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4 **KABUKI: CLASSIC JAPANESE THEATRE** Theatre began to develop in various parts of the world many years ago. In India, China, and other parts of the Asian continent, theatre emerged between 350 b.c.e. and 1350 c.e. It developed initially in India and China. In Japan, it appeared first during the fourteenth century. One of the three major classic forms of Japanese theatre is kabuki. Shown here is a moment in traditional kabuki theatre, which—with its stylized movements, elaborate costumes, and painted facial makeup—continues to be popular in Japan today. The actor is Nakamura Shichinosuke in the Heisei Nakamura-za troupe's presentation of *Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami* or *Summer Festival: A Mirror of Osaka*, a Kabuki theatre drama from the 1600s. (© Michael Kim/Corbis)

For 1,000 years, from approximately 350 to 1350 C.E., there was no organized theatre in the West. But on the continent of Asia, thousands of miles away, theatre had begun to emerge. The development of theatre began in India more than 2,000 years ago, and theatre later became well established in China while formal theatre was still moribund in the West. Theatre in Japan followed not long after. These traditions of Asian theatre, established centuries ago, continue to the present day.

## THE THEATRES OF ASIA

### BACKGROUND

The people who created theatre in Asia knew nothing of the theatres of Greece or Rome. In Chapter 10, we mentioned the universal tendency toward theatre; and except where theatre is expressly forbidden by religious or other laws, it is likely to emerge in any civilization. This was true in India, China, and Japan—the countries we will focus on in this chapter—and also in other Asian countries, such as Indonesia.

Each of the Asian theatres is unique, but these theatres also have aspects in common that set them apart from Western theatre. To mention two: they rely much more on dance than Western theatre does (in many instances, Asian theatrical presentations could be called *dance dramas*), and they more heavily emphasize symbolism. All the great Asian traditions—including those of India, China, and Japan—have created and sustained one form or another of what has been described as *total theatre*. In this type of theatre there is a synthesis or integration of elements—acting, mime, dancing, music, and text—more complete than in traditional Western theatre. Though each of the Asian theatrical traditions is unique and self-contained, all have qualities that may seem familiar to Westerners who have been exposed to opera in which a colorful blending of ideas, art, and technique is crucial.

One reason why this kind of synthesis developed in Asia and found continued support lies in the fact that the religious roots of theatre are still kept alive there. Each of the three Asian traditions on which we will focus—Indian, Chinese, and Japanese—reached a high point of artistic excellence at a time when religion and philosophy were central in its culture. This level of excellence has kept the focus of traditional theatre at least allied to religion and philosophy, even when society itself changed and became modernized.

We can speculate on the antecedents of theatre in India, China, and Japan, but the actual origins of theatre in each culture remain obscure. The high point, however, usually occurred when writers of poetic and intellectual ability began to create a dramatic tradition in which the text assumed a central place.

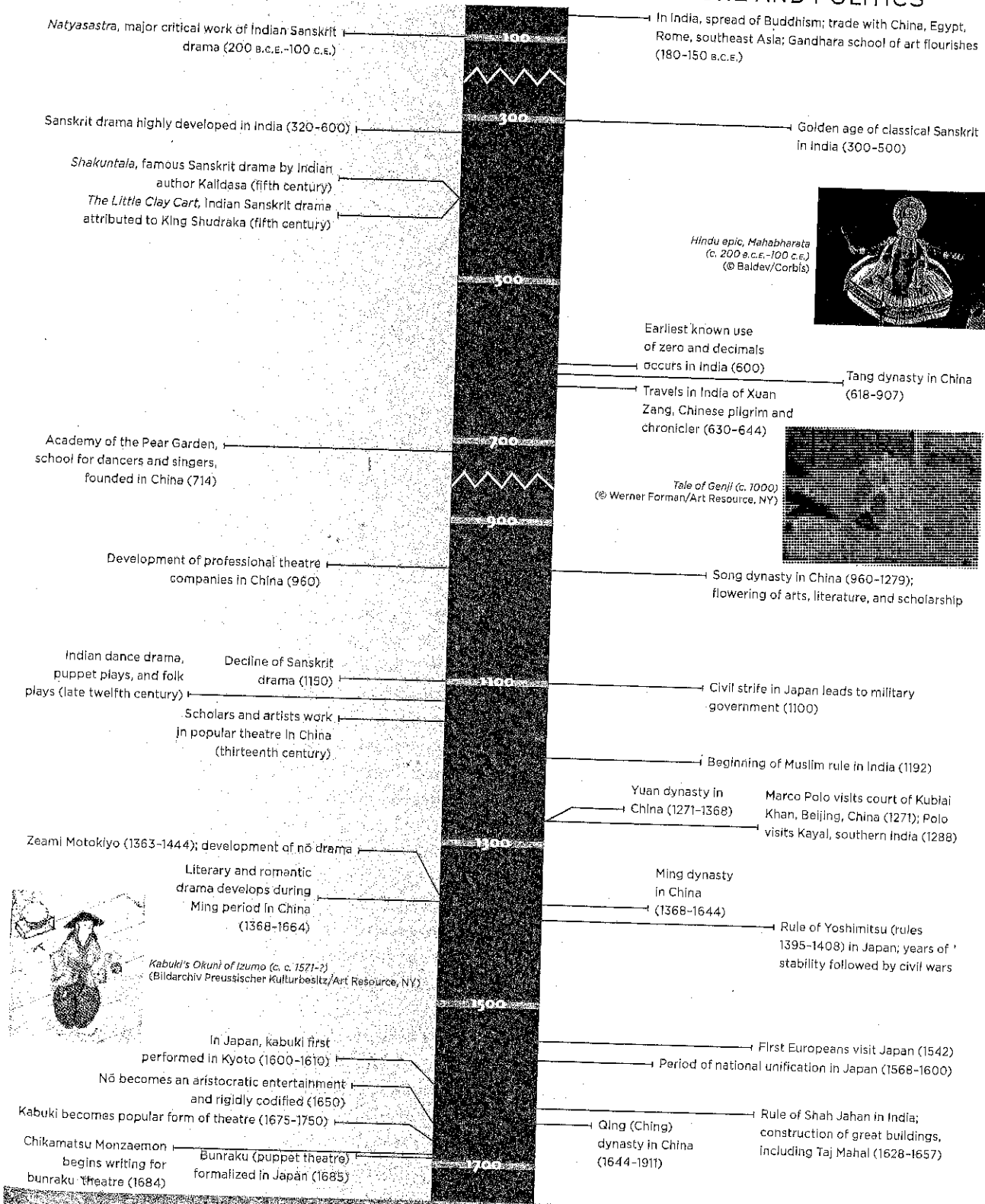
What remained in later years was usually the words rather than the production style; this is, of course, partially explained by the fact that anything written, such as a script, has some permanence, whereas a performance is ephemeral. Thus, little is known of early performance practices in China or India. Japan, on the other hand, is unique in having preserved many of the ancient techniques of acting, dancing, and singing. Still, in all three theatres the ancient traditions—interpreted and reinterpreted as these cultures developed and changed—have continued to color and shape many later experiments.

# ASIA

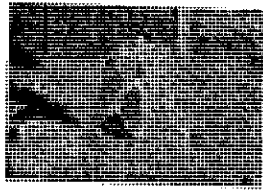
YEAR, C.E.

## THEATRE

## CULTURE AND POLITICS



Hindu epic, *Mahabharata* (c. 200 B.C.E.-100 C.E.) (© Baldev/Corbis)



*Tale of Genji* (c. 1000) (© Werner Forman/Art Resource, NY)



*Kabuki's Okuni of Izumo* (c. 1571-?) (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)

## INDIAN THEATRE

Indian history has been characterized as a succession of immigrations into the Indian subcontinent. Early traces of civilization there go back to 3000 B.C.E. The Aryans, who came into southern India 1,000 years later, left behind works in Sanskrit that constitute the basis of the great Indian literary traditions. Scholars believe that by 1000 B.C.E., certain fundamental aspects of Indian civilization were already established; one of these is the caste system under which people are classified by heredity: a person must remain in the caste to which he or she is born, and people are forbidden to change occupations.

