Zeami’s Treatment of Original Source Materials in Two Plays of His Late Period:
The Examples of the Nō Plays *Nue* and *Kinuta*

Thesis

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Zeami Motokiyo 世阿弥元清(1363?—1443?), a famous actor, playwright, and theorist of Nō drama in medieval Japan, is universally acknowledged as one of the major figures in the history of Nō. He not only composed a large body of Nō plays, but also left twenty-one critical treatises that cover a wide range of discussions from performance to the philosophy and aesthetics of Nō.

In this thesis, I will discuss Zeami’s treatment of source materials in two of his exemplary plays from late in his career, Nue 鵺 and Kinuta 砧. Nue mainly describes the miserable predicament of a nue—a monster with the head of an ape, the tail of a serpent and the limbs of a tiger—who is killed by a famous warrior, Minamoto no Yorimasa 源頼政 (1104-1180). Kinuta is a story about the wife of a provincial member of the warrior class who yearns for her husband far away. Based on my analysis of honzetsu 本説 (original source materials; modern Japanese honsetsu), I will argue that beyond allusions to traditional literary works, Zeami also invokes Buddhist philosophy and ritual to make alterations in received interpretations and reception of source materials belonging to the literary tradition. Moreover, I will make the case that Zeami’s adaptations of such materials demonstrate his sympathy for humble characters, including not only figures who are
marginalized such as the *nue* monster, but also those who are not celebrated in history or literature, such as the protagonist in *Kinuta*.

In Chapter One, I will give a brief introduction to the two plays *Nue* and *Kinuta*. I will argue that the transformation of the focus from famous characters to humble ones reveals Zeami’s rethinking and further development of his ideas on appropriate source materials—going beyond his earlier dramatic theories.

Then, in Chapter Two, I will analyze how Zeami invokes the target audience’s horizon of expectations by means of his adaptations of allusions in *Nue* and *Kinuta*. I will argue that Zeami’s exploitation of literary source materials has the effect of both eliciting and altering the expectations held about these stories on the part of the target audience as they view the plays in performance.

In Chapter Three I will discuss Buddhist philosophical writing as a kind of *honzetsu* in the two plays. I will argue that the allusions to Lotus Sutra teachings in both plays also work to alter preconceived notions that the audience might have regarding literary source materials already familiar to them. Such alteration opens the door to a broader scope of interpretation of those received materials belonging to the literary tradition.

In the last chapter, I will further argue that not only the Buddhist teachings in the Lotus Sutra are invoked in the plays, but the ritual acts involving the Lotus Sutra also form a certain sort of backdrop for the audience. I will make the case that it is
through the staging of the ritual practice of chanting the Lotus Sutra that Zeami renders the eventual Buddhist enlightenment of the protagonists in Nue and Kinuta credible to audiences.
Dedicated to the memory of my grandmother

Yang Hongting
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Chapter One

Introduction to the Two Plays Nue and Kinuta

1.1 Nue

The Nō play Nue is based on the following story. A monk traveling to the Kyoto capital from the Kumano Shrine complex lodges in a temple at Kawasaki, where he meets a mysterious boatman who is sailing in a dugout boat. After the boatman confesses to the monk that he is actually the ghost of a creature called a nue, he starts to narrate the story of how he was slain by Minamoto no Yorimasa 源頼政 (1104—1180), the famous warrior poet in the reign of Emperor Konoe 近衛天皇 (1141—1155). The ghost of the nue then disappears on the river. When the monk holds a Buddhist ritual for the placation of the nue, the nue’s ghost appears to express gratitude for the monk’s prayers. After narrating for a second time the scene of being slain by Yorimasa, the nue expresses his aspiration to be saved by Buddhist teachings and disappears into the water.

As for the authorship of the play Nue, in his critical treatise titled Go on 五音 (The five vocal sounds; undated), Zeami enumerates Nue as one of the exemplars of the vocal style of aishō 哀傷 (lamentation).¹ Besides, it is also characterized by Zeami’s style of diction.² For these reasons, Zeami is generally recognized as the

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¹ Go on is a treatise by Zeami about vocal styles. Zeami divides plays into five different vocal styles: shūgen 祝言 (celebration), yūgen 幽玄, renbo 恋慕 (passionate love), aishō 哀傷 (lamentation), and rangyoku 防曲 (seasoned fluency).
author of the play. There is no more reference to Nue in Zeami’s treatises beyond Go
on, which results in the difficulty of identifying the composition date of Nue.
However, according to certain characteristics embodied in the play, it is possible to
estimate Nue’s date of composition.

To identify the date Nue was written, it is necessary to consider the date of Go
on. Although Go on is also undated specifically, its date can be inferred from the
reference to it in another treatise title Sarugaku dangi 猿楽談義 (Talks on sarugaku,
1430). Sarugaku dangi is a treatise about the mature Zeami’s perspectives on Nō
performance, recorded by his son Kanze Motoyoshi 観世元能. As a listener,
Motoyoshi records Zeami’s theories of Nō late in Zeami’s career systematically and
comprehensively. Omote Akira puts forward the idea that Zeami’s career can be
divided into three periods on the basis of the chronology of his treatises on Nō.
According to him, the first period centers on Fūshi kaden 風姿花伝 (Transmitting
the Flower Through Effects and Attitudes, 1400-1418). He divides Zeami’s second
period into two halves, the first half he calls the Kashū period, and the second one, the
Shikadō period. Treatises such as Kakyō 花鏡 (A Mirror to the Flower, 1424),
Shikadō 至花道 (A Course to Attain the Flower, 1420), Nikyoku santai ningyō zu 二
曲三体人形図 (Figure Drawings of the Two Arts and the Three Modes, 1421) and
Sandō 三道 (The Three Techniques of Noh Composition, 1423) all belong to the
second period. Treatises such as Sarugaku dangi, Go on and Kyakuraika 却来花
(Flower of returning, 1433) that Zeami composed in his late years are classified in the
third period.3 Yashima Masaharu concurs with Omote and further argues that Go on is
composed after Sarugaku dangi, both of which are treatises created in the last period.

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of Zeami’s compositions. 4

Interestingly, although Yashima demonstrates that Go on belongs to Zeami’s later treatises, he regards Nue as an earlier play written in the first period. However, in my opinion, there are several characteristics in Nue that not only deviate from the theory expounded in his early treatises but also match certain points in his late ones, which evidences that Nue cannot be a play written early, but one written late in Zeami’s career. In the following paragraphs I will try to make my argument.

The most distinct characteristic is that the information about Nue does not appear in any of Zeami’s treatises except Go on, which offers direct evidence that Nue was composed in Zeami’s late years.

In terms of the five classifications of Nō plays--gods, warriors, women, mad characters, and demons--Nue is classified in the demon category because the protagonist in the play, the nue, is a monster with the head of an ape, the body of a badger, the tail of a serpent and the limbs of a tiger. However, the dramatic structure of the play is recognized to be similar to that of plays in the second classification, shura mono (plays featuring warring beings). Therefore Yashima regards Nue as “a variant style of warrior play written by Zeami around the same time as other shura mono.” 5

However, although Nue is similar to shura mono plays in terms of its dramatic style, that does not necessarily mean that Nue is composed around the same period as most of the shura mono. Instead, I argue that there are several aspects in Nue distinctly different and developed on the basis of the shura mono, which greatly increase the possibility that the play was written later in Zeami’s career.

To begin with, because Nue is classified as a demon play, it is necessary to take a

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5Ibid, 744.
look at Zeami’s theory on the two styles of demonic roles. He calls one saidōfū 碎動風 (the style of pulverized movement) and the other rikidōfū 力動風 (the style of forceful movement). The word sai 碎 (to pulverize) is ambiguous in literal meaning. Quinn explains the word when used in reference to martial style as “the breaking down of a uniform show of force characteristic of a warrior, to allow for a more detailed exposition of what is in his mind.”6 As a derivative of the martial style, the demon in the saidō style “has the form of a demon, but the heart of a human being. Neither body nor mind is vested with forcefulness, which makes the lightness of the body become a defining attribute.”7 On the contrary, in Nikyoku santai ningyō zu, Zeami states that the rikidōfū type has the movement of forcefulness as its substance and will not have refinement.8 In Sandō, composed two years later after Nikyoku santai ningyōzu, Zeami also defines rikidōfū as seikyōshinki 势形心鬼, the force, the form, and the heart of a demon.9

As for the classification of Nue, Takemoto Mikio recognizes Nue as a play of the saidō type,10 whereas Yashima considers it to be in the rikidō style.11 In my opinion, Nue is a play with both saidō and rikidō elements in its style. First, it is evident that Nue features some of the characteristics in the saidō style. In spite of being a sub-human monster, the protagonist that Zeami depicts, the nue, is a sentient being with human-like emotions. Therefore the heart of the nue is not demonic but human. That is to say, the nue “has the form of a demon, but the heart of a human being,” which exactly matches Zeami’s definition of the demon in the saidō style. Concerning

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6Shelley Fenno Quinn, Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2005), 68.
7Ibid., 70f. For the original, see Omote Akira, and Kaō Shūichi, eds. Zeami, Zenchiku (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 1974), 129.
8Ibid., 69.
9Ibid., 298.
10Takemoto Mikio, Kan’ami, Zeami jidai no nōgaku (Tōkyō: Meiji Shoin, 1999), 184.
11Yashima, Zeami no nō to geiron, 742.
the adaptation, detailed analysis will be conducted in Chapter Two.

At the same time, however, as a demonic play, Nue also embodies both saidō and rikidō elements. The masks used in the play can function as an important reference. In the early Muromachi period, namely in Zeami’s lifetime, Nō masks were still at the initial stage. Although it is true that masks were widely used among various genres of medieval performances, records about them are very rare in the documents before the mid-Muromachi period. Actually, masks didn’t bloom until late Muromachi. *Hachijō kadensho* 八帖花伝書 (Treatise of the Transmission of the Flower in Eight Chapters, 1573-1591), “the most remarkable one among the Nō treatises in the late Muromachi period,” records fifty-eight kinds of masks. This number constitutes about ninety percent of the existing basic masks worn nowadays. That is to say, there is no way to learn what kinds of masks were used around Zeami’s time. However, we can still refer to some documents in the late Muromachi and Edo periods, by which we might conjecture about the interpretations of the play from the perspectives of Nō professionals a little later than Zeami. This might much more closely approximate the typical interpretation of the play Nue around Zeami’s time. In my opinion, the masks used in Nue during the performances in the late Muromachi and Edo show a combination of saidō and rikidō elements. Usually a Nō play is divided into two acts, and in Nue the two masks are used in the maeba 前場 (the first act) and nochiba (the second act) in turn. In *Hachijō Kadensho*, the mask prescribed for the mae-shite 前シテ (first-act protagonist) in Nue is *yase otoko* 瘦男 (lit. thin man). *Yase otoko* belongs to the category of *onryō* 怨霊 (grudge-filled spirits).

