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CHINESE NŌ
A SURVEY ON CROSS BOUNDARY PLAYS IN NŌ

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This work is dedicated to my parents and my brother.
はじめに

能と中国文化についての総合的研究日本の古典劇である能の中には中国題材の曲が少なくなく、能楽の中にも「唐事物」と称されている中国題材の能についての論述が散在している。本稿は能における中国文化の受容についての研究である。

能の現行曲は格流儀の上演曲を総合すると、その数は250曲ほどとなるが、その中に中国題材の曲が二五曲ある。それは、三笑、合浦、邯鄲、咸陽宮、菊児童、呉羽、皇帝、石橋、鐘馗、昭君、猩々、西王母、鶴亀、天鼓、唐船、白楽天、東方朔、難波、芭蕉、楊貴妃、龍虎、長良、などである。

第一章は、能および能楽論中の中国題材の曲とそれについての論述の概況を研究する。まず能楽目録に関する分類方法を検討するために「五番立て」や「夢幻能」という伝統的な分類法の唐事物を表現力を評価し、世阿弥の風姿花伝の「物学条々」に唐事の分類を求める。

第二章は、能楽の中国題材の曲の内容について詳細な説明をするために、唐事目録から十一曲を挙げて、その粗筋によって四種（女、神や皇帝、文人、鬼）の分類をする。

第三章はの要因は、歴史主義と政治的寓意それの視点で「白楽天」と「春日竜神」の謡曲の分析を行われる。能を純粋に美学的な観察の対象とするような、近代の様々批評の方法論は、また政治的な内容の中正化に、大きな役割を果たした。だから、たとえ「白楽天」のように、能があきらかに政治的な寓意意意を表す。「春日竜神」もその視点で分析したら室町時代における対外濃厚に認められる作品だと説明する。

第四章は、第三章のように「鶴亀」と「高砂」と言われる謡曲の分析を行われる。その中の祝言や祝いを表される句を挙げ、古代中国の不老長生や天下泰平や万民寿福の神仙思想に認められる。最後にして高砂の中にある祝言の表現を分析して、「相生の松」のテーマを中国道教の「海內十洲記」の中に描かれている「連理樹」に求めていることを説明する。
Talking about Chinese plays in nō suppose an exercise of division of the nō repertoire in the first place. To divide, to split, to cut the repertoire and than ultimately to talk about Chinese plays means to create taxonomies and classes. Taxonomies are hardly not pragmatic and functional, as they pander a specific classificatory aim. Therefore to talk about Chinese plays means to talk about aims, and the aim of this chapter is not to reply directly to the substantial question of what Chinese plays are (that would be better introduced in the second chapter) but rather to consider the category of “Chinese plays” as a starting point to rethink the roles of taxonomies of nō repertoire. As taxonomies are denoted by a pragmatic task, they are generated by and generates knowledge and ultimately they are arbitrary. Therefore exploring the stratigraphy of nō plays’ taxonomies, their role and significance means to understand their socio historical development, and their shared use and functionality.

This chapter presents a critique against currently used taxonomies to classify the nō repertoire, as it tries to find a space for “Chinese plays” in the gaps left by classical classificatory systems.
The repertoire of no includes 150 plays shared by all the five schools, with a combined regular canon of about 250 plays. Almost all the no performed today contain allusions to Chinese literature, and about one-tenth of the total feature stories or characters of Chinese origin. This group of plays, today is often referred to as karagoto mono 唐事物 and Chinese themed no plays exist from the earliest days of no, featuring elements and themes intricately unique to the repertoire. Once articulated the descriptive lacks of classical taxonomies the second section of this chapter is dedicated to recent scholarship on Chinese no with a particular focus on the recent study of Leo Shingchi Yip and the taxonomy he suggests on the ground of Self/Other cultural dynamics

1 Canonical Taxonomies

1.1 Gobandate 五番立て and mugen no 夢幻能

In the quest of articulating the space occupied by Chinese plays in the cultural praxis of no this first section is dedicated to the two major canonical taxonomies of no, both ‘naturalized’ into modern scholarship. The first called gobandate is based on a seventeenth century shogunate regulations, while the second canonical classification divides no plays according to the structure of their plot separating the canon in two major groups.

The gobandate system establishes five categories according to plays main characters (shite シテ): gods, men, women, lunatics, or demons.

The first category is dedicated to gods and shrines and is called shobanme mono 発番目物. no which are grouped into this category are also called waki nō 脇能. This kind of no feature a ceremonial and religious atmosphere. As a rule waki nō are divided into two parts. In the first part, a deity appears in the form of a mortal and tells the history of the place to the visitor. He appears in the second part in his own form and performs a mai 舞 (dance), giving blessing to the land.

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1 According to surviving records of no plays, Shōkun is the oldest surviving of the Chinese play and one of the oldest surviving of all no plays. See Takemoto, Mikio. Kann'ami. Zeami jidai no nō. Benseisha. (1992): 10-13
The second category of nō, nibanme mono 二番目物 also called shura mono 修羅物. Shura dō 修羅道 is one of the six life cycles beings go through\(^2\). Warriors who fall in battle go to shura dō to engage themselves in eternal fighting there. Shite in shura nō are ghosts of warriors fallen to shura dō. With the exception of Tomoe 巴 the only shura nō featuring the story of a woman, in this case the warrior concubine of Minamoto no Yoshinaka. This second category features stories from the Heike monogatari 平家物語. In a normal shura nō the ghost of the warrior appears to the waki priest who has come to visit an old battlefield, tells him the story of the battle, and asks him to pray for his soul. Most shura nō consist of two parts: in the first part, shite appears as a young villager, in the second part as a ghost in full battle attire. Sanbanme mono 三番目物 are also called kazura mono 銅物 and is the third category of the gobandate taxonomy, in this group the shite is usually a young and elegant woman. According to the tradition of nō this category evokes most the aesthetic of yūgen 幽玄\(^3\) the ideal of beauty and gracefulness of children and court women.

In most of the case, she is a ghost or a spirit, sometimes a living woman. And tells an old episode of the place. In the second part, she appears in her real form, a princess, a dancer or a spirit of some flower, and performs a graceful mai of slow tempo, such as jo no mai 序の舞 or chū no mai 中の舞. In a nō in which shite is a living woman, there is usually only one part and three is a dramatic situation that ends up in a dance by shite.

The fourth category of nō is called yobanme mono 四番目物 recollects a miscellaneous of different kinds of nō plays and can be divided into five types: the first sub category is kyōran mono 狂乱物 (mad piece): typically, shite in this type of nō is a living man or woman who wanders about the land in search of a loved one, his mind crazed in the grief of separation. Very often shite is a woman whose child has disappeared. Many of this type of have only one part. Where there are two, the first part is usually very brief, serving as a kind of introduction that

\(^2\) Shura: is one of the six realms of Samsara (rokudō): beings in Hell (jigoku), hungry ghosts (gaki), beasts (chikushō), warrior spirits (shura), humans (ningen), and celestial creatures. Furthermore to these six realms are added four superior dimensions of enlightenment: shōmon, engaku, bodhisattvas, and buddhas. All these form the ten realms of Buddhist cosmology.

\(^3\) A complete survey on the meaning of yūgen is offered by Ottaviani G. ( Ottaviani, G. “Introduzione allo studio del teatro giapponese.” Ponte alle Grazie, (1997): 127-128), she clearly points out the evolution of the usage of this concept and its origins drawn from the late Heian poetry tradition, and subsequently during the Muromachi period applied to describe the art of Ōmi sarugaku’s 猿楽 master Inuō.
explains the circumstance leading to the wandering *shite*. A second subcategory *yūkyō mono* 遊狂物 (music and dance piece with *kakko* 羯鼓 drum dance) and *yūgaku mono* 遊楽物: *shite* in this type of *nō* is always male, alive or ghost. In the first group, *yūkyō mono*, he is a young religious in layman’s form who serves in the refectory of Buddhist temple. He performs *kakko mai* (dance) with a type of drum called *kakko* tied to his waist. In some *nō* of the second group, *yūgaku mono*, *shite* is a Chinese who performs *gaku* 楽, a dance of Chinese origin. A third one *shūnen mono* 執念物 (attachment piece) and *onryō mono* 怨霊物 (revengeful ghost piece): *shūnen* 執念 means “worldly attachment” because of which a man after death undergoes torture in hell. In *shūnen mono*, a ghost appears before a monk in the first part in the shape of an ordinary man or woman to ask him for a prayer. In the second part, the ghost appears in its own form and describes an episode relating to its attachment. In *onryō mono*, *onryō* 怨霊 or revengeful spirit of a jealous woman or of a murdered man seeking revenge is either pacified or driven away by prayer. The fourth and the fifth category are respectively called *ninjō mono* and *genzai mono* those two shares the that the main character is a living person and while *ninjō mono* 人情物 concentrate more on the “human feelings” in general, *genzai mono* feature only samurai. The last and fifth category *gobanme mono* 五番目物 or *kiri nō* 切能 is dedicated to “demon plays”, the main character is usually “a being with human body and demon’s heart, or a demon’s body with an human heart”4, who terrorizes those it encounters until the very end of the play, this last group plays feature a rapid and vivid rhythm and bring the audience to the end of the program with an emotional awakening final.

This partition of the canon was established when *nōgaku* 能楽 was dignified as *shikigaku* 式学 by the Tokugawa shogunate, soon after the fall of Hideyoshi when leyasu inherited the courtly passion for *nō*. The five categories also embed the Chinese principle of *jō*, *ha*, *kyū* 序破急 a principle of modulation that can be translated into "beginning, break, rapid" arrived in Japan through the establishment of *gagaku* 雅楽 court dances5. The *jō*, *ha*, *kyū* progression feature both

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5 *Jo ha kyū*: introduction (*jo* 序), development (*ha* 破), and conclusion (*kyū* 急).

This three phased sequence is a mechanism for articulating the parts of a whole. It originates in the criticism of the genre of court music called *gagaku*, and was adopted into a number of medieval genres, such as *renge* 連歌 and *saruigaku*. The three phases make sense only in relation to each other, linked in much the same way as the movements of a sonata. *Jo* is characterized by a measured, stately mood appropriate for establishing the overall tone
the rhythm of a single play, with a slow beginning an evolving development and a rapid finale, so the rhythm of the five categories in their rotation during a whole day long performance. The usage of a taxonomy based on five categories is interpreted by Komparu Kunio as a partition based on the five phases’ cosmology (also called five elements):

phenomena and objects were organized into groups of five and believed to correspond to the five elements and the five yin organs of the human body. This theory had gained currency in Japan much earlier, and could be found in Gagaku related writings and even in textbooks; it was apparently the prevailing wisdom of Zeami’s day. We might call the Five Elements Theory a human-centered way of thinking that signifies a universal process of change.

During the Tokugawa period a program of nō fulfil an entire day of performances and plays were chosen one by one according the order of the jō-ha-kyū organized five categories. Today performance’s programs result in abbreviated format of only two nō plays and one kyōgen 狂言 piece, and the whole performance usually comes with an introduction of some short dances (shimai 仕舞), also depending on the occasion a formal program use to begin with Okina 翁 (shikisanban 式三番).

According to this Edo period taxonomy, 17 percent of the current repertoire of plays fall into the first category, 7 percent into the second, 18 percent into the third, the 26 percent into the fourth, and 22 percent into the fifth.

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6 The five phases model (gogyō) was a classificatory system that found its legitimation in a Neo Confucian metaphysics based on the teachings of Zhu Xi, which interpreted the elements as a set five different kinds of interaction between ri and ki, the two different elements at the origin of the universe.


The second common taxonomy in use today, was developed in 1950s by Yokomichi Mario, and divides the repertoire into two broad categories:

1. *Genzai nō* 現在能: “contemporary nō” involving a historical figure who appears (usually without a mask) as a person who is presently living in the word and who is placed in a conflictual relationship with one of his contemporaries.

2. *Mugen nō*: “phantasmal nō”, involving a supernatural figure (usually wearing a mask), such as the ghost or spirit of a vanquished hero or unrequited lover, who returns to the site of battle or courtship disguised as a local inhabitant in order to recount his or her personal tragedy to the waki; at the end of the play, the waki awakens from the phantasmal spell as if from a dream.

This division shares its framework with modern folkloric morphological studies and structural anthropology ideas: *genzai nō* and *mugen nō* work as two specific archetypes, or structures, of nō plays, allowing a morphology based division to the entire repertoire.

The standard configuration of a *mugen nō* structures itself in a specific sequence of dramatic units that work as follow:

The waki, most often a traveling monk, with or without *waki tsure* ワキツレ or companion enters. He makes a brief speech about the place he arrived which is usually associated to some historical event, and expresses his wish to meet somebody of the place who will tell him the story. The *shite* enters in the form of a common man or woman of the place, such as a fisherman a woodcutter, or a village woman. They start a conversation about the place and its history, at the end of the conversation during the *rongi* 論議 the ghost disappears after having performed a dance. At this point normally the traveller fall asleep or an inhabitant of the place enters and answer the waki’s question about the person in the legend, telling waki about the ghost he could have met wishing for

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9Ibid 8
him salvation after waki’s prayers. This moment called ai kyōgen 間狂言 divides the two acts of mugen nō the maeba 前場 and the nochiba 後場 in which the nochijite 後ジテ. After a brief song signed by the waki starts a musical prelude, shite enters again this time in his or her true form as an armored warrior, a noble court lady or a demon. Standing by the first pine nearest to the main stage, he soliloquize in emotionally pitched lines, telling who he is, or how he feels on coming back to the scene so familiar in his lifetime. An exorcisme can at last be performed by the waki at this point as soon as the demon has performed his final and terrorizing dance. In final rush after the mai, the kiri brings the play to its finale, and the performance comes to an end.10

Although most of the scholarship about nō today conceive nō plays in terms of these two taxonomies (gobandate and genzai/mugen nō), it is important to acknowledge they were not used as such during the Muromachi period. Also among the analysis of Chinese themed nō plays, classical taxonomies appear incapable of organizing plays in a functional way. The 25 Chinese plays are completely invisible when are adopted these very broad taxonomies and the scholar has to look for them one by one. I would also uphold the idea that the unique features of Chinese materials adapted in nō result misread through genzai/mugen nō division, an example of this is represented by the plot of Kantan 卍釈, this very quick but dense play lacks of the nakairi 中入り of the shite, featuring a very peculiar format of mugen nō, in which no ghosts appear and almost all the play is setted inside Rōsei’s 禄生 dream.

