Analysis of *Okuni Sōshi* as Sources of the Earliest Kabuki

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Abstract: *Okuni sōshi* is a group of early Tokugawa period documents depicting the supposed performances of Izumo no Okuni, the legendary founder of the *kabuki* theatre. They contain textual and pictorial material that offer us an idea about what the early kabuki might have looked like, although it is not certain to what extent they are trustworthy in terms of immediate reference to Izumo no Okuni's real performances. Their texts even challenge the very historical existence of Okuni, as she is depicted as the actress as well as the character of the dancing semi-dramatic skits. Despite this historical controversy, the *Okuni sōshi* do convey a general atmosphere and the approximate content of skits which stood at the beginning of a completely new theatrical genre in Japan. They also testify to how, and to what extent, early kabuki drew on the previous tradition of *nōgaku* (*nō* and *kyōgen*).

The emergence of kabuki as a mature theatrical tradition is usually noted to date from the end of the 17th century. However, there is a certain paradox regarding its genesis: on the one hand, it appears as an elaborate all-male actor theatre (in contrast to the puppet theatre) in a fully established form around 1700 thanks to the playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724); yet, regarding the beginnings of kabuki, the founder role is traditionally ascribed to a remarkable, and seemingly isolated, phenomenon of the female dancer called Izumo no Okuni. She came to Kyoto and swept away the city's audiences with her dances as early as 1603, and to such an extent that the shogunate had to issue a whole series of bans regarding this new kind of performing art in an attempt to stop what it regarded as improprieties, not only during the *kabuki* performances themselves but especially offstage.

This study analyses the earliest written, as well as pictorial, documents referring to the beginnings of kabuki. Though the historical existence of Izumo no Okuni can be doubted, the performances connected with her, and named after her, cannot; they set in motion a completely new wave in the theatrical tradition of Japan. This author attempts to identify the role of nō in this process, based on a hermeneutical study of the *Okuni sōshi*.

Okuni sōshi is the name of a group of the earliest extant documents pertaining to early kabuki and traditionally (Tsubouchi Shōyō 1925, 2-19) it is considered as including four materials:

1. Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba 国女歌舞妓絵詞. As it is in the possession of Kyoto University Library, it will be, for the sake of brevity, referred to as the "Kyōdai book" and its text the "Kyōdai play" ("Kd" in abbreviation). It contains drama-like text sections that alternate with pictures that represent the *first illustration set* of the Okuni sōshi.

2. Kabuki (no) Saushi かぶきさうし ("Ss" in abbreviation). It is thought to be several years younger than the Kyōdai book. The historical spelling of the diphthong - "*sau*shi"[1] is preserved here; the pronunciation is, nevertheless, modern, i. e. [so:śi]. Its text has the character of a *monogatari* and is interspersed with pictures which represent the *second illustration set.*

3. Okuni Kabuki sōshi 阿国歌舞伎草紙. In this study, it is referred to as "Bunkakan fragments" ("Bkk" in abbreviation), being in the possession of the Yamato Bunkakan museum. It represents one panel (page) of text and two pictures. The kotobagaki corresponds almost exactly to a portion of the Kyōdai book text, and the two pictures are independent from either of the preceding two sets and thus represent the *third illustration set.*

4. Okuni Kabuki Kozu 阿国歌舞伎古図 In this thesis, it is referred to as "Kottōshū Fragments" ("Kt" in abbreviation), being contained in one chapter of a book called *Kottōshū*, published in the early 19th century, in which the preceding Bunkakan fragments were reprinted in woodblock. It is not clear whether it was made as a copy directly from the Bunkakan fragments or from some other copy that shared its origin with the Bunkakan fragments.

Each of these sources has several names by which they have been called by various researchers. Many of those names, when collated in a list, are too similar to be useful, and that is why some of them are referred to by descriptive names in order to bring out their respective identity and origin more clearly.

All four *Okuni sōshi* are *e-sōshi* or "illustrated books" in which a light and simple text (*kotobagaki*) is combined with pictures (*e*). They are generally taken as part of the body of *Nara-e-hon*, richly decorated illustrated books produced in early 1600s.

Textually, there are actually only two materials – 1. Kyōdai book (*Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba*) and 2. *Kabuki Saushi*, because the remaining two are the same texts, nearly identical to a portion of 1. (with 4. probably a woodblock print of 3.). Pictorially, however, the *Okuni sōshi* represent *three* sources – 1., 2. and 3.

The Kyōdai Book

The Kyōdai book *kotobagaki* has the form of a libretto—an early kabuki play. It describes Izumo no Okuni's arrival at Kyoto in the springtime and the reader witnesses her starting to perform her dance at cherry blossom viewing parties. The season of cherry blossoms is in the second or third lunar month, but other sources mention the fourth or fifth month as the time when Okuni's *kabuki odori* was danced in Kyoto in 1603 (Tokiyoshi 1997, 9-10). This seasonal discrepancy can be explained in such a way that the latter occasion was not the first one and that Izumo no Okuni had performed in

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[1] This is for two reasons: firstly, to reflect the fact that its name, if given in kana, is even nowadays spelled さうし (i. e. s**au**shi) rather than そうし (s**ou**shi), and, secondly, to distinguish this work clearly from the generic umbrella term *kabuki sōshi*.

