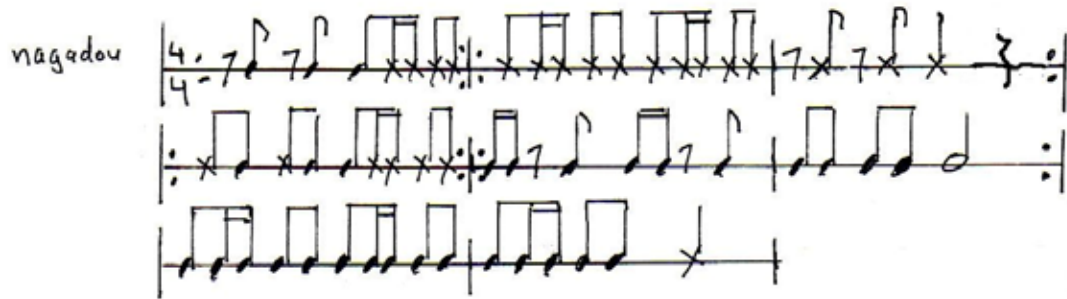


Figure 18 (RAW's "Matsuri" bridge)

RAW's "Matsuri" is choreographed by Suzanne Liska of RAW, who offers an insight into the choreography of their version, "I choreographed a structured improvisational masked dance/theatre piece incorporating solos, duets, trios, and a group ensemble. The movement in the piece is developed through each dancer's own interpretation of the mask, along with the group's suggestions, and a general understanding of the historical Japanese roots of the mask. The percussion supports the changing elements in the dance and invokes the upbeat, playful spirit of "Matsuri" (RAW: p.c., 2005).

Some kumi-daiko groups have retired their "Matusri" from performance. This might be explained by the fact that Oedo Sukeroku launched legal proceedings surrounding copyright issues due to the fact that so many kumi-daiko groups abroad use

their slant drum style and repertoire without direct permission from the group. Hiroshi Koshiyama of Fubuki Taiko mentions that they have dropped Sukeroku compositions, such as “Yodan Uchi” and “Matsuri” from their repertoire (p.c., 2005). The question of compositional ownership of “Matsuri” lies in a gray area. Tamaribuchi states, “So many groups use Tanaka’s “Matsuri” piece, it might as well be considered as public domain...however if anyone could lay compositional claim to it, it would be Tanaka” (p.c., 2005). It is possible that other kumi-daiko groups will also drop the performance of “Matsuri” and seek other festival drumming pieces to incorporate in their repertoire. The other possibility is that the composition will endure as Tanaka had envisioned. The fact that “Matsuri” has been widely disseminated across Canada allows for it to be used as a great finale piece for events that feature a number of kumi-daiko groups. Katari Taiko’s 20th anniversary concert featured a mass performance of “Matsuri” by several different groups participating at the gala event. It is a celebratory composition, tapping into the spirit of the festival that its name represents.

CONCLUSION

The development of kumi-daiko in Japan has been closely tied to a renewal of interest in the traditional arts of Japan in reaction to the post-WWII era's embrace of western culture. Recontextualizing Japanese traditional music in the contemporary form of the kumi-daiko ensemble has sparked great interest not only in Japan, but overseas with the Japanese diaspora as well. In the aftermath of the WWII internment of Japanese Americans and Japanese Canadians, kumi-daiko has attracted taiko participants back to their heritage and community. Kumi-daiko's excitement and sonic power is an effective vehicle for bringing attention to a variety of issues: reclamation of ethnic identity, the reconfiguration of gender constructs, challenges to racial and gender stereotypes, self-empowerment for women and the Burakumin, and the creation of a performance art form associated with Asian American and Asian Canadian identity. The allure of kumi-daiko in gaining visibility for those under-represented is undeniable.

Future of Kumi-Daiko

Many taiko drummers speculate upon the future of kumi-daiko. I've heard more than a few seasoned drummers speak of "how everything has been done" in terms of explorations and creative experimentation within the kumi-daiko format. Still others raise the issue of sustainability – how many groups can a community support? Tamaribuchi has discussed the overall trend of how kumi-daiko groups are faring in America during her workshops. She reports that many kumi-daiko groups are experiencing difficulties of membership recruitment and retention. Kumi-daiko is no longer a new art form ready to be taken to new places, pushing boundaries yet to be

transgressed. Possibly every form of cross experimentation has been ventured in Japan. Certainly in its homeland, players are not concerned or restricted by issues of misrepresentation or adherence to tradition (Tamaribuchi: p.c., 2005).

