

FORMATION OF EARLY NOH DRAMA AND LEGENDS OF YŪZAKI

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This paper is based partly on official noh research done in Japan and overseas, and partly on my field research at Yūzaki in February 2008. I am outlining the development from the earliest known records of performing forms towards the medieval sarugaku, and through that onto the classical noh drama. The breaking point might have been at Yūzaki, a countryside community in central Nara Basin. It is reported to be the birthplace of Zeami and the cradle of the classical noh which Kannami made out of the sarugaku performances played at the local Itoi shrine. Two lines of development started then, the one leading to the formation of the exclusive art of noh in Kyoto, while the original annual sarugaku performances at Itoi shrine in Yūzaki might have continued unchanged well into the 19th century.

Key words: noh, Kannami, Kan'ami, Zeami, sarugaku, sangaku, shushi sarugaku, okina, Itoi shrine, Kasuga shrine, Yamato sarugaku, Kanze, Menzuka, Tōya, Ise-kō, Yūzaki

The earliest period and Shin Sarugaku ki

One of the oldest primary sources of noh are considered to be the Chinese performances called 散樂 sanyue (sangaku in Japanese) which were introduced to Japan still before the 8th century together with the first Chinese cultural influences and probably consisted of music, dance, singing and acting. In the Heian period (794-1192) the humorous element of the performances started to get emphasized, leading to the change of the name "sangaku" into "sarugaku", monkey plays, written 猿樂 and this development culminated in the formation of kyogen, comedy or farce indispensably connected with noh. The term "sarugaku" continued in the Heian and Kamakura (1192-1333) periods as the designation of various entertaining performances (this phase can be termed

“ko-sarugaku” – the old sarugaku), and later, by the end of Kamakura period, came to be used for the then forming noh drama. The old sarugaku comprised a wide range of dramatic sketches, “monomane” (miming, impersonation, acting), wisecracks, “buka” (singing and dancing) and acrobatics, the common feature of all of which was the humorous and exciting (滑稽解頤 *kokkei-kaii*) side and can be said to be the central characteristic of Heian and Kamakura sarugaku.

One of the domestic sources for noh are religious performances in which a deity appears in the form of an old man (*okina*) and bestows blessings on the country and the people. These are believed to have existed from ancient times in various regions throughout Japan. Later on, they produced a background and a professional basis for the future development of noh when gradually the custom arose to hire sarugaku actors for these roles.

Zeami, codifier of the classical noh, wrote in the *Fūshikaden*, the first of his treatises on the art of noh, that the tradition of this “way” dates as far back as the times of Crown Prince Shōtoku (fl. around 600 AD), in the section “On the Godly Ceremonies”:

“The Crown Prince of the Upper Palace (*prince Shōtoku*), relying on the good example of the Age of the Gods and of the Buddha’s birthplace, at a time when there was some trouble in the state, he entrusted to this Kawakatsu 66 imitations (*enactings, dramatic performances*), and also the 66 masks he had designed to produce, were bestowed to Kawakatsu. This took place in the Palace at Tachibana, in the Purple Eaves Pavilion (*Shishinden*). The state became calm, the country serene. The Prince of the Upper Palace, for the sake of the ages to come, gave the performances their present-day name, the monkey plays (...).”¹

秦河勝 Hata no Kawakatsu (or Kōkatsu, in the later pronunciation) was a prominent figure of the Asuka period, probably a leader of the Korean community in the Uzumasa part of present-day Kyoto, who built Kōryūji in 603, one of the earliest ever Buddhist temples in Japan. The tradition in the Hata clan went on, apparently, as Zeami further mentions Kōkatsu’s descendant 秦氏安 Hata no Ujyasu under emperor Murakami (946-967) dancing the *okina* dance at the *Shishinden* palace as a “policy-making by *sangaku*” 散樂対策.

What kind of performance sarugaku was in ancient times, is best testified in the mid-Heian work 新猿樂記 *Shin Sarugaku ki*. Its authorship is ascribed to Fujiwara-no Akihira and it is a *zuihitsu* (miscellany) work in one scroll, written in the Chinese *kanbun* style probably around the year 1060. Under the pretension of one family’s seeing the sarugaku, an account of customs of the period’s populace is given. In the opening chapter, it minutely depicts sarugaku

¹ ZEAMI. *Fūshikaden*. In OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 39. Trans. I. Rumánek.

at various occasions like the festival of Inari. With its listings of various items it is a work of scholarship, a precious literary document on the history of manners and the history of performing arts.

It depicts sarugaku in the light of humorous performances and mentions several of its teachers like 百丈 Hyakujō or 県井戸 Agata no Ido. Dramatic sketches like “Saint Fukkou asking for a surplice (kesa), nun Myoukou pleading for swaddling clothes” or “A Miyako lad failing the courtesy, a man from Azuma coming to Miyako for the first time” show that humour, largely on the textual level, was at that time still the prevailing style of these specialized performances.

As early as the classical Heian literary works like Kagerō Nikki, Utsuho Monogatari, Makura-no Sōshi and Genji Monogatari, expressions are to be met like “saruga(k)u-goto” (jesting, lit. “monkey-play words”) or “saruga(k)u-gamashi” (looking funny, lit. “like in monkey plays”), which is also an echo of the fact that sarugaku must have been prevailingly humorous performances.

Sarugaku performances originate from the sanyue performances of Tang China. The name “sanyue” was originally formed there as a contrast to the “regular, official” performances (正樂), thus meaning something like “irregular, popular” (literally “scattered”). Scenes of it can be seen in paintings preserved in the Shōsōin, the Nara period imperial treasury, bearing traits of dance and singing, light acrobatics and magic. This kind of art was introduced to Japan in the Nara period and it was given an official status by establishing a sangaku community (散楽戸) where this art was to be studied and it was given a high status as an art to be performed at official state occasions.

There is a record from 752 stating that Tang sangaku was performed at the Buddhist ceremony of “Opening Eyes” to the Great Buddha at Tōdaiji in Nara. The metallurgy of this gigantic statue, the construction of the colossal hall to roof it – the Great Buddha Hall one sees today is breathtaking with its dimensions as the world’s biggest wooden building though reportedly smaller by a third than the original building which had burnt down – represented an immense economic effort of the Nara period state, and the fact that the presentation ceremony to this technical achievement was accompanied by sangaku, a performance then still perceived as Chinese, that is, probably, highly exclusive – speaks by itself of the status this performing art must have been enjoying at the time. The sangaku costumes used at this occasion have also been preserved in the Shōsōin.

The sangaku community was abolished in 782. One of the reasons might have been that the number of sangaku performers from among the general population had increased to an extent that the necessity of preservation by any specialized community was no longer felt. But it is probable that even before this abolition, the original Tang sanyue had started to mingle with the

vernacular popular performances of humorous character, for example the piece about how sword was knocked out from Soga no Iruka at the time of his execution, a reflection of the historical event from 645, which laid the grounds for the transformation towards the humorous “sarugaku”, unlike the Tang sangaku in which the humorous element was scarce. This early interrelatedness is the reason why the humorous “sarugaku” or “monkey plays” were often written as 散樂 – characters for “sangaku”. In the Heian and Kamakura periods, there seems to have been practically no difference between writing either 猿樂 (monkey plays) or 散樂 (sanyue, sangaku), even the latter being read “saruga(k)u” or (in later pronunciation) “sarugō”.

The occasions at which sarugaku were performed comprised various official festivals, both Buddhist and Shintoist: in Kyoto they were the *Gion-e* (in the second week of the 6th lunar month, the present-day Gion-macuri) centred around the Yasaka Shrine, the *Inari-matsuri* festivities at the Fushimi Inari Shrine, the New Year 修正会 *Shushō-e* ceremonies at the Buddhist complex of Rokushōji (Monasteries of Six Victories) at Higashiyama (non-existent today), outside Kyoto the *Uji-rikyū matsuri* at the Uji detached palace, the *Kasuga Wakamiya matsuri* at Nara and others. These had a professional character, but besides them, there were many lay occasions like the 相撲節会 *Sumai no sechie* - Palace sumo festival in the 7th month, or the *kagura* festivals, at which sarugaku were taken up by Palace Guard officials, or the 五節淵酔 *Gosechi no enzui*, the Imperial banquet in the Seiryōden hall given in the evening of the second – Tiger – day of the Gosechi festivities of the 11th month, where sarugaku players were courtiers of the Palace.