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Nakamura comments that “this mask could only represent the spirit of a male human being.”\textsuperscript{15} As the name suggests, the mask presents a gaunt face. The yellow skin color also reveals that the character has already died and suffered in Hell.\textsuperscript{16} The most powerful element of this mask is the golden-rimmed eyes, which show the supernatural identity of the character. In sum, the mask \textit{yase otoko} mostly reveals that the \textit{mae-shite} of \textit{Nue} is much more characteristic of a human being than a monster. This depiction is congruent with the \textit{saidô} elements depicted in \textit{Sandô} by Zeami. This is the information we have about the masks of \textit{Nue} in the late Muromachi period.

Later, in the Edo period, the preferred mask for the \textit{maeba} is different. According to the Edo treatises \textit{Kanzeryû kokatatsukeshû} 観世流古型付集, \textit{Konparu Yasuteru katatsukeshû} 金春安照型付集, and \textit{Shimotsuma Shôshin shû} 下間少進集, the treatises records that the mask \textit{heida} 平太\textsuperscript{17} is used in the first part of \textit{Nue}. Nakamura classifies this mask in the category of male masks. Compared to \textit{yase otoko}, \textit{heida} is much more human-like. It is clear that the mask \textit{heida} was used to represent warriors.

It is generally used in \textit{shura mono} in which the characters describe their sufferings in \textit{asura} rebirth, one of the six Buddhist paths or courses into which beings are reincarnated.\textsuperscript{18} Apparently, with the selection of \textit{heida} as the mask for the \textit{shite} in the first part of the play, the \textit{nue} might be considered to be on a par with a warrior.

Regarding the masks used in late Muromachi and early Edo, I conclude that considering the \textit{nue} as partly human being is consistent among the Nô professionals around that time. Regarding the mask used in the second part of \textit{Nue}, it seems these


\textsuperscript{16}Nakamura, \textit{Nô no men: butai ni miru}, 91.

\textsuperscript{17}It is believed to be inspired by the visage of the warrior Heida Tanenaga 平太胤長 (1183-1213). Another theory is that the name of the mask, \textit{heida}, comes from a \textit{kanji} character used in the name of the warrior Kajiwara Heizô 梶原平三 (1140-1200)—the character \textit{hei} 平, combined with another character in his son’s name Genta 源太 (1162-1200)—\textit{ta} 太. Details about the name can be found in Nakamura, \textit{Nô no men: butai ni miru}, 177-178.

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid, 179.
treatises record similar masks belonging to one series—the *tobide* 飛出 group. As reflected in the *kanji* attributed to write *tobi* characters meaning “jumping” and “out,” the name of the mask is inspired by the goggle-eyed image of the face, designed to represent demons or ghosts. The mask of the *nochi-shite* 後シテ (second-part protagonist) of *Nue* is *kotobide* 小飛出 (small *tobide*) or *sarutobide* 猿飛出 (monkey *tobide*). *Sarutobide* is preferred used in *Nue*. As Nakamura says, this mask has been used in *Nue* since ancient times and has come to be identical with the image of the *nue*.19 Such masks deliver a demonic style of forcefulness, which is obviously the main characteristic of the *rikidō* style. Because the selection of *mae no men* and *nochi no men* in the Muromachi and Edo periods seem to have been respectively consistent, it is reasonable for us to conjecture that the selection follows the tradition started in early Muromachi, and thus conclude that there had been both *saidō* and *rikidō* elements in *Nue* since Zeami’s time. The reason why these two elements can coexist in *Nue* is probably that, the *shite* of *Nue* is originally a monster, rather than a human being. Such coexisting *saidō* and *rikidō* elements can hardly be found in the plays of the *saidō* and the *shura* classifications listed in *Sandō*, in which the majority of the *shite* are human, not demonic. Instead, in *Sandō*, Zeami states that “[The *rikidō* style] belongs to an aberrant style. Our group does not recognize this style of image. Only the demon in the style of *saidō* movement is to be portrayed on stage.”20 This statement clearly shows Zeami’s attitude to exclude the *rikidō* style from his playwriting, and thus greatly reduces the possibility of Yashima’s argument that *Nue* is composed around the same time as the *shura mono* mentioned in *Sandō*.

Furthermore, both Takemoto and Yashima argue that Zeami tends to bring the

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19 Ibid, 52.
20 Quinn, *Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice*, 298.
rikidō style into his plays, or at least to not exclude the style in his latest period. Based on these facts above, I argue that Nue might be written not early but late in Zeami’s Nō career.

In addition to the combination of saidō and rikidō styles, another characteristic in Nue makes the play different from the shura mono mentioned in Sandō as well. In Sandō, Zeami also talks about how to select topics for playwriting. He states, “since each of these personages is renowned for his or her ability in the entertainments of dance and chant, making any of them into the core figure of a Nō ought naturally to work to good effect.” This perspective shows Zeami’s position that the playwright should refer to famous characters with legends that precede them. For example, the characters in shura mono are generally important warriors in Heike monogatari that enjoy renown for their abilities in courtly arts or other individual accomplishments. Therefore I argue that the preference for plays about renowned figures dominates in Zeami’s early career.

However, in the play Nue, the shite, the nue, is obviously not a heroic figure in legends. Instead, as a monster, he is even marginalized in historical and literary works of pre-modern Japan. Although one might argue that the legend about the nue and the warrior Yorimasa is famous, and therefore does not deviate from Zeami’s instruction in Sandō, I think that it is Yorimasa rather than the nue that is the protagonist in the version of the legend found in Heike monogatari. That is to say, according to Zeami’s standard in Sandō quoted above, it is much likelier that Yorimasa would be made the protagonist of a play based on the nue legend. In reality, there is a play titled Yorimasa mentioned in Sandō, depicting the final scene before Yorimasa commits suicide upon defeat by the enemies, the Taira clan. Also, based on the materials in Heike

21 Ibid., 293.
monogatari, the play Yorimasa presents his accomplishments in war and in poetry with a lament on his tragic ending, which corresponds with the instruction in Sandō accurately. Other warrior plays in Sandō such as Tadanori or Atsumori do not deviate from this instruction either.

Therefore I argue that the difference in the identity of the protagonists in Nue and other warrior plays mentioned above shows that Zeami gradually expands and revisits his theory about playwriting as stated in Sandō. Takemoto observes that “Adding already established forms (kisei no yōshiki 既成の様式) to other styles (betsu-fūtei 別風体) to create new styles (shin-fūtei 新風体) is characteristic of Zeami’s late career.”\(^\text{22}\) In the case of Nue, Zeami attempts to fit a humble character into the warrior-play format and, in the process, develops a new style that does not appear in his early works. Such an innovation might also be credible evidence to imply that Nue is a play composed late in Zeami’s career.

1.2 Kinuta

After discussing the possible date of the composition of Nue, I am going to turn to another play, Kinuta. The protagonist in Kinuta, also translated as The Fulling Block, is a wife of a provincial member of the warrior class living in Ashiya in Kyūshū, a distant island to the south in medieval Japan. Being separated from her husband, who has been staying in the capital for a lawsuit for three years, she yearns for his return. Their maid who serves the husband in the capital for three years, Yūgiri, is sent by the husband back to Ashiya to announce that he will be home by the end of the year. Hearing the news, the wife laments her misfortune of being abandoned alone at home and recalls the legend about the Chinese statesman Sobu whose wife conveys

\(^{22}\)Takemoto, Kan'ami, Zeami jidai no nōgaku, 245.
her love to him by the sound of beating a fulling block. She then also starts to beat
upon a block to express her deep longing and resentment toward her husband. It turns
out that her husband does not return home by the end of the year as he had promised,
which breaks her heart and results in her death from sorrow. When her husband holds
a Buddhist requiem to pray for her soul, the ghost of the wife appears, complaining of
his coldness and her miserable sufferings in hell. However, thanks to the chanting of
the Lotus Sutra, she achieves enlightenment.

Compared to Nue, it is much easier to identify the probable date of the
composition of Kinuta. Reference to Kinuta appears twice in Zeami’s critical writing,
both times in Sarugaku dangi. He comments, “As there will probably be nobody in
the future who will be able to appreciate a play like that, I think it too much trouble to
write it down.”23 For several reasons Yashima identifies Kinuta as an exemplary play
of Zeami’s last years. First, Kinuta is never mentioned anywhere else except in
Sarugaku dangi which was composed in Zeami’s sixties. The text of the play shows a
certain disappointment and sorrow, which might be related to his miserable
experiences in his late years.24

In addition, I want to point out that there is one characteristic that both Kinuta
and Nue share. As I mentioned above, Zeami chooses a humble character as the
protagonist in Nue, which deviates from his theory in Sandō. Such a tendency in his
later years is also evident in Kinuta. Throughout his life, Zeami composes many plays
in which the protagonists are women. Most of these women are accomplished figures
depicted in literary works. Some of them are renowned for their ability in the
entertainments of dance and chant. Some are well-known for their romantic legends

23Erika de Poorter, trans., Zeami’s Talks on Sarugaku: An Annotated Translation of the Sarugaku Dangi :
with an Introduction on Zeami Motokiyo (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1986), 86.
24Yashima, Zeami no nō to geiron, 696-698.
involving famous figures in literary works such as *Ise monogatari* 伊勢物語 or *Genji monogatari* 源氏物語. However, the woman in *Kinuta* is an exception, for the following reasons.