Around 400 B.C.E., Buddhism, which had its origins in India, reached a peak of development, and soon it became a major force throughout eastern and central Asia. Based on the ideas of Gautama Buddha (c. 563–483 B.C.E.), Buddhism teaches that suffering is inherent in life but that human beings can be liberated from suffering by mental and moral self-purification. King Asoka, who ruled in India about 240 B.C.E., managed to unite the whole nation under Buddhist rule, but a period of disorder and confusion followed until the Gupta dynasty began to unite the nation again around 320 C.E.

It was at this time that another important thread in Indian history, Hindu culture, entered a golden age; and it was during the following centuries that the great Sanskrit dramas were written and performed. Hinduism stresses the belief that soul or spirit is the essence of life; that the goal of all people is to achieve oneness with the supreme world-soul, known as *Brahman*; and that the things of this life do not exist in the same way as Brahman, which is eternal, infinite, and indescribable.

### SANSKRIT DRAMA

What remains from the tradition of the Indian Golden Age is a group of plays written in Sanskrit, the language of the noble classes, to be performed in various court circles. There are between fifty and sixty plays that can be reliably assigned to this period, and the greatest of them are among the finest works of classical Indian literature.

We have been provided a great insight into this early Indian theatre by a remarkable document called the *Natyasastra* (translated as *The Study of Theatre* or *The Art of Theatre*). The *Natyasastra* has been attributed to Bharata Muni but may well be by someone else, possibly by several people. Written sometime during the 300-year period between 200 B.C.E. and 100 C.E., it describes the mythological origin of theatre in India and also presents important material about the nature of Indian drama; it even includes a description of the theatre space in which performances took place.

In the course of this complex treatise, the author defines a quality called *rasa*, or flavor, which permits spectators to surrender themselves to a dramatic situation corresponding to some powerful feeling that they themselves possess. Theatre can thus serve as a means toward enlightenment; art becomes a way to move toward metaphysics and the divine.

The *Natyasastra* also serves as a kind of encyclopedia of theatrical practice. In an abstract way, every element of the complex ancient theatre is treated, from gesture and posture to music, dance, voice, and so forth. Types of characters and categories of plays are discussed, and all this specific information is related in turn to a series of metaphysical principles, which, although perhaps difficult for the modern reader to grasp, are nevertheless challenging, even humbling, to read.



#### SANSKRIT DRAMA

The great early drama of India was Sanskrit, and it appears to have first developed between 200 b.c.e. and 100 c.e. Sanskrit drama reached its high point between 300 c.e. and 600 c.e. Shown here is a performance, in the Shri Shri-Govindaji Temple in Imphal, of a drama illustrating episodes from the great Sanskrit epic *The Mahabharata*. (© Lindsay Hebbard/Woodfin Camp and Associates)

Although we do not know exactly how plays were performed, we learn from the *Natyasastra* that each early troupe presenting Sanskrit theatre had a leader, the *sudradhara*, who was the chief actor and also managed all others involved in production. Men were the main performers, but women played important roles too. Acting in this type of theatre was a skill that combined voice, body, emotions, costume, and makeup in an integrated whole.

The typical theatre in which Sanskrit drama was performed was ninety-six feet long and forty-eight feet wide, divided equally into stage and auditorium, and its seating capacity was probably between 200 and 500. There were four pillars in the auditorium—colored white, yellow, red, or blue—indicating where members of different castes were to sit. A curtain divided the stage into two parts: one part for the action and the other for dressing rooms and a behind-the-scenes area. The few records available from the later period of Sanskrit drama indicate that most performances were given by troupes invited to the courts of the nobility, and performing spaces were arranged in courtyards and similar areas.

Scenery was evidently not used, although elaborate costumes probably were. Dance, symbolic gestures, and music played an important part in the productions; but

again, we have no specific information about performance practices. The plays often make use of fixed characters, such as a narrator and a clown; once again, there are no details concerning how these performers appeared onstage.

From comments in a book entitled *Mahabhasya (Great Commentary)*, some scholars believe that the main elements of Sanskrit drama, as described in the *Natyasastra*, were in place by 140 B.C.E. However, this is speculative and has not yet been proved. The earliest plays that survive, from the first and second centuries C.E., were written by Asvaghosa.

As we have noted, these plays were written in Sanskrit, the classical language of the nobility, though some of the lover characters in the later plays speak a hybrid of Sanskrit and local dialect. Thus the plays had little following among the general public, who could not understand them. The plays usually drew on themes from Indian epic literature.

From what we know, the most productive playwright of classical India was Bhasa, who may have lived around 400 C.E. Thirteen surviving plays have been attributed to him, but it is not certain they are all his. Among the best-known plays of this general era is *The Little Clay Cart*, attributed to King Sudraka, although his identity and dates have not been clearly established. He is thought by many to have lived in the fifth century C.E. *The Little Clay Cart* concerns the love between a ruined merchant and a courtesan; its style is enlivened and enriched by politics and humor. The most famous Sanskrit play, however, comes from the fourth or fifth century: this is *Shakuntala*, which is usually considered the finest classical Indian drama and whose author, Kalidasa, is the greatest of the playwrights from the classic period.

**READ** *The Little Clay Cart*

<http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/21020>

**Kalidasa** Though *Shakuntala* is an acknowledged masterpiece of Indian drama, almost nothing is known about its author, Kalidasa (373?–415 C.E.). Many scholars have attempted to establish his date of birth and to learn some details of his life, but they have had little success. There is no doubt, however, that *Shakuntala* is a masterwork of Sanskrit drama. In seven acts, the play recounts the romance of King Dushyanta and Shakuntala, the foster daughter of a hermit, who secretly marry and are then subjected to a long separation brought about by the curse of an irate sage. After many trials, the lovers are reunited and the king finally meets his son and heir.

*Shakuntala*, which is subtitled *The Recovered Ring*, has story elements such as a secret marriage, forgetfulness caused by a curse, and a magic ring. It also has ideas from Indian philosophy, religion, aesthetics, and psychology. Like all Sanskrit drama, it has both serious and comic elements and includes a large number of locations and characters. It also includes supernatural elements. In addition, *Shakuntala* has a recognition scene in which the lovers confirm their identity through signs; this recognition through signs bears some resemblance to scenes in classic Greek tragedy.

While *Shakuntala* follows traditional patterns of Sanskrit drama, it is set apart by Kalidasa's delicate lyricism. Kalidasa wrote several poems that mingle love, nature imagery, and religion. He also wrote two other plays: *Malavika and Agnimitra*, a courtly comedy about a king's love for one of the palace serving women, and *Vikrama and Urvashi*, a heroic mythological drama focusing on the love of a king and a nymph.

## LATER INDIAN DRAMA

Sanskrit drama—both the plays themselves and dramatic criticism—had faded by the end of the ninth century. By the twelfth century, the Arabs had begun to invade India, and in 1206 they established the sultanate of Delhi. With this series of invasions, the Hindu Sanskrit tradition disappeared. Under Islamic rule, theatrical activities were not encouraged and the old ways of performing were no longer maintained among educated people.

However, folk dramas in the many vernacular languages of India had always been popular, and the continued performances of such works, while they may not have achieved a very high artistic level, helped to keep certain traditions alive. Many of these folk plays have continued to the present day. They used the same traditional epic materials as Sanskrit dramas, but most of them were created by dramatists whose names are now unknown, and the scripts—assuming that these dramas were written down—have not been preserved. Folk plays were extremely eclectic and emphasized spectacle rather than metaphysical profundity.

Also popular with the public were dance dramas that took up aspects of Indian myths. In the performance of such dramas, movement, rather than the spoken word, was strongly emphasized. These and other developments in later Indian theatre, including a well-known dance-drama form called *kathakali*, will be discussed in detail later.

## CHINESE THEATRE

The civilization of China can be traced back to at least 2000 B.C.E., when a unified culture spread over large parts of the area that is now the People's Republic of China. The Shang Dynasty represents the first period that can be authenticated through artifacts and documents. The period following the Shang Dynasty was a turbulent era known as the Zhou Dynasty. The dates of both dynasties are somewhat disputed. Traditionally, the Shang was thought to have been from 1766 to 1122 B.C.E., but some scholars suggest either 1600 or 1523 to 1028 B.C.E. The Zhou Dynasty was dated from 1122 to 256 B.C.E., but alternative dates have been offered: 1027 to 256 B.C.E. In any event, during the later Zhou Dynasty, Confucius, Lao-tzu, and Mencius—three of the greatest Chinese philosophers—lived and wrote. They formed part of the general background of religions, philosophies, and religious practices out of which later Chinese theatre developed.