Shushōe 修正会 is the name of New Year Buddhist ceremonies (*haru no hōe*, lit. “vernal”) organized from as early as Nara period (first mention in 768). They took place in major temples from the First day of the First month of the lunar new year, took three or seven days and had a character of prayers for the happiness of the nation. The festivities have been in existence until this day at old Nara temples like Tōdaiji and Yakushiji and have preserved an approximate image about the form they might have had in ancient times. The presence of the scenic element of monkey plays in the programme of these ceremonies is presumed as early as the Heian period and developed in the Kamakura period. As New Year rituals, the ceremonies had the character of repentance of sins (懺悔 *zange*) and liberation from their results by virtue of the salvation power of Buddhist deities. The monks performing the ceremonies were called 呪師 *shushi* – mantra enchanters. On the last day of the festivities the enchanters performed a ritual of pacifying and averting demons, who appeared in front of the spectators, these roles of supernatural beings given to monks in compensatory monkhood and gradually also to sarugaku players, apparently.

The performing sarugaku players also started to be called “shushi” (or “sarugaku-shushi” – sarugaku enchanters), and these performances are called “shushi-sarugaku” or enchanter plays. Nothing exact is known except the names of several “pieces” (手 *te*) and that apparently they had a character of light dance and singing performances with bells and drums. The best known were performances in temples like Rokushōji, taking place during the magnificent all-night prayer assemblies of the most prominent Buddhist personages, which was one of the main attractions of these events. In contrast to these night performances, aristocrats used to invite to their seats enchanters for daytime performances, which testifies to their great popularity.

Kamakura period

This is what we know about the state of sarugaku in the Heian period, which by enhancing its dramatic aspect started to gradually develop into *noh* from the mid-Kamakura period. Not much is certain about the concrete stages of this process but from the fact that performing art forms, supposedly arisen as imitation of sarugaku – collective dance forms called 風流 *furyū* and 連事 *renji* were performed at large temples as *ennen-gei*, additional entertainment after Buddhist festivals, from around mid-Kamakura, it can be suspected that this was how *noh* started to sprout, by dropping the humorous and exciting side around this time. And the formation of *kyogen*, which fully preserved this humorous character of Heian and Kamakura period sarugaku, can be guessed to start at this period too.

The high popularity of *shushi-sarugaku*, the enchanter plays originating in Buddhist demon-averting rituals, probably continued still at the beginning of the Kamakura period. In the decades to come, they probably started a gradual recession to the benefit of sarugaku and *dengaku* (“ricefield plays”). There must have been a close connection between enchanter plays and *noh sarugaku*, as can be gathered from the period’s numerous references, according to which sarugaku and enchanter sarugaku used to perform together. It can be supposed, however, that enchanter plays were of a slightly nobler character, without the traditional sarugaku humorous-exciting aspect, which heralded further development towards classical *noh*. Indeed it seems that enchanter sarugaku were in a sense the immediate pre-stage to further forms, as some later troupes like Ise sarugaku or the Hōjōji troupe of Settsu derived their origins from them, and the so-called *okina-sarugaku* 翁猿樂 (old man plays) were also formed under their strong influence. These were new-year religious performances, Shintoist in essence, the most auspicious state occasions featuring the character called *okina* – Old Man, as the impersonation of a deity bestowing on the nation his blessings and promises of happiness. The performances, abridgedly called

“Okina” as well, came to be enacted by sarugaku players, hired for this purpose. In this way, the important Shinto ceremonies were derived from originally Buddhist performances and in the elements of their style, the heritage of enchanter plays can be observed.

The mutual influencing is not so surprising if we realize that these festivities took place not far away from each other in Nara, within a triangle of not very distant religious institutions – the Tōdaiji and Kōfukuji temples and the Kasuga grandshrine. The both temples are situated at the edge of the plain of the Nara basin, at the foot of the hills Wakakusa and Mikasa, forming the northeastern edge of the basin. The background to these temples is formed by finely ascending slopes, on which perches the Nigatsudō (Second Month Hall), belonging to the Tōdaiji, and not faraway from it to the south, some 15 minutes walk down a forest path, is the grandshrine of Kasuga. Its filial sub-shrine, Wakamiya, is south of it. Moreover, in the Middle Ages, Kōfukuji and Kasuga were taken as one whole, the important centre of a mixed Buddhist-Shinto cult, which was a practice common with other temples and shrines as well. Thus this northeastern “corner of Nara” was a strong spiritual locality that gave birth to various forms of religious performances, predecessors of noh drama.

Just as the New-year ceremonies of Shushōe (lit. “Assembly for Improvement in the First [Month]”) gave rise to enchanter plays, the Buddhist calendar also contained the ceremonies at the beginning of the Second Month called Shunie (lit. “Assembly for Improvement in the Second [Month]”), taking place in big temples too (to be seen till this day at the Nigatsudō in Nara), and they included, in the Kōfukuji temple, Shinto sarugaku (*shinji sarugaku* 神事猿楽) called *takigi(nō)* 薪(能) “firewood performances”. Takigi noh are estimated to have started in mid-Heian period and thanks to Zeami we know that to prepare them was the duty of the Yamato sarugaku troupes. They took place as the introductory event to the Shunie, during which firewood was brought over to be burnt in the Western and Eastern Golden Hall of the temple, to beckon the spirits of the deities, and the mantra enchanter priests carried out the purification ritual for the peace of the people toward all four cardinal points, for averting calamities and evil demons. This ritual gradually assumed the character of a theatre performance and became the object of spectator admiration after sarugaku troupes had started to take charge of it. According to Komparu Zenchiku’s description, the firewood ceremonies started in the night of the 2nd day of the 2nd month in the Western Golden Hall and continued on the 3rd day in the Eastern Golden Hall. On the 5th day, at the four halls of the Kasuga grandshrine, the seniors (長 *osa*) of the four Yamato troupes played the Okina in the form *Shiki Sanban* 式三番, i. e. “The Official Three”, called *Shushi Hashiri* 呪師走り, lit. “Mantra Enchanter Running”, which is an echo from Heian times when it is known that the dance in enchanter plays was called

Hashiri – Running. On the 6th day, one week sarugaku festival started at the Southern Big Gate: 6th and 7th day saw dramatic competitions of the four troupes, and after them, four days of performances (御社上りの能 Miyashiro-agari no nō) followed in front of the Kasuga Wakamiya shrine, one troupe a day in the given order: Komparu on the 8th, Kongō on the 9th, Kanze on the 10th, and Hōshō on the 11th. On the 12th day, dramatic competitions of the four troupes came again. During these, the troupes performed also at the Ekayāna and Mahāyāna Premises (一乗院 Ichijōin, 大乘院 Daijōin) that served as the temple office of the Kōfukuji.

As an attempt to revive the ancient splendour of this festival, noh performances have been organized in recent times on the 11th and 12th of May on the lawn at the Southern Grand Gate of the temple. The introductory Okina in the three-version Shiki Sanban, performed at the Kasuga Grandshrine, has here the ancient name of *Shushi Hashiri*, Enchanter Running, which reveals the ancient relation of okina sarugaku with the enchanter plays.

The Okina is more of a ritual rather than a dramatic piece and it is estimated that till the end of the Kamakura period it formed the basis of sarugaku performances. It is also for this reason that the sarugaku troupes were always centred around the senior actor called *osa* (the senior). The oldest reference about okina sarugaku comes from 1283 in *Records about the Kasuga Extraordinary Festival in the 6th year of Kōan* (弘安六年春日臨時祭記 *Kōan rokunen Kasuga rinjisai ki*). In connection with the performers participating in the festival procession, five roles are mentioned – Boy, Old Man with the Mask, “The Third Sarugaku”, Servant and Father – along with the names of the priests who enacted them. Three out of these five roles – Old Man (*Okina*), The Third Sarugaku (Sanban-sarugaku, abridged to “*Sanbasō*”) and Father (*Chichinojō*) – form the three aged characters each of which is the central figure of one of the three dances – the core of okina sarugaku, and it is to them that the later term *Shiki-sanban* “The Official Three”, referred. The above-stated five characters – with Servant as a counterpart to the Old Man, plus the Boy – was the state in which okina sarugaku remained until the first half of the following period – the Southern and Northern Courts, before it started a gradual decline, with the number of the characters reduced to three, eventually to two (*Okina* and *Sanbasō*), with the Official Three only reserved to special occasions.

As we read in Zeami’s *Fūshikaden*, this old men trio was compared to the “Three Bodies” (*Trikāya*) of the Buddha. Zeami also mentions “Longevity plays” – *ennengei* 延年芸 in the *Kōfukuji*.² These took place at the end of the Vimala Assembly (*Yuima-e*, in the 10th month from the 10th to 16th day) at which Vimalakīrti sūtra (*Yuima-gyō*) was read. At the same time, Eight Vimala

² ZEAMI. *Fūshikaden*. In OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 40. Trans. I. Rumánek.