In *Sandō*, Zeami enumerates a number of types of plays corresponding to the three styles and their derivatives that he focuses on throughout this treatise. The three styles are the old man, the woman and the warrior. Now let us take a look at the feminine style. Zeami classifies *Hakozaki* 箱崎, *Unoha* 鵜羽 (Cormorant feathers), *Mekurauchi* 盲打 (Blind person strikes), *Shizuka* 静 (now titled *Yoshino Shizuka* 吉野静), *Matsukaze Murasame* 松風村雨 (now known as *Matsukaze*), *Hyakuman* 百万, *Ukifune* 浮舟, *Higaki no onna* 桧垣の女 (Woman of the cypress hedge; now titled *Higaki*), *Komachi* 小町 (Komachi on the stupa) as characters featuring the feminine style. Leaving *Mekurauchi*, “a play by Zeami with no extant script”\(^\text{26}\) aside, I divide the rest of the plays into three types according to the identity of the protagonists. The *shite* of *Hakozaki* and *Unoha* are Shinto deities. Shizuka, Matsukaze, Murasame, Ukifune, and Komachi are all famous female figures related to literary antecedents such as *waka* poetry, *Ise monogatari*, *Genjimonogatari* and *Heike monogatari*. The last type consists of entertainers popular in medieval Japan, such as the *shite* in *Hyakuman*, a *kusemai* 曲舞 performer, and the one in *Higaki*, a *shirabyōshi* 白拍子 dancer. The characters of the three types faithfully follow Zeami’s theory that the playwright should refer to famous characters with the ability in the entertainments of dance and chant or with legends that precede them, which shows his early attitude towards the selection of feminine protagonists. On the

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\(^{25}\) Among these plays, *Hakozaki*, *Unoha*, *Mekurauchi*, *Hyakuman*, and *Higaki no onna* are attributed to Zeami. *Matsukaze*, *Murasame* was composed by Kiami and later revised by Kan’ami. *Ukifune* is composed by Yokoo Motohisa, and Komachi is attributed to Kan’ami.

\(^{26}\) Quinn, *Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice*, 405.
contrary, it is clear that the woman in *Kinuta* does not match any of these types.

Instead, she and the supporting actors are all nameless people who are not celebrated in history or literature. The woman is an ordinary housewife of a provincial warrior. This identity differs greatly from the settings of the female plays enumerated in *Sandō* as introduced above. The deviation from famous and accomplished figures to humble ones is a common characteristic in both *Kinuta* and *Nue*, revealing the transformation of Zeami’s theory of composition in his later years. As Kitagawa points out, Zeami’s interest in treating everyday life in plays of his last years comes after the plays featured by classical literature.27

Furthermore, not only are the characters of *Kinuta* ordinary people, but also the story depicted is a commonplace that occurs in daily life, which makes the play seem more realistic. As Royall Tyler comments, this play certainly does not cater to anyone’s taste for colorful, exciting, or even lyrical entertainment.28 Zeami ranks this play as *mujōmumi* 無上無味 (highest unornamented style), the highest level among all his works. Yashima provides one explanation for this comment. He uses the metaphor of water to argue that the text of the play *Kinuta* leaves the audience blank space to imagine freely. The blank space is the most colorless and the most colorful.29 In my opinion, it is also possible to explain the rank of *mujōmumi* from another perspective. As analyzed above, *Kinuta* is a play without any flowery background. The characters and the motif of the story are also extremely ordinary in realistic terms, which makes it seem to be without special flavor. However, the play is so realistic and close to everyday life that people are able to identify with the feelings between the husband and wife, of the simplest but most common feelings that all people may

29Yashima, *Zeami no nō to gēron*, 711.
experience. It is such resonance that makes the play achieve the top level.

In conclusion, *Nue* and *Kinuta*, both probably plays composed by Zeami later in his career, illustrate his departure from his early precepts in *Sandō*, and are a further development of his ideas on the subject. I have therefore briefly discussed his selection of characters and stories in these two late plays. In the next chapters, I will further examine his treatment of source materials in detail to ascertain how his manipulation of familiar source materials may work to alter audience reception of them in his plays.
Chapter Two

Zeami’s Manipulation of Literary Source Materials in Nue and Kinuta

After introducing the main information about the two plays, I am going to explore how Zeami manipulates the source materials to alter audience reception of them when they view his plays. In this chapter, I will focus on his treatment of literary materials. I argue that he uses different strategies in Nue and Kinuta, but both of them work effectively to alter the audience’s receptions of these materials.

At the beginning of this chapter, I will first discuss the definition of honzetsu in Zeami’s treatises as basic information that we need to examine the allusions in Nue and Kinuta in the following chapters. Zeami refers to honzetsu several times in his treatises, some of which refer to allusions to original materials—is the theme in this study. In Sandō, Zeami mentions honzetsu in the following sentence. “Nō ni wa honzetsu no zaisho arubeshi.”30 (“In Noh, there should be a setting associated with the source material.”)31 Quinn translates honzetsu as “source material.” In Hare’s book, he translates it as “original story.”32 Hare raises a question: what kind of materials does honzetsu include? Zeami continues to explain the meaning honzetsu as follows:

If it is a place of poetic import—a renowned spot or a historic site—then take words from well-known waka or phrases linked with it and write

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30Omote, Zeami Zenchiku, 135.
31Quinn, Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor's Attunement in Practice, 294.
32Tom Hare, Zeami Performance Notes (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 164, note 3.
them into what you judge to be the climax of the three dan of ha.  

It seems Zeami defines honzetsu as literary works such as poetry, which might remind us of honkadori (allusive variation) in poetry, “the incorporation of language from well-known older poems into a new poem.” Another reference to honzetsu in Sandō is in the passage in which he talks about the martial style in Nō. “Guntai no nōsugata, keryō, Genpei no meishō no jintai no honzetsu naraba, kotoni kotoni Heike no monogatari no mama ni kakubeshi.” (“If, for instance, your source material is about a famous commander of the Genji or the Heike clans, take special care to write as it is told in the Tale of the Heike.”) I suggest that the word honzetsu here refers to the legends about warriors. In addition, Zeami refers to honzetsu again in Sandō when he states the ear-opening (kaimon). The passage is as follows:

The ear-opening is that instant in which the two aural dimensions form one impression. Write down the important content from the original source material for the play into words that open the mind’s ear of the listener, and [this] one auditory dimension—that is, the written word that conveys the import—should blend with the vocal expressiveness and foster and aural impression in which content and expressiveness are as one sound; this is the site for [actualizing] a deep impression [of the type] to instantly stir the admiration of all.

As Quinn notes, here the honzetsu “refers to the source for the story material.” In this passage Zeami applies the effects of honzetsu to audiences of Nō plays. That is to “open the mind’s ear of the listener” and to “instantly stir the admiration of all.”

Based on the discussion about honzetsu above, I suggest that honzetsu about allusions to original materials includes not only belles-lettres such as poetry and tales but also legends and stories that can be transmitted either orally or in writing.

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33Ibid.
34Ibid, 137.
35Omote, Zeami Zenchiku, 138.
36Quinn, Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice, 297.
37Ibid, 299.
38Ibid, 398, note 114.
2.1 Nue

First of all, let us take a look at the literary precedents of the *nue*. The *nue* in its earliest depictions is a bird whose call is “low and plaintive and can be heard at twilight and dawn, or when the sky is darkened by clouds.”\(^39\) In the textual instantiations in Japan and from the continent, the *nue* has two primary features. One is its nocturnal habits, which is also indicated by the Chinese character 鵺 used to write “nue.” The character has two component radicals. The combination of the radical for bird 鳥 on the right side and the radical for night 夜 on the left side show that the *nue* is a nocturnal bird. The *nue* is also featured for its call. The call of the *nue* appears several times in early poetry. In the *Kojiki* 古事記 and the *Man’yōshū* 万葉集, it is associated with the image of melancholy and unrequited love. According to Elizabeth Oyler, “In the *Man’yōshū* in particular, *nuedori no* (nue birds) 鵺鳥の is a ‘pillow word,’ or poetic epithet (*makura kotoba* 枕詞) for such words as ‘unrequited love’ (*katakoi* 片恋).”\(^40\) This poetic image of the *nue*’s cry is one of both melancholy and loneliness. It is very possible that because of the two features—the nocturnal habit and the cry, later people started to identify the *nue* as a weird bird, or even a monster and attach a portentous image to its call.\(^41\) The episode about the *nue* in *Heike monogatari* is mainly based on this kind of image. It tells about how the warrior Minamoto no Yorimasa twice shot *nue* monsters out of the night sky over the royal palace where they had been haunting Emperors Konoe 近衛 (1139-1155) and Nijō二条 (1143-1165) respectively.

In addition, the *nue*, or to be more accurate, the call of the *nue* also reminds


\(^{40}\)Ibid.

\(^{41}\)Ibid.
people of the transience of the world. The famous medieval poet Saigyō 西行 (1118-1190) presents such an image in one of his waka poems:

\[
\begin{align*}
Saranu dani & \quad \text{Even the ordinary sky at dawn} \\
yo no hakanasa o & \quad \text{can make one feel} \\
onou mi ni & \quad \text{the transience of the world.} \\
nue nakiwataru & \quad \text{That feeling is only compounded} \\
akebono no sora^{42} & \quad \text{when the } nue \text{ bird cries across the sky.}
\end{align*}
\]

In this poem, what the call of the nue invokes is not a feeling of horror and darkness but rather an image of desolation and loneliness. Besides transience, another emotion suggested in this poem is the theme of loneliness. This might be traceable to the poetic tradition of the pillow word for katakoi in Man’yōshū. In the play Nue, Zeami’s treatment of the character of the nue is similar to that in Saigyō’s poem. What needs to be pointed out is that Zeami actually makes several poetic allusions to the love theme, which seems to be irrelevant to the story of the nue. However, to take early poetic elements into account, we might conclude that these allusions remind audiences of the katakoi image so that they can experience the emotion of loneliness that Zeami endow the nue with in his play.

In short, it seems possible that these two different images represent the kind of general expectations about the nue that Zeami’s spectators would have held before they started to view the play. Because of the broad dissemination of the Heike monogatari around that time, it is reasonable to conjecture that the image of the nue as a portentous monster dominated the expectations of the audience. If so, how did the playwright Zeami go about altering this image? I will explore this question in the

following by comparing the nue’s story as represented in the Heike monogatari and in the Nō play.