Disregarding Chinese plays, general limits of these categories are described by the scholar Brown Steven in his book Theatricalities of Power: The cultural politics of Noh when he refers to gobandate warns that such codification and formalization, which was actively encouraged during the Edo period by the Tokugawa shogunate, “is largely responsible of turning nō into the antiquarian museum piece it is today.” He adds also that the greatest danger of such antiquarianism toward nō is the myth of metaphysical preservation that it fosters: that is, the presumption that it is possible to shield the “essence” of nō from the change, and becoming that invariably after whether explicitly or imperceptibly, the form and function of every cultural

practice during the course of its history.” An example in practice of this danger can be drawn from Komparu Kunio’s work, in the chapter regarding the five-elements theory and its significance in the five play structure he affirms “the five plays cycle is the original and correct” (see Konparu 1983, 32) which represent a quite dangerous statement. Although also the arguments reported by Brown Steven seems to over simplify the problem of modern stereotypization of nō to just a question of categories.

1.2 From Monogaku jōjō 物学条々 to Santai 三体

Over two hundred years before the introduction of gobandate and genzai/mugen nō, a very different conception of categorizing plays was formulated by Zeami during the Muromachi period. According to the Shikadō 至花道 the basic elements of nō consist of “two arts” (nikyoku 二曲) of song and dance (buga 舞歌), and “three bodies” (santai 三体): the “old person’s body” (rōtai 老体), the “woman’s body” (nyotai 女体), and the “warrior’s body” (guntai 軍体). Zeami considered the three bodies to be the main types of dramatic enactments that must be mastered by an actor if he is to perform the wide variety of roles encountered in the nō repertoire. The three bodies pertain to the specific dramatic decorum associated with performing roles of beneficent gods and tranquil old men (in the old person’s body); jealous, mad, and forlorn women (in the woman’s body); and fierce warriors and frightening demons (in the warrior’s body). The three bodies were considered to be the main types of dramatic enactment that must be mastered by an actor if he is to perform the wide variety of roles encountered in the nō repertoire. This kind of functional categorization bases on the needs of dramatic enactment and reflects the centrality of actor’s point of view, also it is important to introduce the concept of monomane that stands as aesthetic and pragmatic principle behind the santai division.

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11 The True Path to the Flower, Shikadō was written when Zeami was fifty eight, in 1420, this treaties stresses “Zeami views on the fundamentals of the actor’s art, and begins to make the kinds of metaphysical and philosophical distinctions concerning various levels of accomplishment in acting that are further developed and elaborated in later treaties”.

...monomane, or what Rimer and Yamazaki (1984) translate as "role play." Monomane encompasses physical aspects of a performance from masks and costumes to the highly stylized movements of the actors on stage. "Role play" is an appropriate translation because the term suggests the representational aspects of monomane without especially imposing any Western sense of mimesis. It is best understood, perhaps, in relation to the metaphysical concepts of yugen and, more important, kokoro, which can be translated as the "heart of things." Kokoro is the most deeply metaphysical element of no and is the so-called essence captured through monomane. Scholar Benito Ortolani explains: "The reality of kokoro is ... rooted in the true essence of all things, or the all-encompassing, unchanging, pure Buddha Nature" (1995, 124). Thus while nō theatre involves representation with gestures at its physical level of monomane, at its primary metaphysical level of kokoro it involves the presentation of an unchanging essence and a reality that is understood to be more true than material reality. The ultimate goal of nō theatre is not the dramatic representation of a plot or event but the presentation of essence.12

The nō actor does not merely imitate, represent, or simulate action or character; rather, the actor becomes other becoming the otherness of the role, becoming the other’s body. It is not simply that the actor makes the role his own; rather he, allows himself to be made other, releasing himself into the otherness of the role, allowing his body to be used as a “vessel” or “receptacle” for the body of the other, as Zeami suggests in Yūgaku shūdō fūken 遊楽習道風見 (Viewpoint on nō training; ca. 1424). Zeami’s categories appears from this point of view pragmatic and based on a buddhist philosophy interpretation of theatrical performance.

Within this framework the evolution of Zeami’s original conception of santai model was fully formalized and expressed between the 1420 and 1424, in both the treaties of Shikadō and Kakyō 花鏡. Although when Fūshikaden 風姿花伝 (Teaching on Style and the Flower) is taken into account a different organization to santai is conceived, the treatise was written by Zeami

when he was reaching the forties, around twenty years before Shikadō and Kakyō in 1402, and it is considered as a work still influenced by his father Kan’ami’s understanding of the art of nō: instead of the santai organization it is presented a less sharpened theory about characters and roles is presented in the chapter (monogaku jōjō), nine different kinds of roles are enumerated: women’s role, old men, performing without mask (hitamen 直面), roles of mad persons (monokyō 者狂), roles of buddhist priests (hōshi 法師), shura, roles of gods (kami 神), roles of demons (oni 鬼) and Chinese roles (karagoto 唐事). Okugawa Tadahiko theorized that Zeami theoretical shift from the monogaku jōjō’s nine bodies to the santai modellization, between the first twenty years of the 15th century, can be interpreted as an embodiment of a change in performing roles’ relevance and as a lack of interest by the mature Zeami on karagoto, which flavour hardly matched his taste for phantasmal nō and his aesthetic of yūgen.

2 Taxonomies for Chinese nō

2.1 Locating karagoto 唐事

Now that we have outlined an overview over traditional taxonomies of nō repertoire it is possible to approach again the problem of locating Chinese plays in this geography. The scholar Wang Donglan in her study “Nō ni okeru Chūgoku” gives a brief quantitative description on the magnitude of Chinese plays in nō today: currently 25 karagoto are still performed on the nō stages, and of this amount just 16 plays are shared between all the schools. This relative small

13 It is important to recognize that when Zeami wrote Fūshikaden he considered significant to distinguish each of all the nine bodies of monomane, and the presence of karagoto allows us to speculate that before Zeami karagoto plays were played commonly, of these early examples just few pieces survived Kanami’s Shōkun (still performed nowadays) and Taizan Fukun 泰山 府君.


Sanshō 三笑, Kappo 合浦, Kantan 邑tan, Kanyōkyū 咸陽宮, Kikujidō 菊児童, Makurajidō 枕児童, Kureha 吳羽, Kōtō 皇帝, Shakkyō 石橋, Shōki 鐘馗, Shōkun 昭君, Shōjō 稜々, Seiōbo 西王母, Tsurukame 鶴亀, Tenko 天鼓, Tōsen 唐船, Hakukakuten 白楽天, Tōbōsaku 東方朔, Naniwa 難波, Bashō 芭蕉, Yōkihi 楊貴妃, Ryōko 龍虎.
If we consider these 25, 10 of these are labelled under the 4th category, 8 are labelled under the 5th category, for the first category are collected the total of 5 pieces, again 2 pieces for the 3rd category and 1 for the shura mono.
amount of plays yet represents the 10% of all the repertoire, and should be taken in account along the number of Chinese themed *bangai kyoku* 番外曲, in her research she enlists the names of around 70 disappeared plays. This numbers can variate of course not only on the bases of new discovery of neglected *bangai kyoku* but also according to the definition of Chinese themed play’s category boundaries. It is extreme but also arguable to claim that due their strong influence both in the *honsetsu* 本説 and poetic reference to Chinese tradition other plays, plays never perceived as Chinese, could be enlisted as Chinese themed nō, like *Hagoromo* 羽衣 or *Kinuta* 砧. These do not belong traditionally to *karagoto* as Zeami ment. To state that *Hagoromo* and *Kinuta* are Chinese themed nō is a groundbreaking claim in nō’s scholarship and my aim here is not to claim their belonging to a category more than another, but to stretch the limits of canonical boundaries, and to enlight how traditional categories works with Chinese themed nō and how new taxonomy are welcomed and can be scholarly useful when Chinese materials are concerned. 

Chinese plays contains elements and themes that are unique to the repertoire, and due to this uniqueness at the beginning of the theorization of roles characterizations Chinese character were treated alone before the *santai* systematization:

Chinese roles are special kind of characters, there is no fixed form of practice for the actor. The element of appearance is of course a human being just like anyone else even though the character is of course a human being just anyone else- it is best for the actor to wear something with an unusual appearance so as to maintain the effect of something somehow out of the ordinary. Such parts are effectively played by older artist with talent and experience. Still, other than costuming, there are no special techniques required. In any case, since any attempt to imitate the Chinese style directly, either in chant or in movement, will not in itself be effective, it is better to add just one lection of just such an element, slight in itself, can serve as a means to animate the whole. Although usually such changes the style, and so such a slight change in gesture will add something of the Chinese flavor and can give the spectators an appropriated sensation. Such methods have been practiced for a long time. In general, such are the various elements of the Role
Playing. It is difficult to express any finer details in writing. Nevertheless, an actor who has fully grasped the points enumerated above will be able by himself to grasp them.  

The fact that the Chinese role was included in the early chapter of Fūshikaden reflects the sensible presence of the Chinese role from the early days of nō. However, Zeami was more concerned in preserving performance style familiar to domestic audiences than providing an authentic presentation of China. He warned that nothing too extraordinarily different should be done, and a foreign atmosphere to Japan should be achieved simply through performance modifications. The attention given by Zeami to Chinese roles suggests the use of a non representational typology of monomane and only an advanced actor should perform the difficult part of Chinese characters and can give to the audience the illusion of becoming himself Chinese, also Zeami underlines the importance of the usage of the scenic devices of mask and appropriate dresses which should be chosen to enhance audience’s experience.

However Zeami aesthetic advices were not normative, Konparu Zenchiku, Zeami’s son-in-law and artistic heir, briefly wrote about Chinese roles in his Rokurin ichirō hicchū 六輪一露之記 (Secret Notes on an Account of the Six Circles and One Dewdrop), Zenchiku echoed Zeami’s idea that the key to Chinese roles is the appearance. Unlike Zeami and Zenchiku’s focus on the performance of Chinese characters, Konparu Zenpō (1454-1532[?]), the grandson of Zenchiku, was interested in actively adapt stories of foreign origin. In his writing on the composition of plays, Zenpō advised playwrights to tell stories from China or India in Japanese style, such as incorporating Japanese poems in the play.

Written mainly during the late fourteenth through the mid-sixteenth centuries, karagoto reflect the assimilation of Chinese culture of those times and how the audience and patrons of nō

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17 “The noh actor does not merely imitate, represent or simulate cation or character; rather, the actor becomes other. (...) It is not simply that the actor makes the role his own; rather, he allows himself to be made other, releasing himself into the otherness of the role, allowing his body to be used as a “vessel” or “receptacle”(...)” ad vocem. Brown T. Steven. “Theatricalities of Power: the cultural politics of Noh.” Stanford University Press. (2002): 25


viewed China and Chinese culture. Prior to the emergence of these Chinese plays a wide range of materials and images of China had accumulated and permeated Japanese culture, eventually through nō performances this shared images could become real bodies on the stage. Chinese nō had the special role of perform China on the stage of Muromachi court, for the first time in Japanese history all the vast amount of writing and shared poetical imagery dedicated to the continent was embodied in a theatrical tradition.

The first records of karagoto representations are contained in few diaries of the first half of the 15th century according to Mansai jugo nihon nikki 満濟准后日記 and the Kennai ki 建内記 during the 1429 at the imperial court the 14th day of the 11th month the Kanze za performed Ayaori 綾織 and Taishikō20, another reference is recorded inside the Kanmon nihon nikki 看聞日記 when in 1432 at the Imperial Residence of Fushimi was performed Kappo on the recurrence of the Tanba sarugaku. After Zeami’s karagoto these plays start to have a more certain attribution, Konparu Zenchiku wrote most certainly the plays Yōkihi, Shōki and Bashō which are also the first karagoto plays to feature a more developed taste of yūgen. The plays Chōryō and Ryōko are attributed to Kanze Kojirō Nobumitsu and also the play Tōbōsaku dated in the same years can be attributed to Konparu Zempō31.

2.2 The Other and the Self

Once acknowledged the ambiguous and unique character of Chinese plays, it comes clear the inadequateness of classical taxonomies to meaningful describe this part of the repertoire and Zeami’s nine bodies classification based on the principle of monomane never gained enough importance to become a scholar tool to classify the repertoire during the centuries.

It is to be claimed that Zeami’s division of karagoto mono can become an extremely useful tool when it helps to draw a complete new paradigm to look at the repertoire. These considerations allow us to introduce the taxonomy developed in the recently published “China Reinterpreted, Staging the Other in Muromachi Noh Theater” by Leo Shingchi Yip in 2016, which

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20 Ayaori is the play that we nowaday call Kureha and Taishikō is nowaday’s Kanyōkyū.

understanding deeply influenced the interpretative point of view of this research. The analysis presented by Yip “looks at nō in a different light so as to investigate its social, cultural and political impetus. Such investigation of nō as a tool of social commentary.”

The seeds of this powerful interpretative framework are to be found in 2002, Brown Steven’s study “Theatricalities of Power: The Cultural Politics of Noh,” as highlighted by Stanca Cionca Scholtz the book:

...aims at disclosing historically specific networks of cultural production, circulation, and reception of the art of no starting from this basic assumption: "Rather than simply mirroring the sociopolitical contexts in which they were performed, these plays constituted an active, productive force in the theatre of the medieval cultural imaginary by engaging specific sociopolitical issues and problems" (cover flap). The author acknowledges thereby an important "scientific turn" that has been taking place for some time now within the humanities—the shift from an essentialist perception of cultural phenomena to a focus on their performative function. The representatives of this trend—sociologists, cultural anthropologists, and philosophers—stress the impact of reiterated social acting ("performance" in a broad sense of the word) on the shaping of mentalities, sensibilities, emotionality, and social institutions. In this perspective, art appears not so much as an "expressive" as a "performative" act. Its role is not so much to disclose identities but rather to produce, by its performative acts, these very identities. Just as, several decades ago, J. L. Austin set out to teach “how to do things with words,” Steven T. Brown sets out to investigate how to do things with (nō) theatre. As he declares from the start, he is not so much interested in “what a text means” as in “what a text does” (p. 1)—thus promising an investigation of the “micropolitics of culture” (p. 2) that would encompass religious, political, and economic discourses in their intricate relations to theatrical conventions and practice.22

From this specific theoretical framework the work of Yip implements the study of the Self and the Other specific to the dynamics between Japan and China, as the goal of his research is to explore the meanings of the representation of Chinese features (the Other) and the process of cultural adaptation between China and Japan. Pursuing this research Yip focuses on two major aims, first to examine whether the China staged is a true representation of China. Second, if there are regular patterns in the portrayal of the Other.