Readings (*Yuima hakkō*) took place in the temple of Tōnominedera (in the mountains of the southeastern edge of the Nara basin, south of Sakurai and east of Kashihara) at which Yamato sarugaku players participated. The name “*ennengei – longevity plays*” – is probably a reflection of the persuasion that entertainment that is spiritually based, contributes to a peaceful and long life.

There is a close connection between the two temples – Kōfukuji and Tōnomine. The latter traditionally formed a Buddhist-Shinto unit with the Danzan Jinja shrine (the names Danzan and Tōnomine being identical, as Danzan or Tan-zan is just an alternative to “*Tan-no mine/Tau-no mine*” which developed into “Tōnomine”) the enshrined deity (*saijin*) of which is Nakatomi no Kamatari, the ancestor of the Fujiwara clan. It was reportedly in these mountains that the historic wistaria bower was located at which Kamatari became a member of the plot in the Imperial family leading to overthrowing the tyranny of the Soga clan and establishing the Taika reforms in 645. Kamatari received a new surname – Fujiwara (wistaria meadow) and became the founder of a clan whose political influence rose all the way from then right until their peak in the 11th century. When the new Capital of Nara was about to be built at the beginning of the 8th century, the Fujiwaras took care that their family shrine be there too – that is how the Kasuga Taisha came about, the enshrined deity of which is the celestial ancestor of the clan, and the Kōfukuji temple below the Kasuga was the family temple of the Fujiwaras, founded by Kamatari’s son Fubito. The Fujiwaras devoted much piety to the both institutions even after the moving of the imperial seat further north, to Heian. As can be seen, the influence of the Tōnomine, Kōfukuji and Kasuga was strong in the Middle Ages too, and was reflected in the development of the theatre situation in Yamato.

In the treatise *Sarugaku Dangi*, in which Zeami’s second son Motoyoshi has recorded the conversations with his father, there is a reference that emperor Kameyama (1259-1274), a sarugaku lover, conferred the title of chieftain (*chōja* 長者) to a certain actor, thus rewarding him for a satisfactory performance. This actor should have been the ancestor of the later three sarugaku troupes in the province of Tanba (northwest of Kyoto).³

In this way, sarugaku troupes or guilds (*sarugaku za*) started to form at both Shinto and Buddhist institutions throughout the country in the second half of the Kamakura period, keeping strong ties with their original shrine or temple. They launched a new kind of dancing performances - the future *noh*, influenced or immediately deriving from the Buddhist enchanter plays (*shushi sarugaku*) as well as the (predominantly Shinto) *okina sarugaku*, but concrete phases of this formation are not well documented. This stage of the development of guilds is also referred to as “the *okina* group”.

³ ZEAMI. *Sarugaku Dangi*. In OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 303.

Nanbokuchō and Muromachi periods

The year 1333 marked the fall of the Kamakura shogunate. Due to a succession disagreement in the Imperial House, two rival imperial courts arose, the Southern and Northern Court, in 1336. This period, Nanbokuchō in Japanese, lasted until 1392, and though politically turbulent, it proved to be fertile for the development of *noh*. Out of the probably numerous sarugaku groups active all over Japan, the sarugaku of Yamato and Ōmi provinces became most prominent (Yamato is the modern Nara prefecture, and Ōmi being the ancient name of the Lake Biwa, the province corresponds to today's Shiga prefecture). They vied with the sarugaku groups of Tanba and Settsu, as well as with groups of another form of performance called 田楽 *dengaku* (originally "ricefield performance") which were popular especially in the capital city of Kyoto.

As early as from Nanbokuchō period, the existence is documented of the abridged version of the *okina* performances in which the first *Chichi no jō* piece was omitted, whereas the full "Official Three" was only given at very special and the most official religious occasions.

The practice of performances in the Nanbokuchō and Muromachi (1392-1568) periods evolved in three stages: First they were centred around Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. Then, the performances started to be commissioned by wealthy theatre-loving patrons, and later there were grand mass events for the public in big halls lasting for days. O'Neill provides a vivid picture of the situation of the times:

"(...) some shrines and temples had arrangements with certain groups of players whereby the latter performed at some of their religious ceremonies. Such arrangements made these religious centres the earliest regular places of performance, but they would, in any case, have been the most natural places to choose, for the shrines and temples of medieval Japan were far from being merely places of worship. They were the centres round which the whole life of the times revolved. They provided the sites for markets at which much of the business was done by members of the various guilds under their protection. The bigger and richer of them, in particular, created much of the local trade by their continual need for food, materials, and labour. Townships grew up outside their gates, just as they did later outside the castles, and a "man living before the gate" has been preserved in *Nō* plays as representing the ordinary lay person of the time, the Muromachi period equivalent of our "man in the street". The precincts held a motley collection of traders, travellers, minstrels, preachers, and ordinary local people who gathered there to carry on the business of everyday life. A troupe of entertainers visiting some outlying place would

naturally have gone there too, especially if, as must often have been the case with touring Sarugaku players, they took with them letters from their patron shrine or temple recommending them to the good offices of the local priests.”⁴

Thus in the Muromachi period there were such troupes of players all over Japan, and those in the vicinity of Kyoto had higher artistic standards as they had an ambition to appeal to the taste of the more cultured audiences in and around the capital, and it is from them that the present schools of noh derive.⁵

The existence of noh is first clearly documented in the year 1349, in the 貞和五年春日若宮臨時祭記 *Jōwa go-nen Kasuga Wakamiya rinjisai-ki*. Noh was born from the lineage of post-Heian sarugaku, and as a symbol of this lineage, this new performing art long retained the designation “sarugaku”. In the Wakamiya rinjisai of that year, noh is also called “sarugau”, as well as noh performances at other occasions in this period are referred to as monkey plays. We see the same designation in Zeami himself, like the names of plays referred to as “Morikata no sarugaku” etc. The word “sarugaku” also included meanings like noh actors, kyogen actors, the whole of the noh entertainment industry, and in this broad scale of meanings the term continued to be used up to the Meiji restoration, thus preserving the lineage all the way from the Heian times.

Zeami explains the name in the following way:

“The monkey plays have in their name the zodiacal character for the monkey, which by its turn is a mere abbreviation from the original character for “deity” – after the left part of the character was removed and only the right part remained. Thus the name came as a derivation from the name of the kagura divine plays. Since the zodiacal character for the monkey can also mean “to present/say with reverence”, the name can also be understood as “to present plays, provide entertainment”, as well as a derivation from the divine plays.”⁶

This definition explains the name through the characters used, rather than through the lexemes, trying to connect sarugaku to the Shinto ceremonial music kagura, written by the characters “divine music” 神楽, from which the writing 申楽 for sarugaku should have been derived by an abbreviation of the first character 神 (deity) into 申 (1. zodiacal monkey; 2. humble verb “mausu”). Zeami tried to avoid the spelling via the trivial 猿 (monkey), and probably so did many a contemporary of his. This explanation, however, ignores the pre-phase of Heian and Kamakura period sarugaku and historically speaking, seems rather a misconception in the way of folk etymology. Nevertheless it is quite interesting – and it should not be overlooked – that according to Zeami, this name had been given to the plays by Crown Prince Shōtoku himself (see above).

⁴ O'NEILL, P. G. *Early Noh Drama*, pp. 59-60.

⁵ O'NEILL, P. G. *Early Noh Drama*, p. 60.

⁶ ZEAMI. Fūshikaden. In OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 39. Trans. I. Rumánek.

So, even if merely a folk etymology, it is still one backed by a strong historic authority.

The sarugaku which evolved into noh playing, were produced as sacrifices at Buddhist and Shinto festivals by specialized groups or guilds (za) formed in the Heian or early Kamakura periods. The former importance of the sarugaku of Tanba province can be seen from the fact that they were hired to perform for the great shrines of Kamo (in the north of Kyoto) and Sumiyoshi (south of Osaka). The sarugaku of Yamato served the great shrine of Kasuga Taisha and the Kōfukuji temple, both in Nara.

However, at the beginning of the formation of sarugaku za, the sarugaku performed at festivals were not the entertainment art leading to noh, but they were based on the auspicious okina-sarugaku and the Shiki-sanban, because sarugaku za were originally organizations specially formed to perform the okina-sarugaku. That is why in the organizational structure of the za, the leader of the whole za was the "osa" 長 (the senior leader actor) who always performed the role of the okina. These are termed, as already mentioned, "the okina group" of sarugaku troupes.