Confucianism was based on the teachings of Confucius (551–479 B.C.E.), whose ideas about the perfectibility of human beings were never wholly embraced in his lifetime but were widely adopted by later generations. Confucianism emphasized the responsibility of one individual or group to others: a ruler to his subjects, family members to one another, friends to friends. Taoism began in the sixth century B.C.E. with the teachings of Lao-tzu (born c. 604 B.C.E.), who believed in the importance of the *tao*, or path. Taoism stresses simplicity, patience, and nature's harmony; following the *tao*, the path of the cosmos, leads to self-realization. A key element in the philosophy

of Mencius (c. 371–288 B.C.E.) is that all people are good. Their innate moral sense can be cultivated, or it can be perverted by an unfavorable environment.

Another movement that was to influence the development of theatre, in China as well as in other societies, was *shamanism*, whose rituals combined costume, song, dance, and gesture. Shamans were spiritual leaders who were thought to have magical powers to communicate with the dead and to ward off evil spirits. Buddhism, too, found its way from India to China and was added to the religious thought and practice of the time.

In terms of political developments, by 200 B.C.E. the centralized imperial system had been developed, and China was provided with a central government that continued to remain effective through many long periods of stability down to modern times.

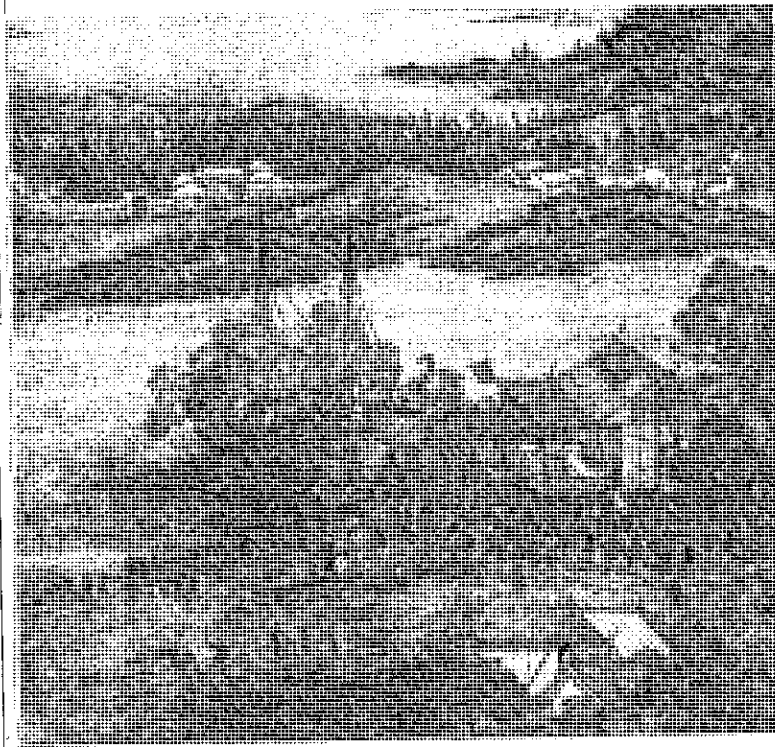
## EARLY THEATRE IN CHINA

The early development of theatre in China—as with many other forms of Chinese art—was linked to the patronage of the imperial court. Popular forms of theatre may also have flourished, though no records of early folk performances survive. Records of court entertainments, however, go back as far as the fifth century B.C.E., and such diverse activities as skits, pantomimes, juggling, singing, and dancing are frequently mentioned in ancient chronicles.

The court of the emperors during the Tang period (618–906 C.E.) was one of the high points of human culture. At this time there was a kind of actors' training institute in the capital; it was called the Pear Garden and had been founded in 714. Details of activities and performances at the Pear Garden have not been preserved, but it firmly established a tradition of training theatrical performers.

In the Song Dynasty (960–1279), which preceded the coming of the Mongols, various court entertainments contributed to the development of what are known as *variety plays*. In addition to court records, there are other documents recording the existence of traveling theatrical troupes, some permanent playhouses, and theatrical activity that involved not only actors, dancers, and singers but also shadow puppets and marionettes. Low comedy was popular as well, and its effect must have been something like our vaudeville.

A form that emerged in the province of Zhejiang, possibly in the early twelfth century, was called *nanxi*, which means “southern drama,” after the region where it developed. Indications are that at this time four types of characters were predominant in Chinese theatre: the *sheng*, or male character; the *dan*, or female character; the *jing*, or painted face; and the *chou*, or clown. These were to remain staples of Chinese theatre in subsequent works.



### EARLY CHINESE THEATRE

Detail from a silk scroll depicting, at the center on the right-hand side, a Chinese theatre set up for a festival in the twelfth century at Kaifeng, the northern capital during the Ching dynasty. (This scroll is an eighteenth-century copy of the original.) Note the covered stage on which performers appear, and the audience members standing on three sides of the stage observing the action. (National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan, Republic of China)

A significant synthesis of art and popular tradition was to come in the dramas of the Yuan period, which followed the Song.

## THEATRE IN THE YUAN DYNASTY

The Yuan Dynasty (1279–1368) was well known in the West through the writings of the Italian explorer Marco Polo. The ruler at this time was not a Chinese emperor but a Mongol, Kublai Khan, whose grandfather Genghis Khan had come down from the north to conquer China.

Although they tolerated many Chinese customs, the Mongols nevertheless dismantled much of the traditional bureaucracy. Ironically, this turned out to be an important impetus for the development of Chinese theatre. Earlier, the highly educated literati—literary intellectuals—had composed essays and poetry of the highest quality but had disdained plays as beneath their dignity. With the coming of the Mongols, many of the literati were no longer employed by the government and took up literary and theatrical work to make a living. In this way, high art and the popular theatrical tradition met. Because the complex mixture of cultural influences produced such a rich outpouring during the Yuan Dynasty, scholars have compared its theatre to that of Greece in the fifth century B.C.E. and to that of Elizabethan England.

The form of drama perfected in the Yuan Dynasty, often referred to as *zaju*, usually had four acts or—perhaps more accurately since these plays used a great deal of music—four song sequences. Rather than writing specifically for the dramas, playwrights composed their texts to suit the rhythms and meters of popular music already known to the audience. Usually the protagonist sang all the music in any act. Unfortunately, none of the music has survived.

The poetic content of these plays was considered the central factor in their success. Because of their lyrical nature, these dramas had only a few characters and avoided subplots and other complications. Accounts from the Yuan period tell us that topics chosen by the playwrights ranged from love and romance to religion and history, domestic and social themes, crimes and lawsuits, and bandit heroes.

**Important Plays from the Yuan Period** Though we do not know exactly how many plays were produced during the Yuan period, there are records indicating that more than 500 dramatists were writing at this time; and we know the titles of some 700 plays, of which 168 survive.

Perhaps the most famous of the plays surviving from this period is *The Romance of the Western Chamber*, actually a cycle of plays, by Wang Shifu, who wrote in the late thirteenth century. These dramas chronicle the trials of two lovers—a handsome young student and a lovely girl of good family—who have been models for thousands of imitations down to the present century. The plays contain a certain amount of adventure and a good deal of superlative poetry.

Another popular play that has survived is *The Orphan of Chao*, which deals with vengeance, sacrifice, and loyalty. *The Orphan of Chao* was one of the first Chinese plays known in the West, as a version of it was translated into French in 1735 and was adapted for the French stage by the philosopher Voltaire.

Another popular Yuan drama, *The Circle of Chalk*, is an excellent example of the lawsuit-and-trial genre in which a clever, Solomon-like judge frees an innocent person accused of a crime. When the twentieth-century German playwright Bertolt Brecht

saw a version of this play (it had been freely adapted and translated into German), he was so intrigued with the theme that he created his own version: *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*.

**Theatre Production in the Yuan Period** Despite the fact that many Yuan texts survive and have been admired down to the present day, relatively little is known about how they were performed. Contemporary spectators left few records of their reactions, perhaps because theatregoing was regarded as beneath the notice of highly educated people. Nevertheless, in recent years careful scholarship has managed to piece together a certain amount of information on theatre presentations.

Professional actors and actresses performed in Yuan dramas, and on occasion both would play male and female roles. Some of the actresses performed for private entertainments at the palace, and stories of their affairs in high society were as eagerly sought out as stories about the activities of today's film and television stars. The performers were organized into troupes, some of which were run by women.