Kyoto before, with her first Kyoto spring mentioned in the Kyōdai book happening some time previously. This would also mean that she might really have started her Kyoto career performing in the *yayako* ("baby") *odori* with which some of the period's references (Tokiyoshi 1997, 9-10) relate a dancer by the name of *Kuni*, and that only later her performances became distinct from other dances, winning fame under the new name of *kabuki odori*.

Allegedly, the year 1603 was a fateful one for Okuni. *Nihon Rekishi Daijiten* records the results of the research of various historical documents which more or less confirmed what is stated in the Kyōdai book, namely that Nagoya Sanzaburō, the "kabukimono" (see below) and Okuni's lover, died in a skirmish in that year, 4th month 10th day (or 5m 3d) (Kawade 1958 "Nagoya Sanzaburō"). It might be this date and this occasion which marked Okuni's special addition to her previous kabuki skits. Her performances probably contained the life-acclaiming tradition of *furyū* processions, the mirth of *yayako odori* and the erotic flavour connected with the *kabukimono* figure. This time, she mixed in yet another flavour— the macabre topic of the spirit of the dead Nagoya appearing during her performance. For a topic like this, she quite naturally chose the classical nō model of a *mugen* (dream-and-spectre) play, to create a tantalizing effect on Kyoto's audiences.

The libretto containing this new and surprising skit is known to us as the *kotobagaki* of *Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba*, and partly from quotations in *Kabuki Saushi*. The authenticity of these texts is questionable, as is their authorship. For the lack of evidence to the contrary, they are here considered as largely based on the very texts that were uttered in Okuni kabuki performances, a record of them, more or less precise, from the memory of the Okuni sōshi authors. We might never know if Okuni wrote the extant libretto herself or whether it was someone from her troupe, or indeed a later author who put down in writing what they had remembered from the performances; at this stage of research, this is impossible to establish. The truth is that what Okuni sōshi presents as the libretto of Okuni's performance has much in common with nō, as will be shown below.

In a way, Okuni kabuki can be said to have returned to the religious—the topic probably abandoned by the yayako odori dancers; nevertheless, rather than "religious", the new performance must have been perceived as a new, popular kind of "nō", hued by what Hattori characterized as "*kabukitaru*" (Hattori 2003, 80) touch which perhaps included a distant reflection of the *Kirishitan* idea of resurrection.

The Nō Structure of the Kyōdai Play

Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba starts in a perfectly nō-like way, both in content and form. Each classical nō drama has the structure of particular "modules," to use Royall Tyler's wording (Tyler 2004), called *shōdan* (小段). Some of the shōdans are of general character, like *ageuta* (higher-register song) and *sageuta* (lower-register song), some are specific as to their theme or location within the overall structure of the play, e.g. *nanori*, placed in the opening part of the play, is the portion of text, and of action, in which the arriving *waki* figure introduces himself. The nō shōdans are furthermore characterized for their musical properties – whether they are sung or just recited (*fushi - kotoba*), and, if sung, whether they share their singing rhythm with that of the drums or not (*hyōshi-ai – hyōshi-awazu*).

It is next to impossible to get an idea of some performance of the past if no historical material survives. In the case of early Okuni kabuki, we are fortunate enough to have the Okuni sōshi materials to rely on. They can be considered a record, more or less exact, of the action on the stage.

The earliest kabuki text known to us, *Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba*, has the literary form of a play text. Ogasawara acknowledged that the performance is depicted in nō-style (2006, 158). A close formal analysis of the Okuni sōshi has revealed that *Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba* starts with an exact nō shōdan structure. It cannot be said in what way the individual shōdans were declaimed, and the acting style of the performance is only testified to by a dozen pictures accompanying the text; nevertheless, the nō structure of the opening part can be identified very clearly. The shōdans are arranged in a sequence typical for nō and their rhythmical syllabic characteristics fall exactly into those of nō – melodical *fushi* shōdans are in the particular syllabic 7-5 rhythm typical for performing arts. Moreover, the pictures show a regular nō orchestra – two hand drums, one baton drum and a flute, and it can be inferred from these indices that the orchestral and melodic quality of the early Okuni kabuki performance was based on nō music.

What follows is the formal analysis of Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba as a libretto, the characteristics of which are compared with those of classical nō plays. The names of the "shōdan" in the kabuki text are given in quotation marks to distinguish them from nō shōdan names. For easier orientation, the numbers of columns in the original manuscript are given and, when necessary, the transcription of Japanese passages are given, too.