It is evident that Zeami relied heavily on the text of Heike monogatari to construct the character of the nue. Such reliance on source material from the Heike is typical of Zeami’s warrior plays, including the plays Atsumori 敦盛, Tadanori 忠度, Yorimasa 頼政 and Sanemori 実盛. Among them, Nue and Sanemori are the two plays in which Zeami quotes passages from the Heike verbatim. In the play Nue Zeami changed the main character from Yorimasa, who filled that role in the Heike, to the nue, in order to make the nue’s emotions the focus of the play. What is more, Zeami’s alteration also made the nue the storyteller, who narrates his own slaying from his own viewpoint. This adaptation “introduces a completely new stylistic approach into the Nō play,” and, as I argue, in the process of the play, successfully alters the audience’s expectations regarding the image of the nue.

The story of the nue in Heike is primarily provided as a means to showcase Yorimasa’s great repute. As described in the opening of the story, “Yorimasa had performed his greatest exploit during the reign of Emperor Konoe,” and then the narration of the story of the nue is offered. This narrative structure distinctly shows that the story is used by the narrator in order to demonstrate Yorimasa’s great prowess both in military and in poetic domains. Oyler states that this episode, “celebrates Yorimasa’s life through descriptions of his earlier heroic deeds.” In the Heike, the protagonist is Yorimasa, while the nue is treated as no more than a monster that has been doomed to be defeated by Yorimasa in order to prove Yorimasa’s valor, as well

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41 Itô Masayoshi, ed., Yōkyoku shū, 447.
42 Ibid.
44 Oyler, “The Nue and Other Monsters in Heike monogatari”, 2.
as his knowledge of Japanese poetry. On the other hand, the sole information on the *nue* provided in the *Heike* is that the creature was frightening the emperor every night, “from the direction of the Higashisanjō woods,” and had, “an unspeakably fearsome apparition with a monkey’s head, a badger’s body, a snake’s tail and a tiger’s legs, and uttered a cry like that of the golden mountain thrush.” The readers are not given the reason why the *nue* tormented the emperor, nor its feelings or antecedent experience. Therefore, in the *Heike*, the *nue* is merely an object without any interiority.

Again, in Zeami’s Nō play, the *nue* is made the protagonist (the *shite*). The viewpoint of the story thus is reversed to side with the *nue*, the victim at whose expense Yorimasa built his reputation. This reversal endows the *nue* with the capacity for emotions that human beings enjoy. The *nue* is no longer cast as a tool to show Yorimasa’s greatness, but as a human-like character capable of emotion. In the *shite*’s entrance passage (*issei* in Japanese), the *nue* chants:

*Kanashiki kana ya*  How saddened is my body,

*mi wa rōchō*  trapped like a caged bird!

*kokoro o shireba*  Like the turtle, blind my soul

*mōki no fuboku*  seeks out here the drifting wood,

*tada anchū ni*  but deep in sightless darkness

*mumoregi no*  the log is buried

*saraba mumore mo*  could I be too deep to rise,

*hatezu shite*  for I cannot rest

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47 When accepting the rewards from the emperor, Yorimasa composed a poem which was highly praised by the emperor and others.
49 Ibid, 162.
bōshin nani ni  what draws my straying spirit
nokoruran  still to linger on? 50
Ukishizumu  Ah, rising, sinking,
namida no nami no  midst the waves of tears I shed
utsuobune  goes my dugout boat 51

With these words the nue is directly expressing its sadness and sufferings after being killed by Yorimasa. Zeami used metaphors of rōchō (caged bird) and mōki (blind turtle) to describe the nue’s misery. All the descriptions above about the nue’s situation were added into the original story based on the innovations of Zeami, whereas in the Heike nothing about the nue was mentioned after it was killed and put into a dugout canoe and cast out to sea. Between the references to the two metaphors, the shite chants “kokoro o shireba” (because I know in my heart that I am like a caged bird). This could be taken to imply that the nue compares himself to the blind turtle who tries to find a niche in a piece of driftwood. 52 The “kokoro o shireba” reference clearly shows that the nue is not insentient. Zeami’s adaptation reminds his audience that even the nue itself might have its own consciousness about what had happened to him. From this point, the audience’s impression of the nue as an evil monster and a loser, the image established in the Heike, may shift because, in Zeami’s play, the emphasis is on the misery and helplessness of the creature. Thus the audience’s expectations of the nue stand to be altered.

Another remarkable adaptation on Zeami’s part is that the play embraces

50Kenneth Yasuda, Masterworks of the Nō Theater (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1989), 419.
51Ibid, 420.
52Here mōki refers to mōki no fuboku 盲亀の浮木, an allusion to a Buddhist parable about a blind turtle who rising to the ocean surface only once in a hundred years, attempts to catch a piece of driftwood there, and to find a hole in it to enter. This is a metaphor employed in Buddhist sutras such as the Mahāparinirvāṇa Sutra (Japanese: Nehangyō 涅槃経) to invoke the rarity and difficulty of achieving enlightenment.
different narrative points of view of the scene in which Yorimasa shoots the *nue*. In the course of the play, the story about how the *nue* was killed by Yorimasa is narrated twice. Although both of the two narratives are performed by the *shite* (the *nue*), there are significant differences between them. The first time the *nue* starts to tell the story is positioned immediately after the *nue* had requested the monk (the *waki*) to pray for it and had confessed its real identity to the monk. The narration here is very close to the original text in the *Heike*. Actually, rather than to say that the *nue* narrated its experience of being defeated by Yorimasa, it is more accurate to say that the *nue* here performed as a storyteller outside of the action that he is narrating from the *Tale of the Heike*. He narrates the story from a third-person perspective.

However, in the second part of the play, the *nue* appears again in its authentic guise – “a demon-specter’s form” before the monk, to retell its own story. This time the *nue* is no longer at third-person remove, but presents its own experience to the audience. Through this second narrative, Zeami provides a potential counter-narrative to the heroic tale of the *nue*’s demise as depicted in the *Heike*. He ascribes a motive for the *nue*’s torment of the emperor that was not addressed in the play’s first narration of the event.

*Sate mo ware* Truly I became

*akushin gedō no* a demon with a hate-filled heart,

*henge to natte* prowling through the hellish pathway,

*buppō ōbō no* hoping that I might corrupt the laws

*sawari to naran to* of the kings and holy Buddha.  

In these words the reason the *nue* tormented the emperor is revealed: because the *nue*

\[\text{\textsuperscript{53}}\] Yasuda, *Masterworks of the Nō Theater*, 432.

\[\text{\textsuperscript{54}}\] Ibid, 433.
wants to “corrupt the laws of the kings and holy Buddha.” In short, the nue is confessions his own sinful act of tormenting the emperor. By admitting his culpability as a hate-filled demon bent on corrupting the Buddhist Law (akushin gedo no henge / buppō ōbō no sawari), the nue here expresses penitence for his past actions. A case can be made that such sentiments conform to the practice of sange 懺悔. Sange refers to repentance for any negative actions one may have done in one's present or past lives, so as to clear oneself of karmic obstacles that may be causing one worldly difficulties or restraining one's spiritual progress.\(^{55}\) That is to say, by making the nue narrate the story from its own perspective, Zeami offers an opportunity for the creature to shed its evil image that lingers from the Heike treatment. Then Zeami arranges for the nue to present its death again to the audience from its own perspective, which shows a distinct contrast with the same scene narrated in the first half of the play. The nue’s narrative in Part 2 of the play says the following:

CHORUS

| Yorimasa ga | I was deeply hit |
|-------------|-----------------
| yasaki ni atareba | by Yorimasa’s arrow point; |
| henshin usete | all disguising powers gone, |
| rakuraku | crashing downward, |
| rairai to | smashing downward |
| chi ni taorete | upon the earth I fell down\(^{56}\) |

This contrasts with the following words in the earlier narration of the events in Part 1 of the play:

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\(^{56}\) Yasuda, Masterworks of the Nō Theater, 434.
CHORUS

Yoppiki hyō to  Fully drawn and with a twang

hanatsu ya ni  released, the arrow

tegotae shite  responded unto his hand

hata to ataru  and squarely hit the mark.

etari ya  “There I hit it”\textsuperscript{57}

Of course, along with the switch from the perspective of the killer Yorimasa, to the victim, the *nue*, the *shite*’s actions are also changed. In the first narrative passage, the *shite* acts the role of Yorimasa by “gesturing as though he were shooting an arrow,”\textsuperscript{58} and then “gazing deeply into space.”\textsuperscript{59} However, in the second account, the *shite* “puts the end of the fan to his chest,”\textsuperscript{60} which represents the action of being shot by the arrow, and “strides back toward the *shite* seat, kneels, and turns himself around on his knee,”\textsuperscript{61} which distinctly represents the process of the *nue* falling down to the ground from the sky.

The significant differences between the two narrative parts open the door to the possibility of arousing audience empathy regarding the *nue*’s miserable fate.

Moreover, Zeami surprisingly cites the whole original *Heike* passage in the narrative in Part 1 with hardly any adaptations, which is uncharacteristic of his style in other plays, in which he tends to adapt materials more freely. Then he presents the narrative perspective of the disenfranchised *nue* in the passage in Part 2 of the play. In my opinion, his faithfulness to the original text could be considered as a kind of citation, that is, as a clear articulation of Yorimasa’s perspective. After providing the more orthodox viewpoint, Zeami comments on it and presents his own perspective on the

\textsuperscript{57}Ibid, 425-426.
\textsuperscript{58}Ibid, 425.
\textsuperscript{59}Ibid, 426.
\textsuperscript{60}Ibid, 434.
\textsuperscript{61}Ibid.
nue and Yorimasa through this adaptation of the narrative passage from the Heike. As analyzed above, he alters the audience’s interpretation of the literary source incrementally by first narrating Yorimasa’s glorious triumph in part one, only to point out the starkly contrastive sufferings of the nue in part two.

Based on the analysis above, I argue that Zeami’s adaptation of the source materials from Heike creates a new perspective for the audiences who have already had expectations of the nue as a marginalized character from previous literary works, so that they could accept the interpretation of the story in a view reversed from what they might have held before.

2.2 Kinuta

As for the play Kinuta, while Zeami’s treatment of literary materials also has an impact on the audience’s expectations regarding the shite in the play, it is different from his manipulation of source materials in Nue in some aspects. As I state above, in Nue, Zeami’s main strategy is to alter the spectator’s perspective from one that aligns with the killer Yorimasa, as depicted in the original source, the Heike, to one that aligned with the victim, the nue itself. In Kinuta, however, I will argue that Zeami composes a fictitious story based on his allusions to certain source materials.

