

Developments In Post-Classical Nō (1500 - 1700)

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Nō's classical and post-classical phase

In this contribution, nō will be treated from the point of view of its own development and its inner system in the period of the final medieval (late Muromachi) and early modern (early Edo) periods. The term *post-classical* will be used to refer to this period of nō's development, as distinguished from both the *classical* nō of Zeami and his immediate followers (*Zeami shūhen*) and early, pre-classical or ancient (*kosaku no nō*) of Zeami's predecessors. Nō of these periods is not necessarily the same notion as the nō known from the stage today. In the first centuries of its existence, nō appears to have been a much livelier, more dynamic and melodically richer performance.¹ Much of its present-day characteristics including the slowness of its tempo, both in dance and speech, owes to the adjustments to the tastes of shoguns in the Edo period while its special 'stomach-produced' (*hara kara*) voice has its roots in the samurai-like diction.

Nō was also never limited to the art of the official five schools (*shiza ichiryū*: Kanze, Hōshō, Komparu, Kongō and Kita). In the day of Kan'ami (1333-1384), there were several regional varieties of performances counted under the heading 'sarugaku' (which remained an alternative term for nō well into the 19th century). We lose sight of the other *sarugaku* groups after the era of Kan'ami. His son Zeami (1363 or 4 – c.1443) only lists them to keep a memory of them and to show how the style of his theatre drew creatively on the various sources.²

The fact is that besides the four (and later five) official nō schools that established themselves from Kan'ami's era on, there still were references about *sarugaku* style performances which did not belong to these four troupes but nevertheless are documented from as early as Zeami's day. There is an entry of 1432, tenth month, in the diary of prince Sadafusa³ which refers to *onna sarugaku* – a female version of nō, during Zeami's lifetime. Further references, too, suggest that there were non-codified and unofficial nō-style performances during the whole

¹ Takakuwa 2003.

² E. g. Zeami developed what came to be termed as the *yūgen* quality of his creation, under direct inspiration from the Hie sarugaku which was active along the western bank of Lake Biwa.

³ *Iwanami kōza Kabuki-Bunraku dai2kan* 1997, 6.

time of the existence of what is now considered as classical *nō*, and they still existed as late as in the Edo period.

One important circumstance should be pointed out here which looks like a historical paradox: nowadays, *nō* is generally considered a theatre based on the principles recorded by Zeami in his treatises on *nō* (*nōgakuronsho*); however, present-day *nō*, contrary to the general view, is actually not ‘authentic’ in this respect. Much of contemporary practice is far from what is propounded in Zeami’s treatises.⁴ Nevertheless, there is the unbroken tradition of performance and of performers, with the more or less direct genealogical lineages of *nō* school heads (often kept direct by mutual adoptions between the official schools), which is considered to be a guarantee that the true style of *nō* should remain unchanged. As I tried to show in my previous publications⁵, the discrepancy between the medieval, early modern, and present-day practice is considerable, the element of performance having changed the least is the rhythmical pattern behind both the text and music of *nō*.

The bulk of around three thousand *nō* plays can be divided into many types by several kinds of classifications.⁶ The most common classification is by the main underlying theme of the plot and the character of the main *shite* figure, yielding the division into *genzai nō* and *mugen nō*. Unlike the realistic-world *genzai nō*, the *mugen nō* have a supranatural character appear and reveal its identity to a pilgrim who is usually a Buddhist monk on a pilgrimage. If the main *shite* role type is a suffering ghost, the monk is often asked to carry out a mantra chanting ceremony for the ghost to be liberated from its imprisonment in either hell or the inter-space between this and that world in which they have been stuck. Zeami produced a lot of *mugen nō*, making it the representative type of *nō* but the beginnings of this genre are already traceable back in the times of his father Kan’ami. Nevertheless, within the bulk of the archaic, pre-classical (pre-Zeami) plays, the *mugen* type is rather rare. Similarly, in the post-classical period, the number of *mugen* plays decreases again, replaced, as will be shown, by *genzai nō* as the majority of the production. Within *mugen nō*, Zeami is credited to have fathered the *fūga no shura nō* type which presented the *shura* theme (warrior suffering in hell) in an elegant way full of poetry quotations and allusions, apparently appealing to the taste of the Ashikaga shoguns.

⁴ Based on my own research summarized in Rumánek 2010.

⁵ Rumánek 2010 et alia.

⁶ This number includes extant plays and those known to have ever existed. Lectures of Prof. Nishino Haruo at Hōsei University, 2007-8.

The classical *nō* production of Zeami and his generation (*Zeami-kei nō*) is characterized by several determining concepts like *yūgen* (charm related to dance and music) and *monogurui* (derangement, raving, madness). Also, the *shite* role type is dominant in them, being termed Zeami-style *shite*-centrism. Its absence can be seen in the pre-classical (*kosaku*) *nō* and it can be presumed that the so-called non-Zeami *nō* (*hi-Zeami-kei nō*), both before and after Zeami's day, were multi-focused with many figures appearing on the stage. The decrease in the *shite*'s importance seen in post-classical *nō* might thus be no more than just a return to the previous, generally dramatic, practice not connected with Zeami and his circle. Nevertheless, the ancient *nō* and the *nō* after Zeami do differ in that the post-Zeami plays contain a refining which must have gone *through* Zeami: all the figures are 'effective' because their place in the play had previously been strictly defined and elaborated.⁷

The 16th century saw the collapse of the Ashikaga shogunate but *nō* continued to be performed. "It was widely popular among the general public, and developed into a dramatic form unlike that seen today, and in many cases closer to what kabuki has become with large casts of characters onstage, realistic props, etc."⁸ The character of plays was gradually changing and new names of playwrights popped up, like Miyamasu, Konparu Zennō and Kanze Nagatoshi. As Yamanaka Reiko points out, the shift did not happen because the audiences changed from aristocracy to the crowds, or that for the sake of livelihood the playwrights set out writing lower-standard plays; nor was it that the point of interest would have completely changed. Rather, the taste of the audiences broadened and *nō* readily reacted to this.⁹ The division of this post-classical period is often based on the prominent playwrights active one after another, and so we have the period of Konparu Zenchiku, then Kanze Nobumitsu and his son Nagatoshi. Nagatoshi, being at the end of this development, produced plays some of which remind of *nō* only distantly¹⁰.

Geki nō and furyū nō

Besides Zeami and his followers like *Konparu Zenchiku* (1405-1470?), there were playwrights whose works and activities did not fully fall into the categories and practices

⁷ Yamanaka 1998: 189.

⁸ Looser 2008: 17.

⁹ Yamanaka 1998: 182.