The *Kyōdai play*—text (*kotobagaki*) of the Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba—starts with the passage:

"1. *Shidai*"

1. Miyako no haru no hanazakari [word repetition mark]
2. kabuki odori ni ideu yo.

The springtime blossoming in the Capital -
let's go to kabuki odori.

This passage fits perfectly the characteristics of the opening shōdan called *shidai* by which most classical nō plays typically start: it has the nō shidai metre – a repetition of the 7-5 *ku* ("stanza"), i. e. twice 7-5, followed by an incomplete *ku* of 7-4 syllables. The shidai in nō is a song with a distinct melodic pattern even today (in contrast to most of the vocal parts nowadays which tend to be rather monotonous). Although obviously no melodic characteristic can be identified for this Kyōdai "*shidai,*" it can, nevertheless, be hypothesised that the Kyōdai play also started with a melodically interesting song intended to attract the attention of the audiences at the opening of the performance.

"2. *Nanori*"

Similar to classical nō, the "*shidai*" song in the Kyōdai play is followed by a part which corresponds to the nō shōdan of self-introduction – *nanori* (columns 2-8.). In nō, *nanori* follows immediately after the opening *shidai* song; the *waki* character declares his identity and intensions by it; in nō, it is very often a wandering Buddhist monk who on his pilgrimage has "reached this distant place." In the Kyōdai play, the character is Okuni, a Shinto priest's daughter who has come all the way to dance kabuki. In this, too, the nō pattern has been maintained.

An exact translation is hard to give here, because after the introductory "**Somosomo**" (column 2), there are three possible translations of c. 3-6. depending on the position of commas and in view of different possible syntactic interpretations:

3. kore wa Izumo no kuni (no?) ōyashiro ni tsukaemōsu
4. shanin nite sōrō (,) soregashi ga musume ni
5. kuni to mōsu miko no sōrō wo, kabuki odori
6. to mōsu koto wo narawashi, [...]

I. *I am a priest(ess) of the Izumo Shrine* (shanin nite sōr**ō, s**oregashi ga musume)*, I am someone's daughter and they call me Kuni the holy maiden. To teach kabuki odori and to...*

II. *I am the daughter of a certain priest* (shanin nite sōr**ō s**oregashi ga musume) *of the Izumo Shrine and they call me Kuni the holy maiden. To teach kabuki odori and to...*

III. *A certain priest of the Izumo Shrine* (shanin nite sour**ō s**oregashi **ga, m**usume) *had a daughter* (musum**e ni,** kuni to mōsu miko no sōrō wo, kabuki odori to mōsu koto wo narawashi)*, whom they call Kuni the holy maiden, and **he taught to her** kabuki odori.*

And the remaining "*nanori*" words translate:

(c. 6-8) *[...] Because the times of the Heavenly rule [of the Emperor] are so peaceful, I humbly went up to the Capital, thinking I would try and dance there.*

In nō, nanori, unlike the shidai, is metrically free and melodically is *kotoba*, which means that it follows the natural intonation of the spoken Japanese utterance – only ignoring the accentual falls; the Kyōdai play "*nanori*" is also metrically free and it can be surmised that it was declaimed in an intonation similar to nō kotoba.

<div align="center">"3. Ageuta"</div>

Following exactly the nō rules, the next part is a song in the 5: 7-5 rhythm, the flowery depiction of the pilgrim's route. Generally, it is called *michiyuki* and in nō it is often the *ageuta* song in the higher register. We can imagine that the Okuni kabuki singing might have been a variation of this nō singing style.

Below, the full Japanese original of the "ageuta" is given in transcription so as to show the syllabic metre of 5: 7-5.

It is difficult to give a clear, unambiguous translation of these lines which are, as indeed are many passages of the Okuni sōshi texts, full of poetic allusions and puns – especially the traditional poetic figures of classical poetry, *makurakotoba* ("pillow words" similar to ornate epithets), *kakekotoba* ("pivot words" – puns based on homophony) and *utamakura* ("pillow of the poem" – poetical toponyms). These features indicate that the Okuni sōshi texts are clearly based on nō conventions.

9. Furusato ya
Izumo no kuni wo ato ni mi=(10.)=te,
suwe wa kasumite haru no hi no,
naga=(11.)=to no kō wo suginureba,
kakaru miyo (12.) ni mo *au* no shuku,
michi sebakaranu hiro=(13.)=shima ya,
toiyoru miya wa Itsukushima,
14. fune no tomari ni narata no hama,
tsuri suru (15.) waza wa ushimado no,
tsuki ni akashi no ura=(16.)=zutai,
nao yuku sue wa yo no naka no,
nani=(17.)=wa no koto mo yoshi-ashi no,

wakaba ni kaze (18.) no fuku shima no,
minato no nami no osamare=(19.)=ru,
miyo ni wa ima zo *au*saka ya,
isogu (20.) kokoro no hodo mo naku
miyako ni hayaku tsuki=(21.)=nikeri.