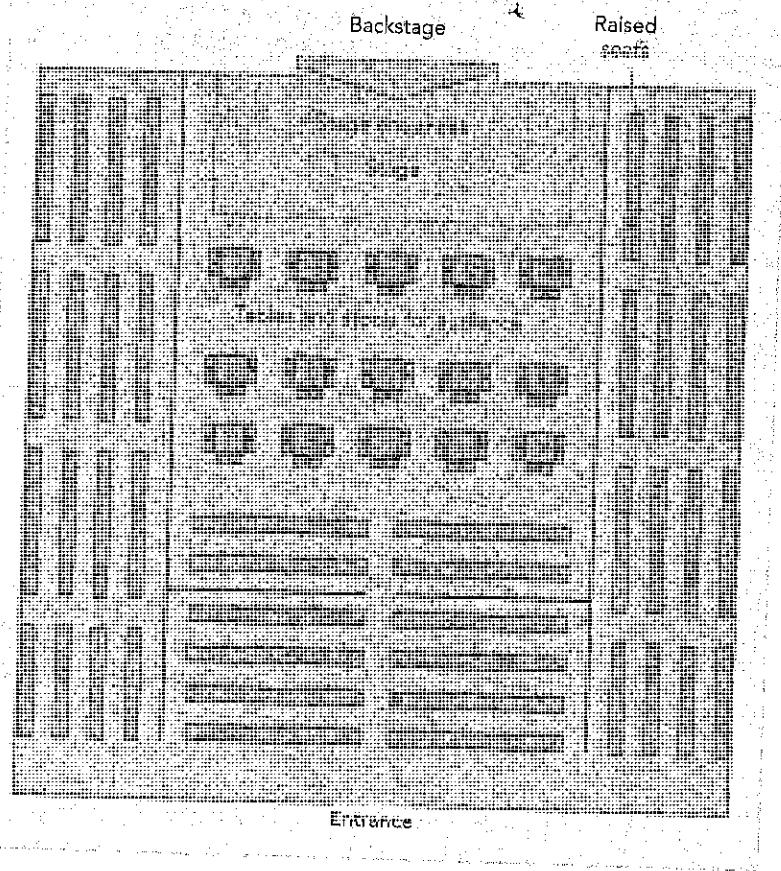
Only meager information remains about the theatres used for these performances. Evidently, there was a bare stage with two doors on each side at the rear, and a painted cloth hanging between the doors. (This arrangement is shown in a wall hanging from northwestern China painted about 1324.) Most stages seem to have been built for outdoor use and were not roofed over. Curtains and such properties as swords and fans were used, but there is no evidence of any scenery. Much of the color of performances came from elaborate costumes. Some of the stylized robes, which are illustrated in artworks of the time, resemble those in modern Peking (or Beijing) opera. Makeup was also important and was evidently applied heavily in a stylized manner.

## THEATRE IN THE MING DYNASTY

By the end of the Yuan period, the level of accomplishment in theatre was very high and drama had become firmly established as a respectable art form. With the overthrow of the Mongols, however, and the establishment of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), a Chinese emperor was restored to the throne. At this point, the traditional patterns of social behavior were restored; highly educated scholars were still able to write plays, but they tended to confine their efforts more and more to dramas that would please the elite. The theatre tended to become ornate and artificial; it lost contact with the broad mass of the public, which had originally supported it.

What had been an active theatre in the Yuan Dynasty, responsive to general audiences, now became a kind of literary drama that emphasized poetry and was averse to sustained or powerful dramatic action. The structure of Ming plays often became far more complex than that of Yuan plays. Also, only one actor had sung in each act of a Yuan play, but several actors were now permitted to sing during an act, and the instrumental accompaniments became very elaborate.

One of the earliest and best plays written in this expanded form is *Lute Song* by Gao Ming (c. 1301–1370), dealing with questions of family loyalty in a woman whose husband has abandoned her for political reasons. *Lute Song* contains strong characterizations and beautiful poetry and has been popular ever since its composition; this story of a faithful wife even reached Broadway in a musical theatre version, also called *Lute Song*, written for Mary Martin in 1946.



### GROUND PLAN OF A TRADITIONAL CHINESE THEATRE

Diagrammed here is the arrangement for seating in Chinese theatres for the period from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. Before that, performances were held in teahouses; when permanent theatres were built, tables with chairs around them were retained in the section nearest the stage. Women and commoners sat at the sides and back.

Attempts to create drama of distinction during the Ming dynasty culminated in the works of Li Yu, a scholar who failed his examinations and became instead a playwright, theatre critic, and impresario.

**Li Yu** Li Yu (1611–c. 1685), China's first important drama critic, believed that a playwright should write clearly, with a mass audience in mind, and should be well versed in practical stage knowledge. These conclusions were based on his own experience as a popular playwright. His writings on theatre—in which he dealt with such matters as plot construction, dialogue, music, and versification—are among the most important in the history of Chinese dramatic criticism.

As a playwright, Li Yu wrote plays for entertainment and placed little emphasis on the poetic songs that other playwrights favored. Instead, he developed well-made situation comedies with intricate plots and sophisticated dialogue. Rather than borrow his material from standard literary sources, Li created original plots based on the lives of common people. He was particularly skilled at writing strong characters for his young female performers. Most of his notable plays, including *Ordained by Heaven*, *Be Circumspect in Conjugal Relationships*, and *The Error of the Kite*, revolve around romantic themes.

At the end of the Ming Dynasty, theatre, which was patronized almost entirely by the rich, began to lose any real contact with the larger public, and its vitality seeped away.

## JAPANESE THEATRE

Although the civilization of Japan is younger than that of China, the Japanese heritage is long and complex. The origins of the Japanese people are obscure, but anthropologists have found artifacts suggesting migrations from such diverse areas as Siberia, Korea, south China, and southeast Asia. We know that by the fifth century C.E. the southern portions of Japan were consolidated and a series of capitals were established in the vicinity of present-day Kyoto. At the time, the Japanese followed a religion called Shinto, or the Way of the Gods, closely allied to nature and spirit worship.

With the growing influence on the Japanese aristocracy of the Tang Dynasty in China (618–906 C.E.), Buddhism, a religion that was more sophisticated than Shinto in both ritual and doctrine, became a prevailing influence, first in court circles and then in the country as a whole. Influences from both Shinto and Buddhism were strong in the development of theatre in Japan.

### EARLY THEATRE IN JAPAN

The earliest recorded theatrical activities in Japan are the court entertainments of the Heian period (794–1195 C.E.). These entertainments were influenced by Chinese models, but that is the only link—a very remote one—between the two traditions. Later, similar kinds of performances formed part of annual Shinto and Buddhist ceremonies. These were usually of a popular nature and included juggling, skits, dancing, and the like.

The first great period in Japanese theatre occurred in the fourteenth century, not long after similar developments in China. The sudden and remarkable development of *nō* (it is also spelled *nob*)—one of the three principal forms of traditional Japanese theatre—came about when popular stage traditions were combined with serious scholarly pursuits.

### NŌ

In the fourteenth century in Japan, there were a number of roving troupes of actors who performed in a variety of styles; some of their presentations were simply popular entertainment, but some aspired to art. One of the more artistic troupes was directed by the actor Kan'ami (1333–1384), who was also a playwright. A typical, well-known play by Kan'ami is *Sotoba Komachi* (*Komachi at the Stupa*), which was based on a familiar legend of the time. In this legend, Komachi, a beautiful but cruel woman, is pursued by a man named Shii no Shōshō. She tells him that he must call on her for 100 nights in a row, and for 99 nights he comes, in all kinds of weather. But on the hundredth night he dies.

At the beginning of the play, two priests enter, discussing the virtues of following Buddha. They then come upon an old woman—the leading actor in the mask and wig of Komachi in old age. She says that she was once beautiful but has grown old and lost her beauty. She argues with the priests about religion and then reveals who she is. She recounts the story of what she did to Shōshō.

A presentation by Kan'ami's troupe was seen by the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408), a man of wealth, prestige, and enormous enthusiasm for the arts. Fascinated by what he saw, he arranged for Kan'ami's son, Zeami, who was then twelve years old, to have a court education in order to improve the quality of his art.

*Nō* Rigidly traditional form of Japanese drama combining music, dance, and lyrics.