¹⁰ Yamanaka 1998: 188.

outlined by Zeami. It is only natural that the large corpus of plays necessarily involves diverse dramaturgical approaches. There were also various troupes of *nō* (*sarugaku*) the existence of which is attested to by references in diaries and other documents. They might be indirect continuations of the former *sarugaku* and *dengaku* troupes of the 14th century, or, more probably, lay imitators of the mainstream *nō*. They are termed *gunshō sarugaku* 群小猿楽, and later, in the 16th century, *tesarugaku* 手猿楽; there were also female *onna sarugaku*. Apart from their attested existence and, consequently, imaginable popularity, very little is known about them; Performances like *Hie sarugaku* and *Kasuga sarugaku* are documented, too.¹¹ As Lim Beng Choo describes¹², the so-called *tesarugaku* performers were on the border between amateur and professional; some of them were professionals and performed even in the residencies of the cultural elite, yet they did not belong to any of the four official *sarugaku* troupes.

For the development in the *nō* of the late Muromachi period (i. e. after the Ōnin wars), Yamanaka Reiko enumerates the following characteristics:¹³

1. Zeami style *shite*-centred plays (*shite-ichinin shugi*) giving way to multi-focused pieces;
2. popularity of *furyū nō* with a lot of personages and focus on the visually attractive, especially by means of elaborate *tsukurimono* props;
3. appearance of new topics, new figure styles (*fūtei*) like dragons and *tengu*, and new acting techniques¹⁴ designed for the requirements of these new roles;
4. broadening of the scale of material in such a direction as if to make *nō* out of everything presumably interesting to the spectator like prayer scenes, miracles, countrysied festivals, local customs etc.
5. positive reception of poetical texts in Chinese (*kanshibun*).

The playwright Miyamasu, in contrast to the classical *nō*, predominantly wrote *genzai nō*, only two of the 36 plays attributed to this ‘legendary’¹⁵ figure are *mugen nō*.

The full tide of the renovations started with the Ōnin wars, the period of Kanze Nobumitsu, Konparu Zempō and others. In the following period of Kanze Nagatoshi, these tendencies were pressed on till the extreme and pieces were written which seem even to have crossed the

¹¹ Ikai 2007: 110.

¹² Lim 2004: 118.

¹³ Yamanaka 1998: 168.

¹⁴ Yamanaka 1998: 189.

¹⁵ Takemoto in Nishino and Hata 1999: 401-2.

boundary of *nō* as we understand it. Afterwards, however, one whole portion of these extreme plays disappeared with the re-introduction of the system of patronship when *nō* became once again financed, and controlled, by men of power.

Performance records indicate that very early on in Muromachi times some actors staged *nō* in remarkably spectacular ways; Ikai Takamitsu writes that according to a diary entry of 1429, the spectators were astounded by the use of real horse(s) and real armour; the drum beating had to be adjusted so as not to upset the horse(s).¹⁶ All these examples testify to the existence of several ‘unorthodox’ currents in *nō* from its early history and they are termed *hi-Zeami-kei nō* (‘non-Zeami-style *nō*’). Furthermore, in the first half of the 16th century, *Kanze Nobumitsu* (Zeami’s grandnephew, 1435-1516), *Kanze Nagatoshi* (Nobumitsu’s son, 1488?-1541) and *Konparu Zenpō* (Zenchiku’s grandson, 1454-1532?) gave *nō* yet another direction, one of dramatic spectacle referred to by the terms *geki nō* ‘dramatic *nō*’ and the more visual-based *furyū nō* (a term introduced in the 1960’s) ‘*nō* as a spectacular panoply’. The latter also included a special group of plays with a fighting scene called *kiriai nō* 切合能, which drew much attention in their own times but their heyday did not outlive long the start of the Edo period when a return to the *yūgen nō* in connection with the establishment of *nō* as the official shogunal performance pushed them to the margin. Lim Beng Choo, who focused on the social discourse behind *nō*’s development, points out the elevation of the social status of *nō* actors after the Ōnin war (1477). “The gap in social status between the actors and their patrons was narrowed, so that they shared a common social space in which the power relationship was more equal, at least temporarily.”¹⁷ It was this atmosphere that brought about the new kinds of plays, *geki nō* and *furyū nō*, as the result of the necessity to attract new target audiences at a time when the established pre-Ōnin-war system of patronage of *nō* troupes had collapsed.¹⁸ Many spectators took *nō* courses and came to the performance with an interest differing from that of a sheer spectator.¹⁹

Another speciality of this period is also making into *nō* such motives which were not to be seen in Zeami’s time. *Waki nō* and *monogurui nō* about meetings and partings are left aside, so to say, and works with a strong interest in countryside festivals and customs were produced.

¹⁶ Ikai 2011: 230.

¹⁷ Lim 2004: 118.

¹⁸ Lim 2004: 124.

¹⁹ Yamanaka 1998: 183.

It can be said that anything was made into *nō* which could attract the attention and interest.²⁰

Dragon and *tengu nō* seem to have appeared exactly in the late Muromachi period.²¹

Kanze Nobumitsu and his son Nagatoshi developed an influential new style. “They expanded the scope for the *nō* play and intensified its dramatic impact. Without their contributions, *nō* would have remained a purely lyrical and highly elaborate storytelling art form.”²² This new genre of *geki nō* had “a high level of conflict, rich characterization, and a strong narrative quality” contrasted with the previous ideal of *mugen nō* with its otherworldly quality of ghosts appearing, engaging in elegant dances and subdued chants reinforcing the rich lyrical moods.²³

The *shite-ichinin shugi* principle of *shite* as the only real character did not, according to Tsubaki, allow conflict to fully develop²⁴. Nevertheless, a very early example of plurality of characters between which something like a conflict is perceptible, is seen in the very old classical *nō Matsukaze* (Pining Wind) by Kan’ami and Zeami in which Nishino identifies a ‘double *shite*’²⁵. Conventionally, the ghosts of two sisters represent the *shite* and *tsure* role types, yet there is no real distinction between them until the moment when, towards the end of the play, one of them unveils her innermost emotions as still lingering on her attachment to Yukihiro who is long dead (and so are the two sisters, as a matter of fact). This subtle touch of psychological distinction between two characters found its full development in the later *geki nō*. Ikai writes that “some of his [Nagatoshi’s] plays can even be said to cross the boundaries of *nō*”²⁶ while Tsubaki goes even further to argue that Nobumitsu and Nagatoshi, indicating the sensitivity to conflict and characterization, produced *geki nō* which is the earliest prototype of the kabuki.²⁷ Yamanaka also expresses this view, pointing out that with the new topics and figure styles, acting requirements must have changed, too: works started appearing containing a staging in which a state of mind important from the semantic point of view is expressed by action rather than by words; a sense of speed, vertical movements, quick costume changing (*haya kawari*), i. e. elements different from those characteristic of the

²⁰ Yamanaka 1998: 190.