9. My birthplace, the province of Izumo, I left
10. behind, in the hazed-over distance of a spring day, I passed Nagato [2]
11-2. the provincial capital, stayed at [3] *Ōno = "the vast [Ō] plain where one meets [au] with"*
such [=excellent] times,
12-3 Oh, Hiroshima with no narrow roads! – there the shrine to visit is Itsukushima
14. the ship stopped at the beach of Narata, the fishing
15-6. skills at Ushimado, [4] *the moon there linked the Akashi shore, and the further goal of my*
journey – the centre of the world [5] *– Naniwa*
17. the words of leaves, good? bad? [6] *the young leaves in the wind*
18. blowing through the Island of Happiness [7] *whose port waves calm down*
19. in this fair era with which we now meet at the Meeting Slope! With a hurry
20. in my heart, in no time did I quickly reach the Capital.

"4. *Tsukizerifu*"

Again in the style of nō, the "ageuta" michiyuki is followed by the shōdan "tsukizerifu" – lit. words about arrival:

22. And here – as I came to the Capital, (23-4) I felt like viewing the imperial city cherry blossoms with a peaceful mind.

The clear structure of a sequence of nō-like shōdan is gradually lost as the performance continues with a portion of text (c. 24-43) and the *nenbutsu odori* (c. 44-65), before another nō-like shōdan was identified as "*issei*" by Tsubouchi Shōyō (1925, 8):

"5. *Issei*"

In mugen nō, *issei* is the preparatory shōdan designed to evoke the mood of expectation of the supranatural. It is usually the arrival of the *bōrei*, the spirit-of-the-dead, and this is exactly what happens in the Kyōdai book:

66. Attracted by the voice of the nenbutsu,

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[2] Province on the northern coast of the westernmost part of Honshu, west of Izumo.
[3] A series of puns follows.
[4] A port in the southeast of Okayama prefecture.
[5] A *makurakotoba*, perhaps an allusion or a quotation from a tanka.
[6] *Yoshi-ashi no* - a refrain famous from Zeami's *Yamamba*.
[7] Pun through pivot *fuku*.

67. let me leave the sphere of sin-caused barriers. Hey, Okuni,
68. allow me to humbly talk to you. Do you not recognize me?
69. In the longing for our past, have I
70. come all the way here.

By this, the clear nō-like shōdan list is exhausted and the text continues in its own independent way - the *nō* turns into a new style which can be already designated *kabuki* as the performance goes on.

The Texts of the Okuni Sōshi

The Kyōdai book is a libretto, or at least has the form of one, and conveys an idea possibly very close to what actually was played at Okuni kabuki performances. On the other hand, *Kabuki Saushi* is in the form of an objective, third-person observer's rendering of Okuni's life. It narrates the popularity of kabuki and offers impressive insights into her performances. It is a *monogatari*, i. e. work of prose with a focus different from the Kyōdai book. The account is about Okuni's life, followed by what seems to be a spectator's observation of Okuni's performance, and the ending is also different. Kabuki Saushi makes evident that during the several years presumably dividing the birth of the Kyōdai and Kabuki Saushi texts, Okuni had become a legend, a character not only of the dramatic form of early kabuki but also one of early Edo prose—perhaps even storytelling. This is one of the reasons why Kabuki Saushi is regarded as a historically less reliable source in which the original historical reality was literarily reshaped. It indeed has the aura of reminiscence of a time long gone—gone forever perhaps—like the words in columns 212, 213:

"*Among the people of old, some went to see the kabuki theatre to console their hearts.*"

This might reflect the atmosphere after the series of bans had started, when kabuki felt like something gone forever. Kabuki Saushi is a tale in which poetic language narrates the story of both Okuni's life and performance, inseparably entangled together. It could be imagined that, originally, it was an *oral storytelling piece* in which the narrator depicted everything in a colourful storyteller's style, later put down in writing and complemented with illustrations to make an attractive *Nara-e-hon*. It relates the tale of Okuni coming to Kyoto, more amazing than all the beauties of literature, and shows her dance. She is invited to the Imperial Palace and gets a court title as a reward. Rich daimyō lavished gold and silver on her and she has a residence built next to the Kitano shrine in northern Kyoto. However, she cannot bear the idle life and starts dancing again. Crowds come to see her performance in the same way as they come to the Kitano deity. A description of the crowded auditorium follows,

and of the suspense of expectation before Okuni finally appears on the scene. Her pose, her costume and dance are described in sumptuous detail. Nagoya Sanza appears and they dance together.

After a detailed rendering of the performance(s?), there comes the leave-taking of Okuni and Nagoya Sanza. They wake up after sleeping together, and she sees off her lover who is returning - to the other world, supposedly. The ensuing words "waking up from a dream" evoke, in a nō-like style again, the authorial intention that not only Okuni's sleep but perhaps the whole performance was a dream, one in which Okuni was reunited with the deceased Sanza. The closing words of Kabuki Saushi describe the great benefit that can be drawn from kabuki, how the spirit gets cheered up and how it all "okashi! okashi!" ("is amusing/funny"), which are its closing words.

