

Dora - The Art of UOZUMI Iraku III

The “*Dora*” is a type of gong with roots in Asia. It came to Japan from the Chinese continent and is still in use today. It is used in Buddhist services and in the tea ceremony to welcome and send off guests. UOZUMI Iraku III, who carries on the techniques of his grandfather, UOZUMI Iraku I, produces *Dora* of the finest shape, timbre, and resonance. He has been designated a “Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property” for the technique he uses to produce the *Dora*. This film documents every step in the production process of the *Dora* from preparation of the materials to completion.

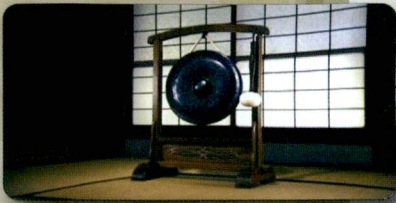


UOZUMI Iraku III

UOZUMI Iraku III was born in the city of Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture, in 1937. His real name is UOZUMI Yasuhiko. He studied under the tutelage of his grandfather, UOZUMI Iraku I. In 1962 he received the Commissioner Award from the Council for the Protection of Cultural Properties at the annual Exhibition of Japanese Traditional Art Crafts, and in 1998 received the Education Minister's Award. He also received the Pola Traditional Japanese Culture Award Excellent Prize in 1998, the Purple

Ribbon Medal (for notable innovations in scholarship, arts or sports) and a Cultural Merit Award from Ishikawa Prefecture in 2000, along with being

designated in 2009 by the Japanese government as a “Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property” for the *Dora*.



✦ The *Dora* of UOZUMI Iraku III

The *Dora* made by UOZUMI Iraku III is introduced here. This type of gong has been used at Buddhist temples since ancient times, and today is primarily used in the tea ceremony.



✦ The Origins of the *Dora*

In the distant past, the peoples of China, the Korean peninsula, and Southeast Asia rang a gong to pray for safety and to inspire courage when going into battle or leaving on a sea voyage.



✦ UOZUMI Iraku III in the Atelier

In 2002, UOZUMI Iraku III was named a “Holder of Important Intangible Cultural Property” for his *Dora* production techniques. UOZUMI hammers a *Dora* made from an alloy of copper and tin known as “*sahari* bronze” in the hope of achieving a subtle timbre suitable for Chanoyu, the Japanese tea ceremony.



✦ Kanazawa, Ishikawa Prefecture

Chanoyu has been popular since the Edo period in Kanazawa, a castle town that was home to the MAEDA family, feudal lords who ruled for 14 generations. The UOZUMI Iraku atelier is located in the middle of this town.



✦ Making the Model

Dora production starts with the making of a model from clay. Rice husks are mixed in and thoroughly kneaded into the clay to form the model from which the casting mold for the *Dora* is made.



✦ The Role of Rice Husks

There is a good reason for mixing in rice husks to make the clay model. In the stage before casting, the casting mold is fired, the husks turn to ash, and tiny holes form in their place, which allow the gas to escape when casting.



✦ Firing the Clay Model

The model of the *Dora* made from clay and rice husks is fired in a charcoal fire. After this step, the shape of the model is improved in the modification process or *katamawashi* that comes next.



✦ The Completed Model of the *Dora*

After modification, tiny indents are made in the model, which eventually gives the *Dora* its timbre and gentle resonance upon completion. The size of the model is approximately 36 centimeter across.



✦ Coating the *Dora* with Wax

The process of coating the *Dora* with wax begins in November. The thinly stretched one-millimeter layer of wax is soaked in warm water to soften it before being applied to the model. In summer the wax would become too soft, and in winter it would be too hard, so the making of *Dora* can only be done in the spring and autumn when the air temperature is just right.



✦ Completion of the Casting Mold

Soil is then placed over the model, covering it. This soil becomes the outer mold and the model becomes the core. This completes the casting mold. To remove the moisture from the soil, shards of fired pottery known as *suwashi* are fixed over the entire surface. The dried casting mold awaits dewaxing.



✦ Measuring the Copper and Tin

The materials to form the *sahari* alloy are measured. The components are copper and tin and the ratio is 100 parts copper to 30 parts tin.



✦ Putting the Copper into the Crucible

The melting of copper and tin to form the *sahari* bronze alloy begins in a crucible in the atelier furnace. The melting of copper is started first, because of its higher melting point at 1,380 °C.



✦ Putting the Tin into the Crucible

Because tin melts at a relatively low temperature, it is put into the crucible later. UOZUMI watches the color of the alloy as melting takes place to determine the right moment to begin casting based on experience and intuition.



✦ Dewaxing the Casting Mold

At last, preparations for casting begin. First, the casting mold is heated in the charcoal fire to melt and remove the wax inside the mold. The dewaxed mold is cooled to the right temperature for casting, and the right moment is awaited.



The Moment of Casting

The moment of casting. The atelier is kept dark so that the color of the *sahari*, indicating its temperature, can be discerned. UOZUMI holds up the casting mold, while his eldest son, Yasunobu, pours the melted *sahari* into the gate.



Removing the Mold

Until the mold is removed, nobody knows if the *Dora* was formed successfully or not from the *sahari* alloy. A single tiny crack could spoil the entire effort.



Hardening and Annealing

The successfully cast *Dora* goes through the processes of annealing, hardening, and finishing before completion.



Finishing

The *Dora* is now approaching completion through the processes of coating with *urushi* lacquer, polishing with a charcoal block, covering with *ohaguro* black, and polishing with oil. UOZUMI performs this polishing work lovingly as though the *Dora* were his child.



First Ring

It is time for the *Dora's* first ring. UOZUMI Iraku III rings the newly made *Dora*. The sound reverberates through the quiet tea room.



Waiting Guests

The guests waiting outside the tea room hear the sound of the *Dora*, informing them it is time to enter.



The Timbre of the *Dora*

The subtle, profound sound of the *Dora* leaves a shimmering resonance.

Assistance

ISHIZAWA Yoshiaki
Kanazawa Nakamura Memoriam Museum
Tokyo National Museum

Staff

Production ——— SANO Fumio
Framing/Stage direction — KUROSAKI Yoichi
Filming ——— OKI Daisuke
Lighting ——— FURUYA Atsushi
V E ——— CHIBA Kiyomi
Filming assistance ——— YOSHIDA Takahiko
Music/sound ——— YAMAZAKI Shigeyuki

Colorist ——— SEKIGUCHI Masato
Timing ——— MITSUHASHI Masayuki
Mixing ——— KADOKURA Toru
Narration ——— YAMAMOTO Gaku
Recording ——— Tokyo T.V. Center Co., Ltd.
Technical assistance — Imagica Corporation