²¹ Yamanaka 1998: 189.

²² Tsubaki 2002: 5.

²³ Tsubaki 2002 p. 5.

²⁴ Tsubaki 2002 p. 5.

²⁵ Lectures of Prof. Nishino Haruo, Hōsei University, 2007.

²⁶ Ikai 2011: 143.

²⁷ Tsubaki 2002: 5.

previous period, started appearing and seen from today's perspective, they remind rather of kabuki.²⁸

The novelty of the three representative playwrights of this period consisted in enhancing the dramatic (*geki*) and visual (*furyū*) aspect including showcase scenes full of bizarre and elaborate stage props and dramatic mass scenes with an array of characters, influenced by the *ennen furyū* procession activity which was very popular in the Middle Ages. The scale and functions of props increase, introducing shrines in *waki nō*, and props inside of which a grandiose metamorphosis (*henshin*) happens and the prop opens up to reveal the new *shite* coming out of it as the visual culmination (*miseba*) of plays of the latter half of the Muromachi period. The staging of such grandiose *henshin* first became possible when the props had reached a certain required level of technical elaboration and the costumes, along with the way of donning them, had matured accordingly. It can be guessed from Zenpō's and later treatises that perhaps it was not until the latter half of the Muromachi period that such conditions had ripened.²⁹ They brought about powerful visual effects like falling props (a bell), or a popping-up rock, or the effect of a beautiful woman turning into a demon. "It was perhaps the change itself, not seen in the previous period, and done inside the prop. It spread, and this grandiose change of costume even got back-imported into plays in which it probably had not been applied originally, because not necessary from the logics of the plot, like *yūrei* plays."³⁰

Besides the dramatic and visual, the two Kanze playwrights came to heighten the importance of the *waki* roles: Nobumitsu and Nagatoshi were required to produce interesting plays for the young Kanze *tayūs* they were in charge of. The *shite* roles in those plays were duly deemphasized for the sake of their comparatively inexperienced actors, to such an extent that in Nagatoshi's plays it is difficult to identify a clear *shite*. Yet, in doing so, they had to deemphasize the *shite* (principal) roles performed by their comparatively inexperienced masters." (Tsubaki 2002: 5).³¹

One of the typical plays symbolizing this phase of *nō*'s development is the ever popular *Funa-Benkei* by Kanze Nobumitsu. Firstly, it had a *kokata* child actor play the *shite* role of Minamoto no Yoshitsune while it is Yoshitsune's companion and vassal Benkei and

²⁸ Yamanaka 1998: 190.

²⁹ Yamanaka 1998: 139.

³⁰ Yamanaka 1998: 140.

³¹ Tsubaki 2002: 5 and Takemoto in Nishino and Hata 1999: 372-3.

Yoshitsune's lover Shizuka who are themselves the active characters taking part in the development of the action. Nevertheless, similar to the *shite* plurality mentioned above, entrusting the role of Yoshitsune to a child actor was not a completely new dramaturgical trick, either. We see a similar one used by Kan'ami in *Jinen Koji* in which the audacious and righteous Zen monk Jinen was made much younger than he really might have been according to the feats he was reported having done; thus, already Kan'ami had applied this dramaturgical trick to heighten *Jinen Koji*'s heroicity, and Nobumitsu developed it further.

Secondly, another characteristic of Nobumitsu's *Funa-Benkei* was that he applied the halberd (*naginata*) in this play. The use of this weapon was an important innovation of Nobumitsu's work, since, obviously, the halberd is more spectacular onstage than the sword, "that is why it was only natural for Nobumitsu to use it in a *furyū nō*, and *Funa-Benkei* was written with the aim to make full advantage of this spectacularity".³² In his detailed story about the employment of the *naginata* halberd in *nō*, Ikai traces its further development from the late Muromachi period onwards. He argues that the figure of a demon or a woman holding a *naginata* must have been quite a novel and shocking element when first used; moreover, in the early Edo period *kiriai nō*, it was a special stage trick to have a *kokata* child actor hold a *naginata*. "It seems that it was not a depiction in prose or drama of what occurred in real life, but on the contrary, that a fabrication corroded the reality into what came to later become a[n established] tradition."³³

Nobumitsu's son Nagatoshi wrote plays which were new and met the expectations of the people of his era when Zeami's plays had been felt as having been just enough. But the endeavour to keep taking the audience by surprise could be seen as soon as Zeami's plays of later period.³⁴

It has been pointed out that some of Nagatoshi's plays are doubted as to the possibility of their actual presentation on stage, and some again by far exceed the framework of what is thought of as *nō*. His plays had a different touch and could not possibly survive into the present day (*genkō*) repertory and can be said to have contained something that could only be appreciated, and popular, in his own day only. The special characteristics of his plays are:

1. The figures have a wide variety and appear on the stage one after another in a great number. In some plays, *shite* is not distinct enough, and in some again, the role types are distinguished

³² Ikai 2011: 327.

³³ Ikai 2011: 355-356. Moreover, Ikai points out that in turn, this fabrication influenced reality in the Edo period when women really started to use *naginata*, influenced by drama.

³⁴ Yamanaka 1998: 183.

but it cannot be said which one is more important. Some plays have as many as twenty characters on the stage.

2. The first half is often a typical *maeba* while the second half offers a visually rich and violent *kirikumi*, *demon (kijin)*, *dragon god (ryūjin)* and *tengu* scenes. What is new in contrast with the previous plays is the presence of a whole group of fighters. Moreover, they also show signs of their human individuality.³⁵

3. Spectacular props which pop up into two halves etc. It was a fashion seen before Nagatoshi but he, unlike those before him, has as many as three beautiful women turn into devils instead of just one.

4. Like others, he often uses countryside, but he chooses a certain element which must have stirred the heart of the spectators in the Capital.³⁶

Local, provincial dimension had already been the innovation of Konparu Zempō, besides the exotic flavour of China which was also the fashionable realm of the works of Zempō's older contemporary Kanze Nobumitsu. There was a heightening of interest for regional shrines and famous places. People travelled a lot – itinerant artists and poets, female entertainers, the countryside was no more an unknown place and the local flavour was a welcome element. This reflected in the production of plays which Yamanaka terms *shinji no nō* (神事の能).³⁷

The *nō* about gods differ from those of the previous period, especially Zeami's circle, in their interesting renderings of shrines and festivals, which come to the fore much more than before and are more important than the individual salvation.³⁸ Yamanaka even suggests that in latter Muromachi, “together with the traditional themes, be it *wakinō*, *monoguruiō* or other, there was also a tendency to push away the traditional themes and write a lot of various plays in which the interest for regional shrines and festivals supported the piece.”³⁹

Spectacularity, *including horror*, came into fashion and the psychological intensity of the classical era was replaced by “a clever succession of stories that bring the audience from one physical landscape to another, and subsequently to the psychological landscapes of the characters.”⁴⁰ The innovations of Konparu Zempō and Kanze Nagatoshi can be seen as experiments which did not, in the long run, show much success; only a few of their plays have

³⁵ Yamanaka 1998: 170.