The two texts share many passages which are identical, or similar with only slight divergence. It is these discrepancies, together with the style of the illustrations, which have led Japanese scholars to presume that the Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba (or its original, if the preserved material is a copy) is older than Kabuki Saushi.

The Bunkakan text, on the other hand, is a fragment corresponding to columns 116-136 of the Kyōdai book and represents the first *Jōruri modoki* ("jōruri imitation") song along with its introductory words, ending with the first two syllables of the second *Jōruri modoki* song. A comparison of the ten differences between the Bunkakan and Kyōdai texts seems to indicate an earlier provenance of the Bkk, although, on the other hand, Hattori's analysis of the pictures in the Bkk showed that they might be the closest to the real Okuni performance (Hattori 1968, 8).

The most important structural difference between the Kyōdai and Kabuki Saushi performance is the lack of *nenbutsu* (Buddhist chanting invoking the spirit of the dead to appear) in Kabuki Saushi. Based on its diction and pictorial style, Kabuki Saushi has been considered as the younger of the two (Shōyō, Hattori). However, the fact that nenbutsu is not mentioned here does not necessarily mean that it *was* not there—the author might just have chosen not to mention it. Nevertheless, it could be hypothesised that precisely the absence of the nenbutsu skit, with Nagoya appearing without any previous religious ritual, might indicate an older form, a phase in which nenbutsu was not yet integrated into the kabuki performance but in which Nagoya was already appearing as returning from the afterworld "*feeling attachment to Okuni's kabuki*" (Ss c 88-89). The described performance, if a single one at all, is rather incoherent in comparison with the Kyōdai play which would, thus, reflect a newer, more mature version with some further reworking done in which the nenbutsu was added as the dramatic element immediately connected with Nagoya's arrival.

The _Kabukibito_

The depiction of _kabukibito_ and their ways was one of the new topics early kabuki introduced, and according to some scholars was the nucleus, the _kabuki_ itself. The _Tōdaiki_ chronicle (of unknown authorship or date of compilation) for the fourth (rather than fifth) month of 1603 says: "At the moment, the kabuki dance is in vogue. A shrine maiden from the country of Izumo (her name is Kuni, yet she is not pretty) was the first to dance it, coming to the Capital." It goes on to say that she imitated the outrageous men with their strange clothes and swords and their ways in the tea house. The whole city was thrilled about her and she even danced in the Fushimi Palace built by Hideyoshi (Ihara 1972, 5).

These outrageous men with strange clothes and swords were the _kabukibito_. Tsubaki translates kabuki as _wild_ and takes Okuni dressing as a man for a reflection of the "wild" (_kabuki_) spirit that became the heart of kabuki. He maintains that the early kabuki era was marked by this kabuki spirit, which was taken up by the _machishū_, Kyoto's new townspeople with commercial wealth, and became one of the driving forces behind the early modern culture (Tsubaki 2002, 1). The kabuki social movement tried to oppose the medieval set of rules and regulations, and was supported by a new stratum of townspeople (Kawade 1958, 134). It seems that this driving force of modern culture had a negative, violent aspect to it; concretely speaking, _kabukimono_ were gangs of dissolute young men around 1600 who, dressed in outrageous clothes and carrying overly long swords, swaggered about the streets of Kyoto causing trouble (Shively 1991, 749) and made life in the cities, chiefly in Edo, insecure before the Tokugawa shogunate took over (Barth 1972, 194). This meaning for the word _kabuki_ is also found in the Portuguese dictionary _Vocabulario da lingoa de Iapam_ (Leims 1990, 67) as early as 1603, the same year as the first record of kabuki odori. The compilers of the _Vocabulario_ were active in Kyushu and obviously could not follow the most recent goings on in Kyoto, yet in its fifth meaning, "cabuqi" is characterized as _losing one's control or taking more liberty than is given in something or in trying to answer more quickly or hastily than appropriate_; "cabuqimono" and "cabuita fito" is a person of these characteristics, with the addition "_or is happy more than appropriate when hearing news etc_" which corresponds to the eccentric properties kabukimono seem to have been known by. Mezur cites Ortolani's view that many of the kabukimono were executed for their subversive behaviour (Ortolani 1990, 164-5) The troubles kabukimono caused lasted for some time; Barth mentions that the battle of Osaka Castle in 1614-15 contributed to the worsening of the situation because after it, rōnin who had lost their occupation went to Edo and other cities, seeking to vent their war frustration and aggression, roaming the streets in shocking dress and hairdos and often engaging in acts of violence, riots and indecencies (Ortolani 1990, 164). It was not until the end of the

17th century that the shogunate finally managed to get these gangs, later also called *hatamoto yakko* and *machi yakko*, under control (Barth 1972, 194).