When Zeami succeeded his father as head of the troupe, it remained attached to the shogun's court in Kyōto. With a patron of this caliber, Zeami was freed from financial problems and could devote himself to all aspects of theatre: writing plays, training actors, and constantly refining his own acting style, whose outlines had been inherited from his gifted father.

**Zeami Motokiyo** More than 500 years after his death, Zeami Motokiyo (1363–1443) is still considered the most important figure in the history of Japanese nō theatre. A gifted actor, Zeami brought new prestige to nō, and his plays remain an important part of its repertoire. He was most influential, however, as a theorist; in his writings, he established the aesthetic and philosophical basis of nō. Zeami became the director of his father's troupe when Kan'ami died in 1384. He continued to improve nō, borrowing elements of other, earlier, forms of dance drama. His 200 plays, 124 of which remain in the active nō repertory, incorporated his innovations.

Zeami also began writing on the theory and philosophy of nō, presenting ideas that were heavily influenced by his study of Zen. In his several volumes of theoretical works, Zeami developed the concept of *yūgen*, the mysterious inner heart or spirit behind outward form. *Yūgen* is the aim of nō performances; another definition of it might be philosophical and physical gracefulness.

**Characteristics of Nō Theatre** Under Zeami's direction, nō became the dominant form of serious theatre in his generation, and it remained dominant well past 1600 until it was supplanted in the popular taste by bunraku and kabuki.

Nō, as perfected by Zeami, was and is a remarkably successful synthesis of various theatrical forms into a single, total experience. Nō actors (there were no actresses in Zeami's theatre) trained from childhood and became adept at singing, acting, dancing, and mime. The plays they performed were remarkably sophisticated in language and content and were all constructed around a definite series of organizational principles based on musical, psychological, and mimetic—or imitative—movements, which change gradually from a slow to a fast tempo. Many of the greatest nō plays were written by Zeami himself.

The stories considered appropriate for nō plays were often from literary or historical sources. One important source was a famous novel of Heian court life, Lady Murasaki's *Tale of Genji*, written around 1000. Another important source was *The Tale of the Heike*, a chronicle of the devastating civil wars that destroyed the power of the aristocracy in Japan at the end of the Heian period in 1185. Nō characters were generally based on literary or historical figures already familiar to the audience. A nō play reveals some working out of passions felt by a character, who often appears as a ghost or spirit.



#### NŌ PERFORMANCE TODAY

Traditional nō theatre is still performed in Japan and other parts of the world, and its stylized acting, minimalist settings, ornate costumes, and distinctive masks are still used. Shown here is Haruhiko Jo, as the ancient former beauty in the all-male production of *Sotoba Komachi*, under the direction of Yukio Ninagawa in a production at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York. The Japanese playwright Mishima, who killed himself in a public ritual suicide in 1970, modernized fourteenth-century Japanese nō theatre. (© Michael Kim/Corbis)

# LIVING HISTORY

## SOTOBA KOMACHI

### 1413, KITANO TEMPLE, JAPAN

The year is 1413. In Japan, at the Kitano temple, a platform stage, with a floor of polished wood, has been set up. There is also a wooden walkway, or bridge, on which actors can move to the stage from a dressing room set up in one of the temple buildings. The spectators are on three sides of this platform stage.

The actor performing today is Zeami. He is fifty years old and has been under the patronage of the shogun of Japan since he was twelve. Zeami's father, Kan'ami, was a renowned actor before him, and Zeami has carried his father's art to even greater heights. He has studied different acting styles, perfected his own technique, trained other actors, and written plays for them to perform.

The theatre he has fashioned from all this is called *nō*; it has elements of opera, pantomime, and formal, stylized dance. In *nō* theatre, the main character, who wears a beautifully carved, hand-painted wooden mask, recites his or her adventures to the constant accompaniment of several onstage musicians. Toward the end of the play, the chief actor will perform a ritualistic dance that includes symbolic gestures of the head and hands and stomps of the feet on the wooden floor.

The crowd is gathered today for a special reason. Usually, Zeami per-

forms only in a restricted theatre space for the shogun and members of his court, or at a temple for a select audience. But here at the Kitano temple, performances will go on for seven days and will be open to everyone; as one later commentator will explain: "All were admitted, rich and poor, old and young alike."

As with all *nō* performances, several plays will be presented each day. The play the audience awaits now, *Sotoba Komachi*, was written by Zeami's father. In it, Zeami portrays a woman. (As in ancient Greek theatre, all the performers in *nō* are men.) The legend of Komachi is as well known to the audience as the story of Antigone was to the Greeks. Komachi, a beautiful but cruel woman, is pursued by a man named Shii no Shōshō. She tells him that he must call on her for 100 nights in a row, and for 99 nights he comes in all kinds of weather. But on the hundredth night he dies. On that night a snowstorm is raging and he falls, exhausted, to die on her doorstep.

When the play begins, we see two priests enter. As they discuss the virtues of following Buddha, they come upon an old woman. This is Zeami in the mask and wig of Komachi in old age. She is a wretched woman approaching her hundredth birthday. Komachi tells how she was once beautiful but has lost her beauty and grown old. She argues with the priests about religion and then

reveals who she is. She recounts the story of what she did to Shōshō.

As the play progresses, the audience watches Zeami's performance with rapt attention. At one point, his character becomes possessed: the spirit of Shōshō takes over Komachi, and Zeami acts this out in pantomime to a musical accompaniment. At times, he acts out Komachi's part while her lines are chanted by a chorus of ten or twelve men sitting at the side of the stage. At another point, Komachi is dressed as Shōshō and becomes him, feeling his death agony. Zeami performs this sequence as a mesmerizing, frightening dance. At the end of the play, the spirit of Shōshō leaves Komachi, and she prays to Buddha for guidance and for a peaceful life in the hereafter.

The audience members, who have heard a great deal about Zeami but have never before seen him perform, watch in awe. Throughout, he plays the various parts with astounding grace, subtlety, and understatement, developed through years of training and performance. The segments when he lets go—as in Shōshō's death agony—are all the more effective because of their contrast with the measured quality of the rest. For the audience, the play is a revelation of how moving a theatrical performance can be—an experience unlike any they have had before.

READ *Sotoba Komachi* in *Anthology of Living Theatre* or at:

<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/WalSoto.html>

The major roles in *nō* are the *shite* (SHEE-tay), or main character, who is often masked; the *waki*, a supporting character; and the *tsure*, an accompanying role. There may be various smaller parts as well, including a *kyōgen* (kee-OH-gehn), or comic character.

**Shite** Major roles in *nō*.

**Waki** Supporting role in *nō*.

**Tsure** Accompanying role in *nō*.

**Kyogen** Comic roles in *nō*.

**Producing Nō Theatre** The elegance, mystery, and beauty of *nō* have fascinated the Japanese since the time of Zeami, and the *nō* tradition, passed on from teacher to disciple, has been carried on to this day. In most of the larger Japanese cities, *nō* can be seen in excellent performances by troupes whose traditions go back to the fourteenth century—a remarkable legacy.

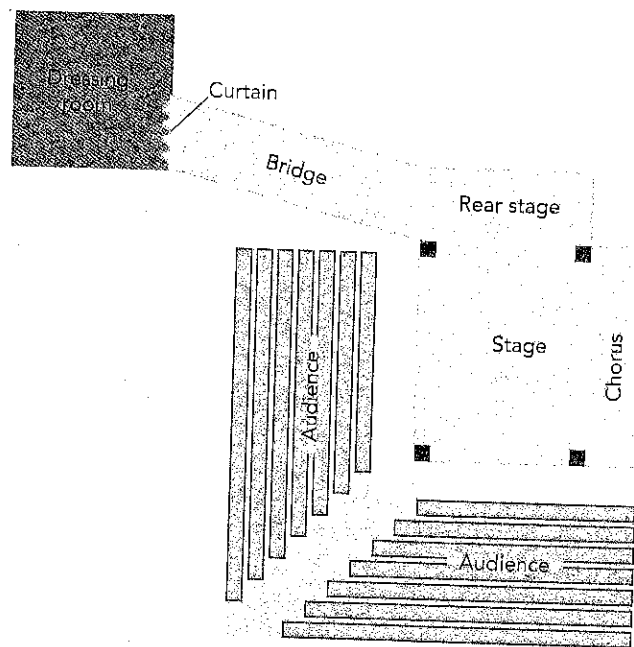
Even the *nō* stage has remained roughly the same since the time of Zeami and his immediate successors. There is a bridge, called the *hashigakari* (ha-shee-gah-KAH-ree), which leads from the actors' room offstage to the stage. The bridge is normally about twenty feet long. The main playing space to which it leads is about eighteen feet square; it is roofed and has a ceremonial pine tree painted on the rear wall. At the back of the playing space is a narrow section for four musicians who accompany the play on flute, small hand drum, large hand drum, and stick drum. *Nō* theatres were originally outdoors, and the audience sat on three sides of the stage. The modern *nō* theatre is built inside a larger shell as though it were a giant stage set itself, and the audience sits on two sides.