In Japan, the discussions of kumi-daiko's future have crystallized into two areas of thought: taiko as entertainment versus taiko as a great musical performance art form. Nagata elaborates:

There are people, and there are young people too, that are taking it to an extremely high level. That taiko music, taiko performance could be and should be on the same level as any other great musical art form like classical music. Very fine, very sophisticated, very great music, great compositions, and great playing. That's one way it's going. The other way it's going it just completely flash and spectacle, poor compositions, poor playing. And the sad thing about that is, that's what many Western audiences like.... I think that's a very bad direction to go, when kumi-daiko as a performance art becomes entertainment. Back in the old days when taiko was played at festivals and it was part of entertainment, that's one thing, it was played for the gods, it was light. It didn't necessarily have to be musical; it had a function, which was a certain kind of taiko. But now we're talking about performing art wadaiko, and when you just take it to an entertainment level, I think it's very dangerous. Not only that, but it attracts more people who are interested in wadaiko simply because it is spectacular. So I'd love to see it being elevated to a new height where it's not so much about just entertaining masses of people and I see it going this way. (Nagata: p.c., 2005)

Certainly many taiko drummers realize that kumi-daiko as a performance art form has only been around for several decades. Japanese children have grown up playing taiko and are exposed to kumi-daiko in schools. For many seasoned drummers who have children, a great deal of energy is directed towards the youth and hope that the children who have grown up playing taiko will take kumi-daiko to higher levels. Asano Taiko Co. looks towards a bright future in taiko: "As taiko becomes more and more prevalent in years to come, the overall level and quality will continue to rise. Regarding the direction, we will see when the next Eitetsu Hayashi¹ comes along. We consider Eitetsu Hayashi as

¹ Eitetsu Hayashi is a well-known wadaiko drummer in Japan.

the leader of wadaiko in Japan. So as more and more leaders in taiko emerge, taiko will be taken into new directions. In Japan recently, taiko has become more musically centred. In America, it seems to be performance and entertainment centred. I believe that entertainment value is very important, musicality is important, too, but I think it needs to be both” (p.c., 2005).

Kumi-daiko remains a vibrant performance art that plays an important function within Japanese Canadian communities. Many of the groups started over a decade ago persist, and there a number of new groups that are emerging. The “big drum” still madly consumes many taiko drummers, as they engage in maintaining groups and assisting new groups through the formative phase. Women are still attracted to the big drum and enjoying the cutting edge experience of an Asian contemporary performance art that empowers female players. Canadian kumi-daiko ensembles look forward to developing their own unique styles, engaging in a celebration of culture and sharing the potentials of kumi-daiko in the broader community.

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GLOSSARY

aji: Taste

bachi: Taiko drum sticks

bon odori: Japanese folk dancing

Burakumin: minority group in Japan

chado: Tea ceremony

chu daiko: Medium-sized barrel drum

daibyoshi daiko: Smaller version of okedou drum that is slung around shoulders

daimoku daiko: Shell-less drum

dojo: Training hall for martial arts

edo-bayashi: Repertoire of old Tokyo folk festival music

eisa: Okinawan traditional music

fundoshi: Loincloth worn by men

gaku daiko: Shallow form of barrel drum

gagaku: Japanese court music

hayashi: Generic term for ensemble made up of Japanese drums and flute

hira daiko: Shallow form of barrel drum

hogaku: Generic term for Japanese music

hyou: Tacking of the drum skin to the body

ikebana: Art of flower arrangement

ik-ko daiko: Used in gagaku music

ji-uchi: Base rhythm in kumi-daiko composition

kabuki: Japanese theatrical dance form performed by men

kagura: Generic term for Shinto music

kake koe: Drum calls

kami: Shinto deities

kane: Hand-held gong

keyaki: Zelkova serrata

kiai: Vocal yells (such as “sore”)

ko daiko: Small barrel drum

koto: Japanese zither

ko tsuzumi: Hourglass-shaped drum used in noh and kabuki

kuchi shoga: Taiko solfege or oral mnemonics

kumi-daiko: Japanese ensemble taiko drumming

miya daiko: Large taiko drums used in festival drumming

minyou shime: Rope-bound drum

nagadou: Barrel-shaped drums that are traditionally hollowed out from a single log

nembutsu odori: Buddhist dance form

nihon buyo: Japanese classical dance

nikkei: Japanese

noh: Japanese theatre

obon: Festival for ancestors

odaiko: Large taiko drum

okedou: Taiko drums that are made from staved construction

omikoshi: Portable shrine

otsuzumi: Hourglass-shaped drum used in noh

paaranku: hand-held frame drum used in eisa music

san no tsuzumi: Hourglass-shaped drum used in used in gagaku music

sansei: Third generation of Japanese descent

sanshin: Okinawan lute

sato-kagura: Shinto folk and festival music

sempai/kohai: Teacher and student hierarchy

sensei: Teacher

shakuhachi: Bamboo flute

shime daiko: Drums that have skins fastened by rope or lug tension

shinayakasa: Flexible

shino-bue: Bamboo flute

Shinto: Indigenous Japanese animistic religion

taiko: Drum

take-bue: Bamboo flute

tsukeshime: Rope bound drum

tsuzumi: Hourglass shaped drum with rope tension

uchiwa daiko: Shell-less drum

wadaiko: Japanese drum