The position of osa was later, with the appearance of noh as entertainment, replaced by the titles 権守 "gon no kami" or 太夫 "tayū" which had originally been designations of administrative positions. These were conferred by such authorities as the monks of the Kōfukuji temple in Nara, and gradually it was these who came to be the leaders of their za.

This definitely holds for the Yamato sarugaku of Kannami times (1333-1384) anyway, where there were four original za aimed to perform the okina sarugaku. This was the status quo we know about thanks to references in Zeami's treatises. Generally, "za" is regarded as a general term for a guild in any craft, and in the case of performing arts, Omote writes that "probably they were close to something like a theatre troupe".⁷ On the other hand, Amano Fumio distinguishes two organizationally different levels of za:

"In the case of the Yamato sarugaku (...), the original za which were formed for the sake of okina sarugaku performances, were 円満井 Enman'i za, 結崎 Yūzaki za, 坂戸 Sakado (or Sakato) za and 外山 Tobi za, and their respective powerful noh-performing groups were 金春 Komparu, 観世 Kanze, 金剛 Kongō and 宝生 Hōshō. The original sarugaku za were temporary bodies active only at the times of religious festivities, whereas the noh-performing groups centred around their tayū were active on a permanent basis, but this difference gradually got blurred and noh-performing groups came to be designated as "sarugaku za" too, and names like "Komparu-za", "Kanze-za" came into general use as replacements for "Enman'i-za", "Yūzaki-za". Nevertheless, their

⁷ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 434.

relation is not equation of the type “Komparu = Enman‘i” or “Kanze = Yūzaki”, the former being groups for noh, the latter those for okina performances. This distinction, though becoming more and more sparse, still continued until the end of Muromachi period.”⁸

In Omote’s opinion, the change of guild names was caused by the growing prestige of influential guild leaders as period “stars”. While at the beginning, the guilds tended to be named after the respective localities they had been traditionally based in, in Zeami times, the designation via the name of the leading actor (the “chief pillar” – 棟梁 tōryō) had come into vogue, completely prevailing at the end of the Muromachi period.⁹

The troupes of Yamato sarugaku and Ōmi sarugaku were the most prominent sarugaku troupes out of all the provinces in the Nanbokuchō period. There were six troupes of Ōmi sarugaku. For other provinces, there were three in Tanba, four in Uji, one in Yamashiro, three in Ise, and in Yamato there were other troupes except the “Yamato four”, based in places like Yamada, as well as further sarugaku groups in Settsu, Kawachi and Ki. All of them are believed to have sprung up in the Kamakura period as okina guilds aimed at performing okina sarugaku, as these occasions were the main reason why sarugaku so flourished in those times and why so many guilds had formed.

Beside sarugaku, also dengaku dealt with doing noh-type performances and were even more powerful than sarugaku from the Nanbokuchō period until the beginning of the Muromachi; nevertheless, there being only two groups of dengaku, the Old Group and the New Group (Honza, Shinza), this probably resulted in weakness leading to their early decline.

There was a great master of Ōmi sarugaku by the name of Inuō (later Dōami), excelling in the mugen (spectre, phantome) style. Nevertheless he lacked followers, which led to a fast decline of this artistic current, too, from the mid-Muromachi period.

For convenience’ sake, beside sarugaku noh, other performing forms can be referred to with the affixed -nō (= noh): dengaku-nō, ennen-nō. But what we call noh today is the development from sarugaku noh only and we might refer to this as “noh in the narrow sense”, the other “nohs” coming to an end without a development comparable to that of the sarugaku noh. The success that put sarugaku noh forward was thanks to musical achievement of Kannami and Zeami, who put special emphasis on “buka”, dancing and singing, over “monomane” – acting, impersonation.

Already before this, the four Yamato sarugaku troupes must have gradually split off the other troupes of the “okina group”, by gaining popularity by means

⁸ AMANO In NISHINO, H., HATA, H. *Nō-Kyōgen Jiten*, p. 258.

⁹ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 434.

of some new type of performance which could be termed “ratsubu” – the non-conform, out-of-the-tradition, dance - and thus they formed the “ratsubu group” as opposed to “the okina group” of troupes. The Yūzaki troupe was representative of this ratsubu group in the times when Kannami (or Kanze) had become its leading actor. His art gained such pre-eminence that he gained the favour of the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, which enabled him to expand to Kyoto and thus strengthen the position of his troupe. Though of somewhat low standing, the Kanze father and son of the Yūzaki troupe brought sarugaku to an abrupt progress and success. Prof. Nishino Haruo calls Kannami’s achievements “a revolution” in the development of noh.¹⁰

- I He enriched monomane, the basis of Yamato sarugaku, by the dancing and singing element in which dengaku and Ōmi sarugaku excelled.
- II The traditionally strong style was still enhanced by what was termed “yūgen” and what in those times probably best corresponded to something like enchanting elegance (the word shifted its meaning in the course of the centuries).
- III He introduced the highly rythmical melodies from the dance performances called kusemai. Incorporating kusemai into noh is the most important moment in the development of noh and no other influence can equal it, including dengaku which had not made any major step forward after establishing a good standard.

Kannami died in 1384 and his son Zeami (1363?-1443?) by no means fell behind the father in his talents and brought noh to an even higher status. He is reported to have been “a small man of delicate, disciplined bearing” (Hare). His main successes were:

- I He brought mugennou (spectre plays) to an especially refined level.
- II He wrote essays (能楽論書 nōgaku-ronsho) on the theory of noh, leaving 19 of them.¹¹

The favour of a shogun was, however, not a lifelong love affair, and each of the successive Ashikaga shoguns had his own tastes and different artistic and personal preferences, and so, still in Zeami’s lifetime, the favour of the shogun was bestowed onto Inuō (later “Dōami”) and his troupe of Ōmi sarugaku. After that, a representative of dengaku, Zōami became a big rival, gaining the favour of shogun Yoshimochi who preferred his lion dance and later still, his interest shifted onto Zeami’s nephew Onnami, which is taken as indication that the style of Zeami and his son Motomasa must have been very different at that time.

¹⁰ Lectures of prof. Nishino, Hosei University, 2006-2008.

¹¹ or 18, if 二曲三体人形図 is not to be taken as a separate work.

In the end, however, Zeami's son-in-law Komparu Zenchiku did find the favour of the mighty ones and managed by his new plays to implement the very artistic current he had received from his master, adoptive father and father-in-law, Zeami. According to Komparu family tradition, also confirmed by Zeami's treatises, the Komparu troupe were descendants of the Hata clan, around thirty generations from Hata no Ujijasu, thus having the most direct and main lineage among all the Yamato sarugaku troupes, so the adoption of Komparu Zenchiku by Zeami meant at the same time the union (not the first and not the last) of two powerful genealogical and artistic traditions. Zenchiku's followers and descendants – the Komparu school, along with the descendants of Zeami's younger brother, the Kanze, thus managed to outrival the sarugaku of other provinces, and together with the successors of the other two Yamato troupes, Hōshō and Kongō, and a newer Kita school derived from Kongō later, have been the only streams of this performing art for the past five centuries...

Local traditions at Yūzaki

結崎 Yūzaki is a village with a local railway station (Kintetsu Kashihara Line) in the very heart of the Nara Basin. It is situated in the centre of the triangle of places of ancient fame, Nara, Asuka and Hōryūji and probably there used to be a road nearby leading from Asuka to Ikaruga where was the seat of the legendary Crown Prince Shōtoku. Yūzaki takes prides in an ancient tumulus called Shimanoyama kofun, with its length of 190 m the largest tumulus in central Nara basin.¹² The local oral tradition sometimes ascribes it to Soga no Iruka, the last of the powerful clan that had influenced the policies of prince Shōtoku. The execution of Iruka in 645 meant the start of what became known as the Taika Reforms. Nevertheless, the kofun with its impressive size, typical keyhole (zenpou-kouen) style and the character of excavations, seems to belong to the classical kofun period, thus dating back much earlier, perhaps as far as the 4th/5th century.

The area is now a part of Kawanishi town (Kawanishi-chō) which expands to the south-west of the northbound bend of the Yamato River and to the east of the Soga and Asuka rivers flowing northward to the Yamato River. The Teragawa river runs right across the area, likewise flowing into the Yamato River. It is a place where “the okina mask and seeds of leek fell from the Sky” and where local tradition has it that here was the birthplace of Zeami and consequently the cradle of the noh. Prof. Omote qualifies his statement about the connection of Yūzaki with the origin of Kanze troupe with the ending

¹² Kintetsu Tawaramotosenzoisen Gaido Mappu, p. 2.

