

# Explanation of Common Symbols Found in Jin Nyodo Honkyoku Notation

Compiled by James Nyoraku Schlefer  
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| Characters                           |   | Explanation   |                            |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| <b>NUMBERS</b>                       |   | Numbers written next to notes usually mean one of two things: 1. to open the hole, or 2. to hit or lift that hole for articulation (Atari/Osu.)                                     |                            |
| 一 二 三 四 五                            | Ichi, ni, san, yon, go<br>1, 2, 3, 4, 5 | The Japanese numbers – <i>ichi, ni san, yon</i> (or <i>shi</i> ) and <i>go</i> – correspond to the holes on the shakuhachi counting from the bottom hole (1) to the thumb hole (5). |                            |
| 空                                    | 2, 4, 5                                 | Open holes 2, 4, and 5  |                            |
| <b>ATARI &amp; OSU</b>               |   |   |                            |
| 打                                    | Atari “Hit, strike”                     | A fundamental technique of shakuhachi sound. Always accompanied by the number of the hole to be struck.   |                            |
| E<br>x<br>a<br>m<br>p<br>l<br>e<br>s | 一打                                      | 1 Atari   | Hit the 1 hole.            |
|                                      | 二打                                      | 2 Atari   | Hit the 2 hole.            |
|                                      | 三打                                      | 3 Atari   | Hit the 3 hole.            |
|                                      | 三打 四打                                   | 3-4 Atari   | Hit the 3 then the 4 hole  |
|                                      | 三打 二打                                   | 3-2 Atari   | Hit the 3 then the 2 hole. |
| 四三 一三                                | Hit 4, 3      Hit 1, 3                  | Frequently the symbol Atari is omitted and only the number or numbers are used. By themselves or next to repeat signs.  |                            |
| 才                                    | Osu “Push”                              | This means to quickly open and close the hole. The opposite motion from Atari but with the same effect, to rearticulate a note.   |                            |
| E<br>x<br>a<br>m<br>p<br>l<br>e<br>s | 二才                                      | 2 osu   |                            |
|                                      | 三才                                      | 3 osu   |                            |
|                                      | 四才                                      | 4 osu   |                            |
|                                      | 五才                                      | 5 osu   |                            |

ツメ  
一  
大  
雨  
打

Tsu Meri lift 1

山  
奈  
し  
音

U yuri

月  
Bright

開  
Kai (open)

吹  
き  
ま  
く

Fukinuku

二  
斗  
斗  
Ni Bakari  
2 open Re

強

Tsuyoku (strong)

弱

Yawaku (weak)

調

Shirabe

本  
手

Honte

高  
音

Takane

鉢  
返  
し

Hachikaeshi  
Also Hachigaesi

結

Ketsu  
Or Musubi

起

Ki

承

Sho

轉

Ten

返  
し  
返  
し

Arui (wa)  
Kaeshi (return)

露  
拂

Tsuyu Harai




## FINGERING

|     |                 |   |
|-----|-----------------|---|
| 一開  | Open            | Open the hole.  |
| 三開  | 3 open          |   |
| 一三開 | 1 & 3 open      |   |
| 三開閉 | 3 open-close    | Usually found at the beginning of a phrase, start with the 3 hole open, then close it at the same moment you start the breath.  |
| 四開閉 | 4 open-close    | Same as above only with the 4 hole.   |
| 一四交 | 1 & 4 alternate | Atari/osu with 1 and 4 alternately  |
| 四一交 | 4 & 1 alternate | Same as above but start with 4.   |
| 一四五 | 1, 4, 5 meri    | Like it says.   |
| ア   | “A” 4,5 meri    | A (pronounced AH) is played with 1, 2, and 3 closed, 4 and 5 open but shaded. Can be played in both octaves and sometimes kari. |
| ホ   | Ho              | A fingering of open 1, 4 and 5, meri position.  |

## MERI, KARI, HIKU

|     |                         |  |
|-----|-------------------------|--|
| ホ 在 | Meru                    | Lowered head position often accompanied by shading the next lowest hole. |
| 在 ホ | Karu                    | Head in upper, normal playing position.                                  |
| 指   | Yubi “Finger”           |  |
| 指 在 | Yubi Meru “Finger Meri” | Use the finger not only the head to make the meri.                       |
| 中   | Chu or Naka             | Means middle or half.  |