**Hashigakari** Bridge in *nō* theatre on which the performers make their entrance from the dressing area to the platform stage.

The temple roof above the stage is supported by four columns or pillars, each of which serves a definite purpose in the staging. In addition to the actors and musicians, in *nō* there is a chorus of ten men who serve as a very rough equivalent of the chorus in Greek theatre. *Nō* actors move in a highly stylized fashion that involves important elements of both dance and pantomime. During the performance of a *nō* text, the actors alternate sections of chanting with a kind of heightened speech that might best be compared to recitative, sung dialogue in Western opera. The costumes made for *nō* are usually of great elegance, and the masks worn by the *shite* are among the most beautiful, subtle, and effective created for any theatre.

There are occasional comic elements in *nō*, and these elements eventually developed as a separate form called *kyōgen*. *Kyōgen* plays, which use a good deal of folk humor and slapstick, are still performed and appreciated today.

The *kyōgen* are usually performed without special costumes, masks, or wigs, except when a *nō* play is being parodied, in which case the appropriate *nō* mask is used. Parody and satire are common in *kyōgen*, and no subject is sacrosanct or exempt from being



#### GROUND PLAN OF A TRADITIONAL NŌ THEATRE

*Nō* theatre of Japan—a stylized theatre originally for the upper classes—began nearly 600 years ago. It was performed outdoors; a ramp at the left led from a dressing room to the wooden platform stage. Spectators sat on two sides of the stage, to the left and in front.

treated comically. A feudal lord, monk, or friar can be the main figure; so might a drunken or stupid servant, a braggart, a shrew, or a gallant.

## BUNRAKU

Nō remained the most popular theatrical form of theatre during Japan's medieval period. During the sixteenth century, civil wars and other disturbances caused political disarray of increasing gravity until a general, Tokugawa Ieyasu, unified the country in 1600. All through the long Tokugawa period (1600–1868), which bears his family name, Japan was unified and at peace, but this calm was purchased at a price. Alarmed at the political maneuvering of Japan's growing number of Christians, who had been converted by European missionaries, the Tokugawa family outlawed Christianity and cut Japan off from any extensive contact with either China or Europe until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Peace did bring a rapid development of commerce and trade that led to increasingly sophisticated urban life. As the merchant class grew, its members' wealth and their increasing leisure time allowed them to patronize various entertainments. The aristocracy and the Tokugawa family continued to support nō as a kind of private state theatre, but the merchants supported theatrical arts that more closely mirrored their own world. These entertainments flourished in large cities, such as Osaka, Kyoto, and Edo (now Tokyo).

Before we turn to puppet theatre—bunraku—and to the later kabuki, it is worth noting that both forms of theatre can be understood more fully if one takes into account certain tenets of neo-Confucianism. These tenets form the basis of rigid codes of behavior regarding such matters as sacrifice, loyalty, and revenge as found in the class system and the samurai code of the warrior aristocracy of Japan. These strict codes of behavior, in turn, are reflected in the theatrical presentations of bunraku and kabuki.

Of the new popular forms of theatre that developed in Japanese cities, puppet theatre was the first. Since the nineteenth century, this puppet theatre has been called *bunraku* (buhn-RAH-koo), a name that derives from a famous puppeteer. It developed in a most unusual way. One widespread form of entertainment in the medieval period was the art of the chanter—who, with his *biwa* (a kind of large lute), would travel around the countryside intoning chronicles of wars and tales of romantic heroes and heroines. Between 1570 and 1600 the *samisen*, a three-stringed instrument something like a banjo, replaced the *biwa* as the chief instrument accompanying the chanter. By around 1600, it became customary to add to these performances, as a kind of extra attraction, companies of puppeteers who would act out the stories, "illustrating" the chanter's music. The introduction of the *samisen* and the puppeteers made possible the development of bunraku.

The chanted texts are called *jōruri* (joh-ROO-ree) after the name of a popular female character in one of the recited tales. The chanters, down to the present day, have been regarded with the kind of awe reserved for opera singers in the West. The chanters perform all the voices in a play, as well as the narration, and set the general mood. Originally, they also wrote their own scripts. Eventually, however, it became customary to ask someone else to write the text.

In bunraku, the puppets representing important characters are manipulated by three people: one for the legs, one for the left arm, and the chief handler for the head

**Bunraku** Japanese puppet theatre.

**Jōruri** In Japanese puppet theatre, chanted text.



#### JAPANESE BUNRAKU: PUPPET THEATRE

Bunraku—puppet theatre—became a popular form in Japan in the 1600s. In bunraku, unlike traditional Western puppet theatre, the puppeteers are in full view of the audience and are always dressed in black. Often, the story is delivered by a chanter, with the puppets dramatizing the action. Because the puppets are very complex, there is usually more than one puppeteer controlling each of them, as is the case in the photo shown here. (Kyodo via AP Images)

and right arm. The chief handler is often dressed in an elaborate, gorgeous costume, but the other handlers are dressed in black and are assumed to be invisible. The puppets, which today are approximately two-thirds life-size, were originally smaller. Bunraku reached its characteristic form in the 1730s when it became a three-man form. Before that, a significant step in its development was taken in 1685, when the writer Chikamatsu began to collaborate with Takemoto Gidayu, the outstanding bunraku chanter of the day. The first and undoubtedly the best of the bunraku writers, Chikamatsu contributed enormously to the transformation of this popular form into a vehicle for great art.

**Chikamatsu Monzaemon** Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725) was born to a provincial samurai family in 1653 and became the first important Japanese dramatist since the great period of *nō* drama 300 years earlier. His family apparently had literary interests; in 1671, they published a collection of haiku poetry that included some pieces by the future dramatist.

Chikamatsu did not begin to write plays until the age of thirty, but thereafter he was a prolific writer. His best-known dramas were written for the puppet theatre,

bunraku. He is one of the world's only major dramatists to write primarily for that form. He also wrote for kabuki theatre (discussed below), and many of his puppet plays were later adapted for kabuki.

As a playwright, Chikamatsu used his knowledge of Japanese life to create vivid, detailed, and accurate pictures of his society. His history or heroic plays are loosely constructed stories about the nobility; they sometimes feature military pageantry and supernatural apparitions. In his domestic dramas he explored the problems of the middle and lower classes; many of these plays are based on actual events. Often, his domestic plays deal with unhappy lovers, who may even be driven to suicide by the problems they face. Both Chikamatsu's history plays and his domestic plays are known for the beauty of his poetry, which elevates the incidents and the characters.

Western critics have compared Chikamatsu to both Shakespeare and Marlowe because of the quality of his verse and his knowledge of society. His most famous history play is *The Battles of Coxinga* (1715). His notable domestic dramas include *The Love Suicides at Sonezaki* (1703), *The Uprooted Pine* (1718), *The Courier for Hell* (1711), *The Woman Killer and the Hell of Oil* (1721), and *The Love Suicides at Amijima* (1721).

Chikamatsu spoke of maintaining in his dramas "what lies in the slender margin between the real and the unreal," and this quality, plus his remarkable ability as a poet, has kept his plays popular. His emphasis on ordinary people, too, not only was new to the Japanese stage but also foreshadowed later developments in European theatre.