From Tyler’s perspective, the technique Zeami uses to construct this play is to imagine “a commonplace misfortune” and, especially in part one, he “embellishes it with a haunting Chinese ‘melody’: the story of Sobu, supplemented by further ornaments from poetry in Chinese.”62 It is evident that the story depicted in Kinuta is primarily based on the legends about the Chinese statesman Sobu (140 B.C. – 60 B.C.; Su Wu 蘇武 in Chinese). In Sandō, Zeami proposes that “there should be a setting

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associated with the source material." In Kinuta, such a setting appears first in the
mondō 問答 (spoken exchange) section. When the shite hears the sound of the
beating of a fulling block, she starts to narrate Sobu’s legend.

[I]n my present misery I remember an old tale. In China, a man named
Sobu was taken captive by the Huns. Imagining his lying sleepless through
the cold nights, the wife and child he had left behind climbed a high tower
and beat a fulling block. And perhaps the message of their love did reach
him, for Sobu in his exile’s sleep, ten thousand leagues away, heard that
block beating at his home. Sobu’s story is initially recorded in Chapter fifty-four in Han shu 漢書 (the Book of
the Former Han; Kanjo in Japanese), a classical chronicle of Chinese history
completed in 111. According to the Han shu, Sobu was a statesman during the Former
Han Dynasty (208 B.C. – 8 A.D.). During his diplomatic mission to the Huns (a tribe
to the north of the Han Dynasty), the king of the Huns arrested and exiled him in
order to force him to surrender and serve the Huns. Because Sobu refused the king’s
order, he was exiled for many years but never surrendered. The Huns claimed that
Sobu had long ago died; however the news that he lived was secretly delivered to the
Han. The Han government thereupon claimed that the emperor while hunting had
found a letter from Sobu on a wild goose's wing, seeking help in order to force the
Huns to admit the fact that Sobu was still alive. This scheme succeeded, and finally
Sobu returned to his home after nineteen years in exile.

Besides the account in the Han shu, Sobu’s life story also appears in Heike
monogatari, at the end of Book Two. Generally speaking, it follows the record in the
Han shu faithfully. Sobu’s stories both in the Han shu and in the Heike are all about
his loyalty to the Han government. His wife is not mentioned at all, nor is the story of

63Quinn, Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice, 294.
64Tyler, Japanese Nō Dramas, 162.
beating the fulling block found in either of the two sources. Because of this, it is necessary to consider the received image of beating the fulling block separately.

The fulling block called “kinuta” in Japanese, or “zhen” in Chinese, was used to beat garments in order to “soften the silk of a robe and restore its lustre.”65 The scene of beating the fulling block (daoyi 搗衣 in Chinese; kinuta utsu 砧打つ in classical Japanese) is a common poetic image related to a wife’s longing for a husband far away. Chinese poets started to import it into their poems no later than the Liu Song Dynasty (420 - 479). From the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) the scene of beating the fulling block frequently appears in many poems by different poets. It usually presents a wife’s yearning for a husband in a faraway place, where normally he would be serving as a soldier who guards a border of the country.

Such a reference might derive from the contemporary military system. The military system used in the Tang Dynasty is called the fubing system 府兵制. It involved a system of militia who farmed tracts of land at peacetime to make a living, and served as soldiers at wartime. Under the system soldiers were responsible on their own for preparing their military supplies, such as cavalry horses, weapons and clothes. Therefore, once the weather got cooler from late summer to autumn, the soldiers’ families, usually housewives, had to prepare heavy coats for them to protect against the cold of winter. Beating the clothes on the fulling block was one of the steps to make them soft and thus gradually became the symbol of longing for a husband far away. Also, because of the custom, the time frame in this kind of poem is always an autumn night. With the introduction of Chinese poetry into Japan, Japanese poets also received and incorporated this poetic image into poems written both in Chinese and Japanese.

65Ibid, 159.
Among those poems which depict beating the fulling block, there is one poem, “Qieboming” 娄薄命 that deserves our attention. The poem is included both in *Quantangshi* 全唐詩 (Complete collection of Tang poems) by a poet named Liu Yuanshu 刘元叔 (dates unknown) and in *Wakan rōeishū* 和漢詠集 (Collection of Japanese and Chinese Poems for Singing, 1013). The poem depicts the miserable fate of a woman who is separated from her husband. Yashima points out that in the poem there is one couplet 北斗星前横旅雁，南楼月下搗寒衣 (“Across the stars of the Northern Dipper / fly the wild geese; / beneath the moon of the southern tower / they full cold-weather clothes.”) that might put Sobu’s story and the scene of beating the fulling block together. The words *lüyan* 旅雁 (travelling goose) in the first half might remind the reader of Sobu’s letter to the Han emperor, mentioned above. The second half describes the scene of a woman beating the fulling block to prepare heavy coats under the moonlight. Later, in *Shinsen rōeishū* 新撰朗詠集 (New collection of Poetic Recitations, 1106-1123), the Japanese poet Ōe no Masafusa 大江匡房 (1041-1111) relates Sobu’s story and the scene of beating the fulling block as follows:

賓雁繫書飛上林之霜。忠臣何在。寡妾搗衣泣南樓之月。良人未歸。

The general meaning of this poem is as follows: The goose, with a letter on its talon, has flied across the Shanglin garden where the frost fell. (Could it tell me) where the loyal minister is? The housewife, beating the clothes on the fulling block, is weeping at the moon above the South Pavilion. It is because her husband has not returned.

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67 Yashima, *Zeami no nō to geiron*, 716.
home.

Similar to Liu Yuanshu’s poem, the first half of the poem implies Sobu’s exile in its allusion to the goose. *Shang lin* 上林 is the name of the imperial hunting ground used in the Han Dynasty. The third and fourth lines depict the image of a lonely wife who beats the fulling block, weeping under the moon. The elements in the narration about Sobu and his wife in the play *Kinuta* are all contained in this poem. Therefore it is possible that the literary precedents of Sobu’s wife delivering the message to Sobu in exile by beating the fulling block are traceable to Masafusa’s poem.

We have analyzed the formation of Sobu’s legend in *Kinuta* by tracing it back to the historical and poetic sources in China and Japan. I argue that the reception of the image of the *kinuta* as it is depicted in poems composed in Japan is important to the audience’s understanding of it in the play. In terms of how Zeami incorporates earlier legends and materials into the two plays under discussion, the techniques he uses in *Kinuta* are clearly different from those he uses in *Nue*. As I state above, in *Nue*, Zeami’s strategy is to reverse the received narrative perspective on the *nue*’s identity, while retaining the events related in the original source in *Heike*. In *Kinuta*, however, Zeami adapts the original literary materials into a new story presented in the play. In my opinion, he alters the audience’s reception and interpretation of Sobu’s legends in two ways.

The first is to change the whole background of the original story. As noted above, both Sobu-related materials and the custom of beating the fulling block originated in China. It was Japanese poets that combined these two elements together, which provided Zeami with the source materials to compose the play. The materials are still characteristic of a Japanese treatment of the Chinese poetic theme, namely to introduce a touch of exoticism. If Zeami chose to follow the materials of Sobu’s wife
beating the fulling block without adapting the general setting of the story, the heavy Chinese characteristic might give the medieval audience the expectation that this story, which happened on the continent, is far away from their normal experience and therefore not realistic. However, Zeami adapts the place from the distant continent to a Japanese island, and replaces the main characters from an ancient Chinese heroic statesman and his family with an ordinary medieval provincial family. Such adaptation makes the story much more accessible to the audience in terms of both time and space. Furthermore, Zeami comments that this play is at the top level of the highest unornamented style. The identity of the protagonist changes from Sobu and his wife, the celebrated figures who have some relation to historical and literary antecedents, to the nameless husband and wife in Kinuta. This kind of setting contributes to set the unornamented tone of the play and corresponds to Zeami’s style of dramaturgy in his late years.

At the same time, however, Zeami does not hide the original source material from Wakan rōeishū completely from us in the play. He refers to some keywords in the kinuta-themed poems in this collection that are taken from the earlier Chinese source, Han shu. The legend of Sobu is narrated by the wife, which works to evoke a feeling of a vast timelessness. Combined with Sobu’s legend, when the wife in the play starts to beat the fulling block, the sound not only crosses over the distance between her home and the capital where her husband is, but also reminds the audience of the sound of Sobu’s wife’s pounding in her efforts to send her message to Sobu. Here is one passage that superimposes Sobu’s allusion with the Kinuta wife’s longing for her husband:

*Sobu ga tabine wa kita no kuni*  
Sobu, exiled, slept in northern lands,
Kore wa higashi no sora nareba while my love lies under eastern skies.

Nishi yori kitaru aki no kaze no Winds of fall, that sweep in form the west

Fukiokure to blow his my message. Come,

Madō no koromo utōyo. Beat upon his robe, of weave so thin! 68

In addition to Sobu’s legends, Zeami also employs Chinese poems about the custom of beating the fulling block in order to activate the audience’s recollections of literary precedents as part of their appreciation of the play. There is one poem in Shinsen rōeishū alluded in the play. In Kinuta, this poem is presented with little alteration.

Kyūrō takaku tatsuuke The palace clock points aloft;

Kaze kita ni meguri the wind veers to the north.