|                                   |                          |  |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| 中                                 | Chu meri                 | Half or middle meri. Usually played with the finger shading but the head in kari position. |
| 大                                 | Dai                      | Big, Great. This symbol indicates to do more of whatever the following instruction is.     |
| 大 <sub>カ</sub> and 大 <sub>カ</sub> | Dai Karu                 | Play with the head in a higher than usual position.  |
| 大 <sub>カ</sub> 大 <sub>カ</sub>     | Dai Meru                 | Very low head position.  |
| 高                                 | Taka meri<br>"High meri" | Essentially the same as a Chu meri.  |
| カ                                 | Kazashi "Shaded"         | Meri fingering position.   |
| フ                                 | Furi                     | A quick head dip.  |
| ハ <sub>二</sub>                    | Ha 2, 4, 5               | Usually played in Kari position.   |
| 引                                 | Hiku                     | Literally "pull." Lower the head. May sometimes be accompanied by a finger meri.           |
| 引                                 | Hiku, drop               | A quick drop down to the meri or dai meri position at the end of a phrase.                 |
| 引                                 | Dai hiku                 | Lower the head more than usual.  |
| 出                                 | Dasu "Push up"           | Head up – usually found following a hiku.  |
| 引<br>出                            | Hiku, Dasu               | Head down then up  |
| <b>TECHNIQUES</b>                 |                          |  |
| 口                                 | Ko ro                    | Indicates the playing technique <i>koro koro</i> .   |
| 口 <sub>南</sub><br>口 <sub>南</sub>  | Hororo                   | Similar to Koro koro.  |
| カ<br>ウ                            | Kara                     | Usually seen only on Hi or Ha, a trilling on the 1 hole.                                   |
| カ and 引                           | Meri komi                | Bend the note down in pitch and then back up again.  |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
|   | Nayashi                                     | Play the previous note in meri position and slide quickly up to the kari position.                         |
|   |   | Multiple repeats of nayashi getting faster.  |
| 全  | Onaji "Same"                                | Play the following notes the same as the first time.   |
| 甲  | Kan   | Play in the high octave.   |
| 大甲   | Dai Kan                                     | Play in the third octave.  |
| 乙  | Otsu  | Play in the low octave.  |
| ろ <sup>ニ</sup>   | Ra and Ni Atari                             | The letter Ra <sup>ニ</sup> indicates an Atari on the second hole. This particular indication is redundant. |
|  |   | Continue the pattern getting faster.   |
| スル   | Suru  | Indicates either a slide to the next note or to omit the Atari on the next note.                           |
| 玉音   | Tamane                                      | Flutter sound produced by a back-of-the-throat vibrato.  |
| ムライキ   | Muraiki                                     | A loud blast of air and sound. A distinctive sound of shakuhachi.  |
| 或筒音  | Arui (wa) Tsutsune<br>or play "Like a Pipe" | A somewhat enigmatic indication, generally played as a strong, straight sound.                             |
| エリ   | Yuri  | Typical head vibrato.  |
| 低エリ  | Soku Yuri                                   | A vibrato done with the lips rather than the head.   |
| 切  | Kiru "Cut"                                  | Cut the note off: i.e. don't hold it out.  |

|                  |                                |  |
|------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| ミ                | Komi                           | Use the komi buki technique – a pulsating diaphragm vibrato. Used exclusively in Naesaha (Kinpu-ryu) honkyoku  |
| ニ<br>ツ<br>メ<br>リ | Tsu meri                       | Play Tsu meri then slowly lower the head while slowly removing the 1 finger, maintaining the pitch. Hit 1 and go immediately to Re.  |
| ウ                | “U”                            | This U is attacked with the 4 hole, dai meri, and then open the 3 hole to kari. A repetitive sweeping head yuri follows that gets faster and narrower.   |
| 明                | Mei – “Bright”                 | A term specific to Jin Nyodo’s notation, Mei indicates to make the meri sound without shading the hole; head-only.   |
| 明<br>明<br>明<br>明 |                                | Some examples of Mei.  |
| 開                | Kai – “Open”                   | Also no shading  |
| 開<br>開<br>開      |                                | Some Examples of Kai.  |
| 吹<br>き<br>ぬ<br>く | Fukinuku                       | Play until your air is completely out.   |
| 二<br>斗           | 2 open Re                      | Play Re with all holes closed except for 2. This is only found in the last phrase of Kinko-ryu pieces.   |
| <b>DYNAMICS</b>  |                                |  |
| 強                | Tsuyoku<br>“Loud, Strong”      | Play loud and strong.  |
| 弱                | Yawaku<br>“Weakly, gently”     | Play quietly.  |
| <b>SECTIONS</b>  |                                |  |
| 調<br>竹<br>調      | Shirabe<br>And<br>Take Shirabe | “Shirabe” is the beginning section of a piece. It can also be read as “Choshi” where it means preparation or tuning, to prepare for meditation. Take Shirabe “Prepare the Bamboo,” i.e. the shakuhachi |



|   |                              |  |
|---|------------------------------|--|
| 本手  | Honte                        | The Main melodic section.  |
| 高音  | Takane                       | A section that uses high notes.  |
| 鉢返し   | Hachigaeshi                  | Passing/returning the bowl section. At this point in the honkyoku the komuso would pass his bowl to the patron in the hopes of receiving alms. |
| In addition to the above sections indicators, Jin Nyodo often uses the four following terms from the Noh theatre. The great Noh dramatist Zeami conceived the four sections of a Noh drama as Ki-Sho-Ten-Ketsu. |                              |  |
| 起   | Ki – “Wake up”               |  |
| 承   | Sho – “Accept”               |  |
| 轉   | Ten – “Change”               |  |
| 結   | Ketsu or Mutsubi – “Closing” |  |
| 返し  | Kaeishi – “Return”           | Repeated section. The music between these signs may be repeated.   |
| 露拂  | Tsuyu Harai                  | A closing section  |

