Response to Professor Loeb

Henry Burnett

First, I would like to thank Professor Loeb for the chance to discuss some of his arguments concerning the findings in my article, and to clarify points that I may not have made clear. No doubt we will still disagree on essential points, but at least his criticisms will afford me the opportunity to further explain my intentions.

First, and perhaps most important, is Professor Loeb's misunderstanding of what I meant by *cantus* and how it is applied to the *sangen* melody. As I mentioned in my article, in *jiuta-tegotomono* the *sangen* (or shamisen) part was composed first as a complete composition, often with the intention that another *sangen* or koto part would be added at some later date. As a result, the *sangen* part contains the original melodic line upon which the other added parts (*sangen*, koto or shakuhachi) are derived. But what exactly is the nature of the *sangen* melody? I have ascertained that the melody itself is an arpeggiation of the trichords that comprise the hexachord of the *in-senpō* mode. Thus, the *in-senpō* mode itself provides the *cantus*, or background structure of the melodic line. The way in which the *sangen* arpeggiates the trichords, including their transpositions up or down from the tonic hexachord, forms a melodic profile that is followed by any and all instruments that are added to the ensemble. If a piece is written for koto solo, as is the case with *Midare*, the highly decorated melodic line still adheres to the *in-senpō cantus*, with every embellishing note accounted for as being either a half-step upper neighbor, or a whole-step lower neighbor, of any particular trichord of whatever hexachord

governs the passage. As I have stated in my article, it does not matter how the koto is tuned, or where the half-steps are located on the instrument, *Edo-jidai* shamisen (and this includes *nagauta*, the music for the Kabuki theater) and koto music follow the voice-leading of the *in-senpō* mode.

Professor Loeb also makes mention of the fact that performers often play *jiuta* pieces as a koto-vocal solo without the *sangen* part—quite often, incidentally, because there is no *sangen* player around to play it. But this particular performance practice does not negate the important fact that the koto part is still derived from the original *sangen* melody, and therefore still follows the original *sangen cantus*, even though the instrument for which the piece was composed is absent. So I do not see how a change in venue would affect the voice-leading structure of the music, as Professor Loeb seems to suggest. Besides, when koto players perform a *jiuta* piece (the word itself refers to *sangen* songs of the Kansai area) as a koto solo, they invariably use the original koto part, often composed by Yaezaki Kengyō, in which the koto strictly follows the *sangen* original in a heterphonic relationship. There are passages in the purely instrumental sections of these pieces (*tegoto*) in which the *sangen* and koto alternate passages in a *call and response* technique named *kakeai* ("echo"). Professor Loeb asserts that the koto in these passages is not following the *sangen* part, but has its own elaboration, sometimes quite distinct from that of the lead instrument. But these pieces were often conceived originally as *sangen* duets before the second *sangen* part was rearranged for koto (this fact was communicated to me by the late Japanese musicologist Kikkawa Eishi when I met him in Tokyo in 1982). In fact, there are Japanese performers who believe that these *kakeai* sections, both parts of which are indicated in the *sangen* scores, were originally meant to be played by a *single* performer on the *sangen* (this belief is held by Kurahashi Yodo II, grand master of shakuhachi in Kyoto and on the faculty of

Osaka University). Again, I do not see Professor Loeb's point that solo performance of this repertoire "suggests that such performers do not share Burnett's view that the *sangen* parts represent some kind of indispensable *cantus*," especially when one considers that the koto part was invariably derived from the original *sangen cantus* in the first place. What does the performer have to do with it?