Regarding the first point, from a theoretical point of whether a true representation of the Other is possible at all has been one fundamental issue in the analysis of the Self/Other dynamics, and Yip eventually denies the possibility of any true representation. Here below is briefly synthesized the analytical path chosen by Yip in order to frame his research:

[All representations] are representations, [they] are embedded first in the language and then in the culture, institutions, and political ambiance of the representer… [then, a representation is] implicated, intertwined, embedded, interwoven with a great number with a great many other things besides the “truth,” which is itself a representation.23

Yip argumentation recalls and move from Said claim that “presentation has purposes” and therefore representations of the Other are embedded in “cultural praxis” related to a specific historical context with its social, intellectual and economic setting. Consequently it is possible to draw the idea that the knowledge of the Other is never “raw, unmediated, or simply objective”, and as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claimed representations are responsible of “constructing the Other simply as an object of knowledge, leaving out the real Others.”24

Once these concepts are introduced to build a first basis to his theoretical premises, Yip concentrates on the meaning of “real Others” introducing Margaret Higonnet idea that the represented Others are themselves “constructed Selves”, enlightening that the vision of the Self


is always constructed in relation with the existence of an Other that “foster self alienation, self liberation, and assimilation to the Other.”  

The possibility of the Other posing a challenge to the Self is related to the inevitability of involving the knowledge of the Self in the process of understanding the Other. Martin Heidegger’s idea of the fore-structure interpretation explains this very notion of how indispensable the Self is for understanding the Other. Heidegger saw interpretation as the “appropriation of understanding,” that become apparent under the guidance of a point of view. He pointed out that “an interpretation is never grounded in a presuppositionless apprehending of something presented to us”. Rather interpretation is always something “grounded in something we have in davance (fore having), in something we see in advance(foresight) and in something we grasp in advance (fore conception).

In his analysis Yip eventually concludes, as mentioned earlier, that it is impossible to verify a “purely and objective understanding of the Other, but it is possible to understand that the Self plays eventually the only role in the representation of the Other.” And ultimately when the Self comes to interpret something of foreign origins a whole process of Self definition, regeneration and protection is triggered, in which Self and Other can be visualized as two changing fluid entities influencing each other.

In regards to the current survey on nō taxonomies, from Yip point of view to talk about Chinese nō means to talk about a self imaginative praxis of the Japanese elites in Muromachi Japan. With this ‘fore-structure’ interpretation in mind it is possible to forward a better understanding of how the Japanese Self engaged with the Chinese Other. Yip identifies five kinds of different patterns

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27 The idea of the Self as fluid is formulated in Jacob Raz’s discussion on the dynamics of the Self and the Other. In Raz, J. “Aspects of Otherness in Japanese Culture.” Institute for the Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa. (1992): 1-2
that are common in several plays of the repertoire that show the variety of reflections in which karagoto mono plays construct and reinterpret Chinese motifs:

a. First he categorizes plays in which the Chinese element convey auspiciousness and celebratory motifs he calls the “Auspicious Other”, in his analysis he gave a description of Tsurukame and Seiōbo and Tōbōsaku.

b. A second subdivision is represented by plays that display Japanese Heian period “renditions of famous Chinese stories” like Shōkun 昭君 and Yōkihi 楊貴妃 through which the audience could feel “a strong sense of nostalgia,” this second group he calls “Sympathized Other.”

c. A third category is representative of a more entertaining adaptation in which Chinese features become “Chinoiserie” and the Otherness is “exoticized” within the plays, this category is called the “Exotic Other,” featuring the plays Shakkyō 石橋 and Ryōko 龍虎.

d. The fourth category under the name of “Destructive Other” regards plays which depict China as “a threat to Japanese culture and society,” in these plays as answer to external threat it is asserted the superiority of the Japanese Self in relation with the Chinese Other, recalling Hakurakuten 白楽天 and Zegai 善界.

e. A last category includes plays that portray an harmonious image of Chinese people and highlight the similar aspects of the cultural background, called the “Armonious Other”, this category includes the play Sanshō 三笑 and Tōsen 唐船.

This functional and interpretative taxonomy, based on different declinations of Self/Other dynamics, represents a concrete theoretical improvement to modern scholarship on nō. The
study of Yip remembers to us the power of taxonomies as part of the act of production of knowledge, they are a fore structure that helps us to understand what we have in front. When *karagoto* are considered as we have demonstrate common taxonomies used in nō can not help. The taxonomy constructed by Yip in stead gives us the opportunity to make a wide survey on the role of Chinese motifs in Muromachi Japan that’s why this approach to nō is the frame adopted in this research, as the second chapter will foster light on the contents of Chinese Plays in nō in Muromachi period, the third and the fourth focus on a sperimental extension of Yip’s taxonomies implications to nō plays which are commonly not considered as Chinese.
This second chapter aims to articulate the question about what Chinese plays are, in so doing investigates the contents of Chinese plays. As mentioned earlier today survives on the current repertoire only a group of about twenty five Chinese plays that were written between the late fourteenth and the early sixteenth centuries: Sanshō 三笑, Kappo 合浦, Kantan 郊飄, Kanyōkyū 咸陽宮, Kikujidō 菊兒童, Makurajidō 枕兒童, Kureha 呉羽, Kötei 皇帝, Shakkyō 石橋, Shōki 鐘馗, Shōkun 昭君, Shōjō 猩々, Seiōbo 西王母, Tsurukame 鶴亀, Tenko 天鼓, Tōsen 唐船, Hakurakuten 白楽天, Tōbōsaku 東方朔, Naniwa 難波, Bashō 巴蕉, Yōkihi 楊貴妃, Ryūkō 龍虎.

Even if these plays retell stories of Chinese origin “this group of plays was not about representing China, but rather about manipulating the perceived images of China and catering to the cultural practices, aesthetic preferences, and sociopolitical attitudes of various audience groups in medieval Japan.”28 It is through the different images of China constructed in these

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plays that the playwrights amplify certain aspects of nō, such as auspiciousness, cultural identity, depictions of human emotion, as well as spectacular dance and performances.

Throughout its long history of encounters with China, Japan viewed China in various and sometimes contrasting fashions. To Japan, and more specifically to some Japanese, China was at times the fountainhead of invaluable knowledge and a cultural model, at times an important trading partner with abundant natural resources and products, at times the lord requiring a tribute, at times a country that posed a challenge to Japan’s national identity and. In studying Japan’s complex cultural adaptation of Chinese culture, Donald Keene has emphasized his view of China as one determining factor in shaping Japanese literature, as he states, “The central factor of Japanese literature, if not the entire traditional culture, was the love for and the rejection of Chinese influence,”

David Pollack, a pioneer of sino Japanese studies, has asserted that “it is a truism to say something Japanese was originally Chinese.”

Carl Sesar has illustrated Japan's different attitudes towards Chinese culture raging from total admiration to complete rejection. Sesar has described the handling of Japan's cultural relationship to China as an inevitable team that grew from Japan's deep-seated ambivalence toward China. Wang Donglan has analysed dedication of certain Chinese materials in seven nō plays including Yōkihi and focusing on a variety of play in early and mediaeval Japan, a profound knowledge of Chinese culture and classical Chinese literature was considered a fundamental attribute of a culture person. Nonetheless, the Japanese did not simply push or Chinese studies, but also express their views and sentiments towards different cultures.

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32 Wang Donglan study written in Japanese, centers on the adaptation of Chinese materials in seven nō plays Ryokō 呂后 (Empress Lu), Yōkihi 杨贵妃 (Consort Yang), Shun Shibaku 孙思邈 (Sun Simiao), Ōmunotori 鳥鵲鳥 (The Parrot), Kogen uzura 根元鶉 (The quail), Nishime 螺女 (The conch shell maiden) and Shōjō 猩々 (Shōjō). Wang, Donglan. “Nō ni okeru chūgoku.” Tōhō shoten. 2005
It is however the mediaeval noh theater first integrated this earlier renditions of barriers Chinese stories through a comprehensive approach. the theatre stage a large spectrum of images of China, some of which the Japanese had never seen before points this is intriguing and often innovative portrayals of Chinese figures.33

In this chapter is presented a selections of Chinese plays that taken together provide a well rounded representation spanning from the late fourteenth to the early sixteenth century. It was during this period that nō developed into a mature art form even as it continuously reinvented itself to suit the various tastes of different groups of audiences. The plays selected are divided into five groups according to the nature of the characters. They are Chinese Beauties, Chinese Deities and Emperors, Chinese Literati, Exotic Creatures, and Visitors from China. This grouping of the plays is inspired by the influential categorization of role types in the artistic treatises of Zeami, which was adopted in later treatises of nō. As described in the first chapter the earliest categorization of role types in appears in the second chapter of Zeamis Kaden. He lists nine role types in the following order: women, old men, characters without a mask, the crazed ones, priests, warriors, deities, demons, and Chinese roles. The key factor underlying these role types is that the audience can easily recognize their stories (basic sources, honzetsu 本説), and expect the character to perform dance and chant. In most cases, Chinese plays of same role types have similar themes and are rendered in similar fashions.

a. Chinese Beauties: Shōkun 昭君 and Yōkihi 楊貴妃

Shōkun 昭君

According to surviving records of nō plays, Shōkun is the oldest surviving of the Chinese play and one of the oldest surviving of all nō plays. The play, often referred to as kosaku 古作 today, provides invaluable information on the treatment of a Chinese motif in early no dramaturgy. In fifteenth century nōtreaties, such as Kabu zuinoki 株髄脳記 (Records of the essentials of

dancing and chanting, 1456), attributes the play to Konparu Gon no Kami 金春権守, the head of the Konparu troupe in the late fourteenth century and the grandfather of Zenchiku. The play tells the tragic story of Wáng Zhāojūn 王昭君, an imperial consort of the Emperor Yuan (r. 48-31 B.C.), who was sent off to marry the Xiongnu king Huhanxie for political reasons. In contrast to interpretations of her story in China, the nō version depoliticize the Chinese story and shifts the focus onto Wáng Zhāojūn parents lamenting her paring and mourning her death in exile.

**Yōkihi 楊貴妃**

The play epitomizes how a Chinese motif made well known predominantly by Chinese plem was reconstructed in nō, and how a story of Chinese origin had pervaded Japanese culture and literature before nō version emerged. As the only “Chinese play grouped” in the “women play” category, however, Yōkihi achieves a high degree of artistry with a strong affect to yūgen, comparable to Izutsu 井筒. Because of the close association of the Chinese story with prominent literary works from Heian Japan, particularly with Genji monogatari, Yokihi effectively constructs an atmosphere of nostalgia and melancholy among the Japanese audience.

A hermit Hōji 方士 (waki), receives the order to find the spirit of Yáng Guìfēi from the emperor Xuánzōng, his beloved concubine. The hermit after a long travel finds the entrance of the Tokoyo 常世 (everlasting realm). Once entered this world, the hermit discovers the spirit of Yáng Guìfēi (shite). In order to understand if she is the real spirit of her, he ask to tell him the love promise exchanged between the emperor. Than she cries dancing the dance of the eternal farewell that separates her and the emperor, after telling him the verses of the secret exchange: “In heaven, we would be two birds flying on one wing. On earth, we would be a tree with a double trunk, branches entwined”.34

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34 An allusion to lines 107 and 108 of Zhāng hēngē 長恨歌 "Song of Everlasting Regret" is considered one of the literary masterpiece of the Tang dynasty by the poet Bai Juyi (772-846). It retells the love story between Emperor Xuánzōng of Tang and his favorite concubine Yáng Guìfēi (719-756). This epic poem is dated from 809.

*Kantan* 邯郸

*Kantan* belongs to the category of *yobanme mono* and it is attributed to Zenchiku or to Kanze Motomasa. Rosei *shite*, a young man in China, sets out on a long journey seeking enlightenment. At the village of *Kantan*, he stops at an inn where he is given a miraculous pillow which is said to provide enlightening dreams. He falls asleep, but is soon woken by an imperial envoy *waki* saying that he has been chosen to ascend the throne. He is taken to the capital and reigns for fifty glorious years. But he is suddenly awoken again and told by the innkeeper *ai* that his meal is ready. Dazed, Rosei realizes that life is but a dream. He decided to return home.

The story is almost entirely settled in the dream of the *shite*, that starts exactly when the imperial envoy touch with his fan the pillow. The mat where Rosei was sleeping becomes now the throne of the Palace of So, he dance on the mat until the dream ends and he touch the stage with his feets. When the *ai* call him for dinner. The *honsetsu* is believed to be the twenty fifth chapter (*Kōryōmu no koto* 黃粱夢事) of the *Taiheiki* 太平記.35

*Kikujidō* 菊児童 and *Makurajidō* 枕児童 (only Kanze) 36

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Regarding the *Honsetsu*: The World Inside a Pillow 枕中記 is a traditional Chinese story by Shen Jiji 沈既済 of the Tang Dynasty (A.D. 618–907). The story involves a Taoist monk and is interpreted through the Taoist and Buddhist belief of life as an illusion and the moral of not striving too much in one's life.

36 This is one nō play that describes a story set in China featuring a mysterious main character, Jidō. The legend of Jidō is described as follows in the Japanese medieval classic, the *Taiheiki* (Chronicle of Great Peace). The Kanze school calls this play, “Jidō of the Chrysanthemum” (Kiku Jidō). They also have a play called “Jidō of the Headrest” (Makura Jidō), but it is an entirely different piece. The Kongō school has a similar play titled, “Peng Zu” (Höso).
During the era of Emperor Wen of the Wei dynasty, medicinal water sprang forth at the foot of Mount Rekikenzan/Tekkezan. Upon the emperor’s order, an imperial official waki is dispatched to investigate the headspring of the medicinal water. At the mountain, the official finds a hut. While he is exploring the vicinity and surveying the hut, a strange boy shite emerges from the hut. When the official, whose suspicions are aroused, asks the boy his name, he replies that he is Jidō and that he served Emperor Mu of the Zhou dynasty, and exiled more than seven hundred years ago. All the more suspicious, the official asks the boy sharply, trying to determine if he is a phantom. The boy says that he was given a pillow, upon which the emperor inscribed two (four) verses from a sutra, and shows the headrest to the official. The official is impressed by this rare treasure and he and the boy together joyfully recite the verses of scripture. Jidō further reveals that when he copied the two (four) poetic verses onto a chrysanthemum leaf, the dew that formed on the leaf became immortal elixir and that because he keeps drinking the dew, he has lived for seven hundred years. Then, Jidō performs a dance of joy. He tells the official that dew dripping from the leaf has created a pool in the valley, which has become the headspring of the medicinal water. The official and Jidō exchange cups of the water as sake, making it an offering of prayers for the longevity of Emperor Wen and the enduring prosperity of his reign. Jidō returns to his hermit’s hut on the mountain.