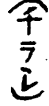
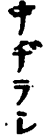







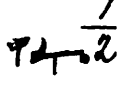


Explanation of  
Common Symbols  
Found in Chikausha Notation  
of the Sankyoku Repertoire

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

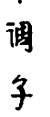
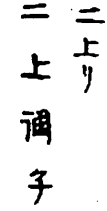
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|  | Ryaku Sen           |
|  | Uchi<br>Aratame     |
|  | 2<br>Half Sneed     |
|  | 1/2<br>Double Speed |





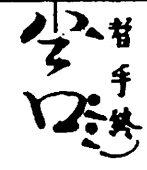
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|   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
|  | Yoi                               |
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|---|---------------------|
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| Characters                      |   | Explanations  |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>SECTIONS</b>                 |   |   |
| 千<br>ラ<br>レ<br>シ                | Chirashi  | Indicates the final section of the <i>tegoto</i> , the instrumental interlude. Generally played fast.   |
| 中<br>ナ<br>カ<br>ジ<br>ラ<br>シ      | Naka Jirashi  | “Middle Chirashi” – Distinguished from the final <i>Chirashi</i> , or climax section of the <i>Tegoto</i> section. Note the alliteration: <i>jirashi</i> becomes <i>chirashi</i> because of the word before.                  |
| 段;<br>段四<br>段初                  | Dan;<br>Fourth Dan;<br>Sho (First) Dan  | In “Danmono” music (i.e. <i>Rokudan</i> ) and in some <i>tegoto</i> sections, the number of the <i>Dan</i> is indicated. Sho is the first <i>Dan</i> .  |
| 手<br>事                          | Tegoto  | Beginning of an instrumental section.   |
| 合<br>手                          | Ai (no) Te  | Short instrumental section between songs.   |
| 前<br>弾                          | Mae Biki  | While most of the Sankyoku pieces begin with the vocal occasionally a piece will begin with an instrumental section before the vocal begins. <i>Mae Biki</i> is an instrumental introduction.                                 |
| <b>RHYTHM</b>                   |   |   |
| 畧<br>線                          | Ryaku Sen   | “Lose one line” – The beat and tempo stay the same but you will see one less line connecting the notes. i.e. what should be two lines is now one; there is no line where there should be one. This is an annoying convention. |
| 打<br>改                          | Uchi Aratame  | “Change beat” – In sections where the beats alternate Dot and Dash, there will be two dots or two dashes in a row. You can think of it as a measure with an extra beat.   |
| E<br>x<br>a<br>m<br>p<br>l<br>e |  | Uchi Aratame example  |
| 2                               | 2   | Indicating that the tempo is twice as slow. Each beat is now twice the value that it had.   |
| 1/2                             | One Half  | Indicates that the tempo is now twice as fast. The beat is worth half of what it was previously.  |

|                                      |                                    |   |   |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|---|---|
|                                      | Beat marks                         | Right side beat marks can be either a series of dashes (as in the far left example) or alternating dots and dashes (as in the near left.) In the dot-dash pattern, dot beat notes are emphasized more than the dash beat notes. All right side beats are stronger than left side beats. |   |
|                                      | Circles and triangles              | Circles replace beat marks on the right side; triangles replace beat marks on the left side. This is an indication that the melody is syncopated, or playing off the beat. In the example at left the RI is held through the left beat and the RO is held through the right beat.       |   |
|                                      | Yo i                               | A rhythmic device to help with counting. If you say the letters "Yo Ee" in your head in rhythm, while holding the note you are playing, you will come in correctly on the next note. Used for notes of one-and-a-half beats (fast tempos) or three-quarters-of-a-beat (slow tempos.)    |   |
|                                      | Yo i in context                    |   |   |
|                                      | "Jitsu wa"<br>Actually a half beat | Indicates that string players actually play only a half beat here instead of a full beat. Note the contradictory notation.  |   |
|                                      | "Jitsu wa"<br>Actually one beat    | Indicates that string players actually play only one beat here instead of two as indicated.   |   |
| NOTATION                             |                                    |   |   |
|                                      | Nobiru - <i>ritard</i>             | Equivalent to <i>ritard</i> or <i>rubato</i> in Western music. Stretch the beat, or slow down momentarily.  |   |
|                                      | Arui wa - <i>or</i>                | An alternative to the main written music. Examples follow.  |   |
| E<br>x<br>a<br>m<br>p<br>l<br>e<br>s |                                    |   | Or play <i>kari</i> – You may need to play <i>tsu karu</i> instead of <i>meri</i> as written. |
|                                      |                                    |   | Or play <i>meri</i> – You may need to play <i>chi meru</i> instead of <i>karu</i> as written. |
|                                      |                                    |   | Or omit – The repeats maybe omitted.  |