Rinten yuruku kyū ni shite Nearby, a block beats slow then fast;

Tsuki nishi ni nagaru the westering moon sinks low. 69

The poem has no relation to Sobu’s legend but depicts the custom of beating the fulling block at night. Similar allusions also appear elsewhere in the play. In my opinion, the references to Sobu’s legend and the poems about the custom of the fulling block work together in combination in the story of the Kinuta woman. Therefore I argue that the audiences are made to view Kinuta not as a separate story but rather as part of a larger associative network of images linked to a collective literary past. That is to say, Zeami makes full use of the audience’s knowledge of literary precedents to imbue the story of the sufferings of this provincial wife with literary gravitas. Through these literary allusions, audiences are able to consider the wife’s longing for her husband as a universalized feeling that spreads across time and

68 Tyler, Japanese Nō Dramas, 164.
69 Ibid.
space, which adds a strong sense of history and tragedy to the play.

This chapter has demonstrated a range of strategies that Zeami employs in these two exemplary plays from late in his career, *Nue* and *Kinuta*. In *Nue*, he adapts the literary works to alter the audience’s expectation of the *nue*, a marginalized being in the earlier *Heike* narrative. In *Kinuta*, however, he first makes the original sources closer and more realistic for Japanese audiences. On the other hand, he also alters the audience’s interpretation of the play by the allusions to the literary precedents, which endows the play with multiple perspectives of interpretation, from ancient times to the present, from ideality to reality, from the continent to Japan. In conclusion, I argue that he employs different strategies in the treatment of the source materials in the two plays, which successfully alter the audience’s expectations and interpretations of them.
Chapter Three

Zeami’s Treatment of Buddhist Philosophy as Source Material
in Nue and Kinuta

In Chapter Two I have discussed Zeami’s allusions to literary sources in Kinuta
and Nue. As I argued, these treatments correspond to one aspect of Zeami’s theory of
playwriting in Sandō. In Sandō Zeami advises, “in your writing you should allot
words from poems in Chinese or Japanese that invoke various associations.”\(^7\)
In addition to the allusions to literary works, Zeami also employs Buddhist philosophical
concepts as another type of original source material in these two plays, or so I will
argue below. I will explore how Zeami uses Buddhist philosophy to alter the
preconceived expectations that the audience might have regarding literary source
materials already familiar to them. I argue that, through the allusions to Buddhist
philosophy, Zeami broadens the scope of possible interpretation of the literary sources
upon which he draws. By combining allusions to Buddhist precepts with allusions to
literary sources, Zeami is able to induce the audience to accept his adaptations and
fresh interpretations of canonical literary works.

First of all, I am going to examine aspects of Buddhist philosophy adopted in the
two plays. I argue that both in Nue and Kinuta, Zeami chooses the teachings in the
Lotus Sutra (Myōhōrengekyō 妙法蓮華経, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the

\(^7\)Quinn, Developing Zeami: The Noh Actor’s Attunement in Practice, 294.
Fine Dhama; or, simply, Hokkekyō 法華経, Lotus Sūtra; Sk. Saddharma-pundarīka -sūtra) as a primary source to alter the audience’s preconceived ideas about the main characters in the plays.

As stated in The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature, the Lotus Sutra has been “the preeminent scripture in the Mahayana of East Asia, both for its doctrinal position and for providing a rich imagery, largely through the parables, both for literature and for the pictorial arts and architecture.”\(^\text{71}\) The philosophy of the Lotus Sutra has been in the orthodox mainstream of Buddhism since the Heian period, primarily promulgated by the Tendai and Nichiren sects. Chanting of the sutra was considered one of the essential components of the daily life of the court aristocracy in the Heian period. From the Kamakura period, the influence of the Lotus Sutra was weakened by the Zen and Pure Land Sects, but it remained prevalent in the Nō plays of the Muromachi period. According to Anezaki, the chanting of the Lotus Sutra was still a very important form of worship in the Muromachi period.\(^\text{72}\) Such influence of the sutra is explicit in the plays Nue and Kinuta, as discussed below.

### 3.1 Nue

The redefinition of the nue as a vivid character capable of various emotions akin to those of human beings, instead of as an insensate beast, has been discussed in Chapter Two. Based on the humanization of the nue, I will argue that Zeami further endows the nue with an aspiration to attain Buddhist enlightenment by employing the Buddhist precepts set down in the Lotus Sutra.

At the beginning of the second part of the play, after the entrance of the shite,

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he waki sings:

WAKI

Ichibutsu jōdō One Buddha who has won the Way
Kanken kōkai surveys the world of Laws and sees
Sōmoku kokudo that grass, trees, the land itself:
Shikkai jōbutsu these all attain enlightenment.73

The words contain the notion of sōmoku jōbutsu 草木成仏 (the grasses and trees all achieve enlightenment), meaning that even inanimate beings, like grasses and trees, have the Buddha nature.74 This thought encapsulates the precept of all beings sharing the same thusness, which is derived from the precept of shohō jissō 諸法実相 (real character of all dharmas), referring to all things in their real aspect. As Anezaki states, the principle of shohō jissō is represented specifically in Chapter Five, “Medicinal Herbs,” in the Lotus Sutra, ensuring the enlightenment of the grasses, trees and the earth.75 In that chapter, the Buddha announces that he reveals the Buddhist law to all beings through skillful means discriminating among individual dispositions, as illustrated by a parable about the growth of plants. He describes the power of the Buddha “as if a great cloud were to arise in the world, universally covering everything,”76 and thus “all trees, high, intermediate, and low, in accordance with their size are each enabled to grow.”77 After teaching the parable, the Buddha announces”

He appears in the world, as if he were a great cloud universally

73Yasuda, Masterworks of the Nō Theater, 432.
74Digital Dictionary of Buddhism, s.v. “sōmoku jōbutsu” (草木成仏).
75Anezaki, “Yōkyoku ni okeru bukkyō yōso,” 100.
77Ibid, 105.
covering all. Once having emerged into the world, for the sake of living beings with discrimination he sets forth the reality of the dharmas.\textsuperscript{78}

In my view, this pronouncement shows that, according to the Lotus Sutra, all the disciples of Buddha shall achieve enlightenment no matter who they are. This statement was developed in Japanese Tendai Buddhism by extrapolating on the idea that the disciples of Buddha encompass all beings in the world, including both \textit{ujō} 有情 (sentient beings) and \textit{hijō} 非情 (non-sentient objects) such as grass, wood, earth, and stone.\textsuperscript{79}

Anezaki classifies five categories of thought based on the Lotus Sutra in Nō plays and puts the \textit{nue} into the category of \textit{shohō jissō}, which is primarily represented by the idea of “grasses and trees all achieving enlightenment,” as mentioned above.\textsuperscript{80}

Based on this classification, I argue that the concept of \textit{sōmoku jōbutsu} used in the play \textit{Nue} by Zeami distinctly shows the \textit{nue}’s aspiration to attain enlightenment. After the \textit{waki} mentions the idea of \textit{sōmoku jōbutsu}, the \textit{shite} continues, “Sentient and non-sentient / shall find the Way together,” which introduces the sentient and non-sentient beings together as one group.

Then, which group does the \textit{nue} belong to? In my opinion, the standard for differentiating \textit{ujō} and \textit{hijō} should be whether the subject has the capacity for feeling or not. According to this standard, the \textit{nue} in the \textit{Heike} is close to the \textit{hijō} or non-sentient end of the continuum, but in the Nō play, after Zeami’s adaptations, the \textit{nue} is endowed with feeling. It therefore should belong to \textit{ujō}, or the sentient grouping. As the idea of \textit{sōmoku jōbutsu} (the grasses and trees all achieve enlightenment) in Tendai Buddhism indicate, even insentient beings such as grasses and trees have an opportunity to become Buddhas. According to this concept, it is

\textsuperscript{78}Ibid, 105.
\textsuperscript{79}Anezaki, “Yōkyoku ni okeru bukkyō yōso,”
\textsuperscript{80}Ibid.
natural that the *nue* too, as a sentient being, might have an aspiration to enlightenment. Zeami endows the *nue* with such aspiration, revealing his sympathy for the *nue*. I conclude that this adaptation is an explicit example to show that Zeami adopts the teachings of the Lotus Sutra as a strategy for arguing for the equality of all sentient beings--to be more specific, for the possible enlightenment of the *nue*.

Based on the introduction of the Lotus Sutra teachings in *Nue* above, it is clear that the *nue*, who is marginalized, has little hope of achieving Buddhist enlightenment according to his earlier literary depictions. However, through Zeami’s adaptations, the *nue* featured in the Nō play comes to express a strong desire to reach Buddhist enlightenment. Although the teachings of the Lotus Sutra are generally considered as part of the domain of Buddhist philosophical writings, they also work in a way that is similar to the literary sources in the play. Because the Lotus Sutra had been prevalent since the Heian period and was familiar to medieval Japanese of Zeami’s time, when Zeami adopts it into his plays, it can also work as another type of original source (*honzetsu*) to remind the audience of the Buddhist philosophy with which they should have been already very familiar. Zeami has depicted the *nue* as a sentient being, but if the play ended on that note, its denouement would be still the same as that of the original episode in *Heike*. The depiction of the *nue*’s fate in the *Heike*, as staying in endless spiritual darkness, seems to have been widely recognized by medieval Japanese because of the existing widespread familiarity with the *nue*’s story in *Heike monogatari*. In order to change this fate, Zeami has to refer to something that was persuasive enough that the audience would be able to accept the *nue*’s new prospects for achieving enlightenment as credible. Zeami’s invoking of the Lotus Sutra teaching about the potential of all sentient beings to achieve enlightenment was expeditious. First, the idea of *sōmoku jōbutsu* from the sutra provides the philosophical grounding
for the nue’s possible enlightenment. Moreover, the teachings in the Lotus Sutra were familiar to contemporary audiences, so invoking those teachings as the backdrop for altering the received narrative from the Heike about the nue’s end stood to make the nue’s newfound candidacy for enlightenment in the Nō version more believable to audiences. Both of these points reflect the fact that source material from the Lotus Sutra was as important as source material from literary precedents such as Heike monogatari in determining how the Nō version of the nue’s fate was to be interpreted by audiences.

Furthermore, Zeami even blends the Lotus teachings with allusions to works in the belles lettres tradition, as in his quotation of a waka by the Heian poet Izumi Shikibu. The allusion to her poem primarily works to intimate the nue’s desire for salvation.

Chorus

*Kuraki yori* from raven darkness
*Kuraki michi ni zo* into the path of darkness
*Irinikeru* I have gone astray;
*Haruka ni terase* let the light shine bright far out
*Yama no ha no* from the mountain ridge
*Haruka ni terase* let the light shine bright far out
*Yama no ha no* from the mountain ridge
*Tsuki to tomo ni* O, moon, with you the moon

These words allude to the poem by Izumi Shikibu in the imperial collection of waka poems titled *Shūishū* (Collection of Gleanings, 1005-1007). The original poem is as follows:

81Yasuda, Masterworks of the Nō Theater, 436.
Kuraki yori  From raven darkness
kuraki michi ni zo  into the path of darkness
irinubeki  must I go astray
haruka ni terase  O moon, let your rays shine bright
yama no ha no tsuki  far out from the mountain ridge. 82

Izumi Shikibu is a famous female poet of the Heian period who served at the imperial court. She is particularly well known for her romances with male courtiers and for her love poems. Then why does Zeami quote a court lady’s poem in a play about this nue a creature that hardly seems to have a connection with romance?