It is therefore possible that Okuni kabuki, besides being inspired by kabukimono, might have influenced the kabukimono "vogue" as well. In connection with the new kabuki performances, the words *kabukibito*, identical with *otokodate*, seems to have changed meaning, informed by Okuni kabuki skits. The verb *kabuku* came to mean "to walk about in unusual outfit, to behave (speak and act) in a sensual, erotic (好色めいた) manner" (Hirano 1989, 509), which is the meaning obviously connected with the kabuki tea house skits of Okuni kabuki, and the *Okuni sōshi* also use it in the sense of "dancing (the specific dance called) kabuki". Whether the previous references to the name Kuni actually referred to the founder of kabuki odori or not, the later reference from 1603 marked her performance as distinct from both the previous yayako odori and boys's dances by *introducing the figure of kabukimono* and basing her skits on it.

Ogasawara writes that the epoch-making idea for Okuni to include in her performance the topic of *chaya kayoi* – frequenting the "tea house" (presumably one of the various kinds of brothels) - might indeed be connected, as the folk rendering has it, with the fact that she shared the stage with kyōgen actors. She gained eternal fame for herself by adopting what represented the "the climax of the times" (Ogasawara 1975, 142) – the *chaya asobi*, the most topical theme of fashionable amusement. According to Ogasawara's *marebito* theory, *marebito*, the visiting deity, was for the first time in history united with the chaya goer as a hero; the shrine maidens welcoming the deity were transformed into the chaya women or prostitutes; these four character types merged in a single skit and determined the basic structure that kabuki would continue to have from that point on (Ogasawara 1975, 142-3).

Performance Structure in the Sōshi

It is clear from the content of the two sōshi texts that they refer to different performances, because—although some of the numbers of the programme are similar—most of them actually differ. The springtime performance described in Kabuki Saushi is longer and more composite, and the vital difference is that the nō structure seen in the Kyōdai text is only represented in the former by the opening shidai: (Ss c 41-2)

The springtime blossoming in the Capital - let's go to kabuki odori.

Ogasawara called the nō structure in the Kyōdai text as a "stitching together in the nō-like manner" (Ogasawara 2006, 108) of individual skits; this would mean that they were originally independent skits – *nenbutsu odori, chaya-gayoi* (or *chaya no asobi*) and *furo-agari*, additionally connected to each other to form the integral plot of the early kabuki play. While the Kyōdai book presents the succession of scenes as one performance, it cannot be clearly established from Kabuki Saushi whether it is a realistic description of a real performance as it uninterruptedly proceeded, or just a collection of impressions of individual scenes not necessarily in their sequential order in one successive performance programme. This would also account for the absence of the *nenbutsu* number, which might just have been omitted by the author for some reason.

The structure of the Okuni kabuki performance as presented by the two Okuni sōshi texts can be compared as follows - the corresponding parts are underlined:

Kyōdai book (Kuni Jo-kabuki Ekotoba)
1. nō-like opening:
    shidai,
    nanori,
    ageuta (= michiyuki),
    tsukizerifu,
2. Okuni starts dancing
    issei
3. *Nenbutsu odori*
4. Sanza appearing
5. *Kabuki odori:*
    I.-V.
6. *Kaze mo fukanu* passage
7. *Jōruri modoki*
    I., II.
8. leavetaking (offstage?)
9. *honjimono* style ending

Kabuki Saushi
1. nō-like opening:
    shidai
2. *yayako odori* style *musume odori*
3. kyōgen: *Narihira kyōran*
4. Sanza appearing
5. Inviting Sanza in
6. *Kabuki odori:*
    I., V., IV., III., II., + three more (VI., VII., VIII.)
7. audience joins in dancing, 12 more songs
8. (as encore) *Furoagari* dance
(offstage:
    9. leavetaking
10. "*okashi!*" ending)

Okuni's dance in the Kabuki Saushi starts amidst the cheerful and breathtaking atmosphere of blossoming cherry trees. Similarly, it is in this season that the Kyōdai book has Okuni come to Kyoto and start dancing there. As Shively writes, it is evident from popular stories and Kyoto guides that visiting temples and shrines on days of special events was a favourite form of entertainment (Shively 1991, 739), and the cherry tree season was the best. In the Kyōdai book, Okuni starts performing on the 25th day of the 1st month: (Kd c 41-43) *this is the gathering of all people, high and low, on the 25th day of the New Year, visiting the shrine, and at this occasion, I would like to start kabuki odori.*

As stated above, one of the possibilities is that Kabuki Saushi is based on an oral storytelling tradition, perhaps of the kojōruri or sekkyō style: most of the book is prosodic, in the 5-7 or 7-5 syllabic rhythm, and not only in the quotations of the songs on the stage, but even the narrator's words are often prosodic, which might suggest the storytelling tradition. A lot of the narrator's attention has previously been given to Okuni's life in Kyoto, her success, recognition and the fortune she achieved. As the plot progresses towards her performance, the verses assume more and more the 7-5 structure, which is what I term the *stage ku*, typical of performing arts from the *shirabyōshi* times (12th century), as discussed in Rumánek 2012.