## KABUKI

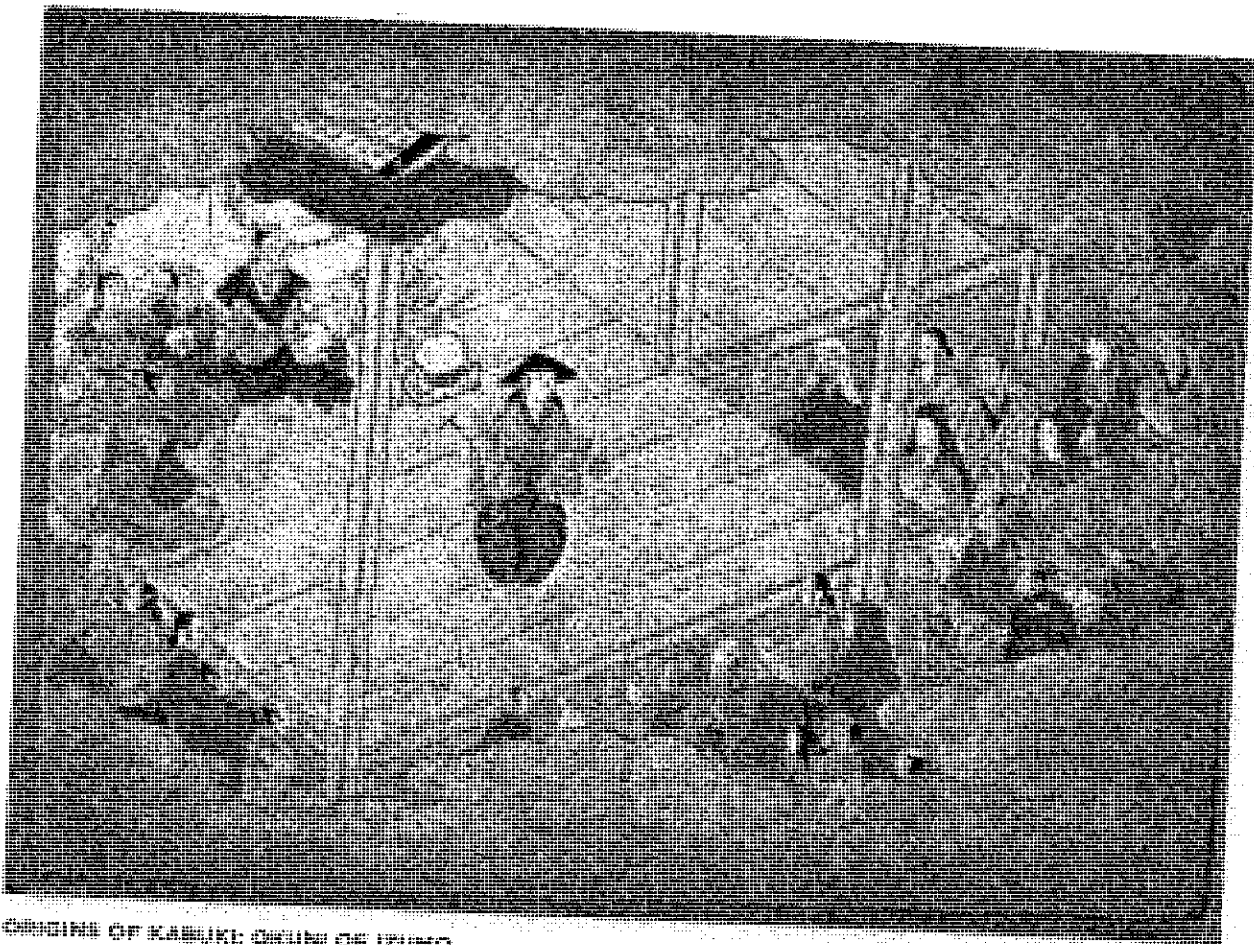
**Kabuki** Form of popular Japanese theatre combining music, dance, and dramatic scenes.

In the early seventeenth century a new form of Japanese theatre, *kabuki*, had emerged. Combining elements of *nō*, bunraku, and folk theatre, kabuki became the most popular form of theatre in Japan throughout the seventeenth century despite challenges and other vicissitudes. It has remained a part of the theatre scene in Japan in the centuries between and is still performed today.

**Origins of Kabuki: Okuni of Izumo** According to Japanese legend, credit for developing kabuki, the most popular form of traditional Japanese theatre, belongs to a Shinto priestess, Okuni of Izumo (born in the late sixteenth century). Though little is known of her life or of the circumstances that led to the development of kabuki, tradition holds that in 1603 this priestess began kabuki by dancing on a temporary stage set up in the dry bed of the Kamo River in Kyoto.

Probably, Okuni's early dances were of Buddhist origin and had been secularized by being intermingled with folk dances. It is said that Nagoya Sanzaemon, a samurai warrior who is believed to have been Okuni's lover, taught her adaptations of dances from *nō*, the samurai-sponsored drama of the period. She might have used *nō* dances as well as elements of popular dances, but no detailed descriptions of her performances survive.

That her dances were popular, however, is shown by the fact that she and her troupe toured Japan in 1603. Okuni used a stage similar to the *nō* stage for the performances of her group. In 1607 she performed for the shogun. The kabuki developed by Okuni became so popular that in 1616—only a few years after she had begun her performances—there were seven licensed kabuki theatres in Kyoto.



#### ORIGINS OF KABUKI: OKUNI OF UZUNO

One branch of the classic Japanese theatre is Kabuki, which is supposed to have originated with the performer Okuni. In this drawing, from a 17th century Japanese scroll, Okuni (center) is seen dancing in a Shinto temple in Kyoto. (Bildarchiv Preussischer Kulturbesitz/Art Resource, NY)

**Development of Kabuki** Dance was the basis of early kabuki performances, and the musical dance-dramas that developed revolved around stories that were romantic and often erotic. As a composite entertainment appealing to townspeople, kabuki was seen by some authorities as an unsettling influence on the rigid social and artistic structure.

A fascinating series of events occurred in the early days of kabuki related to social concerns and problems of gender and sex. Originally, most of the performers were women; but when social disruptions arose because of feuds over the sexual services of the women, the authorities intervened, and in 1629 women's kabuki was banned. Thereafter, young boys performed kabuki; but eventually it was felt that they, too, as sexual targets of older men in the audience, were causing problems of social and class conflicts, and so in 1652 the authorities also banned boys' troupes.

In addition to concerns about sexual relationships between performers and audience members, the authorities also worried about the mingling of different classes and improper displays by samurai at kabuki performances. After 1652, therefore, men's



#### KABUKI PERFORMANCE TODAY

Seen here is the kabuki actor Kankuro Nakamura performing on a special stage, set up on a beach at the break of the New Year in Naruto, Japan. Today, all roles in kabuki are performed by men; most of the actors are descended from generations of kabuki performers and train for years. Note the heavy, stylized makeup, which covers the entire face; the ornate costume; and the highly theatrical wig. The costumes, makeup, gestures, and stage configuration are part of a long-standing tradition. (© Eriko Sugita/Reuters/Corbis)

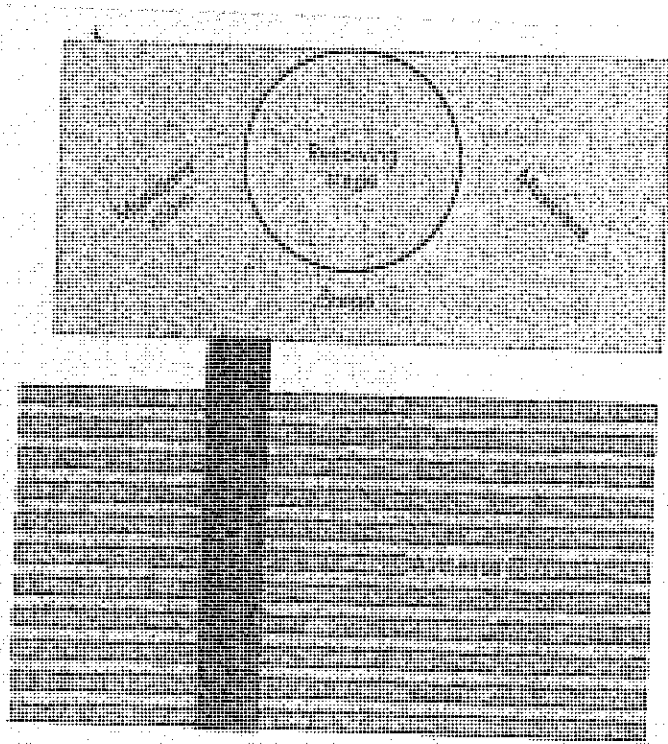
troupes, in which sexual glamour was deemphasized, became the rule—a custom that remains to the present day. Though the men's troupes were heavily regulated, kabuki flourished in the following centuries and the eroticism that had marked kabuki in the early days was reintroduced. Part of this is due to the necessary development of the art of female impersonation by the male performers.