**Kureha 呉羽**

37 According to Ye Hanao, the first records about the medicine of immortality is to be found in the "Records of the Grand Historian" Shiji 史記 in the chapter 封禪書: 「燕の昭王から人を海に遣わし蓬莱、方丈、瀛洲を捜させ。この三神山は言い伝えによれば渤海のなかにあり、さほど遠いところではない。...そこには諸仙人が住んでおり、不死薬もある」.

The chrysanthemum dew as medicine of immortality is recorded inside Shén nóng bèn cáo jīng (Shinnō honzō kyō) 神農本草経 (written between about 200 and 250 CE) enumerates 365 different kinds of medicines, divided in three categories, the upper (上薬) medium (中薬) and the low (下薬).

The chrysanthemum is classified inside the upper section also called Immortality Medicine (仙薬), in the class of herbs (草部) together with the some examples from the section of precious stones are: cinnabar (tansa 丹砂), mica (unmo 雲母). According to the Bao pu zi (Hōbokushū) 抱朴子仙薬篇 there are around one hundred medicines, and related to the the dewdrop form chrysanthemum, the water form the chrysanthemum, the peach of the immortality, the alcool of the immortality, from Ye, Hanao. “Nōgaku to Chūgoku no kogeinō, shinkō.” Bensei Shuppan, (2000): 31
On his way to pray at Nishinomiya, a Court official sees two women in the village of Kureha, one of whom is weaving and the other reeling thread. When he asks them who they are, he is told that they are the two girls, Kurehatori and Ayahatori38, who introduced weaving into Japan in the reign of Emperor Ōjin. After promising to return this same night to weave some cloth for the present Emperor, they disappear. Kurehatori later returns and dances in celebration of the happy reign; and in his dream, the official sees them both weaving heaps of rare damask for the Emperor.

**Seiōbo 西王母**

The honsetsu of Seiōbo is contained in *Kara monogatari* 唐物語, a book of Chinese stories written probably early in Kamakura Period.

The story of the nō is very simple. After the speech by a kyōgen announcing a court festival, the waki and the waki tsure enters as the Emperor and high courtiers, accompanied by a solemn prelude called shin no raijo performed at the entrance of an emperor onto the scene. They immediately take their seats and start singing the prosperous reign, the Emperor himself singing a hymn to his virtue. Then Seiōbo appears to the Emperor in the form of an ordinary young woman, sings song in praise of the Imperial virtue, offers him a branch of peach blossoms, reveals her identity, and disappears with a promise that she will come back to present him with magic peaches from her garden. In the second part, Seiōbo descends from heaven magnificently attired and accompanied by all the birds of paradise gives peaches to the Emperor, performs dances, and ascends to heaven again. The song describing the dancing of Seiōbo alludes to the feast by the winding stream with peach petals floating the sake cups.

c. Chinese Literati: Sanshō 三笑 and Bashō 芭蕉

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38 According to ed. Sadanari, Kentaro. “Yōkyoku Taikan.” Vol 2. Meiji Shoin. (1928): 975 the episode of some woman weavers arrived in Japan is recorded in the section dedicated to the emperor Ōjin in *Nihon shoki.*
Sanshō 三笑

Sanshō depicts the story of a gathering of three Chinese sages and their laughter upon the realization of an unintentional violation of a religious constraint. The play tells of the Buddhist monk Huiyuan 慧遠 (334-416), the shite, who founded the White Lotus Circle at Mount Lu where devotes his life to the pursuit of the way of Buddhism. Huiyuan has made a vow that he would never step beyond the Tiger Ravine, which marked the boundary of the Buddhist monastery. One day, the poet Tao Yuanming and the Taoist scholar Lu Xiujin pay a visit to Monk Huiyuan. While enjoying the scenery and conversation over wine, they inadvertently cross the bridge over the Tiger Ravine. At that very moment, they hear the roaring of a tiger and realize that Huiyuan has just broken his vow. In response, they burst into a laughter. Sanshō according to Yip “was written sometimes during the second half of the fifteenth to the early sixteenth centuries. All extant records of authorship attribute the play to Jiun’in 慈雲院, also known as Hosokawa Nariyuki 細川成之 (1434-1511).”

Bashō 芭蕉

Masterwork of Konparu Zenchiku, Bashō features strong religious contents, this play take place in China. A monk waki is practicing meditation on the Lotus Sutra in an hermitage hidden between the mountains. Every evening when he is chanting the Sutra, he can hear the presence of human beings outside his hut. Outside there is a woman maeshite who listens to the monks prayers, once she appears to the monk, he invites her to enter inside the hut, during their conversation she demonstrates an astonishing knowledge on the Buddhist texts. She enigmatically refer to herself as the spirit of a banana tree covered by the snow, disappearing at the sound of the evening bell. The monk ask to a villager about it and this (aî) tells the legend about the banana tree. The spirit of the banana tree nochijite appears during the nochiba in the shape of a woman, describing the nature of impermanence, with the passing of the seasons, dancing a jo no mai

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under the light of the moon. As soon as the cold wind of autumn rise the spirit disappears leaving just its leaves on the floor.

d. Exotic Creatures: Ryōko 龍虎, Kappo 合浦, Shakkyō 石橋 and Shōjō 猩々

Kappo (Hépǔ) 合浦

*Kappo* is a drama belonging to the fifth category, its first record is present in the *Kanmon niki* where a representation a play called *Kappo no tama* かっぽの玉 is dated the fourteenth day of the third month of the third year of the Eikyō era 永享 (1431) at the residence of Sentō according to the Yokyoku Taikan the piece is also present in the dengaku tradition of the Kasuga Taisha and performed during the Kasuga Taisha Wakamiya Matsuri Reizu.

On the beach of Hépǔ in China, a villager *waki* from a nearby town sees a fisherman *kyōgen* taking from the sea an extremely rare kind of fish. The villager ask to buy it and takes it at home with him. During the night of the same day, a little child *maejite* comes in visit to the house of the fisherman, asking to stop there for one night. The villager accept to host him but he is puzzled by the suspicious behaviour of the boy, than he asks him his name. The boy tells him that he is a *kōjin* 鮫人 (a kind of mermaid) and he is the spirit of the fish, praying the villager to save his life promising to the fisherman to give in change of his life gold, in which his tears can change. Than the boy goes back to the beach (nakairi), the *ai* dance the dance of the spirit of the fish asking to be rescued. In the second part the fish appears as *kōjin nochijite* to the villager who rescued his life and gives him treasures and a long life. ④

Shakkyō 石橋

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The play Shakkyō, or "Stone Bridge," written anonymously, probably sometime before 1465. It is an example kiri nō, plays that bring a day's performances to a close on an auspicious note. Typically they feature a dance in which the leading actor portrays a non human character, in this case a lion. Shakkyō is based on the life of a historical figure, Ōe no Sadamoto 大江定基 (ca. 962-1034), better known as Jakushō 寂昭, the name he adopted after he became a monk, A monk waki, Jakushō hōshi (962-1034), goes in a pilgrimage in China, searching for the sacred places of Buddhism, and comes to a stone bridge suspended on the Wǔtái Shān 五台山 also called Qīngliáng Shān 清凉山. During the climb to the summit of the mountain the monk encounters a young boy maejite which is collecting wood. The young boy advises the monk that only a very high ranked master could go through the bridge. Than tells him about the bridge (kuse), the bridge is covered of green moss, and it has appeared like a nature prodigy, it has the shape of a rainbow and from the other side comes an enchanting music, symbol of the Pure Land of Monjū 文殊 located on the other side of the bridge. The young boy then foretells that the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas will appear to the monk one day, disappearing (nakairi). Soon in the nochiba appears a lion dancing with impetuous, playing with gorgeous, fragrant peony flowers. After dancing a lion dance, the lion returns to his designated position, which is the carrier of Manjusri Bodhisattva.

Shōjō

Shōjō is a play belonging to the fifth category, because of its strong auspicious and celebratory features is strongly associated with shūgen mono.

Once upon a time in China, a man lived in the village of Yōzu 楊子, at the foot of Mount Kin 金山 (Ch. Jīnshān 金山) in Jiāngsū 江蘇 Province. The man named Kōfu was rewarded for his filial piety with a dream in which he was told that he would become rich if he sold sake in the

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41 Nose, Nōgaku genryū, 1262. It was recorded as Shishi (The Lion).

42 According to Borgen: The only allusion to Japanese lore is a reference to the "Floating Bridge of Heaven" that is part of Japan's creation story as told in both Kojiki 古事記 and Nihon shoki 日本書紀.”

market. He followed the dictates of the dream and now has become quite prosperous. One of his customers who comes every market day to drink his sake without getting drunk, reveals to be named Shōjō. This mysterious creature reveals to Kōfu that he lives in the sea. One day the prosperous sake merchant comes down to the sea to the beach of the Yangtze River carrying liquor to await Shōjō appearance. When Shōjō at last appears in the middle of the night, Kōfu pours him sake as the creature sings of the glories of this “chrysanthemum elixir.” He then dances for the sake merchant and when finished promises him a very felicitous well of sake which will never run dry.

**Ryōko 龙虎**

All the extant records of authorship attribute Ryōko to Kanze Kojiro Nobumitsu. The play Ryōko employs adaptation strategies: earlier sources on the motif of dragons and tigers are predominantly in Chinese ‘style’ paintings, often found in temples, and residence of powerful members of the society. In the play, an old Japanese monk, who claims to have exhausted all places in Japan for Buddhist learning, decides to go on a religious pilgrimage to China and India. After arriving in China, he is amazed by the beautiful landscape and encounters a woodcutter. Soon he notices a sudden change of the sky above a bamboo grove in the distance, where dark clouds appear with gusting winds. The woodcutter tells him that it is a fight between a dragon and a tiger, the monk arrives at the site of the fight. He watches the spectacular fight till the end.

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43 Mythical creatures named "shēng shēng" (犭犭) or "xīng xīng" (猩猩) are mentioned in three passages of the *Shan Hai Jing* ("The Classic of Mountains and Seas").

44 See quote 37
PART 2.
CHAPTER 3
HAKURAKUTEN AND KASUGA RYŪJIN

Image of China depicted in nō is not always positive or festive. In some cases, China is presented as a threat to Japanese culture and society. In contrast to the apolitical portrayals of Chinese characters of some of the Chinese plays presented in chapter two some plays are charged with strong cultural pride and sociopolitical messages. This chapter looks into the extant scholarship written about Hakurakuten 白楽天 that best demonstrate such a negative sentiment toward China by highlighting the difference between the Self and the Other. Such portrayals of the Chinese in medieval Japan overtun China’s image as the “superior Other” which had influenced Japanese culture for centuries, and advocate Japan’s superiority in poetry and religion. Ultimately the analysis presented in this chapter will bring the example of the nō play Kasuga ryūjin 春日竜神 closer to Hakurakuten exegesis. Kasuga ryūjin is a play not traditionally categorized as karagoto mono but a close analysis to its features would lead to reconsider the importance of studying it as featuring Chinese plays characteristic dynamics toward the Other. Both these two plays shows a firm superiority of the Japanese Self when it has to deal with the continent and China.
This approach to the analysis of nō plays comes rather new in the scholarly literature, and it represents a means to rise again the political contents from the plays, which often have been neutralized by modern critical methodologies that treat nō as a purely aestheticized object of study.\textsuperscript{45} This chapter following Susan B. Klein and Yip's path, explores the connection between the analyzed plays and the political scenario of the second decade of the 15\textsuperscript{th} century Muromachi Japan. The chapter ultimately will discuss the similarity of the allegorical message contained in both Hakurakuten and Kasuga ryūjin claiming that if the first underlines the superiority of Japanese “Self” through a reduction of the threat from Chinese “Other”, in Kasuga ryūjin the Japanese “Self” reduces the importance of Chinese “Other” through a process of cultural appropriation of the second part.

1. Historical Context: Japan Overseas relation with China during the Muromachi period.

This first part is dedicated to an historical introduction to the unstable relations that were held between Japan and China during the Muromachi period in order to contextualize the analysis of the two nō plays within their specific historical context. As Susan B. Klein has stated “even if a play had been written explicitly as a political allegory of contemporary events, over time, as the original context in which the play was composed fades from memory, it would be increasingly difficult to read the plays as allegorical” if it is not contextualized in its historical circumstances.

The rule of the third Ashikaga shōgun Yoshimitsu puts an end to the troubled Nanbokuchō period 南北朝時, and permits to Sino Japanese relationships to flourish again. Around the end of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century Ming Chinese government wanted to make an agreement with Japanese regarding the control of pirates, Yoshimitsu not only opened the commerce and established an official relation with China but as ultimate sign of good relationship with the continent, in 1401, he was appointed with the title of “King of Japan” by the Ming emperor. At the time this meant that Yoshimitsu had agreed to make himself a subject of the Chinese emperor, and this decision created discontent within Japan, particularly at the imperial court.

\textsuperscript{45}Klein, Susan B. “Nō as Political Allegory, The Case of Haku Rakuten.” in Oyler, E. and Watson M. “Like Clouds or Mists.” Cornell East Asia Series. (2013): 419.
Soon after his death, diplomatic relations with China were terminated. Diplomatic relation with the Ming were discontinued by Ashikaga Yoshimochi after his father Yoshimitsu’s death. This action apparently dealt a heavy blow to Ming hopes for establishing and maintaining a Sinocentric international order, and for a time the Ming emperor Yōnenglè even contemplated sending troops to attack Japan. But this plan was never carried out, Yōnenglè sent emissaries to Japan in 1417 and again in 1419 hoping to restore friendly relations with the Japanese. Yoshimochi, however was adamant in rejecting these overtures, he also interestingly stated that in the Japanese history the country was never subordinate to foreign forces and that his father became ill because this prohibition when he accepted, adding that “the native deities were offended by Japan's subordinate position”. It is important though to remember that unfortunately Yōnenglè choose a very bad moment to send his envoy, just some weeks before their arrival an attack by Korean ships occurred to Tsushima.