Thus, Okuni starts dancing at a cherry blossom viewing venue in the most gorgeous atmosphere imaginable, with a classical poem quoted[8], and this is when the words about the spring time in the Capital are sung – which is the opening *shōdan* of the Kyōdai nō beginning. In Kabuki Saushi, however, these are not the opening words of the performance because they are followed by another narratological rupture when performance quotation transforms into narration again, offering detailed descriptions of the atmosphere in the auditorium before the performance, the suspense of the expecting spectators, in contrast to the nō-like straightforward dramatic pace with which the Kyōdai play progresses. Kabuki Saushi, it seems, makes free use of the original libretto for its storytelling purposes, choosing from it freely according to the author's (perhaps narrator's) preference. At last, Okuni appears and performs her first dance in Kabuki Saushi, after which she disappears into the dressing room again.

What follows in Kabuki Saushi is called "kyōgen" (described as "mai-kyōgen of Narihira's love *monogurui*" in Geinōshi Kenkyūkai 1986, 14) and is a (presumably dancing) piece about *Narihira*, a figure based on the 9th century prince-made-commoner and poet, famous for his (often highly scandalous) love affairs. The narrator comments that Narihira's heart was in frenzy because of his

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[8] It is a tanka by Sosei Hōshi (Kokinshū 56) in which the springtime Kyoto of the cherry blossom season was represented by the metaphor of brocade.

dissipation and his figure is described with the belt worn very low, wound around a womanish kimono. From the description, it can be imagined that this piece was done in a humorous, parodic way when Narihira "*sings about all forms of love in all sorts of kouta, dancing along*," and this parody is designated as *Narihira kyōran*.

In his analysis of Kabuki Saushi, Hattori (Geinōshi Kenkyūkai 1986, 14) maintains that it was written as an impression of seeing the wakashu kabuki performance. On the other hand, Moriya Takeshi[9] sees the appearance of the beautiful Narihira as the reflection of a trend, in Kan'ei (1624-1630), of a return to classical topics. Thus Narihira, once a popular figure in nō, found his way into kabuki.

Narihira kyōran is the number in which gender reversal, a typical feature of Okuni kabuki, virtually starts. The narration depicts his outfit as half male (*kazaori* cap and a sword) and half female (coloured *kosode*). In fact, the latter might be a subversive reinterpretation of the Heian courtier's garment which, in the popular entertainment that was kabuki, was reinterpreted as womanish and thus used humorously: (Ss c 70-72) *which was an outfit which puzzled everyone – you saw a woman and then realized it was a man, or vice versa, thinking you saw a man you then saw a woman*.

Narihira's effeminate air was a tradition reaching back to times long before Okuni kabuki. Already as hero of the classical nō *Izutsu*, Narihira wears a special kind of costume, combining the courtier's hat and specially patterned coat that identify Narihira with the female kimono of the female character, Aritsune's daughter. "*It is a "half-man, half-woman" combination, which shows that while she is still Aritsune's daughter, she is also now Narihira*" (Looser 2008, 186). Thanks to this *between-gender-ness* of Narihira, he was also a welcome character in later performances of wakashu kabuki; this way of representation of the famous 9th century personage did not leave the stage of early kabuki well into the yarō kabuki period (Mezur 2005, 167).

Narihira in Kabuki Saushi is a messenger: a parallel can be drawn between him and the figure of Nagoya Sanza who is to appear next and who, similarly to Narihira, is (c 84-90) *a womanizer of exquisite taste [...] A kabukimono of excellent figure, he had arduously led the <u>lifestyle of falling in love, sent messengers with notes to women regardless of their social statuses</u> and had them at his wish; they called him the kabukimono who knew how to flow through life, but now, it is only his name that has remained in the world.*

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[9] 守屋毅 *Miyako no geinō* (Geinōshi Kenkyūkai 1986, 14).

The lifestyle of falling in love (*irogonomi*) and sending messengers with notes to women regardless of their social status are signs which unite the figures of Nagoya and Narihira.

The Images

The images are useful in that they offer us some idea about the possible staging of Okuni kabuki, although not necessarily a completely reliable reflection of the historical reality – Kimbrough warns that the depictions (especially in Nara-e-hon kojōruri and sekkyō stories) of performances may not always be trustworthy (Kimbrough 2013, 11).