“-rashii” (“it *seems/is probable* that they were based in Yūzaki, village of Kawanishi”¹³), yet the local tradition seems to stick to it, ignoring any hesitation in this respect. What follows is based on my field research at Yūzaki in February 2008, materials I obtained at the local government’s Board of Education and a consultation I had with Mr. Fukazawa Tatsuhiko, assistant chief (as of 2008) of the Social Education Section, Board of Education, town of Kawanishi, Nara Prefecture.

The local folklore says that some time in the Muromachi period, still before Kannami times,¹⁴ the sky suddenly became overcast one day and to some strange sounds from above, something fell down upon the bank of the Teragawa (previously called the Itoi-gawa, the name still preserved in local folk songs). This was one okina mask and a bundle (or according to other versions, seeds) of the Japanese “negi” leek. According to one legend, the villagers buried the mask on the spot with due care and devotion, another version claims it was presented to the Itoi Jinja shrine nearby where it was preserved for some time before being offered over to the Kasuga Taisha; notwithstanding, the track of its existence became lost. The negi leek grew well in the area and became the prominent local product until the Second World War.

This legend is connected with the place called “Menzuka” (the Mask Mound) which is at the dyke of the Teragawa, just across the Itoi jinja shrine, and is one of the explanations of its name and origin. Another oral tradition exists, explaining the name of the tumulus as being a commemoration of a female deity who appeared in male garment and wore a mask which is venerated there.

Actually there might even be unclarity regarding the Kasuga shrine itself. Besides the Kasuga Taisha which seems to be the one insinuated and is the famous Kasuga shrine of Nara which the four Yamato sarugaku used to serve, there is a “Kasuga Jinja” within the precincts of the Himekuba (or Himekuwa) Jinja 比売久波神社 situated to the northwest of the Menzuka and near the west side of the Shimanoyama kofun tumulus. This shrine shares another affiliation to the great Kasuga Taisha of Nara: its main hall (honden) from the early Edo period, designated as an Important Prefectural Cultural Object (Ken-jūyō-bunkazai), is said to be originally the main hall of the Wakamiya Jinja, the by-shrine of the Kasuga Taisha, transported here and re-built, corresponding to the Kasuga style of shinto architecture.¹⁵ Another Kasuga jinja is in 吐田 Handa,

¹³ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 434.

¹⁴ In this case, the term “Muromachi period” obviously expands onto the previous Nanbokuchō period.

¹⁵ Bunka no kaori takai machi, rekishi wo kataru Kawanishi-chou, p. 2.

and yet another as a subordinate shrine within the precincts of 六県神社 Mutsugata Jinja in 保田 Hota.

The information tablet to the memorial stone on the original spot of the Menzuka mentions several genealogical documents (観世小次郎画像賛 Kanze Kojirō gazō-san, 観氏家譜 Kan-shi-ke fu, 宝生座系図 Hōshō-za keizu) according to which Kannami had a troupe of sarugaku in Kohata (present-day Minohata-mura) in Iga province (which took up the region between Ise and Yamato, around Nabari) and later moved to Yūzaki in Yamato province, making it the cradle of Kanze where his son Zeami was born.¹⁶ Kannami's usage of the mask in his noh might have been an echo of a period when okina masks were venerated and highly valued, thus the birth of a legend of a (supposedly okina¹⁷) mask falling down from the sky, is quite understandable, as well as its further veneration either in a form of a mound or as an object dedicated to a shrine. The fact that the leek really became the local product and specialty here, proudly bearing the name "Yūzaki nebuka" as the most famous vegetable of Yamato, is of no small importance either. All these can have blended into a story, a local legend, mixing historical fact and fantasy.

The Mask Mound used to be more elevated, but in 1952, due to the enlargement works of the banks of the Teragawa, the mound was allotted another spot, around 10 m to the south, on the plain ground to the south of the river's embankment, and reconstructed there as a small park, looking a little pushed off, below the outer side of the dyke. The fence around the spot was built out of contributions from Kanze disciples from all around Japan and contains a small park with trees and two central stone tablets with the inscription "面塚 Menzuka" and "観世発祥之地 Cradle of Kanze" purportedly produced by the then head of the Kanze school (Kanze sōke), Kanze Kiyohisa (Sakon) on the 4th of December 1936, just three years before his death in 1939, both of them previously located on the original spot of the Menzuka.

There is a mention in a document called 上島家歳用覚 Uejima-ke Saiyōkaku dating back to around 1831 that a "guardian of the Mask Mound" was nominated from private funds. This might refer to this place, thus heightening the probability that something of a tumulus should have existed in this place at that time.¹⁸

Across the river from the Menzuka, to the east of it, stands the 糸井神社 Itoi Jinja shrine. Its over a thousand year old history is documented by an entry

¹⁶ Kawanishi sōshi, p. 5.

¹⁷ The information tablet to the memorial stone on the original spot of the Menzuka mentions explicitly that an "okina mask fell down from the Sky".

¹⁸ Kawanishi sōshi, p. 4.

in the Englishiki (10th century) in which the name of the shrine is recorded as 糸井社. The dances and festivities that used to be celebrated on the premises of this shrine may have a deep connection with the very roots of noh. One can get an idea about these festivities from the large “ema” votive paintings hanging under the roof in its prayer hall (haiden). They depict dancing and sumo scenes with dozens of participants and spectators gathered. The most famous ema, dated 3rd month 1842 (Tenpou 13), belongs to the prefecture’s cultural treasures (ken-shitei-bunkazai). It shows the “isami-odori”¹⁹ (or “okage-odori”²⁰) or “namode-odori” dance in the form which probably still existed at that time the way it is depicted, at which a crowd of people are engaged in a lively thanksgiving for the fulfilment of prayers for the rain, to the accompaniment of a gigantic taiko drum standing in the centre between the pair of komainu and the two stone lanterns in front of the haiden. This kind of dance was organized as a thanksgiving when prayers for rain or other wishes had been fulfilled.

The autumn festival of Itoi Shrine is held on the 21st and 22nd October²¹ (or the fourth Saturday and Sunday of October²²), with the 奉幣 (hōhei - offering) ceremony and ranking among the most important matsuri in Yamato with its tradition of “Tōya” 当屋 or 頭屋. This tradition was typical for the Kinai region in the Middle Ages (中世 chūsei) and was generally called “miyaza”, where only limited families were entitled to the performance of religious ceremonies and the organizing of matsuri festivities. It used to be hereditary and on a rotation basis within a number of houses within the closed community (buraku), claiming to be the “ujiko”²³ or descendants of the enshrined deity (see below). Festivals on the same tōya basis used to be done in other localities in the area, but died out after the Second World War. Sumo wrestling is a part of the Tōya festival (Tōya-zumō), including young boys’ sumo (kodomo-zumō).

What is peculiar about this shrine is that it has no particular “saijin” or enshrined deity, or at least its identity is not known. Judging from the “ito” in the name of the shrine, meaning “thread”, it is believed that the enshrined deities might have a relation to the Chinese weaver masters who came over from Han and Wu states in the times of emperor Yūryaku (456-479). This might be connected with the existence of another shrine nearby at 唐院, the already mentioned Himekuba (or Himekuwa) Jinja, stated in Englishiki to have the saijin

¹⁹ Kawanishi sōshi, p. 11.

²⁰ Kintetsu Tawaramotosenzoisen Gaido Mappu, p. 2.

²¹ Kawanishi-sōshi, p. 17.

²² “Itoi Jinja” tablet.

²³ “Itoi Jinja” tablet.

connected with silk production. Thus, the area might have been connected with kuwa, the mulberry tree, reportedly grown on the divine Kaguyama (to the south of Yūzaki) by the gods.

The Itoi shrine consists of several buildings on quite large precincts. There is the main hall (honden), prayer hall (haiden), treasury (hōko) and there are four smaller subordinate shrines on the precincts.

The haiden hall is a regular gallery of art, with huge ema votive paintings like the isami-odori ema mentioned above, another one depicting the selling of the “nishiuri” melons. The precious art collection includes also the “Kasuga mandala” dating back from Muromachi period, and a painting of the Buddha ascending the ship.