³⁶ Yamanaka 1998: 171.

³⁷ Yamanaka 1998: 163-4.

³⁸ Yamanaka 1998: 162.

³⁹ Yamanaka 1998: 144.

⁴⁰ Lim 2005: 46.

retained popularity enough to be included in the *genkō* repertoire of plays played in the Edo period and still staged today. Unlike them, Kanze Nobumitsu was more successful, perhaps for his being a link between classical and post-classical *nō* in whose plays the lyrical and dramatic were still subtly balanced to secure popularity to a far greater number of his plays. Nagatoshi, the youngest of the three, concludes a period when great *nō* playwrights succeeded one another, each with their own individual style, and the production of new plays started to move towards degeneration.⁴¹ As Yamanaka notes, many of the plays did not survive, but that does not mean that they were not important. They reflect the spirit of the time.⁴² Moreover, the creative endeavour for innovation characteristic of the generation of these three playwrights proved a fertile element for the formation of further dramatic genres, especially kabuki, which was to appear within a matter of decades from them.

Kiriai nō

Another experiment in the history of *nō* is the group of *kiriai nō* or fighting plays, a product of the increasing demand for action. They partly originate in Nobumitsu's conception of introducing fighting on the stage and were chiefly produced in the late Muromachi period which saw their greatest success when over 40 plays can be identified. The reason for this is believed to be the situation in which the patronage from powerful lords was discontinued due to the war times and new audiences were sought among common people. So the repertory was changed from lofty themes to more common ones (*zoku* or vulgar). The structure was simpler, and appealed straightforwardly to the emotions of the audience, and the texts were also simpler with much less poetry included. The authorship of many *kiriai nō* is unknown which is perhaps because many were linked to the activity of the so-called *gunshō sarugaku* troupes independent from the official Yamato Four. The success era of *kiriai nō* was, however, shortlived and they quickly lost favour with the establishment of the new Edo shogunate. Ephemeral as they may be, they are another example of how *nō* evolved in various directions, rather than being a unified current, and participated in influencing further theatrical development.

Kiriai nō were not “plays made to show the fighting on the stage” as is, according to Ikai, generally thought. The important thing was not only for the main character to develop into an

⁴¹ Takemoto in Nishino and Hata 1999: 173.

⁴² Yamanaka 1998: 165.

ideal hero while showing his prowess, but also to show both the going-on before the fighting, which became just as relevant, and the very moment when the hero reached death.⁴³

The distinction of role types became more and more blurred in post-classical *nō* and in the end, the distinction whether the hero is *shite* or *waki* became a purely formal one. A special subgroup of *kiriai nō* includes *kirikumi* (斬り組み), a specific kind of fighting scene in which the hero (*shite* or *waki*), sometimes even several of them, is/are confronted with a huge number of enemies and end up defeated. This subgroup is called *kirikumi nō* after this representative fighting scene which was so popular, or deemed so attractive by the managers of the performances around the late Muromachi and early Edo periods that they were even inserted into plays that had not contained it originally.⁴⁴ This craze culminated in a couple of *nō* plays which even have *seppuku* as their final scene. These are called *harakiri no nō* but not all of them belong to the *kiriai nō* group.⁴⁵ Ikai tries to define the histrionic method of how *harakiri* was enacted. On the *hashirigaki* bridge, it seems, the figure held the sword and stabbed it to his left side, and then left the bridge through the curtain. There might have been a turn back (*naka-kaeri*) or a falldown (*korobi*), according to some documents from the early Edo period.⁴⁶

By introducing *kirikumi* and *harakiri* on the stage, Japanese theatre in the time of intermittent wars pushed forward all the more. A general sense of searching for novelty can be felt in these additions which set the *kirikumi nō* and *harakiri no nō* plays against the pre-war ideal of *yūgen*. They are, however, a direct continuation of one of the innovative processes identifiable within *nō*. *Kirikumi* can be assessed as a post-classical endeavour to create a fighting scene as *nō*-like as possible, and *harakiri* might also represent a search for a tool how to move even more an audience tormented by the incessant warfare. *Seppuku* was, after all, “a prologue to rebirth”, so it was this aspect, rather than the sheer cruelty of the act, that might have been the motivation to making *harakiri* part of the *nō* structure.⁴⁷

After the ending of the long period of intermittent wars, the fighting topic seems to have ceased attracting people any longer, and (similarly to the fight-based *kōwakamai*), the success era of *kiriai nō* ended very early on with the establishment of peace.

⁴³ Ikai 2007: 216.

⁴⁴ Ikai 2011: 5.

⁴⁵ Ikai 2007: 199.

⁴⁶ Ikai 2007: 213.

⁴⁷ Ikai 2007: 215.

Aragoto and wagoto style in nō

Good examples of the unorthodox character of post-classical plays are some of the nō plays on the Soga brothers (*Soga mono*) like *Wada sakamori* (Wada's sake party) and *Hitsukiri Soga* (Soga slices the chest). According to a study by Kominz,⁴⁸ what later developed in kabuki as the histrionic opposition of *aragoto* and *wagoto* acting styles might have its foundations in these nō (and their corresponding *kōwakamai*) as early as the 16th century. This section is devoted to Kominz's hypothesis.

Similarly to *kiriai nō*, the endeavour to meet the audiences' expectation of *effect* might have been the immediate impetus for a new acting form to emerge in plays dealing with the topic of the Soga brothers. Yamanaka Reiko also points out that the *Soga mono* plays, together with Nagatoshi's, represent a handful of innovative late Muromachi plays containing special devices and acting techniques which narrowly escaped oblivion.⁴⁹ Kominz sees the tendency towards new acting styles seen later in the *Soga mono* already starting in nō plays about Yoshitsune and Benkei like the above-mentioned Kanze Nobumitsu's *Funa-Benkei*, as well as his *Ataka* (The Ataka barrier). These plays provide a juxtaposition Yoshitsune - Benkei in which Yoshitsune is very much in the background and played by a *kokata*. This juxtaposition was further applied in the two Soga brothers Gorō and Jūrō who epitomize the new pattern of *paired heroes* with sharply *contrasting* personalities.