What all the three illustration sets have in common is the depiction of what is generally considered as the arrival of the *bōrei* ghost of Nagoya Sanza:
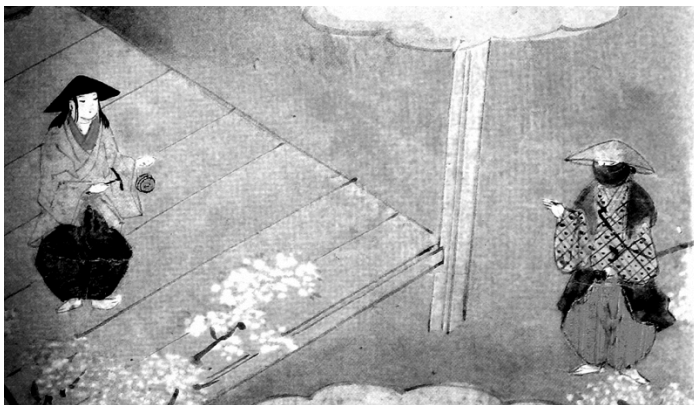
1. Bōrei image – Kd (Kd pic. 7)

2. Bōrei image - Ss (Ss pic. 8)

3. Bōrei image – Bkk (Bkk pic. 1)

In all three of them, a male figure is seen in front of the stage (or, in the case of Kabuki Saushi, in front of an *engawa* veranda) upon which Okuni stands. This represents a break from the nō staging since in the mugen nō plays, in the presentday staging at least, the appearing spirit or ghost comes onto the stage down the hashigakari bridge; in early kabuki, he apparently came from the side of the audience; not only do we see him do so in the pictures, but the kotobagaki says so, too:

> *Who is it <u>amidst the gathered crowd of high and low</u>? Should I know you? Who would you be?* (Kd c. 71-73)

A sense of *humour* and *parody* can be identified: "*Though it is humble, please do deign to come in, she invites master Sanza in. And so, you a kabukibito <u>of old</u>, tell us, please, how the world <u>used to be then</u>*" (Ss c. 115-117) A slight mockery can be imagined here as the tea house lady is actually talking to someone who has been dead and by this kind of speech she seems to distance herself from what used to be the reality of the deceased person's life. This attempt at humour adds to the general light tone and runs counter to the common and supposedly natural awe felt at the apparition of a ghost.

Hattori writes that it has been taken for granted (Hattori 2003, 76) that the *chaya no asobi* was the most favourite and most typical skit of early kabuki and that its attraction consisted in gender reversal with Okuni enacting the kabukimono visiting the chaya and a kyōgenshi playing the *chaya no kaka*, or tea house lady. This cast is based on the *chaya no asobi* scene in the Bunkakan fragments which show three characters presumably representing:
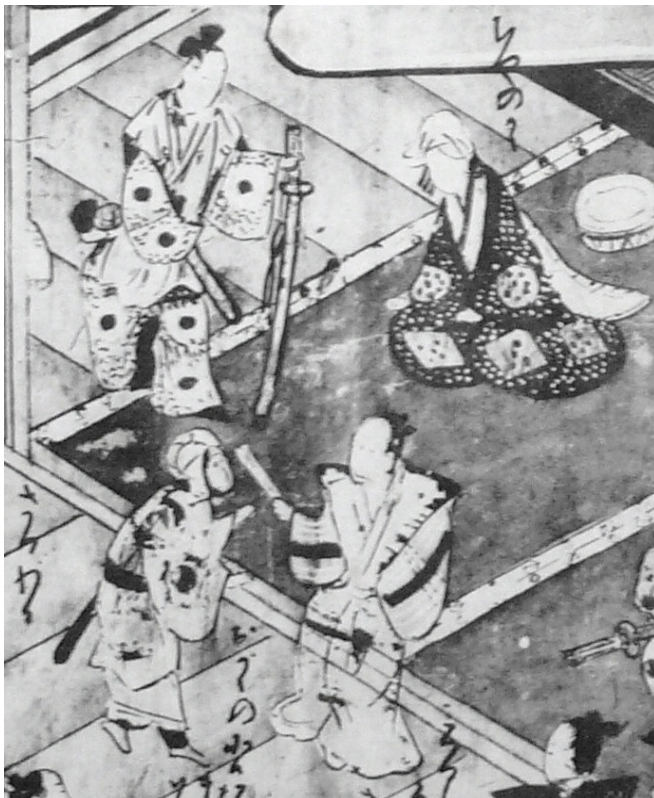
    1. <u>Okuni</u> playing the *kabukimono*,

2. a <u>kyōgenshi</u> playing the *chaya no kaka*, and
3. the <u>saruwaka</u> playing the *joker*.

4. Chaya figures – Bkk (Bkk pic. 2)

Out of the three sets, the Bunkakan images are considered as the earliest, and thus this cast is supposed to be the original one. These figures can be seen in Kabuki Saushi as well:

5. Saruwaka and kaka - Ss (Ss pic. 10)

Conclusion

It is nowadays difficult to appreciate fully how enthralling Okuni's kabuki odori must have been when it gained sensational acclaim and Kyoto's audiences were swept away, as can be imagined on the basis of the Okuni sōshi. These materials can, however, give us an idea about the staging, the figures and the structure. They complement our understanding of how new and fresh Okuni's performance was. Presumably attractive, sensual and amusing at the same time, it modernised the nō/kyōgen theatre tradition to a point where the development took on a completely new direction and kabuki was born.

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