What makes the connection of this place to Kanze all the more conspicuous and easier to believe, despite all the doubts and scarcity of historical proof, is that the exhibition at the haiden of the Itoi shrine includes a photo of an assembly, gathered in that very hall, among whom one discerns the somewhat youngish figure of the present (26th) Kanze sōke, the hereditary head of the Kanze school of noh, in person, sitting in the front. The above mentioned “legends of Yūzaki” might seem just a little more than a local hearsay; it is, therefore, with all the more surprise when one beholds this photo, taken at the occasion on May 18, 1985 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of erecting the monumental stones of “Menzuka” and “Cradle of Kanze” by the previous Kanze sōke, adoptive father of the 25th Kanze sōke (Motomasa). Under the roof of the haiden hangs a wooden tablet inscribed with the noh programme of that day: even a noh play called Menzuka is reported to have been performed. Surprisingly enough, no play of such title is to be found even in Nishino’s exhaustive list of noh plays,²⁴ which does not, however, include the 新作能, newly written plays produced nowadays, so this suggests the possibility that it might have been a new play specially written for that special occasion: the noh programme was impressive and of the most auspicious composition, as it started with the *Okina* in which a number of members of the Kanze family acted including Kanze Motomasa, the previous (25th) Kanze sōke, and his son Kanze Kiyokazu, the present (26th) sōke, followed by a curtailed mai-hayashi *Takasago* (the very auspicious noh, the first in the traditional list of plays) and a full performance of the *Menzuka*, and three curtailed shimai nohs (*Tatsuta*, *Miwa*, *Kasuga Ryūjin*), then a kyogen and a full version of the *Funa Benkei*. A final prayer, tsuke-shūgen ended that day’s performance. From this programme, auspicious and festive, it can be seen that the commemoration was given the highest possible grandeur.

²⁴ NISHINO, H. *Yōkyoku Hyakuban*, pp. 701-729.

Origin of the names of the four Yamato guilds

Tobi seems to be the original name of what later became known as the Hōshō troupe. In Zeami times they must have been based at, or originated from, Tobi, township in Sakurai-shi in the southeast of the Nara Basin, a place where the river Hase leaves the eastern mountainous area. It is generally acknowledged, at least the tradition has it, that the later name comes from the artistic name of Hōshō tayū, Kannami's eldest brother.²⁵

The name Enman'i is of uncertain origin, their other name being Takeda which is a locality west of Tawaramoto-machi some 8 km south of Yūzaki. There are no traces whatsoever reminding of this history in the locality. Their later name Komparu probably dates back from the times of Komparu gonnokami, grandfather of Komparu Zenchiku. In my opinion, the mutual geographical position between Takeda and Yūzaki might have also been behind the terms "lower and upper lineages" (shimogakari, kamigakari), referring to two main streams in noh in such matters as the way of singing or manuscript versions of individual plays. One goes "up towards the Capital", and one proceeds "up the Capital" (within Kyoto), this way of saying caused by factors like the position of the Inner Palace in the very north within both Nara and Kyoto, as well as the location of the ancient Nara in the northern half of the Yamato Basin, and also the gradual northward rising of the Kyoto basin. Consequently, it might have been a common practice to take Takeda for the "lower" in comparison to the "upper" Yūzaki further north.

Sakato used to be the name of a place in the Ikoma mountains (mountain ridge between the Nara Basin and Osaka), in the vicinity of the Hōryūji temple. Their later name Kongō probably came into use after the name of Kongō gonnokami who appears to have been their leader roughly in the times of Kannami.²⁶

The Kanze are connected with Yūzaki. Yūzaki information sheets give the names "Yamada" and later "Deai" as previous names of the Kanze za; nevertheless, Omote supposes that 山田 Yamada (later 出合 Deai) might have been a guild led by Shouichi (生市/生一), middle brother of Hōshō and Kanze, and that it might have been active in the area of Deai, township of Kashiharashi²⁷ in the south of the Nara Basin.

These four were well-known as "the four Yamato troupes" with responsibility for the sarugaku performing sections of festivals at the Kōfukuji

²⁵ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 434.

²⁶ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 298.

²⁷ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 435.

Temple, Kasuga Shrine, Kasuga Wakamiya shrine (these three at Nara) and Tōnominedera 多武峰寺. Originally, Tobi and Yūzaki (Yamada) probably belonged to Tōnominedera, just as Sakato was originally under Hōryūji, but gradually they found themselves under Kōfukuji's control as the latter's power extended over the whole of Yamato province.²⁸

The later names of the four troupes, which became their steady designations existing until today, have interesting connotations as well. They are all names of prominent personalities whose talents and performance brought fame to their respective troupes. Moreover, except Komparu, they are related to the Mahayana Buddhist pantheon.

Komparu is a peculiar name, written with two characters 金春 which form an exquisite visual harmony of graphic symmetry and beauty when written one below the other in the vertical column, to say nothing of their clear and auspicious meaning (gold – spring). Nevertheless, the writing, with this irregular reading, seems more of an ateji, and it “does not even look like a Japanese name”²⁹ and there might be a hidden Korean relation lurking behind this unusual name, considering the family's purportedly Korean ancestry via the Hata clan. The earliest known bearer of this name is Zenchiku's grandfather Komparu gonnokami, whose son Yasaburō became the family leader in the 56th generation after Hata no Kawakatsu. Since Yasaburō's son, 57th leader Zenchiku, the name Komparu has become the family's surname and the name of the noh troupe too.

Kannami had several names which are known, Kiyotsugu Saburō were his original personal names, Kanze his artistic name which later became the name of his troupe and the surname of the descendants of his son Shirō (Zeami's younger brother) – the Kanze family until today. The name Kanze comes from the name of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Kan(ze)on-bosatsu in Japanese who, according to a legend, chose him as a small boy to serve him (her³⁰). Kanzeon means “(the one who) perceives the sounds of the world” and is an explanatory calque from the Sanskrit name in which “Avalokita + isvara” can be translated as “master of vision” or, more periphrastically, “one who is master, seeing wide and all through”. In the esoteric tradition, the element “loka” was probably emphasized too, meaning “the world” – that is why the element 世 (= world) appears in the Chinese-Japanese transcription –, though it does not seem to have a direct bearing on the grammatical formation of the name as it comes from “ava-lokita(m)” = looking at, beholding”.

²⁸ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 435.

²⁹ Lectures of prof. Nishino, Hosei University, 2006-2008.

³⁰ In China and Japan, Avalokiteśvara usually has female sculptural representation.

Thus Kanze is probably a direct abbreviation from “Kanzeon-bosatsu”.³¹

Kannami is an abbreviation from the full “Kan-Amidabutsu” form which was his Buddhist priestly name (pronounced also Kan’ami in accordance with the more modern phonetic treatment of the final -n phoneme). The suffix -ami is an abbreviation from Amidabutsu (Amitābhabuddha in Sanskrit), the Buddha of the Western Quarters. It appears in further names of the family, like Ze-ami and Shirō’s two sons – On-ami and Ren-ami. Kan- is short for Kanzeon, who is the bodhisattva accompanying Amitabha in the Buddhist pantheon, along with bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāptah (勢至 Seishi) forming the “Western Triad”. The inclusion of the names of these two Western deities into the name of Kannami must have been an expression of a distinct faith orientation, whether personal or as an echo of the general popularity especially of these two members of the Mahayana cosmological pantheon.³² Since Kanzeon-bosatsu should have chosen Kannami to serve him (her), his reverence to Amidabutsu to whom the bodhisattva belongs, would seem natural, leading to the inclusion of the Buddha’s name into his own name. The appearance of *dōbōshū* (art connoisseurs) of 15th century Ashikaga shoguns, who were elevated to priestly status and allowed to bear an Amida-gō (Buddhist names ending in “...-A [mi{dabutsu}]),³³ like Nōami (1397-1471), his son Geiami and grandson Sōami, might show a spreading Amida-gō practice among (originally Buddhist) artisans and artist. Kannami might have been a forerunner of this anthroponymic practice, indeed its initiator perhaps.

Kannami’s eldest brother Hōshō bore the name again of the Buddha of the South, Ratnasambhava in Sanskrit. It means “Arise from the Jewel”, thus “Hōshō” 宝生 is its direct calque.

Kongō is vajra, the weapon originally of Indra who helped Ārya warriors in the conquest of the “dadas” during the prehistoric Āryan expansion to India. It seems to have been the thunderbolt as the symbol of strength, later identified with diamond as the symbol of hardness, thence the frequent translation as “diamond”. Later, the vajra also became an attribute of Mahāvairocana-buddha, the central figure of Mahāyāna cosmology, as the symbol of this Buddha’s wisdom: this is based on the Vajraśekharasūtra of India, while the other sutra used in esoteric Buddhism, the Mahāvairocana-sūtra, symbolized this Buddha

³¹ The explanation of the name Kanze as a compound made up of the first syllables of Kannami’s and Zeami’s names, seems nowadays to have completely given way to the opinion that it had been, from the outset, Kannami’s name, supported also by the genealogical fact that the Kanze are not descendants of Zeami but of his younger brother Shirō (cf. Omote In NISHINO, H., HATA, H. *Nō-Kyōgen Jiten*, p. 369).