Yoshimochi was succeed as shōgun by his younger brother Yoshinori, who soon resumed amicable relations with China. From the Japanese point of view Yoshinori’s diplomacy was something of an improvement over the subservient attitude adopted by Yoshimitsu. But Yoshinori’s interest in the political and economic prospects of a renewal of relations with Ming China overcame any repugnance to acceptance of investiture by the Ming emperor. The first envoy sent by Yoshinori to China arrived in 1433. The document carried by this envoy referred to Yoshinori as “Your Japanese subject, Minamoto Yoshinori” and, although the term as “King of Japan” was not used, the year period designated on the document was that of the emperor Xuāndédi. The Ming emperor, satisfied with an envoy carrying an imperial rescript that invested the shōgun with the title of “King of Japan” the Ming envoy also brought 100 tally sheets. During the periods when Yoshimitsu and Yoshimochi were shōgun the ships from Japan to China sailed entirely in the name of the bakufu, which was the principal sponsor of the trips. After contact with China had been established by Yoshinori, the bakufu was joined in its sponsorship by various powerful temples and shrines and by some of the shugo daimyō of Japan. Beginning in the middle of the fifteenth century this traffic dropped off sharply, one reason being restrictions imposed by the Ming government. Another important reason for the decline in the Japanese China trade was the political instability of the Japanese. The struggle between the
Hosokawa and Ōuchi houses, which was to result in the Ōnin War (1467-1477), this was the period in which Kanze Kojiro Nobumitsu lived. The last period of consistent composition of Chinese plays in the history of nō.

2. Hakurakuten

2.1 Synopsis

Hakurakuten is a fictitious story which portray the Tang poet Bái Jūyì’s visit to Japan. The waki, Hakurakuten (Bái lètiān), is sent to Japan under an official Imperial command to take measure of Japan's learning accomplishments. After his arrival at Matsura Bay in Bizen Province, he encounters a fisherman shite, the Sumiyoshi deity Sumiyoshi Myōjin 住吉明神 in disguise. The fisherman immediately identifies the foreign visitor and they engage a poetry competition, the fishermen proves that the poetic tradition of Japan is independent from that of Chinese. In the second act (nochiba 後場), the deity of Japanese poetry, in his true form enters the stage and performs a spectacular dance that summons an array of Shintō deities and Buddhist gods. They stir up the divine winds, blowing Bái Jūyì back to China in his ship.

The first record of a performance of Hakurakuten belongs to a Kanjin nō performed in the fourth month during 1464 (quarto mese) Kanjin by the Kanze tayū and his son at Tadasugawara 當河原 in Kyōto. Regarding the attribution of Hakurakuten, the first record of its authorship is stated in an account of nō plays from the sixteenth century indicating Zeami as playwright (Annotated Notes on authorship of nō plays, Nōhon sakusha chūmon 能本作者註文, 1524), despite this, most of the scholar literature disagrees with this attribution, Takemoto Mikio claims that the play was written in the time between Zeami and that of Kanze Nobumitsu and Konparu Zenpō, the scholar Itō Masayoshi identify the author with Nobumitsu.

46 Bái Jūyì 白居易 (772-846) known in Japan as Haku Rakuten

The play presents an unusual pattern, first it features the presence of one of the most venerated Tang poets in Japan, which authority is unexpectedly overturned by a negative depiction of his intention. This overturn of authoritativeness of Bái Jūyì rings a bell to the modern scholar, analyzing the choose of the author to put on the stage this new relation means not only to deal with an history's puzzle solving process, that Susan Blakeley Klein has brilliantly recomposed, but also has a wider importance on academic methodology developments on the analysis of nō's repertoire. In her analysis Klein claims that the play can be read as a political allegory written for Ashikaga Yoshimochi in order to celebrate the defeat of the Chosŏn navy at Tsushima and the repulsion of the Ming envoy from Hyōgo Bay. Klein further suggested that the play was a memorial celebration of the Imagawa Ryōshun 今川了俊 (1426-1418), an exceptional warrior and poet who put his faith in the power of the Sumiyoshi deity during his decades of defence for the Ashikaga shogunate in Kyūshū. This claims is based on an interpretative approach to the text which aims to reconstruct a lost metaphorical language and references. A very similar point of view on nō can be found in Richard A. Gardner approach to the play Takasago 高砂, he states that Takasago “as well as other plays, needs to be placed more fully in the context of social, political, and religious dynamics of Muromachi Japan,” in order to be fully understood. The case of Hakurakuten either can be considered highly symbolic on a political level regarding Japan's foreign policy with China.

2.2 Cultural and Political Statements in Hakurakuten

48 “For a text to be identified as political allegory, one must be able to place it within a specific historical context. A poem, for example, that is written for a specific political purpose (say, petitioning for reinstatement to office), but cloaks that purpose in metaphorical language, may be impossible to identify as political allegory if all hints of the original circumstances in which the poem was written are removed. In the case of nō plays, we often have only the vaguest idea of when a play was written and by whom, much less for what purpose. Even if a play had been written explicitly as a political allegory of contemporary events, over time, as the original context in which the play was composed fades from memory, it would be increasingly difficult to read the plays as allegorical.”


By juxtaposing the poetic geniuses of Sumiyoshi deity and Bái Jūyi, *Hakurakuten* makes a strong case for the originality and innateness of the Japanese poetic tradition. With the most celebrated Chinese poet as the *waki* and the Shintō deity of poetry as the *shite*, poetic source materials are bontiful and enchanting poetic allusions to both Bái Jūyi’s work and some of the finest Japanese poems should be assured. The playwright impose to focus on the poetic tradition of Japan and showcase the poetic skills of its people. Bái Jūyi and the fisherman (*maejite*) start by exchanging definitions and examples of poetry of China and Japan:

*Hakurakuten:*
Well, fisherman, what do people do for leisure in Nippon?

*Fisherman:*
How about in China? What kind of things do people engage in for leisure?

*Hakurakuten:*
In China, people compose [Chinese] poems for leisure.

*Fisherman:*
In Japan, people compose *uta* (*waka* poems) to soothe minds and hearts.

*Hakurakuten:*
What exactly is *uta*?

*Fisherman:*
Derived from the holy sutras of India are Chinese poetry and poetic prose. Out of Chinese poetry and poetic prose, Japanese *uta* is made. Since Japanese *uta* blends three different countries in harmony, it is titled Yamato *uta*, written as “great harmony poems.” You probably already knew, but are only testing the heart and mind of an old man like me.

*Hakurakuten:*
No, that was not at all my intention. Well, how about letting me compose a poem about the scenery in front of us. Green moss, like a cloak, lying in the shoulders of the cliff
White clouds, as though a sash, encircling the waist of the mountain
What do you think, old fisherman?

*Fisherman:*

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“Green moss” is the green moss growing on the shoulders of the cliff as though it is a robe the cliff has put on. ‘White clouds’ resembles as ribbon encircling the waist of the mountain. How interesting! Japanese *uta*, too, Is similar to that. The crag wars a robe of moss without a sash the mountain, not dressed in a robe seems to be wearing a sash.\(^51\)

The above exchange between Bái Jūyi and the fisherman provides a definition of Japanese poetry that demonstrates Japan’s ability to integrate Chinese and Indian tradition in the creation of Japan’s own form of poetry, and hence reflects the dynamics of the Other and the Self. Despite the substantial integration of Bái Jūyi’s poems to help support the Chinese play. Moreover, the above poems composed by the two characters (Bái Jūyi and the fisherman), according to Yip (see Yip 2014, 138) “closely resemble those of Miyako no Arinaka 都在中 and his wife appeared in *Gōdanshō* 江談抄.” Of course, whether the playwright was aware was aware that Arinaka was the author of the poem instead of Bái Jūyi is unclear. It is, however, possible to see that the major concern of the playwright as that the poem could be translated from Chinese into Japanese, and vice versa, which assured familiarity on the part of a Japanese audience. Despite the large corpus of Chinese literary work known to Japanese literati and the numerous works by Bái Jūyi treasured by the Japanese for centuries, no Chinese sources are used in the nō play at all. Instead the playwright integrated the “Kana Preface” (Japanese preface) and annotation to the *Kokin wakashū*, the foundation of classical Japanese literary criticism, in the poetic exchange between the two characters. In so doing, the play substantiates the innateness of Japanese waka poetry to the Japanese and thus distances it form the shadow of Chinese poetry. By alluding to the locus classicus of the “Kana Preface” the playwriting assert that all living

\(^{50}\) According to Yip (see Yip 2016, 135) this verse refers to a *kanshi* composed by Miyako no Arinaka 都在中 (ca. 919) contained in the collection of tales told by Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041-1111) in *Gōdanshō* 江談抄, the poem recites in Yip’s translation:

White clouds, as though a sash, encircling the waist of the mountain  
Green moss, like a cloak, lying on the shoulders of the cliff.

白雲似帯囲山腰  
青苔如衣負巌肩

beings in Japan are spontaneously given to singing. The original lines of the “Kana Preface” the playwright asserted that all living beings in Japan are spontaneously given to singing. The original lines of the “Kana Preface” alluded to in *Hakurakuten* reads:

Hearing the waber sing among the blossoms and the sound of the frog living in twater is there any living creature not able to spontaneously sing\(^{52}\).

It is transformed on the play into:

*Fisherman:*
Of all living beings there is none that does not sing

*Hakurakuten:*
If you say “all living beings,” are you suggesting even birds and animals too?

*Fisherman:*
They are examples of creatures singing Japanese songs

*Hakurakuten:*
In the land of Japan,

Fisherman:
There are many examples

*Hakurakuten:*
The nightale singing among blossoms, even the frog living in the pond. I do not know if it is so in China, In Japan we sing the Yamato song, Including this old man.\(^{53}\)

The nō play goes on legitimizing the origin of the Japanese poem by illustrating that Japanese waka poetry was simply inspired by nature, specifically the song of birds. Such a statement not


only detaches the “Chinese link” but also establishes the originality of Japanese poetry. The playwright provided an example from a story in the *Kokin hishō* 古今秘抄 (The secret notes to the *Kokinshū*):

*Chorus:*
To begin with, it is said that the first example of the nightingale singing Japanese son is during the reign of Emperor Kōken. In the land of Yamato, a priest lived at Takama Temple. One spring, there came a nightingale to the plum near his window. Listening to the song of the bird, it sang,

“Sho yō mai chō rai, fu sō ken hon sei”

When transcribed into characters, it emerges as a poem of thirty one syllables.

Fisherman:
*Hatsu haru no ashita goto ni wa kitare domo,*
In early spring, on each morning although I visit,

*Chorus:*
Awase zo kaeru moto no sumika ni
Failing to meet, I return to my old dwelling⁵⁴.

The chorus continues with an allusion to a Japanese poem from the “Kana Preface” to illustrate the ability of Japanese people to compose poetry, in this case, the ability of a fishermen at the shore of Ariso Bay.

After proving the originality of Japanese poetry and its independence from Chinese poetry, the god of Japanese poetry sends the foreign visitor away in order to protect the divine tradition of Japan. In the second act, the *nochijite* appears in his true form, that is the god of Japanese poetry, Sumiyoshi deity. He performs a dynamic dance (*shin no jo no mai* 新の序の舞) to summon other Shintō deities and the eight dragon kings of the sea and protectors of Buddhist Law to stir up “divine winds” *kamikaze 神風* that blows the boat of the Chinese poet back to China. The play ends on an auspicious note that celebrates the longevity, the

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stability, and the prosperity of the Japanese reign. Celebrating the longevity and prosperity of the country and the emperor’s reign is a common theme in many “deity plays” as it will better explained better in the next chapter. In Hakurakuten, the worship takes place at the end of the first act of the play, before the main character, the fisherman, exits the stage. I reads:

_Fisherman:
Reed Plain

_Chorus:
The country endures its stability for thousands of years.
For the deities and our lord, indeed, we are grateful,
For the deities and the reign of our lord,
Enduring stability, our nation everlasting_55

Having the Sumiyoshi deity in disguise to perform prayers for the nation’s longevity is in line with the medieval image of the Japanese deity. According to Susan Blakely Klein Sumiyoshi deity was the embodiment of both a warrior and poetic master, although the image of Sumiyoshi as one of the “gods of war” was gradually overshadowed by the image of the “guardian of waka poetry.”56 Klein pointed out that the deity was closely linked to the imperial family and court culture. For example, the Sumiyoshi Shrine was designated as one of the shrines for prayers and rituals to protect the country during the Mongol invasion in 1268 and 1275.57

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Hakurakuten draws on Bái Jūyi’s popularity in Japan to propagandize the superiority of Japanese poetry over Chinese poetry. Bái Jūyi is no longer a poetic genius to be modeled after, but a spy from China.

3. Kasuga ryūjin

3.1 Synopsis

Kasuga ryūjin is a dramatic dream nō included in the repertory of all five current schools of nō. The play represents Myōe Shōnin 明恵上人, waki, a monk from Toganoo willing to travel to China and India to make a pilgrimage on the places where Buddha lived. The play starts with his entrance on the stage together his two attendants, wakitsure, he is directed to Kasuga Taisha in order to bid farewell to the deities as he is going to depart. Once they are arrived to the shrine Myōe begins talking to an elder Official 58, maejite. He shows his intention of leaving Japan in order to reach India and China, to visit the great sites of the life of the historical Buddha. The elder Official welcomes Myōe, saying that he is a chosen one for the deity of Kasuga. However he advises him that the God does not like him to leave and travel so far away. In the mondō 問答 following the ageuta 上げ歌 the old man reveals to Myōe that now Shakyamuni resides in the Shrine of Kasuga, upholding that the landscape of Japan reflect and embodies the sacred places in which Buddha lived.

At this point of the play Myōe has already changed is mind, considering the old man as an oracle. Myōe then exit the stage. The play features an interlude in which an ai (usually a minor deity) sums up what has happened just before. The nochiba begins with the entrance of the waki and wakitsure (Myōe and the two monks) on the stage. The Dragon God (Ryōō 竜王) (the nochishite) enters down the walkway and stops at first pine (before entering the stage), and sings along with the Chorus about the eight Dragon Kings. As the song turns to the Dragon Princess,

58 The play gives to the Elder Official’s (the oracle) name as Tokifū Hideyuki, a reference to both Nakatomi no Tokifū 中臣時風 (731-818) and Nakatomi no Hidetsura 中臣秀行 (713-807), who are said to have played a role in the founding of Kasuga Shrine, and whose descendants (in the case of the latter) remain priests of the shrine today.
the Dragon God enters the stage and dances, making a circuit of the stage. The chorus (speaking for the Dragon God) asks Myōe if he will travel to China and India to visit the great sites in those distant lands, and he responds "no." The play ends with the Dragon God making his way to the center of the stage, leaping into the air, and kneeling, ending his dance.