Kominz argues that the main heroes of the *Gikeiki* (The Tale of Yoshitsune) and *Soga monogatari* (The Tale of the Soga Brothers) had by the 16th century become clear prototypes of the *wagoto* and *aragoto* characters who would later populate "the thousands of kabuki and puppet plays based on the two tales". In the nō plays written till the mid-1400s, the two brothers are *both* strong, virtuous samurai and there is no striking difference between them in personality or physical strength. During the Muromachi period, over a dozen nō plays were written about the Soga brothers, and according to Kominz, three mid- to late-Muromachi period plays point clearly toward the juxtaposition of *wagoto* and *aragoto* acting styles which would have become sharply distinguished by the mid-17th century when, in the popular version (*rufubon*) of the Soga tale, Gorō appears as a superhuman strong man ever spoiling for a fight, while Jūrō is a cautious, sensitive man, best known for his love affair with the prostitute Tora Gozen.

⁴⁸ Kominz in Leiter 2002: 18 passim.

⁴⁹ Yamanaka 1998: 184.

The three Muromachi plays in which Kominz observes the beginning of this bipolarity are adaptations of an episode added to the core of the Soga story in the late 15th or early 16th century,⁵⁰ an episode that is only found in the popular version of the narrative. It is called *Wada sakamori* (Wada's saké party). Scenes from *Wada sakamori* would “inspire numerous *aragoto* creations for kabuki, both dances and dramatic scenes.”⁵¹

The *nō* *Wada sakamori*, judging from very unorthodox aspects of its dramatic and musical structure, is clearly from the late, post-classical period, as can be seen from the fact that the *shite*, Gorō, appears only at the end of the play while the three *tsure* who play Jūrō, Tora and her mother each have more lines than the *shite*. A comparison of the *nō* and *kōwakamai* versions of the story showed that the relationships between Jūrō, Tora and her mother are the same in both but it is the *nō* play which has Jūrō a more consistently *wagoto*-like character. The *waki* and *wakitsure* characters (Yoshimori and his retainers) make a remarkably large cast for *nō*, which is another typical aspect of post-classical *nō* (the *furyū* element). Also, most of the play is taken up by dialogue—a typical *geki* or dramatical element—with only a few snatches of song and poetry before the concluding felicitous dance performed by Gorō and Asahina: the lyric sung for that dance is the only significant choral part in the play. Furthermore, the play uses none of the *shōdan* units normally employed to structure a *nō* play. All these point to post-classical characteristics. “The reader of *Wada sakamori* feels that the anonymous author has written a work that is *not in fact a nō play*, but that he described the roles in the terminology of the *nō* and made it about as long as most *nō* plays so that *nō* actors could perform it on a *nō* stage.” Kominz says that *Wada sakamori* is in many ways *an anomaly*.

According to Kominz, it was the *kōwakamai*, not the *nō*, version which might eventually contributed “an exaggerated display of physical strength, exactly the appeal of *kabuki aragoto*” while “[a] *wagoto* character in *kabuki* is not merely gentle and meek; invariably he is a sensitive lover, beloved of the most beautiful courtesan in the pleasure district”⁵². Nevertheless, it is a *nō* play in which he sees the beginnings of the contrast between a violent, martial character and a meek, sensitive one: it is in the *nō* play *Hitsukiri Soga* (Soga slices the chest) coming from no later than the first years of the 16th century.

⁵⁰ Araki 1977: 121.

⁵¹ Kominz in Leiter 2002: 14, 25.

⁵² Kominz in Leiter 2002: 16, 27.

Although much more orthodox than the *Wada sakamori nō*, *Hitsukiri Soga* still “exhibits the inventiveness, delight in character contrasts, and *novelty typical of kabuki*”⁵³. In his opinion, the author of *Hitsukiri Soga*, perhaps Miyamasu, wrote the first *nō* play in which violent male hero is *paired* with a gentle counterpart.

The first act is what Kominz calls one of the most romantic scenes between a prostitute and her lover in *nō* drama. It is also the only *nō* play with a love scene set in a brothel. This point is crucial for the future development because brothels will become a common setting for early kabuki plays. Thus, the setting, along with the play’s concern with the feeling of a prostitute neglected by the man she loves, presages the locales and concerns of kabuki. In this way Kominz shows how some of the future characteristics of kabuki were to be found in *nō* plays as early as the first years after 1500; in this light, Kominz argues, *Hitsukiri Soga* can be regarded as transitional drama, a *nō* play clearly pointing in the direction of kabuki.⁵⁴

The division of roles in *Hitsukiri Soga* is highly unorthodox. According to Kominz, there is no other play in which the relationship between *waki* (Jūrō) and *tsure* (Tora) would be so important. Traditions in actor training and responsibilities necessitated this strange pairing. Also, the play concludes with a pair dance for *waki* and *shite*, a very rare phenomenon in *nō*.

“The chest-slicing scene, which establishes Gorō as an *aragoto*-like hero, is an invention not found in any previous work of Japanese literature. Theatre scholars have called it a *shukō*. Normally the term is used to describe a bizarre and original plot twist invented by a kabuki or puppet playwright for a play set in one of the standard thematic *sekai* (worlds) of Edo drama.⁵⁵ To use the word *shukō* in reference to a *nō* play is to imply that the author was working under one of the important constraints of Edo playwrights, namely, an audience that craves novelty and excitement. Many of the *nō* plays written in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries suggest that such was the case, for that was when the most spectacular *nō* plays were produced. [...] A major appeal of [...] [this] *nō* play must have been its novelty. [...] it would have been a new experience to see a dramatic contrast in characters on stage. The plot would have been a total surprise.”⁵⁶

⁵³ Kominz in Leiter 2002: 16.

⁵⁴ Kominz in Leiter 2002: 16, 27.

⁵⁵ The word *shukō* was used at least as early as in the *Taiheiki* for the idea of an innovation. Consultation with Prof. Gerstle, 2013.

⁵⁶ Kominz in Leiter 2002: 10.