³² It might be noteworthy, too, to mention here that Zeami had in his name the second element, “ze”, of the name of this bodhisattva.

³³ TORNIAINEN, M. *From Austere Wabi to Golden Wabi*, p. 3.

by the lotus flower (pundarīka – white, or padma – pink). This is how the traditional “vajra-and-lotus” symbolism came about.

The Chinese translation of “vajra” – 金剛, pronounced “kongō” in Japanese, appears in the names of several members of the Buddhist pantheon, including³⁴

金剛夜叉 Kongōyasha (Vajrayaksha) – the eastern Shining King (明王 Myō-ō)³⁵

金剛業 Kongōgō (Vajra-karma) – the northern Bodhisattva

金剛さつた Kongōsatta (Vajrasattva) – the eastern Bodhisattva

金剛波羅密多菩薩 Kongōharamitta-bosatsu (Vajrapāramitā-bodhisattva) – the central Bodhisattva

金剛法 Kongōhō (Vajradharma) – the western Bodhisattva

金剛宝 Kongōhō (Vajraratna) – the southern Bodhisattva

Thus, practically all the five bodhisattvas, according to the esoteric teaching of the Shingon School anyway, have their names starting in Kongō or Vajra, plus one of the Shining Kings – the eastern.

The four Yamato schools got their later names after their respective “starring actors” who became legends enough to give their names to whole troupes. Unless any other, deeper meaning can be found behind the strong Buddhist connotations of the three of them, this shows at least how anthropomorphic practice in medieval Japan was closely related to Buddhism.

Three versions of Kannami’s origin

Omote mentions several versions of the origin of Kannami, like an “origin from Iga” version, “formation of the za at Kohata in Iga” version, “formation of the za at Yūzaki” version. He considers them antiquated, unfounded and apparently mistaken.³⁶ What follows is a survey of three versions, one of them provided by Yūzaki legends, the second is presented by Tom Hare, and the third is Zeami’s mention in the Sarugaku Dangi.

I.

The information sheets of Yūzaki mention what Fukazawa termed “a previous hypothesis” (“以前の説”, Fukazawa), based upon records found in Nabari, according to which Hōshō’s and Kanze’s group(s?) served to the Aekuni shrine 敢国神社, the First Shrine (Ichinomiya) of Iga, near Hattori 服部 and Ueno-shi. Their father was Hattori Suginoki of Iga, Hattori being a ninja surname, and the

³⁴ based upon the Shingon sect esoteric mandala of 21 statues in the Tōji Temple, Kyoto.

³⁵ called Ususama in Tendai esoterism.

³⁶ “みな誤りと思われる” Omote In NISHINO, H., HATA, H. *Nō-Kyōgen Jiten*, p. 369.

mother might have been an actress with an artistic name of Shō-Minō-dayū 小美濃大夫 of Yamada-za. Their eldest son joined the Tobi-za as Hōshō-dayū. Their middle son Shōichi inherited the Deai-za which later became extinct. The youngest Kannami built a group at 小波田 Obata (or “Kohata” – Fukazawa) northeast of Nabari, but did not stay long before moving on to Yūzaki, founding the Yūzaki-za there which later became the Kanze-za.

The newer version, according to Fukazawa, supposes that the mother might have been from Sakurai as an actress in the Yamada-za there. The family might have lived in Nabari or Sakurai, and Kannami could have been born at either. The reason for the move towards Sakurai might have been the presence there of the Yamada-za which attracted either the mother or the sons.

II.

According to Hare,³⁷ the existence of an old genealogy called Kanze-Fukuda became public in the 1960's, reportedly a copy from an extinct original, dating from the beginning of the 19th century. It made Kannami the third son of Kamijima Kagemori (Buddhist name Keishin), lord of Asada domain in the province of Iga, and a mother from the Kusunoki clan. This would make Kannami an aristocrat by birth. He should have been born in Suginochi and later adopted by Ichidayū Iemitsu. Married to the daughter of Takehara Daikaku, lord of Obata domain³⁸ and a priest, and Zeami should have been born at the Kamijima family seat in Nagaoka. Kannami's maternal uncle, Kusunoki Masashige, was a famous supporter of the Southern Court and this should have been the reason why they tried to hide their background from the shogun. The hardships Zeami got into later in his life could have been accounted for by this fact.

As Hare writes, it is questionable why Kannami, son of a lord, would have built an actors' troupe, and why Zeami should be born at the family seat if his father had been adopted by Iemitsu, indeed why would he be “in the beginning given to the care of another actor, Komparu Yasaburō Katsukiyo”. Such close ties of the Kamijima family seat with actors' troupes, standing low in the social hierarchy, are doubtful. In addition, this information does not correspond to the data given by Zeami himself in the *Sarugaku Dangi*, a treatise in which Motoyoshi, Zeami's second son, took notes of his father's conversations.

³⁷ HARE, T. *Zeami's Style: The Noh Plays of Zeami Motokiyo*, p. 14.

³⁸ A place northeast of Nabari, according to materials from Yūzaki.

III.

Sarugaku Dangi says:

“A man called Suginoki of Hattori, a branch of the Taira clan, of Iga province, had a son adopted by one Naka of (O)uta, and by this one a concubine in Kyoto gave birth to a son. This son was adopted in Yamada by someone called Mino-dayū, and three sons were born to him. Hōshō tayū, the eldest, Shōichi, the middle, and Kanze, the youngest – these three are his descendants. This tayū of Yamada died soon.”³⁹

Due to the curtness of the passage it is not clear if the father of the three son mentioned was Mino-dayū or his adopted son from the Hattori family, but logically taken, there would be no reason why Zeami should mention at all the extramarital lineage from Suginoki of Hattori if they were Mino’s sons, so it is probable that this is the origin of the Kanze the passage is meant to refer to. It is not quite clear either whether the “tayū of Yamada”, who died soon, is Mino or his adoptive son of Hattori, or indeed Hōshō tayū. The translation tries to render exactly the ambiguity of the Japanese original. Of course, Zeami’s rendering is generally taken as the most decisive authority, and based upon this, prof. Omote clearly states:

“Kannami was the third son of an adoptive son of Mino-dayū”.⁴⁰

The generally accepted version of Kannami’s and Zeami’s rise in success is that it took place when “in 1374, Kan’ami received the signal honour of being invited to perform *nō* for the first time before the shogun, the young Asihkaga Yoshimitsu (1358-1408), in Kyoto. Zeami, then a boy, also appeared on stage. Yoshimitsu instantly fell in love with him, removed him from his father’s care, and brought him up at his court. This son of a provincial actor was now the protégé of the most powerful man in Japan, and he received his education from the greatest men of letters of his time.”⁴¹

The appearance of Setouchi Jakuchō’s biographical novel *Hika* (Secret Flower) in 2007 appealing to the broad readership by its spicy accentuation of the homoerotic aspect of the Yoshimitsu-Zeami relationship, at its very beginning anyway, probably relied on the hearsay and rumours conveyed by oral tradition at Yūzaki, according to which:

“It is said that Zeami was born in Yūzaki. Kannami had come here to study sarugaku which was later to be developed in Kyoto. Kannami’s father was from the province of Iga. He was a ninja and his mother was an actress – there used to be women in sarugaku, unlike the future *noh!* She might have been from Sakurai, or Kannami might have moved there, presumably in connection with

³⁹ OMOTE, A., KATŌ, S. *Zeami-Zenchiku*, p. 302. Trans. I. Rumánek.

⁴⁰ NISHINO, H., HATA, H. *Nō-Kyōgen Jiten*, p. 369.

⁴¹ TYLER, R. *Japanese Nō Dramas*, p. 6.

the Yamada troupe of sarugaku being active there. Kannami later moved on to Yūzaki. The reason for this change might be the quality of Yūzaki sarugaku, which might have attracted his curiosity and interest or provoked his ambitions. The Yūzaki sarugaku might also have been more open to outsiders than the other Yamato sarugaku guilds. (Interestingly enough, later on the Kanze group closed itself again). It can be said that Kannami brought the Yamada troupe, or its style anyway, to Yūzaki (perhaps together with his actress mother) and thus the Yamadaza fused with the Yūzakiza, and out of the Yūzaki sarugaku was formed the art of Kannami's noh in which he raised his son Zeami who should have been born in Yūzaki. In a way, it can be said that Kannami "stole" the art of Yūzaki sarugaku, took it to Kyoto, transforming it and making it into his noh by which he tried to appeal to the high classes in the capital.