The answer may be traced to the original context of the composing of the poem. There are legends about this poem. According to one, it was written to a holy man, Shōkū shōnin 性空上人 (1177-1247), famous as a Buddhist saint who promulgated the Lotus Sutra teachings. When Izumi Shikibu is refused permission to visit Shōkū because women were prohibited from doing so in accordance with orthodox Buddhism (nyonin kinsei 女人禁制), she sends this poem to Shōkū to express her desire to reach Buddhist enlightenment. In the reply by Shōkū, he tells her that the Lotus Sutra offers a path to enlightenment to any being, regardless of gender. 83 The first part of the poem cites the words found in Chapter Seven of the Sutra, “Parable of the Conjured City.” The original words are, “From darkness proceeding to darkness, they never hear the Buddha’s name” (従冥入於冥、永不聞仏名). 84 The referent here is beings living in the present world, which is full of various blind passions. Izumi Shikibu states that her circumstances are as dark as those described in this passage.

82Ibid., 561.
84Hurvitz, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, 133.
Then she asks Shōkū to lead her to salvation.

The moon shining from the mountain ridge may represent first Shōkū, who was considered to be a figure who could lead those immersed in darkness to salvation. In addition, I would argue that the image of the moon in the sky also implies Buddhahood. I base this conjecture on a concept of the moon that was prevalent in medieval Japanese society. The concept was closely related to a school of Tendai thought known as *hongaku shisō* 天台本覚思想, or “original enlightenment thought,” which was based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Hereafter, I will refer to this set of beliefs as “*hongaku* thought.”

*Hongaku* thought is most prominent in East Asia and especially in Japan. A fundamental premise is that enlightenment is inherent in all sentient beings from the outset and is accessible to all such beings in the present, rather than as the outcome of a long process of cultivation. A prominent element forming the basis of *hongaku* thought is the concept of *honji-suijaku* 本地垂迹, literally, “manifestation from the original ground.” This idea, which was rooted in Lotus Sutra tenets, is articulated by Stone below:

The Buddha of the latter fourteen chapters of the sutra, or “origin teaching” 本門 (*honmon*), who attained enlightenment countless kalpas ago, is the Buddha in his original ground 本地 (*honji*), while the Buddha of the first fourteen chapters, or “trace teaching” 迹門 (*shakumon*), is the “manifest trace” 垂迹 (*suijaku*) who appeared in this world as the historical Buddha.

The relation of the *honmon* and *shakumon*, or *honji* and *suijaku*, is described by the Chinese Tendai patriarch, Zhiyi 智顗 (538-597), in the metaphor of the moon in the sky.
sky and its reflection on a pond. Whereas the moon represents the “original teaching,” the reflection represents its manifest trace. I infer that the image of the moon in Izumi Shikibu’s poem actually may be read as a reference to the original Buddha, or, more specifically to Shōkū as a trace representation of the Buddha who is here in Izumi Shikibu’s world.

The poem as quoted in the play also expresses a purport similar to that expressed by Izumi Shikibu originally. By chanting the poem, the nue also expresses its strong desire to be rid of the darkness in which it is deeply immersed. The moon here first refers to the waki because of his praying for the enlightenment of the nue, and furthermore, refers to the Lotus Sutra in particular. As Yashima argues, the poem at the end of the play, expressing desire for guidance from Saint Shōkū, is adapted by Zeami in order to depict a parallel desire for enlightenment on the part of the nue.

There are some characteristics that the court lady Izumi Shikibu and the nue have in common. As a woman and a monster respectively, both of them are marginalized by orthodox Buddhist views and thus seem hopelessly removed from the possibility of enlightenment. However, according to the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, they are not denied the hope of being saved. Instead, both of them come to appear as legitimate candidates.

In addition to this concept, another Buddhist notion in the Lotus Sutra also helps to give a chance to the nue to achieve enlightenment. In order to do so, it is important for the nue to be pardoned for what he did to the emperor in his lifetime. Attacking the emperor was apparently a severe sin in premodern Japanese society. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the nue is offered a chance to confess his sin in the second part of the

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88Ibid, 41.
play. This might help him to reduce that sin. In addition to his confession, the Lotus Sutra also provides him a way to eliminate what would normally have been assumed to be unpardonable sin. The reference to Lotus teachings works may be expected to remind the audience of another important Buddhist tenet. In my opinion, the concept *akunin jōbutsu* 悪人成仏 (enlightenment of evil people) found in the twelfth chapter titled “Devadatta” in the Lotus Sutra, is another basic teaching upon which Zeami relied to extricate the *nue* from his predicament after death.

Devadatta was the cousin of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. He is described as a figure who was jealous of the Buddha’s greatness and wisdom and wanted to replace the Buddha’s leadership. He is said to have committed five unpardonable sins, including destroying the harmony of the community, injuring the Buddha with a stone, and inducing the killing of a nun. Because of his heinous crimes, Devadatta falls into Hell after his death. However, in the “Devadatta” chapter, the Buddha Śākyamuni declares that, because Devadatta was a seer who preached the Lotus Sutra to the Buddha in a past life,90 Devadatta would, “following the passage of incalculable kalpas,”91 achieve Buddhahood. The idea in this chapter is that the Lotus Sutra enables even the most heinously evil ones, such as Devadatta, to achieve enlightenment. Thanks to the Lotus Sutra, even Devadatta who sinned especially deeply was able to escape Hell and become a Buddha. Therefore the *nue*, who suffers because of the severe sin he committed before, is certain to have a chance to be enlightened thanks to the insights of the Lotus Sutra. Due to the general familiarity with the “Devadatta” chapter of the Lotus that medieval Japanese enjoyed, the idea of the *nue* achieving enlightenment would have fallen within the audience’s horizon of expectation. Although the play does not make a direct reference to the “Devadatta”

90Hurvitz, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, 196.
91Ibid, 197.
chapter in the text, in the second half of the play, the concept sōmoku jōbutsu might work to remind audiences members of their knowledge about the concept akunin jōbutsu in this other chapter. In this way, it would not have been hard for medieval audiences to recognize the possibility for the nue to rid himself of his sin.

In addition to the Lotus Sutra, I would point out that the Jōdo teachings also appear in the play Nue. At the end of the first part, after the nue narrates the story of being killed by Yorimasa, there comes the rongi (rapid exchange), the conversation between the shite and the waki. The Jōdo teachings are presented in the first sentence rendered by the waki:

CHORUS

Geni kakurenaki

yogatari no

sono ichinen o

hirugaeshi

naritame.  

How well know this story is

all throughout the world!

Now you must reverse and change

that one attachment

from the sunken depth.  

The phrase ichinen o hirugaeshi 一念を翻し is originally a term in the Jōdo sect. In Tannishō 歎異抄 (the Lamentations of Divergences, 13th century) by Yuien 唯円 (1222-1289), a short Buddhist text about the dialogues between himself and his master Shinran 親鸞 (1173-1263), the founder of the Jōdo Shinshū sect 浄土真宗, in Chapter Three the word hirugaesu 自力のこころ(Self Power) is used to refer to the action of turning over. The target of this action is the thought of jiriki no kokoro 自力のこころ(Self Power).

Jiriki is a Buddhist term that refers to the power enabling one to reach enlightenment by oneself. On the contrary, the term tariki 他力 (Other Power) refers to the power

92 Yasuda, Masterworks of the Nō Theater, 426-427.
of Amitābha Buddha. Japanese Jōdo encourages people to rely on the power of
Amitābha rather than on themselves to achieve enlightenment. In that chapter in
Tannishō, Shinran claims that because the person who adheres to Self Power is
conscious of doing good and lacks the thought of putting himself completely in the
power of the Amida Buddha, he or she is not included in the Primal Vow of the
Buddha to save all sentient beings. Only if one turns over the thought of Self Power
and relies on Other Power completely, can he or she attain birth in the Pure Land.
Based on the teachings in Tannishō, “ichinen o hirugaesu” should refer to the turning
over of the thought from jiriki to tariki, in other words, from the wrong mode of being
to the correct one.

In Nue, when this term is alluded to the text, it may be interpreted as first the
transference from a stubborn self-powered wrongheadedness to a faith in Amitabha's
vow, as the turning over from jiriki to tariki stated in Tannishō. Beyond this, what it
refers to here more generally is also the process of spiritualization and transference
from evil thoughts to Buddhist beliefs. The waki alludes to this term in order to tell
the audience that as long as the nue changes his mind set, he can then get rid of his
current predicament. In my opinion, like the Lotus teachings, the allusion to the Jōdo
term here also helps to ensure the nue’s enlightenment. Similarly, the general
familiarity with the Jōdo teachings that promotes people of medieval Japan enjoyed
would have allowed them to recognize such allusions to popular Buddhist teachings
easily.

3.2 Kinuta

In the Nō play Kinuta, the Lotus Sutra also works to offer the shite salvation
from Hell. However, because the shite’s identity is very different from that of the nue,
the Buddhist ideas in Kinuta also differ. The precept *sōmoku jōbutsu* as employed in Nue is not directly applicable to the predicament of this woman. In my opinion, the precept *nonin jōbutsu* 女人成仏 (women attaining Buddhahood) from the Lotus Sutra readies audiences to accept the shite’s enlightenment in Kinuta.

At the end of the first part of the play, the shite dies out of resentment toward her husband, who does not return home as he had promised. After her death, she falls into Hell as the punishment for her sin during her lifetime. When she appears as a spirit in the second part of the play, she starts to describe her miserable sufferings in Hell after her death:

**SHITE**

*Sarinagara ware wa jain no tsumi no* Yet Love’s lustful karma rules me still

*Omoi no kemuri no tachii dani* Fires of longing smoulder night and day

*Yasukarazarishi mukui no tsumi no* Now as before, I have no peace; this sin

*Midaruru kokoro no ito semete* a heart in pain, yields me its reward:

*Gokusotsu Abōrasetsu no* assaults of hell-friends, the Abōrasetus,

*Shimoto no kazu no hima mo naku* brandishing their rods and raining blows.