Kabuki was greatly indebted to the plays and performance of puppet theatre, including scenes in which actors imitated puppets' movements. At least half of the current kabuki repertoire was adapted from puppet theatre. Both kabuki and the puppets were less formal and distant than *nō*, which remained largely the theatre of the samurai class. Still, many samurai—despite official restrictions on their doing so—secretly attended kabuki, whose action, spectacle, and rhetoric they preferred to the solemnities of *nō*.

As kabuki itself became popular, the playwright Chikamatsu tried writing for troupes of kabuki actors and wrote off and on for kabuki for many years. Eventually, however, he abandoned the attempt because these performers, it is assumed, unlike chanters, tended to change his lines. Kabuki actors founded dynasties, many of them still active. A kabuki dynasty that lasted through twelve generations was founded by Ichikawa Danjuro (1660–1704), who became known as Danjuro I and who began a bravura acting style known as *aragato*. Many actors came to fame in *Chushingura* or *The Forty-Seven Rōnin*, a frequently revived play originally written for puppets. It is perhaps Japan's most popular history play. The play is based on an actual historical incident in which a provincial lord was provoked into an act of violence and forced to commit ritual suicide. It traces the vendetta or revenge of the forty-seven retainers who are left behind and is a remarkable blend of adventure, pathos, and romance. Ghost stories, too, were popular dramas in the kabuki repertoire.

**Producing Kabuki** Kabuki actors are trained from childhood in vocal technique, dancing, acting, and physical versatility. The male actors who play women's parts—these actors are called *onnagata*—are particularly skillful at imitating the essence of a feminine personality through stylized gestures and attitudes. Costumes and makeup in kabuki are elegant and gorgeous, although they may often be strikingly gritty and realistic. The effect of an actor's performance is frequently quite theatrical and a bit larger than life. Again, however, it must be emphasized that, for all its theatricality, kabuki actually expresses a wide range of styles, from the fantastical to the realistic.

The stage used for kabuki performances underwent various changes during the history of this art, but the fundamental arrangement was reached in the mid-nineteenth century and then altered somewhat after 1853, when Japan was opened to the West.



#### A KABUKI THEATRE

Kabuki, a 400-year-old Japanese theatre, is performed today in elaborate spaces with staging devices that include onstage turntables for shifting scenery. As shown in this ground plan, the stage covers the entire front of the theatre and is approached by a ramp—the *hanamichi*—on which performers make dramatic entrances and exits.

**Onnagata** In Japanese Kabuki, women's roles played by men.

**Hanamichi** In kabuki theatre, a bridge running from behind the audience (toward the left side of the audience) to the stage. Performers can enter on the hanamichi; important scenes may also be played on it.

**Shadow play** A play performed widely in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia involving intricately carved flat leather puppets that create patterns of light and shadow when their image is projected on a screen.

**Wayang** Term usually referring to Indonesian shadow plays but sometimes used for live dance performances.

The stage is wide and has a relatively low proscenium. Musicians—sometimes onstage, sometimes offstage—generally accompany the stage action. Kabuki features elaborate and beautiful scenic effects, including the revolving stage, which was developed in Japan before it was used in the West. Another device used in kabuki is the *hanamichi* (hah-nah-MEE-chee), or “flower way,” a raised narrow platform connecting the rear of the auditorium with the stage. Actors often make entrances and exits on the hanamichi and occasionally perform short scenes there as well.

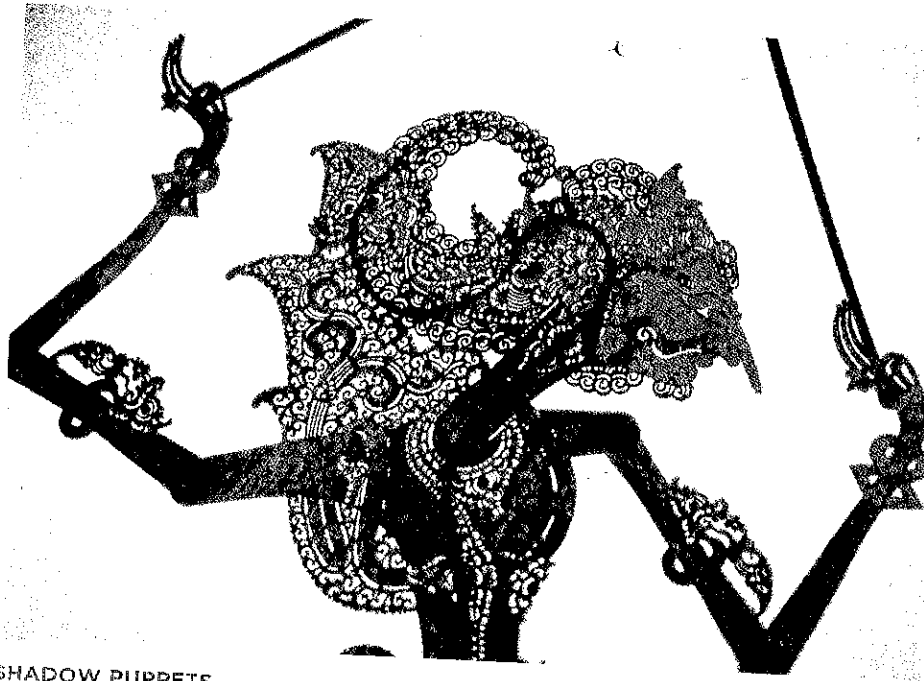
Some kabuki plays use a second or temporary hanamichi down the aisle on the audience’s opposite side. The stage is also well equipped with large and small elevator traps, used to lift actors in tableaux as well as spectacular settings, which come into view as the audience watches. There is even a small trap on the hanamichi that allows supernatural characters to emerge (or disappear) in the midst of the audience.

## SOUTHEAST ASIA: SHADOW PLAYS

Though we have focused on theatre in India, China, and Japan, it is important to remember that considerable theatre activity has occurred in other parts of Asia, such as Korea and the southeastern countries of Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Though each of these southeastern nations has its own theatrical history and tradition, all of them share certain characteristics. Most of their theatrical styles were influenced by the theatre of India and in some instances by that of China. In virtually every one of these countries we note the influence of two epics from India, the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. These stories and others are almost always performed as dance drama, classical dance, or puppet theatre. As is true in other Asian countries, theatrical presentations combine dance, song, movement, and recited text with elaborate costumes. It is worth noting that most of these countries do not even have a word in their language that denotes a dramatic form that is only written or spoken.

One type of theatrical activity that came to prominence in southeast Asia in the eleventh century is particularly significant. This was the *shadow play*, which is widely performed in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. It appears to have been developed most fully in Java, an Indonesian island. *Wayang* (WHY-young) is the term that usually refers to Indonesian puppet theatre but is also used sometimes to refer to live dance performances.

The best known form of a shadow play uses flat puppets made of leather. These figures are intricately carved to create patterns of light and shadow when their image is projected on a screen. The puppets are manipulated by sticks attached to the head, the arms, and other parts of the body. The person manipulating the puppets also narrates the drama and speaks the dialogue of the characters. Shadow plays usually take place at night—sometimes they last all night long—and are accompanied by music and sound effects.



### SHADOW PUPPETS

A longtime theatrical tradition in southeast Asia is shadow puppets. Shadow play or shadow puppetry is an ancient form of storytelling and entertainment using opaque, often articulated figures in front of an illuminated backdrop to create the illusion of moving images. It is thought to have originated in China during the Song Dynasty (960-1127), and later spread to southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. At present, more than twenty countries are known to have shadow show troupes. The figures are manipulated by puppeteers holding sticks attached to the puppets, which themselves are intricately carved flat figures, made of leather, that create patterns of light and shadow when projected on a screen. (© Shelley Gazin/Corbis)

In various places, other theatrical forms have been developed from shadow puppets. One variation uses three-dimensional doll puppets; another uses human performers wearing masks.

In this chapter we have looked at the early development of theatre in India, China, and Japan. These theatres were formed independently of theatre in the West; in some cases, they emerged when formal theatre in Europe was dormant. We have covered a period that goes up to approximately 1700. Though this is several centuries beyond the time when theatre reemerged in the West, there was little or no contact between the two theatre traditions until considerably later.

Later we will look at further developments in Asian theatre: for example, Peking (Beijing) opera in China. We will also note the significant exchanges between Asian and Western theatre that began at the end of the nineteenth century and continued through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first.