Kominz's study has indicated further elements which, typical of a later period in the development of Japanese theatre, were already present in post-classical *nō* of the 16th century. During the Muromachi period, the repertoire and the structure of the performances were also undergoing development. Though performances in the classical period usually consisted of four to five *nō* plays, the number rose considerably in the later period. Many examples in the 16th century list seven to twelve pieces, and a seventeen piece performance is documented. To this, the initial Okina dance must be taken into account plus *kyōgen* pieces that were inserted between the *nō* plays. And that all was made within one day. These programmes themselves testify to the fact that *nō* plays must have been played, sung and danced in a much faster tempo than today.⁵⁷ The performances were basically of two kinds, one being private occasions sponsored by the wealthy members of the elite, and the second were public *kanjin nō*. The latter's official purpose was for religious ends such as "raising money for temples and shrines, or to build structures such as bridges – all of which would be "good works" that earned a kind of positive karma for all involved,"⁵⁸ although collecting remuneration for actors obviously played a role, too.

Hideyoshi and the *taikō nō*

The war-torn times of the 16thth century appear to have been very favourable to performing arts. In the era of Oda Nobunaga and Toyotomi Hideyoshi, *nō* became once again the patron-supported art and some of the patrons enjoyed acting in it as well. "With the maudlin *girinō* as well as grandiose "*spectacle nō*" dying out, *nō* did not become kabuki but remained the classical art."⁵⁹ Besides the never-ending fightings, the figure of Toyotomi Hideyoshi and the arrival of Europeans belong to the major factors that influenced the general atmosphere in Japan of the latter half of the 16th century. The overwhelming presence of Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536(7)-1598), a focused, cruel and vain conqueror but also a great lover of arts, combined with the foreign influences encountered through Portuguese and Spanish missionaries and tradesmen, to give a decisive touch to the rich, intricate and multifaceted developments within the performing arts of this era. One of its products were the *taikō nō*.

⁵⁷ Takakuwa 2003.

⁵⁸ Looser 2008: 17.

⁵⁹ Yamanaka 1998: 184.

The *nō* as might have been performed in this period most probably differed considerably from what it became later. In 2002, a revealing experiment was carried out at the Yokohama *Nō* Theatre the goal of which was to reconstruct a probable form which a *nō* performance would have had in Hideyoshi's day. This reconstruction was only made possible thanks to the existence of documents, notes and textbooks preserved from those times. Scholars led by professors Takemoto Mikio of Waseda University and Takakuwa Idzumi⁶⁰ of Yokohama University provided evidence confirming that the tempo must have been much faster than today, the acting more dynamic and the declamatory modulation of the melodic passages (*fushi*) having more the character of a real song than is the case in present-day *nō* singing.⁶¹

In the sphere of *nō*, it was only the descendants and followers of the four Yamato sarugaku troupes who managed to survive successfully (the fifth troupe was only founded under Tokugawa Ieyasu). The unifier warlords favoured this exclusive art of the shoguns of the former Ashikaga period. Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the second of the unifiers, is known as a great lover of arts. He even seems to have been under some sort of magic spell of tea ceremony, and *nō* was among his favourite pastimes. He supported actors but also enjoyed learning to play *nō* roles and getting onto the stage himself. Besides this, however, *nō* became one of the tools Hideyoshi employed to exert his ever firmer grip of power. He began "to centralize noh's allegiances by assigning most of the country's actors to four "Yamato" schools of noh and then providing stipends to all four schools."⁶² His greatest potential enemies and allies "took to the noh stage with or in front of Hideyoshi, primarily to celebrate Hideyoshi's rule – and Hideyoshi paid them for doing so. In 1592, for instance, Hideyoshi had Tokugawa Ieyasu and Maeda Toshiie perform onstage along with him at the imperial palace to celebrate the birth of Hideyoshi's son and heir, Hidetada."⁶³

Moreover, Hideyoshi "took the unique step of commissioning new noh plays that [...] presented his own colonizing exploits. Such plays portrayed him as a great warrior who is nonetheless also a god, victor in Japan but over Korea and China as well; [...] he in fact also often acted in those plays in the role of his deified self."⁶⁴ Ten new *nō* plays were thus produced on Hideyoshi's command in which he was to play the *shite* and they have been

⁶⁰ いづみ.

⁶¹ Takakuwa 2003.

⁶² Looser 2008: 11.

⁶³ Looser 2008: 14.

⁶⁴ Looser 2008: 16-7.

termed *taikō nō*.⁶⁵ Hattori points out that *taikō nō* had a *kabukitaru* (kabuki-like) touch in comparison to the original classical *nō*,⁶⁶ by which he probably means the atmosphere of exaggeration and dissipation. Looser writes that

“[a]s later with Tokugawa Ieyasu, the *nō* for Hideyoshi was part of the founding and uniting of a new political space. In the mid-16th century, the affiliations of the various troupes and schools of *nō* were scattered among local lords, shrines, temples, and the emperor, and few of these ties had any quality of permanence. Hideyoshi’s first serious effort to assume all these varied affiliations for himself was through the Komparu school of *nō*. [...] Hideyoshi paid the head of the Komparu school to relinquish his post in Nara and move to Hideyoshi’s military base in Osaka. By 1593, Hideyoshi had assigned full stipends to all of the four principal *nō* troupes. In doing so, Hideyoshi was composing the *nō*’s dispersed allegiances to religion, emperor, and military into an image of centralized and fixed obligation to his own political authority.”⁶⁷

Looser also mentions that before each of his military efforts of conquest and appropriation, Hideyoshi held *nō* performances,⁶⁸ and in some cases he even had the plays “written before the event; the play would then first be presented at the actual time of the event being celebrated in the play.”⁶⁹

Much as he danced and commissioned *nō*, however, Hideyoshi was also fascinated by western culture. The appeal it had for him, and through him for the highest strata of the warrior class, *potentialized*⁷⁰ the reception of foreign culture still more. Nagasaki as the main port and the door toward the west played the leading role in the popularity of the things Western; there were even tailors there sewing western-style clothes, that probably provided for the outfit of the retinue of Toyotomi Hideyoshi.

The inheritance of 16th century *nō* provides a plentiful and multilayered picture. Many of them go beyond what is regarded as *nō* to such an extent that it is doubtful as to whether they

⁶⁵ After *taikō*, the title Hideyoshi had created for himself.

⁶⁶ Hattori 2003: 80.

⁶⁷ Looser 2008: 14.

⁶⁸ Looser 2008: 15.

⁶⁹ Looser 2008: 18.