The play features the legend bounded to Myōe Shōnin (1173-1232), a monk lived during the Kamakura period which ambition was to rejuvenate Kegon 健吾 sect. His ambition was to lead Buddhism back to Shakyamuni’s original teaching and thus doing a pilgrimage to India. According to Morrell:

In spite of the failure of his movement, Myōe was personally one of the great figures of his time. His writings on Kegon, (...) had little effect on the subsequent development of Japanese Buddhism, (...) [but] The Myōe legend, however, provided the literary and religious consciousness of an age which widely deplored the worldliness of the clergy with a model priest.

In another article Morrell explains (see Morrell 1982, 183) that Myōe made two attempts to organize a small expedition to India, the first during the winter of 1202-1203 and the second in the spring of 1205. The account which contains the references to the organization of the travel to India is Togonoo Myōe shōnin Denki 梶尾明恵上人伝記 (Biography of Venerable Myōe of

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59 Kegon, the most prominent of the old Six Nara Sects, which had its headquarters at the Tōdaiji. After being ordained a priest in 1188, he devoted himself both to the study of Kegon theory and the practices of esoteric Buddhism (mikkyō), and eventually developed his own synthesis.

60 Morrell, Robert E. "Passage to India Denied: Zeami's Kasuga Ryujin." Monumenta Nipponica 37, no. 2 (1982): 185

Toganoo) written most probably by his disciple Kōshin 高信.\(^{62}\) This account had a wide circulation at the time thanks to its imaginative contents regarding Myōe. The *Togonoo Myōe shōnin denki* can be regarded as the oldest reference to the series of oracles received from the Kasuga Deity, related to his will to travel to India. The text commonly regarded as the literary source of the play is the *Kokonchomonjū 古今著聞集*\(^{63}\), which was written few decades later the compilation of the *Denki*. Other texts that can be regarded as sources of inspiration for the nō play are the *Shasekishū 砂石集* and the *Shingonden 真言伝*.\(^{64}\)

There are few questions about the authorship of *Kasuga ryūjin*, although the date of compilation is not known, its attribution is now given to Konparu Zenchiku A play titled *Myōe shōnin* is reported to have been performed in 1465 by On’ami 音阿弥 (1398-1467) in occasion to the visit of Ashikaga Yoshimasa to the residence in Sentō 仙洞 of the emperor Go Hanazono 後花園天皇 (1419-1472)\(^{65}\). This is taken to be the first reference to a presentation of the work that we know today as *Kasuga ryūjin*. The play can be read as an assertion of religious independence from foreign influences, much as *Hakurakuten* is an affirmation of the native Japanese literary

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\(^{62}\) According to *Togonō Myōe Shōnin Denki* Myōe calculated the distance and the time it would take to walk from the Chinese capital of Cháng’ān to Rajigira in India: “I am unable to contain my affection and longing for India, the land where the Buddha was born, and so I have drawn up plans for the journey thither. Oh, how I wish to go there! If I walked 7 [long] ri a day, I could reach India in 1,130 days, arriving on the 20th day of the second month of the fourth year [of my travels]. And if I walked 5 ri a day, I could at long last arrive on the 10th day of the sixth month of the fifth year, for a total of 1,600 days.” Morrell, Robert E. "Passage to India Denied: Zeami's Kasuga Ryūjin." Monumenta Nipponica 37, no. 2 (1982):183

\(^{63}\) “When Myoe was planning to cross over to India in the company of more than ten disciples, he came to take leave of the Great deity of Kasuga. As he walked to the shrine, sixty head of deer bowed to the ground on bended knee to pay homage to the holy man. Later, when he had returned to the Yuasa district of Kii, where he was born, the Great Deity took possession of a woman who was the holy man’s aunt, and made this pronouncement through her: ‘In order to protect the Buddha’s Law, I assume familiar guises in this land. Where, then, would Shonin go after abandoning my country?’ I find this hard to believe,’ replied Shonin. If this is a genuine revelation, please manifest some sign.’

‘You must not doubt me! When you came to my mountain, sixty head of deer bent their knees in adoration; this was because I was present six feet above you in the air and never left your company. It was in order to worship me that they faced in your direction and bent their knees.’ Morrell, Robert E. "Passage to India Denied: Zeami's Kasuga Ryūjin." Monumenta Nipponica 37, no. 2 (1982):183

\(^{64}\) *Shasekishū* and *Shingonden*

sensibility. As it has been well demonstrated in the first part of this chapter, the poet who most profoundly influenced Heian literature, Bái Jūyì, is symbolically returned to China. In Kasuga ryūjin, Myōe is dissuaded from visiting India on the grounds that the gods of Japan are manifestations of the eternal Buddha specifically adapted to the needs of that country. Enlightenment can be realized at any time or place, and is not a mere function of geography, for the Buddha is present in Nara just as surely as in Rajagriha.

3.2 Cultural and political statements in Kasuga ryūjin

In “The Protocol of the Gods” Allan G. Garbard describes how complex cosmographies and cosmologies that developed in India and China were transmitted to Japan, where they were encoded in the interpretation of places. He upholds “that quite a few members of the lineages that controlled Japan’s major multiplexes came to see their land as the natural embodiment of those cosmologies.” According to him the application of cosmological principles to natural configurations of land represents a specific type of understanding between land and people, nature and culture. It was not a phenomenon that appeared suddenly but arse by a slow process that culminated in the medieval period and, through combinations between kami and buddhas and the state ideology, resulted in a vision of Japan as a sacred land. Medieval visions of Japan as a natural manifestation of transcendental realms or as the physical embodiment of higher principles played a central role in some clerics’ conception of space and time in Kasuga, which came to be seen either as the very embodiment in nature of hell and paradise, or as a Pure Land, or as the Deer Park of Benares in India, the site of the first sermon of the Buddha. The experience of space in Kasuga was closely associated with specific forms of religious experience and vision that were used by Yamato leaders as evidence of the supernatural character of their legitimacy, and consequently, their power. The analysis provided by Allan G. Garbard offers a

precise interpretative framework to understand the dynamics of reduction of the Chinese and Indian “Other,” present in Kasuga ryūjin:

Myōe:

My reason for this journey is really nothing special. I am planning to travel to China and then cross over to India, and so I have come to the shrine for a farewell visit.

Elder Official:

Such may be your determination, but what will the gods think of this? It is your wont to visit the shrine from the year’s beginning through all the four seasons (…) How could please them of you leave Japan to travel China and cross over to India? Abandoned the Idea.

Myōe:

What you say is certainly true. But how could it be contrary to the wishes of the gods for us to cross China to India in order to venerate the sites associated with the sites associated with the Buddha’s life?

Elder Attendant.

This is unworthy of you. Were the Buddha living in the world today, then surely it would avail you to see and to hear him. But nowadays the mountain of Kasuga is our Eagle Peak 67 …

In the above passage is first introduced that Myōe’s idea to reach India is a foolish one. Due to the changing of Buddhist eras the land of Kasuga is today transformed in the place where it is possible to find the mountain where Shakyamuni preached the Lotus Sutra. The passage of time establishes an irreversible exchange of roles between Japan and China and India, Myōe is living in a period when Kasuga has become the place where Shakyamuni dwells:

Myōe:

Now then, please relate to me the facts about this shrine.

67 Eagle Peak 鷺鷹山, 鷺嶠山, 鷺山 (Gridhrakūta; Pali Gijjhakūta; Ryōju sen, Gishakussen, or Ryōzen): Also known as Vulture Peak, Holy Eagle Peak, or Sacred Eagle Peak, and simply Holy Mountain, Sacred Mountain, or Holy Peak. A small mountain located northeast of Rājagrīha, the capital of Magadha in ancient India. Eagle Peak is known as a place frequented by Shakyamuni, where he is said to have expounded the Lotus Sutra and other teachings. According to The Treatise on the Great Perfection of Wisdom by Nāgārjuna, Eagle Peak derived its name from its eagle-shaped summit and the many eagles or vultures inhabiting it. “Eagle Peak” also symbolizes the Buddha land or the state of Buddhahood, as in the expression “the pure land of Eagle Peak.”
Elder Official:
(sashi) In this regard, I would remind you that the purpose of your journey to China and India is to visit the ancient ruins…

Chorus:
… made famous by the Buddha's propagation of the Law. But if you would venerate Mt Tiāntái, you should journey to our own Mt Hiei; and if you have a desire to visit Mt Wūtái, then prey at Yoshino or Tsukuba.

Elder Official:
Of old it was on Numinous Eagle Mount,

Chorus:
Pay you homage at the Mountain of Kasuga.
(kuse) The divine poem states:

Know me!
I am Shakyamuni Buddha
Become Incarnate
An unsullied moon
To enlighten the world.68

(...) and taught the Four Noble Truths. And the Deer Plain where this transpired was this very site. On Kasuga Plain here the animals rouse themselves or recline is this not the Deer Park?

The theoretical analysis introduced by Garpard of a cosmological juxtaposition between imported cosmographies and their encoding process on the landscapes of Japan, comes clear in the above passage where the sacred landscapes related to the life of Buddha and buddhist preaching finds a clear relative inside the landscape of Japan: Mount Tiāntái 天台山 finds its corrispective in Mount Hiei Hiei 比叡山 while the sacred Mountain Wūtái 山 founds where the Pure Land of Monju is believed to be located is associated with the Mountains of Yoshino 吉野山 or Tsukuba 筑波山. A process of identification between Japan and Mainland, “Self” and the “Other,” which modifies once forever the material and geographical limitation of the

68 The verse ascribed to Kasuga Daimyōjin, appears in Shoku Kokinshū, 1265 (Kokka Taikan, 691).
archipelagus. The present religious superiority in Japan is underlined by the presence of
Shakyamuni in the shape of a kami enshrined in Kasuga while in China and India one can find
just the ‘ancient ruins’ (of the presence of Buddha) and a very dangerous travel. Through
claiming the identity of the “Self” to the characteristics typically attributed to “Other,” the “Self”
can assert its superiority.

Myōe and Attendants:

(ageuta) Truly wondrous is this
Divine proclamation,
Truly wondrous is this
Divine proclamation.
From within the voice
A light shines forth.
Kasuga plain and mountain
Become a golden world,
While trees and grasses
Miraculously take the form
Of the Buddha.

Dragon God:

The Eight Dragon Kings

Chorus:

Incline their coronets and ascend into the clouds
Over moon-lit Mikasa by Kasuga Plain.
‘Come and see, watchmen of the signal fres
On Kasuga Plain.’ Maya’s delivery of Shakyamuni,
His preaching the Law on Eagle Peak
His entering Nirvana beneath the dual teak trees
All are here revealed in their entirety.
Now then, Myōe Shōnin, about your plan to go to China?

Although some scriptures say that this world is the Buddha Land of Shakyamuni, this buddha is
associated more often than not with the sacred mountain where he preached the Lotus Sutra, the
Mountain of the numinous Eagle (also called Vulture Peak), Mount Gridhakūta. Such was the case in Kasuga. The Kasuga plain reveals itself as the places related to each of the most important moment in the life of the Buddha, his birth, his preaching and his entrance in the ultimate Nirvana. Garpard upholds that Myōe Shōnin is the person most often associated with visions of the Mountain of the Numinious Eagle at Kasuga. The last paragraph of the Kasuga gongen genki says of him

The common people [who are caught] in the course and revolution [of the wheel of transmigration] may now rejoice that they have the opportunity to receive the guidance of the Buddha in His various manifestations. Since the residence of the mind in purity itself the Pure Land? Since the Pure Land of Lapis Lazuli [of the buddha of Medicine] and the Mountain of the Numinious Eagle are located within the sacred hedge of the shrine, why should one seek Mount Potalaka [Pure Land of the Bodhisattva of Compassion] and Mount Ch’ing-Liang [Pure Land of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom] beyond the ocean of clouds? That is why Saint Myōe worshiped Mount Mikasa as the Mountain of the Numinious Eagle, and why our daimyōjin indicated to Lord Toshimori the very pathway

According to Garpard each kami of the five shrines of the Kasuga Taisha was associated with a buddha or bodhisattva enshrined in various buildings of the nearby Main Temple of the Kōfukuji so that the Kasuga daimyōjin was a composite divine entity whose Original Nature was sometimes thought to be Shakyamuni.

3 Conclusion:

Considering the Sino Japanese relationship during the fifteenth century as described previously, Hakurakuten and Kasuga ryūjin can be read as anti China sentiment revealed by focusing on the two pillars of Japanese culture (literature and religion). On one level the plays strike the audience as a declaration of the integrity and superiority of the Japanese literary and religious traditions over those of China. In light of the different diplomatic

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policies in the Muromachi period, the plays reflect the negative reception of such a newfound relationship with China as that adopted by the third shogun Yoshimitsu, with his acceptance of vassalage to Ming China. Both the plays are evidence of the existence of certain groups of Japanese who not only took pride in their own culture, but also perceived the possible hazard and potential threat posed by people and culture of China. From such a perspective, the plays might have been used as denunciation of foreign policies, such as those of shōgun Yoshimitsu. The open rejection of the idea of leaving Japan to China expressed by the Dragon God in Kasuga ryūjin showcases Japanese religious superiority to Chinese and Indian culture. The effect is to turn upside down normal cultural and political dynamics of superiority of the continent ascribing Kasuga ryūjin as a play showcasing a strong connections to ‘Chinese plays” as it includes strong political and religious statements and implications toward the continent, without showcasing Chinese elements in it.
The aim of this chapter is to understand how Muromachi Japanese playwrights embraced auspicious motifs from Chinese mythology that were originally dedicated to the prosperity of China and its people in order to celebrate the Japanese Self. In order to pursue it, this chapter is divided into two parts, the first offers an introduction to how shūgen motifs are constructed in Chinese plays featuring Chinese deities and Chinese emperors and how Muromachi nō playwrights intricately revamped auspicious themes identified with Taoist tales and Chinese folklore. The second part identifies and analyzes Chinese auspicious motifs present in Takasago, discussing how Chinese deity plays are different or similar from deity plays featuring Japanese deities like Takasago, and locate the functions of these plays within the repertoire of nō.