|                                      |   |  |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| 三                                    | San<br>The number three,<br>often an<br>abbreviation for<br>Sangen (Shamisen)     | Frequently you will see the number three written next to or above another symbol or note, indicating that the Shamisen (Sangen) will be playing different notes or in a different octave. Some examples follow.  |   |
| E<br>x<br>a<br>m<br>p<br>l<br>e      | 五甲  | Shamisen will play in the kan octave.  |   |
|                                      |  | Shamisen will play the left side <i>tsu</i> as written. Since the shakuhachi usually plays in unison with the shamisen, this is to make the shakuhachi player aware of the change.   |   |
| SCHOOLS (RYU-HA)                     |   | There are two main schools of string playing, Yamada and Ikuta. The vast majority are Ikuta players and the notation is written with that style in mind. If you find yourself playing with a Yamada player, you will need to observe the indicated changes in the music. |   |
| 生<br>田                               | Ikuta Ryu   | The predominant school of string playing.  |   |
| 山<br>田 or 山                          | Yamada Ryu  | Yamada school players do play some Ikuta school pieces but there are usually some slight variations which will be indicated following one of these two signs.  |   |
| E<br>x<br>a<br>m<br>p<br>l<br>e<br>s | 山田<br>無   | Yamada Omit  | If you are playing with a Yamada-ryu string player, you must NOT play the notes indicated.  |
|                                      | 山田<br>カ   | Yamada Kari  | If playing with a Yamada-ryu string player, you SHOULD play this note Kari instead of meri.   |
|                                      | 生田<br>懸合  | Yamada Kataei  | If playing with a Yamada Ryu player, play this section as a kakiae, call-and-response. With an Ikuta player, play straight through. |
|                                      | 山田<br>懸合  | Ikuta Kakeai   | If playing with an Ikuta Ryu player, play this section as a kakiae, call-and-response. With a Yamada player, play straight through. |
| TUNINGS                              |   | There are three standard Shamisen tunings and they are usually indicated at the beginning of each song. Oftentimes the tuning changes at the beginning of a new section.   |   |
| 本<br>調<br>子                          | Hon Joshi<br>Also read <i>Choshi</i>  | "Real" tuning. Shamisen is tuned to D – G – D<br>(RO – RE – RO.)   |   |
| ニ<br>上<br>調<br>子                     | Ni Agari  | Shamisen is tuned to D – A – D<br>(RO – CHI - RO.)   |   |

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|                       |                                       |  |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| 三下リ                   | San Sagari                            | Shamisen is tuned to D – G – C (RO – RE – RI.)   |
| ニ上<br>禰子<br>(ニメリ)     | Ni Agari,<br>Ichi Meri                | A non-standard tuning for the shamisen, C – G – C in Western music, the equivalent of the shakuhachi notes RI – RE – HI.   |
| <b>OTHER</b>          |                                       |  |
| 早                     | Hayaku                                | Fast. This looks suspiciously like the Kan, high octave, sign. Be careful.   |
| 和                     | Suru                                  | A symbol found between two notes indicating that an ornament is expected, usually an anticipation. Since ornamentation conventions differ between shakuhachi schools, ask your teacher which ornamentation to use. |
| ハ<br>ヅ<br>リ           | Yuri                                  | The letters to the right of the squiggly line say “yuri,” or vibrato. In this case the vibrato starts slowly then gets faster.   |
| 空<br>口<br>替<br>手<br>終 | Kaede section<br>finishes             | If there is a second, or Kaede, koto part, that part finishes here.  |
| 息<br>下<br>リ           | Ika Ryaku                             | Breath mark is indicated only here. The assumption is you will continue to take a breath at this pattern throughout the piece.   |
| <b>OBSCURE</b>        |                                       |  |
| 碓<br>地<br>ト<br>ナ<br>ル | Kinuta Ji to Naru<br>“Becomes Jinuta” | The shamisen will play a steady, rhythmic pattern during this section. <i>Kinuta</i> recalls the sound of women washing clothes by beating them with a stick while stretched upon a rock.                          |
| 碓<br>地<br>終           | Kinuta Ji ends                        | Indicates that the Kinuta section has ended.   |