How this came about was that shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu travelled from Kyoto to the southern court in Yoshino (a mountainous region to the south of the Nara Basin). On his travel, which led across the Yamato plain and right through Yūzaki, he witnessed the local sarugaku performance and got so enchanted by the boy Zeami that he decided to invite him and his father to Kyoto." (Fukazawa)

There is no written record of this event, thus it has remained on the level of local oral tradition, a legend which, one can imagine, has grown huge through the centuries. Nevertheless, it would pre-date the officially acknowledged 1374 Kyoto performance and Zeami's introduction to Yoshimitsu's favour, and shed light from a slightly more direct angle on the future development of what had previously been the countryside religion-based performance of sarugaku. The point of birth of noh would have taken place not in Kyoto, but in Yūzaki.

"Nevertheless, the Yūzaki sarugaku went on even after Kannami and Zeami left here for Kyoto. The ema at Itoi jinja testifies to its longlived tradition continuing well into the 19th century. Nowadays the matsuri is "on the fourth Saturday of October" at the occasion of the rice harvest, but it might have been in summer in previous times, as "Yamato-zuika" (Yamato water melons) can be seen depicted in one of the ema. What Kannami made out of the Yūzaki sarugaku was an exclusive form of performing art incomprehensible to common people and designed for the shogun." (Fukazawa)

The last vestige of the character the original sarugaku might have had, is the extant form of the "pilgrimage to Ise" (Ise-kō, 伊勢講). Organized groups of believers from all around Japan went on foot to pay homage at the Great Shrine of Ise, singing tunes like "Ee ja naika" ("Isn't it fine?"), usually after the harvest, but there were also special days proclaimed fit for this activity every month, and this activity started in the early Muromachi period. It was organized on the basis of raising money for food and beverages and the participation was either corporate or alternating for the members of a community. In front of the

Amaterasu Ōmikami deity, they performed kagura (Kōjien). These Ise-kō were different from, and should not be confused with the “three Ise-sarugaku troupes” which performed at the regular festivities of the 1st and the 4th months and were based at Ise.

“The legend of the mask falling down from the Skies can also be taken as proof that Yūzaki used to be, from early times, related to performing arts. It is a confirmed fact that the Itoi Shrine commissioned the Yūzakiza to perform at the festivities on the precincts.” (Fukazawa)

The Itoi Shrine is a tributary shrine to Kasuga Taisha which was a centre for sarugaku performances. Indeed all the tributary Kasuga shrines might have engaged in this activity, thus the performances were not limited to the Kasuga shrine of Nara but to all the minor Kasuga shrines all around the country. This holds all the more for the Itoi Jinja which claims a strong architectural connection with Kasuga Taisha, even the most direct one, with a possibility of some of its buildings having been moved here from Kasuga Taisha.⁴² Thus, the general wording that the sarugaku were connected with the Kasuga shrine, might prettily include the Itoi Jinja without any exaggerated degree of speculation or fantasy.

Conclusion

In the world of noh, there is a lot that remains unsaid, a lot behind the scenes. Known and felt by many though said by none. The character of the above mentioned information gained at Yūzaki might arouse an urge to proceed with the utmost caution so as not to let one’s fantasy hold sway over the sober scientific approach, and better to abide by the acknowledged authorities of noh research in Japan. Nevertheless, the presence of Kanze sōke at such an occasion as the commemorative noh performance on 18 May 1985 at the Itoi jinja in Yūzaki, and still in the prayer hall of this very shrine, might be a kind of indirect proof, strong enough to lead one to the belief there must be something about this place after all, something the members of the Kanze family know all too well of. Kanze sōke would not, in my opinion, consecrate by his own personal presence, an occasion based on little more than local gossip.

One can, however, view these circumstances from a different – more “Japanese” – standpoint. Rather than celebrating the place as the birthplace of their second tayū Zeami and of the noh itself, his presence might have been intended as reverence to his predecessor who had created the inscriptions on the monuments. In Japanese culture, concrete historical relations do not predominate over connections of a psychological and mythical character. So, be

⁴² The “Itoi Jinja” tablet.

it as it may, a celebration of this kind, too, might mean not so much a confirmation from the side of the Kanze, of the historicity of the legend, as, rather, its confirmation as a myth by means of its Shintoization, leading to a religious veneration of the hypothetical birthplace of the founder of the Kanze noh, at a shrine where the original enshrined deity is not even known by name...

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Figure 1 Itoi Jinja today.

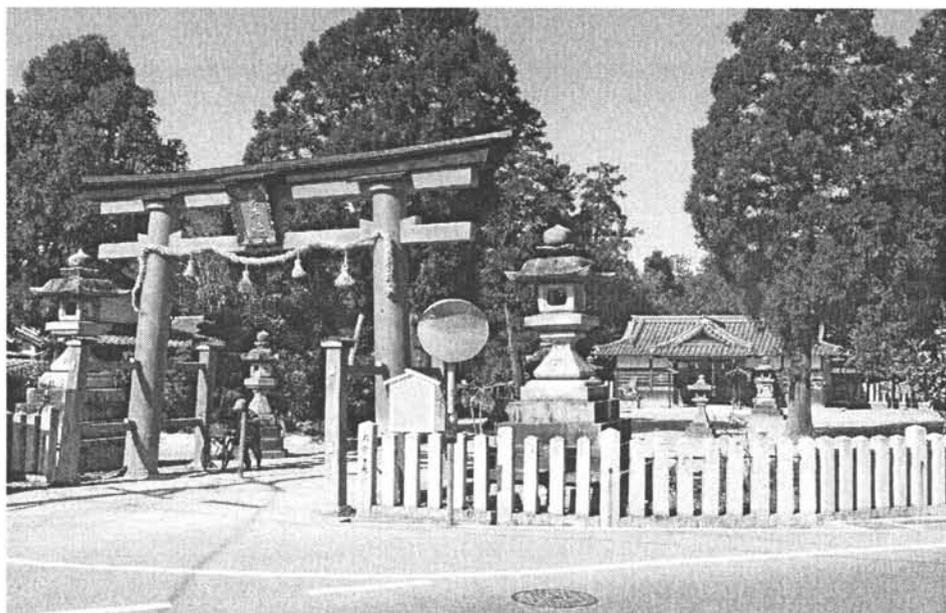


Figure 2 Itoi Jinja in a Meiji ema.

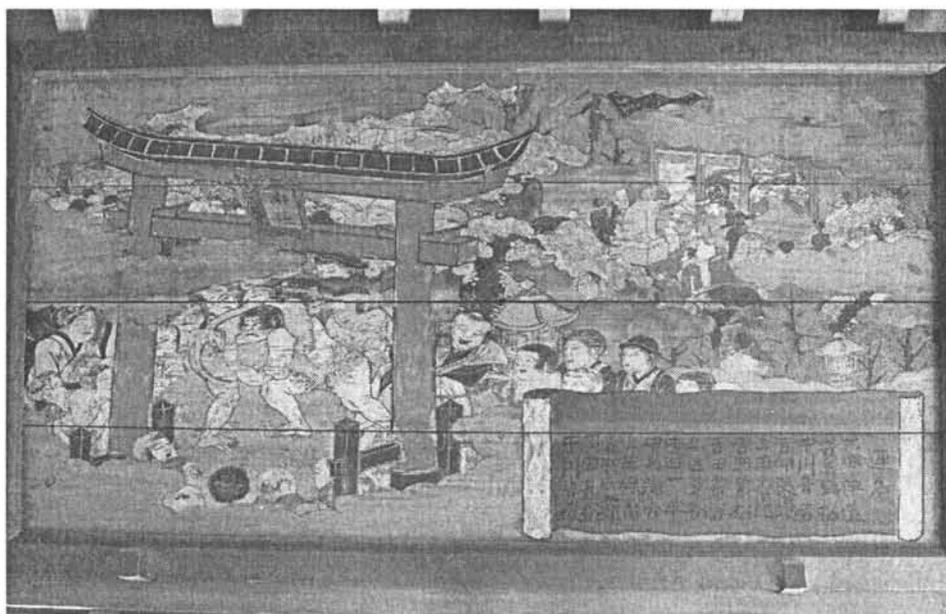


Figure 3 Photo with Kanze Kiyokazu.



Figure 4 The original spot of the Menzuka.