Professor Loeb also makes the point that Yaezaki "could hardly have exerted great influence long beyond his lifetime." But again, what does Yaezaki's koto arrangements have to do with the voice-leading of the *in-senpō* mode? At least as late as the 1860s, the last decade in which the composition of *jiuta-tegotomono* still flourished before the Meiji Restoration of 1868, composers were still adhering to the *in-senpō* mode—witness the still popular *Hagi no Tsuyu* of Ikuyama Eifuku Kenyō (1818–1889?). Professor Loeb does not seem to realize that my article is specifically *about* the voice-leading properties of the *insenpō* mode, especially as it pertains to a particular *sangen* repertoire. Further, the article specifically states that I seek to demonstrate how this mode, the most popular one of the *Edo-jidai*, may be realized in a voice-leading graph that does justice to its inherent pitch relationships. I do not profess to go further than this, and all of my examples seek to support the topic at hand. Why would Professor Loeb want me to explore the relationship between Mitsuzaki Kengyō with that of his teacher, Yaezaki Kengyō? Mitsuzaki is using the same mode everyone else is using, and that is reflected in his masterpiece, *Nana Komachi*, an outstanding *jiuta-tegotomono* composition, that I analyze in my article. In fact, every sangen *jiuta*-tegotomono piece composed by Mitsuzaki, without exception, is based on the ubiquitous *in-senpō* mode.

As Professor Loeb point outs, Mitsuzaki was also famous for establishing a koto literature without *sangen*, but many of these pieces were still based on the *in* mode (the koto tuning

equivalent was called *hira-jōshi)*, no matter how the instrument arranged its bridges. For example, Mitsuzaki's *Godanginuta* for koto duet is based on the *in* mode, and was often played with the *sangen jiuta* piece *Sandanjishi* as a *maeuta* ("opening song"). In fact, *Godanginuta*, one of Mitsuzaki's most famous pieces for koto duet, had quite a convoluted history, the piece ultimately deriving from a shamisen (or *sangen)* duet prototype which stemmed from a popular eighteenth century genre called *kinutamono.* These pieces depicted the sound of the fulling block used to soften kimono fabric, a task usually done in the fall: one shamisen played an up-and-down stroke pedal point (the fulling block) while another shamisen played an elaborately decorated melody. Eventually, a particular *kinutamono* was arranged as a *sangen* and koto duet, *Nijiuginuta*, which was then further arranged by Hasetomi Kengyō (d. 1793) for two koto without *sangen*. It was this version that Mitsuzaki further arranged as *Godanginuta* at the beginning of the eighteenth century. My point is that the *in* mode operates whether or not a *sangen* is present, even in literature for solo koto or koto duet (there are exceptions: Mitsuzaki's *Akikaze no Kyoku* is deliberately composed with a koto tuning that is a variant of the *in* mode, in which the lower nuclear trichord of the mode has a whole-step upper neighbor instead of the more usual half step, a feature that reflects its Chinese theme).

Even with exceptions, I would still assert that most of the koto tunings of the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries have embedded within them the *in-senpō* hexachord, regardless of whether or not the first two strings (the ones furthest removed from the player) form a fifth interval other than that of the tonic fifth of the mode. *Midare* is a case in point, and it is this piece, analyzed by Professor Loeb, that seems to be the basis of contention regarding my interpretation of mode in this literature. *Midare*, like other *danmono*, was composed based on an earlier prototype—in this case, *Rinzetsu*—that had its roots in *gagaku*, and which first appeared

in a rudimentary form for solo koto in the famous 1664 anthology *Shichiku Shoshinshū*. Yatsuhashi Kengyō, or one or more of his disciples, re-composed this piece altogether, transposing the mode from the original Chinese anhemitonic pentatonic scale to that of the more popular shamisen *in* mode (Yatsuhashi was originally a shamisen player), creating, in the process *hira*-jōshi, the basic tuning of the koto. Counting from the lowest string, this tuning of the thirteen strings of the koto, in its untransposed form, would then be:

G	C[1]	D	E♭	G	A♭	c	d	e♭	g	a♭	c	d
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

The two half steps between E ♭ / D, and A ♭ /G, clearly indicate where the two trichords of the tonic hexachord are located; in this case, D and G. If one then accepts that the *in-senpō* mode governs this tuning, then one must accept that D and G form the tonic hexachord, and that G is indeed the tonic of the piece (*Midare* does not change its tuning at any time throughout the piece). If C were the tonic, as Professor Loeb claims it to be, then there would have to be a trichord formed around C with D♭ as its upper neighbor and B♭ as its lower neighbor. However, *Midare* has neither of these pitch classes, which would militate against C as the basis of a tonic hexachord, assuming one recognizes the *in* mode as structurally significant. If Professor Loeb does not recognize this mode, then he is free to choose whatever works best for him. However, I believe that the constant reiteration of the C – G fifth is more a rhythmic feature than a harmonic one; moreover, I hear this fifth as an isolated interval without any deeper structural meaning. In support of my argument, I bring up a most interesting personal experience with an Okinawan performer of the *kutu*, the Okinawan version of the koto. Okinawa also has a tradition of *jiuta*