⁷⁰ Leims 1990: 128.

were actually ever staged at all.⁷¹ One role of *nō* as the provider of everything the audiences were guessed as wanting to see—wonders, fightings, devices—was subsequently overtaken by new performing forms which were coming to existence one after another at that period. Yamanaka suggests that all the experimentation could not possibly have died out and that “perhaps we could start taking into consideration the connection between the polishing and the development of *kyōgen*.” She argues that innovative stage tricks (*shukō*) containing a lot of the different and strange—like inserting a *kouta* or a *mai* dance and the like into plays—might seem like *kyōgen* from today’s point of view but actually there is much of what we do not know about the old form *kyōgen* used to have. There is a possibility that during the phase when *kyōgen* was being refined into any form retraceable today, it absorbed much of what was dropped off from the mainstream *nō*.⁷²

Not many *nō* plays of the experimenting 16th century were successful enough to become part of the official repertoire founded in the Edo period. They might have been too novel for the audience which perhaps started to feel nostalgia for the contemplative, lyrical touch in plays of the classical *nō* period. Nevertheless, these experiments did not die out unnoticed. They provided impetus for further development and enriched other branches of the performance arts—a development which, eventually, led to the formation of *jōruri* and *kabuki*.

Nō as shikigaku

After the Tokugawa shogunate was established, its first century saw a period of rapid change and development. The new peaceful times enabled people to focus their energy on securing their well-being. Entertainment and culture ceased to be just the possession of the privileged elite but became widespread all accross the society. New forms evolved from old ones, vogues followed fashions and it can be imagined that not all literary works produced were preserved until this day.

The shogunate regularly interfered into this development. With the power of the Tokugawa clan firmly established, the government of the Edo shogunate set about building the rigid framework of state regulations that became characteristic for the rest of the period and which had direct impact on the development of performing arts. Before they were imposed, however, the atmosphere was freer, with the new Edo potentates having other, more vital matters to

⁷¹ Yamanaka 1998: 201.

⁷² Yamanaka 1998: 184-5.

concern about and the entertainment sphere continued its spontaneous, pre-Sekigahara life with all its vivacity and panoply of forms. In this age of energy and turmoil, kabuki was born out of the heritage of the previous century and the whole of the 17th century was the period of its formation until they basically reached the mature form underlying the kabuki and jōruri as known today.

One of the approaches the new shogunate assumed was to emulate the preceding shogunate of the Ashikaga by adopting nō as its official performing art (*shikigaku*) that was to mark all official state occasions. The designation ‘nō’ was generally restricted to the professional artistic activity of the four – and later five (including the Kita) – troupes officially recognized by the shogunate from the 15th to 19th centuries, but the term ‘*sarugaku*’ continued to be used, too, including the unofficial nō performances. This shogunal patronage contributed the principal transformation of the art into the nō we know today.

It is not known exactly when nō was officially decreed to be the shogunal official art - *shikigaku*. Most likely it was in 1615.⁷³ Nō was a far more secular entertainment before the start of the Tokugawa regime and there were certainly advisors who thought that a more courtly form, such as *bugaku*, would be more suitable. Nevertheless, it was nō that was eventually chosen. It was as early as with the investiture of the first shogun Ieyasu that nō had started its transformation into the ceremony of state. Ieyasu commanded that the heads of all four schools, including actors who had been living in Osaka, Hideyoshi’s castle town, be brought together and made to live in his headquarters. Under Hidetada, Ieyasu’s heir, all principal actors were given land within the grounds of Edo Castle for their permanent residence.⁷⁴

For a shogun, to be cultured and able to appreciate refined arts was seen as one means of acquiring the essential, aristocratic right to rule.⁷⁵ Ieyasu ordered the *iemoto*—heads of the official schools (roughly corresponding to what is called *sōke* today)—to document all nō-related information which allowed him to know each troupe in detail. Typically, after his death, the *iemoto* of all five schools, including the newly-established, Edo-based fifth *Kita* school, gave regular performances at Ieyasu’s shrine at Nikkō.⁷⁶ Nō for the shogunal family became one of the ways how to be equal to, as well as differ from, the Imperial family who

⁷³ Looser 2008: 1 footnote 1.

⁷⁴ Looser 2008: 11.

⁷⁵ Looser 2008: 14.

⁷⁶ Looser 2008: 13.

had the rites for their own ancestor at Ise in the form of *gagaku*, while the Tokugawa held *nō* at Nikkō.

In this way, *nō* became a formalized political ritual practice imbedded in the Tokugawa framework of power. Organizing and ordering *nō* performances, the shoguns ruled not only by arms but also by culture; they produced “times of social representing”⁷⁷ by stipulating regular occasions when common people could—indeed were encouraged to—see *nō*, like public *kanjin nō* (including the once-in-a-generation pompous and grandiose performances) in front of the shogun’s palace, New Year’s *machi-iri* performances for the public at the shogun’s palace and *matsubayashi* and *utaizome* occasions on the 3rd day of the New Year at the palaces of great daimyō, as well as *takigi* bonfire light performances at the Kōfukuji temple and the Kasuga shrine in Nara. At the *kanjin nō* of 1607, the famed kabuki dancer Izumo no Okuni performed at Edo Castle which might have been one of the earliest examples of these shogun-devised *kanjin nō* and also a symbolic meeting—as indeed departure—point of these two theatrical genres.

A detailed system of circulation of *nō* actors and master actors between Edo and the domains was initiated. Actors were provided land if they agreed to relocate to Edo and the *sankin kōtai* system applied to *nō* school heads, too.⁷⁸ Daimyō were ordered to present *nō* performances in their own domains as well as welcome the shogunal visit, either in their domain or at their Edo residence, with a *nō* performance.⁷⁹

After the establishment of the fifth Kita school known for its “fast” and “unorthodox” style which, as Looser points out, was popular among shoguns but not officially recognized,⁸⁰ *nō* started what is often believed to be the biggest change in its history including the systematic introduction of the *goban* principle for organizing the performance (*gobandate*). These developments are said to have proceeded somewhat slower in the Kyoto area. Changes in the repertoire started from an abrupt reduction of *kiriai nō* plays, both in number of plays and performances, as they fell out of vogue in the early Edo era. The most conspicuous transformation happened when elements of martial arts found their way into *nō* acting and declamation practice. Considerable adjustments took place in the way of *nō* acting, marked by

⁷⁷ Looser 2008: 55.

⁷⁸ Looser 2008: 11.

⁷⁹ Looser 2008: 13.

⁸⁰ Looser 2008: 130, footnote 13.

complete ‘martialization’ of *nō* including the samurai-like diction.⁸¹ In melodic passages (*fushi*), *tsuyogin* was introduced as the manly, masculine type of singing. It was derived from the original melodic *pentatonic* singing (the presentday *yowagin*) by gradually reducing the musical scale, which meant a virtual collapse of the original melodic properties in the manly and heroic passages, with the scale ending up consisting of just three neighbouring tones in the presentday *tsuyogin*.⁸² In this way, *nō* declamation (*utai*) attained its energy (*chikara*) and spirit (*kihaku*) which has continued until this day.