1. Celebrating with Chinese Deities, the logic of shūgen

It is doubtless that one of the distinctive features of Chinese plays is their tight connection with auspicious themes. Although many of these plays are not categorized as deity plays (waki nō) in today’s repertoire, their auspicious undertones convey a celebratory message comparable to
some deity plays. This specific point has been claimed in Yip’s formulation of a “Self “and
“Other” based taxonomies, in which he groups under the “Auspicious Other” category twelve of
the twenty five currently performed karagoto. Those in the “five categories” system are further
divided into two different classes: four plays are regarded as belonging to the deity plays
category (Seiōbō, Tōbōsaku, Tsurukame and Haku rakuten) and other eight designated as
“informal deity plays” (ryakushiki waki nō 略式脇能) ( see Yip 2016, 36).
This part following Yip’s analysis will reveal how Chinese and Chinese inspired elements are
transformed and synthesized to construct shūgen in non karagoto nō as well as to convey certain
socio political themes. Yip underlines how these nō have the capacity of redirecting the
auspiciousness to Japan, by depicting Chinese deities offering prayers for the longevity and
prosperity of Chinese emperors and their reigns. On the contrary almost all normal deity plays
regards the origins and religious implications of various Japanese deities. Yip in this regard
states:

Since playing the role of a Japanese emperor is taboo in nō, staging and blessing of the
Chinese emperors might have functioned as an alternative to deliver a celebratory note to
the Japanese majesty. Chinese deity plays not only introduce elements that non Chinese
deity plays lack, but also add novelty to the end of a program. The opening deity plays in
a program were predominantly about Japanese deities, whereas ending deity plays
sometimes featured Chinese deities. Also, at the end of the program troupes often staged
deity plays that were shorter in length, and sometimes even only chanted the celebratory
verse of deity plays (referred to as tsuke shūgen71) when the last play did not have an
auspicious tone. As surviving performance records indicate, some of the Chinese deity
plays at the end of the program both in full length and in the tsuke shūgen style. (Yip
2014, 36)

71 “An extremely formal program of five plays may be followed by a special shūgen nō, or the felicitous second act
of a waki nō, and the tsuke shūgen is an abbreviation of that. The most commonly used tsuke-shūgen comes from
Catherine Ryu (see Ryu, 2006) helps us to better frame the "imperial taboo" so as intended by Yip, a survey on this theme can easily account that the five classical divisions of nō plays do not include an emperor category per se, despite of this Ryu claims a “pervasive presence of the imperial in nō,” fact that is confirmed by a long list of nō plays, voluntarily compiled in 1940 by the nō Professional Association, that had to be modified or ceased to be performed altogether due to their negative references to and or direct portrayals of the emperor and the imperial family:

The list includes such works as Ohara gokō 大原御幸, Semimaru 蟬丸, Ataka 安宅, Funa Benkei 船弁慶, Genjō 玄上, Kinuta 砲, and Ikuta Atsumori 生田敦盛, among others, not to mention Sōshi arai Komachi 草子洗小町. Scholars such as the historian Ienaga Saburo have undertaken a critical study of this phase of modern nō history, and have shown that the imperial connection with nō is not limited to the plays that belong to the category of kamimono. In fact, more than half of the nō repertoire could have been found objectionable had the censorship against irreverence toward the emperor been thoroughly enforced.

Also when a nō play features an emperor, this role is traditionally performed by a child actor, the kokata 子方. A conventional explanation for employing the kokata is that avoiding realistic

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72 As Zeami states in the section on performing different kinds of characters (monomane jōjō 物まね条々) in the second book of Kaden 花伝, it is almost impossible to imitate people from the ruling class. He explains, “Firstly, we shall start with the emperors and the ministers. The honorable style of the court members and the dispositions of the military officials is something that is beyond our reach, and a very difficult thing to learn.” in Omote Akira. and Katō Shūichi. eds. “Zeami Zenchiku.” Nihon shisō taikei. Iwanami Shoten, Tōkyō. (1974): 20

73 In 1940, the nō Professional Association twice issued (in April and November) lists that enumerated both plays that required some degree of modification to be performed and those that could not be performed at all. The April list contains fourteen plays; the November list, sixteen. In Ienaga, Saburō. “Sarugakunō no shisōshiteki kōsatsu.” Tōkyō. Hōsei Daigaku, (1980): 17-21.


75 Children are used to play emperors or others of very lofty standing, both out of respect and in order to make the apparent depiction as symbolic as possible, deepening the feeling of yūgen by avoiding overly realistic depiction. This is done in particular when the character has a love relationship with the shite, where portrayal by an adult would somehow be too graphic for nō.
depictions of the emperor enhances a play's symbolic dimension, while showing respect for the august personage evoked onstage. This explanation, however, according Catherine Ryu, does not in any way problematize the power relations between the shogunal and the imperial in the Muromachi period. Moreover, it neither addresses the specific symbolic significance of the emperor character in a particular play, nor takes into consideration exactly how the visual effect of the kokata's physical presence (i.e., his childish features and small stature) translates into a symbolic idiom of imperial authority in the nō theater. Lastly, it does not explain what happens when the august character in a given play is more than a purely symbolic being and the glorification of the imperial is more than a formulaic ending. This framework sets a dyalog with Yip’s statement (Yip 2014, 37) about nō plays’s incorporation of Chinese emperors, that will be better addressed after, which allows the Chinese Other to be treated as “a double of the Self.”

In the current repertoire of nō about nine out of the twenty five Chinese plays feature a Chinese emperor as the central character. These plays can be divided into two groups according to their main themes:

a. The first group consist of the plays Seiōbo, Tōbōsaku, Tsurukame, Kikujidō, Hōso which feature Chinese deities offering blessing to the emperors as acknowledgment of their sovereignties. Both Seiōbo and Tōbōsaku of the Queen Mother of the West, a Taoist deity who often is associated with her power to bestow longevity. Similarly, Kikujidō and Hōso tell the story of essentially the same mythical character Kikujidō elixir for longevity.

b. The second group tells of the legendary Chinese characters warding off evil spirits and guarding the prosperity of the Chinese emperors and the country. These are Shōki, Kötei, Chōryō 張良, and Kanyōkyū. Two of these plays feature character Shōki the well known ghost vanquisher in Chinese folklore. The play Shōki tells how Zhōng Kui’s spirit vows to guard the country after his untimely death. Kötei tells of the

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76 Zhōng Kui, also known in Japanese contexts as Shōki, is a figure in Chinese and Japanese mythology. Traditionally regarded as a vanquisher of ghosts and evil beings, and reputedly able to command 80,000 demons, his
spirit of Zhōng Kuí capturing the evil spirit that causes the illness of the Tang dynasty consort Yáng Guìfei. *Chōryō* tells the legend of how Zhūgě Liáng, a political strategist in Chinese history, obtains a secret book of strategy. *Kan yōkyū* portrays the assassination of the first emperor of China Qín Shǐ Huángdi. It tells of how he captures his assassin Jīng Kē and Qín Wǔ yáng with the help of his consort who spellbinds them by playing the zither.

Although these stories are all set in China, according to Yip, Muromachi nō playwrights “strategically redirect the blessing for China to fit the Japanese sociopolitical context.”

Staging the Chinese emperors as recipient of prayers, sometimes accompanied with an auspicious object, achieve the domestication of Chinese motifs to promote auspicious tones more attuned to Japanese audiences. It is important to note that all the plays in the above two groups are either categorized as deity plays or “informal deity plays.”

Yip upholds two key elements in Chinese deity plays that enhance the auspiciousness of the plays within the conventions of nō:

a. The first element of auspiciousness is a character of a reigning emperor, who often plays the important role of the recipient of the divine blessing.

b. The second element is the incorporation of a magical object to enhance the perceived authenticity and auspiciousness of the play. Although the objects and characters are offered makes the auspicious mode more tangible and clearly manifested. The objects employed are mainly associated with longevity and peace. Six plays that offer prayers for longevity incorporate auspicious objects and creature such as mythical peaches in (Seiōbo and Tōbōsaku), dew on chrysanthemums (Kikujidō), a magical wine crock (Shōjō), as well as Tsurukame.

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image is often painted on household gates as a guardian spirit, as well as in places of business where high-value goods are involved.
By casting the Chinese emperor in nō, the auspicious prayers are redirect to the Japanese audience. The Chinese deity plays create a regal atmosphere that is befitting to the theme of shugen by pointing out that the reign of the featured Chinese emperor is an auspicious one. For example, Seiōbo, Tōbōsaku and Tsurukame all begin with a “kyōgen speech opening,” a speech by a kōgen actor followed by the waki’s reciting of the introduction in a style of lyrical monologue (sashi). “Kyōgen speech opening” is a common technique employed in chinese deity plays, whereas Japanese deity plays begin with a shidai (formal entrance song fa a waki), consisting of a 7-5 line that is repeated. The “kyōgen speech openings” in Seiōbo, Tōbōsaku and Tsurukame share a similar rhetoric theme, praising the peace and benevolence of the emperors. For instance, all three plays contain variations of the following lines:

Because our Emperor is a wise and virtuous sovereign,
The blowing wind does not rustle in the branches,
And the citizen do not lock their doors. This is truly an auspicious reign.

この君賢王にてましますにより
吹く風枝を鳴らさず民戸さしをせず
誠にてたき御代にて候

2. Tsurukame and Takasago: the words of shūgen.

2.1 Tsurukame

Taking a step further our discussion, here are presented some examples of auspicious and celebratory motifs taken from the play Tsurukame which shares a common pattern with other

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77The line alludes to a description of a peaceful and auspicious sovereignty in the Lùnhéng (Critical essay), a Chinese classic by Wáng Chōng (27-97). Other celebratory noh plays including Yōrō, and Takasago also contain allusion to the same lines of the Chinese classic. All three Chinese plays allude to more Chinese classics to further praise the sovereign and offer prayers for the emperor’s virtue and leadership.
deity plays, in order to furtherly underline how Chinese motifs of auspiciousness are consistently present in Takasago.

This very short nō play is often selected as the very first practice piece for novice nō performers.

In ancient China, a New Year celebration is being held at the Emperor’s palace. A palace official serving the emperor appears and announces the entrance of the Emperor into the Moon Palace. The aristocrats within his court are all encouraged to come to see His Majesty. When the emperor comes at the Gate of Eternal Youth to see the shining sun of the New Year, all of his people raise their voices in celebration of the New Year. The garden of the palace is filled with gold, silver and gems and appears exquisite. In this atmosphere filled with joy and beauty, the Senior Minister of His Imperial Majesty steps forward and encourages His Majesty to have the crane and tortoise dance to music as happened in the past and hold a music party afterwards at the Moon Palace. When the crane and the tortoise dance to celebrate His Majesty’s longevity, the delighted emperor himself dances as well. After the aristocrats have also danced and enlivened the gathering, the emperor gets on a palanquin to return to the Hall of Everlasting Life.

Chorus:
(sashi)[the Emperor] at the Gate of the Eternal Youth (*Furōmon* 不老門)
Gazes to the light of the Sun and the Moon

Emperor:
Until the courtesans and the ministres,
In rows with touching sleeves

Court Minister:
They are assembled in a countless crowd

Emperor
Thousands of houses are opened to pay tribute to the sovereign

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78 Translation by the author from eds. Yokomichi, Mario and Omote, Akira. “*Yōkyoku shū, Vol.2.*” Iwanami Shoten. (1931): 357
This allusions illustrate similar attributes in other Chinese plays: the emperor that galvanized all people regardless of ranks and classes. The first allusions sets the auspicious and celebratory tones of the reign, also introducing the theme of the emperor as body of the cosmos, as he gazes at the Sun and the Moon, theme that is reframed in the last section of Tsurukame:

Chorus:
(noriji)
White sleeves in the Moon Pavillion, white sleeves in the Moon Pavillion
Change like sleeves of lovely flowers (in spring).
In autumn, they change like crimson foliage moistened in drizzling rain.
In winter they swirl like brisk snowflakes.
The robe of the swirling sleeves s pale purple.
When the aristocrats play the music of Geishōui together
The Emperor is delighted and blesses the mountains, rivers, trees, and grasses,
Everything in his land so they will enjoy richness and thousands of generations of prosperity.
Then, the palace officials and the bearers of his palanquin increase the pace of its progress.
How auspicious it is that His Imperial Majesty returns to the Hall of the Everlasting Life.

The shite acting as the Chinese emperor dances the ending of the play, introduced by the gaku, he glances at the directions of the different season according to the text’s allusions of the changing of seasons (hana no sode, aki ha shigure no, fuyu wa saeyuku). The shite acting so makes the Emperor to be the body of the cosmos, changing with the progression of the seasons. Almost refrained with the blessing of the land, (sankasōmoku kokudo? yutaka nī): “Mountains and rivers, meadows and forests, all whole, Eternal prosperity!” . The Taoist motifs of eternal youth and long life for the emperor are lastly touched refraining the initial quote, the emperor stands at the ‘Gate Eternal Youth (furōmon 不老門) and now with his courtesans enter the Hall of Everlasting Life (chōseiden 長生殿).

All the three emperors appearing in *Seiōbo, Tōbōsaku* and *Tsurukame* (namely Emperor Mu of Zhou dynasty, Emperor Wu of Han, Emperor Xuánzōng) embody qualities that make them excellent candidates to receive auspicious prayers for the longevity of their lives and regimes. The three emperors, like the other Chinese emperors in all deity plays are iconic for accomplishments in Chinese history.

Emperor Mu of Zhou dynasty was well known for his sovereignty of their lives and regimes. Emperor Mu of Zhou dynasty was well known for his sovereignty of over five decades. Emperor Wu of Han was also known for his long reign and his territorial expansion. (...) Emperor Xuánzōng() too had a long reign of over four decades, the longest of the tang dynasty. Under his regime, Tang China became the cosmopolitan center of Asia. It can be said that Chinese culture in the early years of Xuánzōng had the most profound influence on Japan.80

The mythologies surrounding the longevity of the three emperors make them fitting candidates to be featured in deity plays. The interactions between the Queen Mother of the West and Emperor Mu of the Zhou and Emperor Wu of Han were portrayed in carious Chinese books that were brought to Japan. According to the Chronicle of Emperor Mu of the Zhou, Emperor Mu of the Zhou traveled to the Kunlun Mountains in the west during the seventeenth year of his reign. He was welcome by the Queen Mother of the West who hosted a banquet at Lake Yao where they exchanged gifts and poems. A chapter in immortals in *Taiping guang ji* 太平廣記 aslo depicts Emperor Mu of the Zhou’s meeting with the Queen Mother of the West, in which the Queen Mother recites a poem revealing that the emperor will live forever and thus they should meet again. The story explains that Emperor Mu of the Zhou became immortal because he consumed the elixir and fruits of jade trees when climbing the Kunlun Mountains. The chapter concludes

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with a legend that the Queen Mother once visited the emperor in his palace and the two rode the clouds to the palace in heaven.