and *danmono* performance, the so-called Okinawan Yatsuhashi-ryū, which still preserves the original *yō-senpo* tuning of several of the danmono pieces before they were transposed into the *in* mode during the latter part of the seventeenth century. In November of 1981, the Asia Society of New York presented a concert of Okinawan court dance and theater music. After the concert, at my request, the woman who played the *kutu*, performed *Rokudan* in the Okinawan version, which utilizes the major *yō-senpō* mode, the one in which the two trichords of the hexachord have no half-steps, and which is modeled on the Chinese anhemitonic pentatonic scale. What struck me as most peculiar was that while all the strings of the *kutu* were in relative tune with each other, the first two strings, which should have formed a perfect fifth, were decidedly out of tune with each other. In fact, I was not even able to discern what the interval was (incidentally, I recorded her performance). It sounded something between a fourth and a large third! In her performance (she obviously did not care one wit if the first two strings were out of tune), when she hit the first two strings in the ubiquitous *kakite* and *warizume* techniques (hitting the first two strings once and twice respectively) she placed the emphasis on the first string, the second lower one played as an afterthought, as though it had no relevance. This was a professional musician on tour with an Okinawan troupe; she obviously knew what she was doing when she performed *Okinawan Rokudan*, so I cannot simply toss off her performance as amateurish. What I did come away with was the distinct possibility that we in the West simply cannot hear this music as Japanese (or in this case, Okinawan) performers once did during the *Edo-jidai*.

Equally interesting is Sir Francis Piggott's remarks as an eyewitness to a degree-awarding ceremony in which students had to play *Rokudan No Shirabe* before their teacher and the grand master of the school (the event took place sometime in the early 1890s; see *The Music and Musical Instruments of Japan*, Da Capo reprint of the second edition, 1909, 45). There he states

that the *sensei* (teacher) placed the first bridge of her koto an octave lower than its normal position, while the students left the bridge in its normal position (i.e., the first two strings still formed a fifth). This would mean that by this action the teacher, showing her superior position, was not at all concerned that the first two strings of her koto now formed a fourth instead of a fifth, further placing the emphasis on the first string, the tonic of the mode. However, in justice to Professor Loeb's interpretation, Piggott also describes how each string of the instrument had to be tuned perfectly by all the assembled students before individual performances could begin. Thus, after the first string is tuned to the satisfaction of the teacher and the grand master, "[t]hen comes the second string, an easy falling fifth—from the dominant to the tonic, if my analysis of the scale should prove correct" (45). However, I still maintain—and Piggott seems to imply—that Westerners automatically interpreted the koto tuning in terms of a Western bias which did not necessarily reflect a Japanese interpretation of the same tuning.

Lastly, a fascinating recording was made by Hirano Kenji, then Professor of "Japanology and Musicology" at Dokkyū and Tokyo Universities. This two LP set (Toshiba EMI Ltd, Tokyo, Japan, 1979) illustrated the entire history of *Midare* from its origins in *gagaku* right through every publication of the piece during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In several of the early forms of this piece, the first two strings were sometimes tuned to a major third (witness the Okinawan version cited above), or even as a tone cluster consisting of a major third and a major second in which the first three strings were struck, using the *kakite* technique. On the recording, these earlier versions are played striking the bottom two strings very lightly, but clearly bringing out the voice-leading of the hexachord in the upper line, always placing the emphasis on the tonic of the mode (usually string 5). Listening to these performances, one does get the impression that the lower strings are indeed simply rhythmic placements without any harmonic

significance. *Danmono* pieces were performed in either the *yō-senpō* or the newer *in-senpō* mode until the *in* mode took over completely by the first decade of the eighteenth century. By that time, all of the danmono were consistently played in the *in* mode, and were performed both as koto solo, koto duet with an added *kaede* part for a second koto, or even as a *sankyoku* ensemble with *sangen*, koto and shakuhachi (or *kokyū* a bowed fiddle). It is important to note that when the *sangen* joins the ensemble in all of the danmono compositions, it plays the *cantus* of the mode, emphasizing the hexachordal tonic fifth, and never plays the *kakite* koto pitches, which, according to Professor Loeb, form the true tonic fifth of the composition. Since I have addressed my feelings on this point in the article, we need not go into my disagreement with Professor Loeb here, especially since my article does not expound on this point, which should be argued separately.