At a somewhat later period, certain elements of martial arts got fully incorporated in the performance: Ikai writes that popularity of the *naginata* halberd in the circle of shogun Ienobu in the late 17th century is behind this weapon’s re-introduction into the fighting scenes.⁸³ In general, the late 17th century—reigns of the 5th and 6th shoguns Tsunayoshi (r. 1680-1709) and Ienobu (1709-1712)—saw further changes like revival of many rare plays. New possibilities and new staging methods for the *nō* performance were much sought for in the reign of Ienobu.⁸⁴

Style, too, became a field for the construction of overarching control within *nō*⁸⁵: according to a 1647 law, each of the *nō* schools were required to preserve their own house trade style; players and actors specialized in one activity only – *shite* acting, *waki* acting, *kyōgen* acting, or playing of the individual musical instruments, and for each of these, specialized schools formed. Out of the necessity to set up a performance any time an order would come, a permanent repertoire of plays was made ready in each *nō* school. This led to plays outside the repertoire gradually falling out of use and no new plays were introduced. Emphasis was on polishing details, and acting technique reached the maximum possible level. The shoguns encouraged an ever slower tempo, even though the most frequently performed plays were those from the 3rd to fifth categories which primarily were based on quicker, more active roles.⁸⁶ In the early Edo period, *nō* had reached about 66% of its modern rate of slowness: the average time of a *nō* play in the Edo period was likely about 77 minutes while in the middle

⁸¹ Nishino and Hata 1999: 296-7.

⁸² Hare 1986: 59.

⁸³ Ikai 2011: 203.

⁸⁴ One of the main concerns was, for example, how best to show fight on the stage in a new manner. “The original main topic of *kiriai nō*—to create an image of an ideal warrior—became out of fashion, and *kiriai nō* started to approximate the *yūgen*-based mainstream *nō*.” Ikai 2007: 262.

⁸⁵ Omote and Amano 1988 *passim*.

⁸⁶ Looser 2008: 143.

ages it was about 33 minutes.⁸⁷ This had to do with the cyclicity of time which *nō* was supposed to encapsulate. “The destruction of identity described by the *nō*’s aesthetics of the sublime, and the emphasis on melancholic longing, both describe an aesthetic attitude that yearns for transcendence and totalized identities at a time when it is felt that these are impossible. This sublime aesthetic was itself part of the basis of Tokugawa power.”⁸⁸

Besides shogunal support and control, *nō* also became popular in merchant circles as an amateur art. The publication of *nō utaibon* (practice books) became very popular and the series *Utaibon sanbyakuban* established some 550 plays available in print, which caused the rest of the total of around 3000 plays, remaining in rare manuscripts only, to become nearly extinct. Each of the five troupes had their own official repertoire (*kōtei enmoku*) that was reported to the shogunate, with some additional changes made later in the lists. The practice of *utaibon* available in print for the general public exerted influence on the world of *jōruri* in which the principle of availability of the texts of the plays was soon applied. Gerstle writes that while no concept of copyright existed for the content of the *jōruri* tales, it did exist for the *music* which had been kept secret. But based on the period’s practice of *nō utaibon* where the texts contained the complete musical notation, connoisseurs of *jōruri* plays, too convinced chanters to publish texts including the ‘secret’ musical notation.⁸⁹ The spread of use of woodblock print after 1600 made changes like these possible and for ever altered the nature of ‘performance literature’⁹⁰.

What is important when evaluating the development in *nō* and its relations with the new theatrical forms in the early Edo period is to bear in mind that besides the five official schools, there is still evidence of the existence of *nō* troupes and actors independent from the shogunal control and excluded from governmental support. *Nō* teaching served as livelihood to many individuals who were trained in it. Some local *daimyō* supported *nō* actors who were not affiliated with the official Tokugawa *shikigaku* order. Although the pre-Edo independent bodies of *gunshō sarugaku* like *Ōmi Hieza* or *tesarugaku* had dispersed or were absorbed by the four schools,⁹¹ there still continued local rites of religion associated with *nō* which were not suppressed in the Tokugawa shoguns’ expansion of political power, just the opposite –

⁸⁷ Looser citing Omote in Looser 2008: 198 footnote 51.

⁸⁸ Looser 2008: 164.

⁸⁹ Gerstle 2008: 47.

⁹⁰ Gerstle 2000: 47.

⁹¹ Ikai 2011: 155.

many were encouraged by the shogunate. The *Yamato sarugaku nō* of the Kōfukuji, one of the medieaval cradles of nō, can be mentioned, which

“became a fixed annual rite, performed “by the rule of solemnity”, only after the Tokugawa government made it so. But the reorientation of these rites carried out by their subjection to the Edo shogunate meant a loss of local, religious-based difference—here too, the construction of a geography of the Same—and, as part of this process, a reorientation of religion was brought into the service of a central, political seat of power.”⁹²

Due to the Tokugawa patronage of nō and kyōgen which became an ever more formalized official art, the split within kyōgen sharpened. In combined performances with nō, kyōgen flourished on the one hand, but also petrified on the other. As early as under Nobunaga and Hideyoshi, the elite nō and kyōgen separated from the rural nō.⁹³ Kyōgen actors like those of *Nanto negi* kyōgen were considered low and thus were not admitted under the official patronage of the Tokugawa shogunate. This, in the end, resulted in these unofficial kyōgen actors participating in the formation of kabuki.⁹⁴ During the 17th century, the word kyōgen often appeared as the name of the new performance—a synonym for kabuki. Later it also meant the kabuki play and *kyōgenkata* was one of the ranks of playwrights. Remnants of this terminological practice can still be seen occasionally today, for example *kabuki kyōgen* means kabuki play, and a dancer performing a *kabuki kyōgen* can be called *kyōgenshi* (kyōgen master). This was a natural process as kyōgen actors participated hugely in kabuki evolution.⁹⁵ Moreover, shortly before the Genroku era (i. e. before 1688), the renewal of this usage was an endeavour to boost kabuki’s status after the decades of frequent bans, or rather veil its identity behind a different name; this can be viewed in the light of official kyōgen’s emancipation in the previous decades.

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⁹² Looser 2008: 43.

⁹³ Kawade 1958: 64.

⁹⁴ In the case of Okuni kabuki, for example, two male *kyōgenshi* at least - Nagoya Sanza and Densuke - are reported to have been active, and in the later development, too, actors of the unofficial, ‘low’ kyōgen (as opposed to the official ‘nō kyōgen’) participated in the process of formation of kabuki. Based on the most famous type of skit of visiting a prostitute, it is termed *keiseigoto no kyōgen* (Kawade 1958 “Okuni kabuki”).

⁹⁵ Kōjien: 522, 666.

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⁹⁶ Exact year of production not given.