2.2 Takasago

Takasago is a deity play. In the first act a travelling priest on a journey from the provinces to the capital pays a visit to a shrine along the way and encounters an old man and a woman there. After a long, quite discourse on the sentience of plants and trees and on the virtues of martial fidelity and poetry as means of fostering peace and public order, at the end of the fist act the two reveal their identity as the spirit of the entwined pines (aioi no matsu 相生の松) of Takasago and Sumiyoshi. In the second act, the villager and the priest travel together to the other shrine and there witness the revelation of the deity of Sumiyoshi. Which dances and casts auspicious greetings to the reign and the land of Japan.

Some (Kanai Kiyomitsu 金井清光 and Ochi Reiko 越智礼子) have suggested that Zeami ment Takasago to honour not only an idealized imperial sovereign but the more concrete figure of his own brilliant patron, the shōgun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu. If so, the play has a political meaning rarely detectable in nō after the passage of so many centuries. Moreover, Takasago owes its preeminence over other god plays to political significance of another kind. Although Kureha was performed slightly more often than Takasago in the late sixteenth century81, Takasago turned out to be the perfect vehicle for honouring the Tokugawa shōgun, who ruled Japan during the Edo period. The first character of Matsudaira, the shoguns’ original clan name.

The pine is so prominent a motif in Japanese poetry and art that it is hard to say precisely what may have give Zeami the idea for Takasago. Perhaps, as Kanai has suggested, Zeami had in mind the senshū banzai 千秋万歳 dances performed for the new year by beggar musicians. At any rate, when composing the play, Zeami referred to a precise, thoroughly classical source: the Japanese preface to the Kokinshū, the first and most revered of the imperially commissioned poetry anthologies. In a review of established poetic metaphors, the Kokinshū preface mentions

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that the pine of Takasago or Suminoe [Sumiyoshi] are felt to be “paired” (aioi). From this statement come the two pines of the play. Zeami’s understanding of the pines, however, is quite different from Ki no Tsurayuki:

Zeami interpretation of aioi is just the sort of understanding found in the medieval commentaries on the Kokinshū and its preface. Like other medieval writings, these commentaries favour balanced pairs of opposite images or terms. Properly speaking (according to a late sixteenth century dictionary), aioi, when applied to trees, means a tree with twin trunks growing from a single base. Such trees are still honoured at Japanese temples and shrines.82

According to the Kokinshū preface, poetry moves the invisible powers, smoothes the warrior’s fierce heart, and smooths the relations between men and women. It is pure and perfect communication. No doubt for this reason, the medieval commentaries hold that poetry is continuous with good government. This wonderful virtue, the sovereign’s calls into being the fabric of higher culture, exemplified by law as well as poetry. In Kureha, the sovereign wears ‘a flawless weave of honoured precedent’ woven for him by two maidens whose presence in Japan, and whose devoted work, are a response to his virtue. In Takasago, a ‘god pine’ wears a cloak of poetry: the song of the wind as it passes through the needles of the pine. In Japanese, ha means equally the needles of a pine and the leaves of any other plant, so that these needles are koto no ha, or leaves of speech: the words of poetry.

Below are collected two passages from Takasago that underlines how shūgen is constructed in Takasago, with the aim of investigate and reveal how Chinese motifs are embroidered within the text of the play. A first example can be drawn from the theme of the kuchiake of Tsurukame alluding to the Lùnhēng of Wáng Chōng, which is used inside Takasago; it is recognizable at the end of the third dan in the ageuta:

Chorus:

(ageuta) the Fours Seas⁸³ calm, the realm at peace.
A timely breeze rustles no boughs
in this blessed reign:
(...)
The Paired Pines display good fortune!

Truly, no praise can do them justice,
for such a reign bring to us,
our Lord’s subjects, all the richness
of His blessing, O the precious gift!
of His blessing, O the precious gift!

It is clearly visible the similarity with the lines of the “kuchiake” reported previously (see p. 63).
In which the themes of the wind that does not blow the branches of trees (枝を鳴らさぬ) and
the enjoyment of the population under the rule of the sovereign (住める民とで豊かなる) are
elaborated with the language of the symbolism of the entwined pine.

The scholar Ye Hanao has dedicated an entire chapter to decoding Taoist motifs in
Takasago and the symbolism of the ‘aioi’ tree in his book “Nōgaku to Chūgoku no kogeinō
shinkō” (see Ye Hanao 2000, 149-167). He states that the image of the paired pines in which all
the shūgen motifs of eternal life, peace and prosperity for the land, and lode to the emperor are
declined (in Takasago) is drawn undoubtedly form the Kana preface but he also adds that it is
possible to relate this figure to the Chinese image of liánlǐ shù 連理樹 (two trees that grows
together as one) first mentioned in the Hāinèi shí zhōu jì 海內十洲記 "Ten islands in the inner
seas," shortly called shí zhōu jì 十洲記. This book is a collection of phantastic stories
traditionally attributed to the former Han period (206 BC- 8 AD) Taoist master Dōngfāng Shuò
東方朔:

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⁸³ A Chinese expression that means “the whole world.”

扶桑は碧海中にあり、地方万里。上に太帝官があり、太真東王父の治まる所である。その地には林木が多い、葉は皆桑の如く。又椹樹があり、長さは数千丈、太さ二千余り囲。木は両々同根より偶生し、更に相依倚になる。これを似て名を扶桑となる。仙人がその椹を食すれば、体は金色になり空を飛ぶ。その木は大きいが、葉と椹は中夏の桑に如き也。但し、桑は希、葉は赤く、九千年一度が生る。

(see Ye Hanao 200, 154)

From this passage emerges the figure of the ‘aioi’ tree (木は両々同根より偶生し、更に相依倚になる) as dispenser of longevity and eternal youth (仙人がその椹を食すれば、体は金色になり空を飛ぶ … 九千年一度が生る). According to the Shi zhōu jì once one has eaten the fruits of the paired trees then becomes an immortal capable to fly. The association of the paired trees with longevity which emerges from the analysis of the Chinese source is on the same line of the interpretation of ‘aioi’ trees present in the Kana preface of the Kokinshū. In the Kana jo of the Kokinshū the expression of entwined trees is used by poets to evoke their own age by calling themselves ‘paired’ with such venerable pines, in the sashi of the play is contained an allusion to a poem that illustrates this point. The poem is by Fujiwara no Okikaze 藤原 興風, included in the Kokinshū (905) where he complains of being so old that his friends have all died by now, even the venerable Takasago Pine did not exist when he was young. The prositious allegory of long life of the paired tree is symbolically combined with the prospitious image of the pine tree that remained green year-round in defiance of the passing seasons, so to create a perfect auspicious frame. Other Chinese elements that were intended both as rhetorical flourish and sincere auspicious formula that enrich this celebratory frame are toasts and blessings with references to animals like the tortoise and the crane, fabled for their longevity. They employed references to vast spans of time, utilizing auspicious phrases such as chiyo 千代, yachiyo 八千代, and yorozuyo 萬代 ("one thousand," "eight thousand," and "ten thousand generations"), or chitose 千歳, michitose 三千歳, and manzai 万歳 ("one thousand," "three thousand," and "ten thousand years"), in the hope that the ruler might enjoy a virtually limitless reign. In the extract

reported below from the last section of the play, in which Sumiyoshi Myōjin, these kind of magic formula boosting auspicious tones intermix with the repertoire of Gagaku 雅楽 court music “それぞ還城楽の舞、さて万歳の小忌衣寿福を抱き,” “千秋楽は民を撫” and “万歳楽には命を延ぶ。”

Sumiyoshi:
(rongi) Many the dances, the dancing maidens’
Voices ring clear as the moon.
The Sumiyoshi Pin
Stands mirrored in ‘Blue Ocean Waves’:
That is the dance now, surely!
Chorus:
For God, for Sovereign, the road runs straight
To Miyako in springtime,
Sumiyoshi:
When the dance is “Home to the Palace”
Chorus:
They bring endless happy years,
Sumiyoshi:
Those dancers in sacred robes:
Chorus:
A hand thrust forth sweeps demon hence,
an arm drawn in clasps length of days
and happy fortune.
“a Thousand Autumns” brings peace to all
“ten Thousands Years” makes life long
while touched by the wind,
the Paired Pines sing inspiring tranquil joy.
the Paired Pines sing inspiring tranquil joy.

3. Conclusion

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Japanese text from Yokomichi, Mario and Omote, Akira. *Yōkyoku shū, Ge*, Iwanami Shoten. (1931): 357
With auspicious and celebratory themes at their cores *Seiōbo, Tōbōsaku and Tsurukame* incorporate unique elements including the role of Chinese emperor as receiver of auspicious prayers, or celebratory dances from deities like Turtle and the Crane. According to Yip “the playwrights deemphasized the identity of the Chinese emperor, and incorporated Japanese poetic imagery to recast the Chinese-inspired stories for the medieval Japanese audience” (see Yip 2016, 55). The Taoist motif immortality enhance the celebratory mode of the plays, consequently the foreign stories which contain no Japanese characters, effectually deliver a celebratory message to the Japanese audience. These demonstrate how auspicious motifs of foreign origin were adopted and adapted into nō and applied to Japanese context. The analysis of *Takasago* reveals how much the embroidery of the play hides Chinese celebratory motifs. We have demonstrated also that the allegorical core of the plays represented by the ‘*aioi no matsu*’ of Sumiyoshi and Takasago is originally an image drawn from the mainland (see Ye Hanao 2000) and absorbed in the literary tradition of Kokinshū. This analysis does not claims the belonging of Takasago to the category of Chinese plays but puts on light how a ‘Chinese play’ based approach to the exegesis of plays can enhance our knowledge and understanding of the plays.
CONCLUSION

Medieval Japanese no theatre reveals that adaptations of Chinese motifs on the stage where more about the cultural norms, aesthetic preferences, as well as the religious and philosophical perspectives held by playwrights and audiences of no than they do about actual Chinese views. This study divides in two parts: the first (chapter 1 and chapter 2) offers an introductive frame to the study of “Chinese plays”. In the first chapter are analyzed both modern scholarship’s systems of classification of the repertoire (gobandate and mugen no) and Zeami’s conceptions regarding the taxonomies of dramatic enactments (monogaku jōjō and santai). From the analysis of Fūshikaden is drawn the category of karagoto which permits to locate Chinese plays. A step further is taken by adding to the former analysis the categories developed by Leo Shingchi Yip (see Yip, 2016) based upon a set of strategies for adapting Chinese culture. Chapter two articulates the kaleidoscopic diversity of Chinese plays by giving an insight of eleven Chinese plays that were written between the late fourteenth and the early sixteenth centuries. The division in which they are presented is related to the typology of the main character, Shōkun 昭君 and Yōkihi 楊貴妃 (Chinese Beauties), Kantan 邯鄲, Kikujidō 菊児童, Makurajidō 枕児童, Kureha 吳羽 and Seiōbo 西王母 (Chinese Emperors and Deities), Sanshō 三笑 and Bashō 芭蕉 (Chinese literaty), lastly Ryōko 龍虎, Kappo 合浦, Shakkyō 石橋 and Shōjō 猩々 (Exotic Creatures). The second part of this work articulates an exploration of Yip’s approach to Chinese play potentialities, trying to push to the extreme the theoretical implication of his taxonomy. This experimental analysis is carried out on plays which are not commonly considered Chinese Kasuga ryūjin and Takasago, and brings to light their tight connection with Chinese motifs, in other words this process is useful to unveil an allegorical layer of these plays that finds its decoding function in their socio political contextualization. Ultimately the second part of the thesis is interested in evaluating the potentialities of a “Chinese plays approach” to the understanding Muromachi’s crossboundary plays in no, more than claiming a belonging to the ‘Chinese’ or the ‘Japanese’ group of plays.
Chapter three demonstrates on the light of the analysis of Susan B. Klein (see Klein 2013) and Leo S. Yip (see Yip 2016) on Hakurakuten that Kasuga ryūjin presents a same attitude to represent China as “the Other a threat to be reduced.” Both the plays reverse the long standing image of China as the superior Other but through two different dynamics: if in Hakurakuten by claiming the independence of Japanese poetry is showcased the superiority of Japanese tradition, in Kasuga ryūjin the Other is reduced through a demonstration of the superiority of Japanese religion. Consequently, the two plays magnify the mighty power of Japan, namely, the originality and innateness of Japanese poetry, and the syncretic religious tradition of Buddhism and Shintō. Chapter Four in a similar pattern analyzes Tsurukame and Takasago highlighting the usage of cultural adaptation of Chinese auspicious topics in the description of shogunal power, showcasing the ambivalence of Japanese élite toward continent culture. According to Yip “the playwrights deemphasized the identity of the Chinese emperor, and incorporated Japanese poetic imagery to recast the Chinese inspired stories for the medieval Japanese audience” (see Yip 2016, 55). The Taoist motif of immortality enhance the celebratory mode of the plays, consequently the foreign stories which contain no Japanese characters, effectually deliver a celebratory message to the Japanese audience. The analysis of Takasago reveals how much the embroidery of the play hides Chinese celebratory motifs. We have demonstrated also that the allegorical core of the plays represented by the ‘aioi no matsu’ of Sumiyoshi and Takasago is originally an image drawn from the Chinese shí zhōu jì (see Ye Hanao 2000) and absorbed in the literary tradition of Kokinshū. It is important to recognize that the China represented in Chinese plays is essentially a “culturally constructed Self” (as Yip has demonstrated) and the identification of Chineseness of the Chinese play is a complex issue that requires careful examination of various aspects. As most of the times the honsetsu of the plays, were actually taken from earlier Japanese works or interpretation, the China depicted in the Chinese play showcases not “the Other,” but what Yip calls a “modified Self.”


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