Professor Loeb also asks why I did not address the reason that more expansive pieces in the *jiuta* repertoire tend to transpose their tonic hexachords in a dominant direction more than they do in the subdominant direction. He then points out how difficult it is to move the bridges on the koto if the music descends in a subdominant direction, as if that were the main concern of the composer. But this music was written originally for *sangen*, not koto, and the arranger of the koto part had to accommodate this instrument to reflect the style and mode of the lead *sangen* part if he wished to join with the *sangen* in ensemble. It is a well-known fact that koto technique progressed when it joined the *sankyoku* ensemble, since the koto player had to mimic many of the techniques commonly used in shamisen composition of all types. Further, the upward transposition of the hexachordal trichord also reflected the basic *jo-ha-kyū* aesthetic which drives all of these pieces. I discuss this concept in other articles (see, for example, my article in *Perspectives of New Music,* 27/2, 1989), but essentially this aesthetic seeks to move the music in

an asymmetrical arc that rises to a climax—thus the move upwards in fifths—only to fall back to its original register. This concept pervades all Japanese art music in all genres and affects the ebb and flow of the *jiuta* repertoire. The koto player must then follow the *sangen* as it moves up from its original register into higher registers and ever higher fifth motions within each section of the *tegotomono* form. And, yes, the koto player often must have the dexterity to move the bridges on the instrument no matter how difficult the maneuver may be. In one famous example, *Yaegoromo* by Ishikawa Kōtō, with a koto part composed by Yaezaki Kengyō, the shamisen part does not contain a single retuning of its strings, although there are places in the piece where such an action would have normally taken place, as when the music moves into new hexachordal transpositions (Ishikawa did this on purpose). However, the koto player must continually move the bridges of the koto in order to accommodate these new transpositions of the mode, and often in mid-stream, in order to follow the *sangen* modulations (the *sangen* does not have to retune its strings, since technically it can play tones open or stopped along its fretless fingerboard). In all these pieces, the koto must follow the direction and modulation of the original *sangen* part, since it is an addition to a pre-existing composition.

Lastly, Professor Loeb refers to my reference to the "multiplicity of Chinese scales which all derive from a single set of pitches," inferring that many scales also existed in *jiuta-tegotomono*. The reality is that the six Chinese-derived scales used in *gagaku*, the ultimate source of the much later *danmono* (and kumiuta) repertoire, can be reduced to two modal prototypes: *ritsu* and *ryō*, each prototype containing three scales that differ only in starting pitch, and which do not in any manner constitute "multiple modes" (as opposed to "scales"), as Professor Loeb would suggest. These two prototypes became the basis of the later *yō-senpō* and *in-senpō* modes of the seventeenth century. But by the time of the eighteenth century, the koto repertoire was so heavily

influenced by the *in* mode of the shamisen (Yatsuhashi and his disciples were all virtuoso shamisen players) that *hira jōshi* and its transpositional variants became ubiquitous. As I mentioned previously, there are exceptions, but even in pieces as late as *Saga no Aki* by Kikusue Kengyō (d. 1892), were the two koto are tuned to Chinese-derived modes, the left-hand *oshide* technique of the koto player invariably provides the needed half steps to form the traditional *in-senpō* hexachord.

As one can see, we have not even begun to explore the issues Professor Loeb brings up, since so many of them really do not pertain to the present study. A full investigation of the origins and significance of the *kakite* and *warizume* techniques on the koto would warrant a separate essay in its own right. But I do hope that this discussion does not end here and that other scholars in this field might also join in the discussion.