*Ute ya ute ya to mukui no kinuta* Beat on, beat (they howl), as you deserve,

*Urameshikarikeru* the block: for all my hate

It can be seen from the passage quoted above that the woman’s suffering in Hell results from her sin during her lifetime. Then, exactly what kind of sin did she commit? According to the text, Zeami identifies her sin as *jain no tsumi* 邪淫の罪, “love’s lustful karma,” as translated by Tyler. The sin of *jain* violates one of the *gokai* 五戒 (five precepts) of Buddhism, the minimal set of moral restrictions to be observed by

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Buddhist householder-practitioners. *Gokai* applies to the laity, male and female, as well as to monks and nuns. It is said that the observance of these five ensures rebirth in the human realm.94

Among the gokai, jain refers to sexual excess-- indulging in sexual misconduct. It might be generally understood to refer to illicit sexual relations with someone other than one’s husband or wife. Based on this definition, it seems unreasonable to impute to the woman in *Kinuta* the sin of jain, because the object of her intense yearning is her husband. There is no illicit sexual relation in the play. However, I would argue that jain need not necessarily derive from illicit sexual relations. It might also result from an excessive desire for love, even within the legal relationship of husband and wife. In the play *Kinuta*, because the woman’s missing and yearning for her remote husband becomes too strong to control, it grows abnormally strong and gradually grows into deep, irradicable resentment due to the unfaithfulness of her husband. Furthermore, although there is no way of knowing whether the husband has a sexual relationship with there is no way of knowing whether the husband has a sexual relationship with Yūgiri, this possibility might also increase the scale of the wife’s resentment. When she starts to beat the fulling block, this action is the outgrowth and the expression of such hateful feelings:

SHITE

*Yūgiri tachiyori shujū tomo ni* Yūgiri joins her, till mistress and maid

*Urami no kinuta utsu to ka ya* beat upon the block of angry pain.95

The word urami 恨み (resentment) clearly reflects the woman’s acute emotion. In

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94*Digital Dictionary of Buddhism*, s.y. “gokai” (五戒). http://www.buddhism-dict.net/cgi-bin/xpr-ddb.pl?4e.xml+id('b4e94-6212') (accessed June 9, 2010). The five precepts are not killing, not stealing, no debauchery, no false speech, and no consumption of alcohol.

addition, in the passage preceding her death scene, this acute resentment toward her husband flares up again the instant she learns that he has not kept his promise to come home:

TSURE

*Ika ni mōshi sōrō. Tono wa kono aki mo onkudari arumajiki nite sōrō*

I beg your pardon, madam. It appears that our lord will not be back this autumn.

SHITE

*Urameshi ya*  
*I detest him, then!*

*Semete wa toshi no kurashi o koso*  
*He promised, ‘By the year’s end’,*

*Itsuwarinagara machitsuru ni*  
*and I, who well knew he lied,*

*Sate wa haya makoto ni*  
*still looked for him.*

*Kawari hate tamō zo ya*  
*His love really has grown cold.*

Steeped in such resentment, she beats the fulling block as a way to express her anger. At this point it becomes all too clear that this woman’s obsessive longing for her husband has preoccupied her thoughts. Her excessive love becomes all-consuming resentment of her husband, and she tries to release her anger on the fulling block by beating it continuously. Due to the principle of karma in Buddhism, after her death, she is beaten similarly by Abōrasetsu, the jailer of Hell, as retribution for her beating on the fulling block during her past life. Such karma results from her excessive attachment to a passionate love. In my opinion, what the term *jain* refers to in the play is this excessive emotion on her part. This definition of *jain* corresponds to the

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96Ibid, 165-166.
reasons why women cannot attain *gokai*五階位 (five levels of existence), a step essential to achieve enlightenment in orthodox Buddhism. The reasons are that “they do not cultivate the compassionate and self-sacrificing practices of Bodhisattvas, and are lacking in the requisite insight into the true nature of Dharmas, but are, on the contrary, sensuous, lusty, and deceitful.”

Now that I have argued that the woman’s sin during her lifetime should be interpreted as excessive sexual attachment (*jain*), which prevents her from Buddhist enlightenment, I will examine how Zeami employs the Lotus teachings to absolve her of that sin. In the *ai-kyōgen*間狂言 (comedic interlude) there is explicit reference to the Lotus Sutra for the first time. When the Kyōgen actor, a manservant of the husband, introduces the story of the wife briefly, he mentions that the husband is going to hold a Buddhist ritual to placate the spirit of his wife. His announcement goes as follows:

[The husband] had the bowstring plucked to summon her spirit, and offered to the buddhas the fulling block that she had beaten until the moment she expired. And he decided that a service should be held for her comfort and guidance.

Although Tyler’s English translation uses “a service” here, in the Japanese text the name of the Lotus Sutra *hokekyō* is mentioned in that paragraph. The original Japanese text is as follows:

*sono ato hokekyō o motsute / otoburai arōzuru to no mikoto ni te sōrō aida*.

The concept of *nyonin kinsei* (prohibition against women) was mentioned earlier in introducing the poem by Izumi Shikibu quoted in *Nue*. Nyonin kinsei would seem

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99 Ibid, 169.
an insurmountable obstacle to enlightenment, but I hold that the “Devadatta” chapter in the Lotus Sutra also provides a possible solution to this obstacle.

In this chapter, Manjusri, a bodhisattva associated with transcendent wisdom narrates a story to the disciples about the daughter of the dragon king, who is eight years old. He claims that after hearing the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, the dragon girl understands the dharmas and is able to attain to bodhi, or Buddhist enlightenment.\(^{100}\) As soon as he says this, the dragon girl suddenly appears in front of them. However, Śāriputra, a renowned arhat who was one of two principal disciples of the Buddha, raises doubts about this story for the following reasons:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A woman’s body is filthy, it is not a Dharma-receptacle.} \\
\text{Also, a woman’s body even then has five obstacles. It cannot become first a Brahma god king, second, the god Sakra, third, King Mara, fourth, a sage-king turning the Wheel, fifth, a Buddha-body.}\^{101}
\end{align*}
\]

Therefore he questions how could “the body of a woman speedily achieve Buddhahood?”\(^{102}\)

In response to his query, the dragon girl turns into a man instantly with perfect bodhisattva-conduct, becomes a Buddha and universally preaches Dharma to the men and gods of the assembly of that time. Seeing this scene, Śāriputra and all the assembled multitude silently accept and believe the fact that woman can also achieve Buddhahood.\(^{103}\)

In medieval Japan, the five obstacles (gosho 五障) mentioned above were viewed generally as central to a woman's inability to achieve enlightenment and widely recognized by both men and women. Actually, the topos of “the five

\[^{100}\text{Hurvitz, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, 196, 199.}\]
\[^{101}\text{Ibid, 200-201.}\]
\[^{102}\text{Ibid, 201.}\]
\[^{103}\text{Ibid.}\]
obstacles” is treated “as an element of waka discourse.” The poem by Izumi Shikibu that I mentioned above is one such exemplar. Moreover, in Genji monogatari, in the “Niou” chapter, Kaoru thought his mother, the Third Princess, was unable to achieve Buddhahood, in spite of her devotions morning and night. This reference too is evidence that the notion of the five obstacles was familiar to Heian readers.

Some scholars argue that the dragon-girl’s story in the Lotus Sutra is offered as a piece of evidence of the power of the sutra. The dragon-girl is described as a figure who has sharp-rooted wisdom and knows the faculties and deeds of beings, and can accept and keep the profound treasure house of secret preached by the Buddhas. The description reveals that the dragon-girl had already been a marvelous figure before achieving enlightenment. Therefore, her enlightenment should not be considered to be universalized to ordinary women in the secular world.

However, most of the sources in Heian and medieval literature that have come down to us do celebrate the story of dragon-girl as a testimonial to the ability of women to achieve Buddhahood. Kamens discusses a poem composed by a Heian princess Daisaiin Senshi 大斎院選子 (964-1035). In this poem, she celebrates the dragon-girl’s enlightenment and comments that “[h]ere is the example of one who was not obstructed by the obstructions, so I, too, can hope that no more clouds will block my way.” From her poem, it is clear that she believes that the story of the dragon-girl helps to remove the “clouds” that block her way, namely the five obstacles.

As Kamens argues, what Senshi’s poem expresses is “not simply the joy of an

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106Hurvitz, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, 199.
observer but, rather, the joy of one who takes the girl’s achievement as an example (tameshi), of a message of hope available to her for her own appropriation.\textsuperscript{108}

Therefore although the story in the Lotus Sutra might simply support the claim of the sutra’s magnificence, it was “almost always read (in Senshi’s time, and later) as a paradigm for all women…in their quest for ultimate salvation.”\textsuperscript{109} That is to say, no matter what the original purpose of the dragon-girl’s story was, most promodern Japanese people considered it to be a parable about removing the five obstacles that prevent females from achieving Buddhist enlightenment.

Let us return to the play \textit{Kinuta} from the vantage point of the Lotus teachings. The audiences who were familiar with the precepts introduced in the Lotus Sutra would already have been aware that women, though faced with the Five Obstacles, might be able to achieve Buddahood after receiving the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. This idea is also suggested in the term \textit{nyonin jōbutsu} (women achieving enlightenment). When Zeami makes a reference to the Lotus Sutra in the play, spectators’ prior knowledge of the idea of \textit{nyonin jōbutsu} might be easily evoked. I argue that his allusion to the Lotus Sutra in the play serves as a kind of intervention, aimed at altering any more general, preconceived notions about prohibitions against Buddhahood for women that audience may have brought to their viewing of the play. Zeami is bringing into the foreground the familiar counterargument about a woman’s prospects as expressed in the Lotus Sutra parable of the dragon girl.

The idea from the “Devadatta” chapter works to make the woman’s final enlightenment persuasive to the audience, which is similar to the way in which Zeami invokes Buddhist philosophy in \textit{Nue}. Although when he refers to \textit{honzetsu} in \textit{Sandō}, Zeami does not mention Buddhist philosophy, the allusions to the Lotus and Jōdo

\textsuperscript{108}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109}Ibid, 405.
teachings in Nue and Kinuta actually work in the same way as the original materials, such as poetry, legends and prose, do in his plays.

Since when Zeami composed the treatises, the target readers were his successors, he might merely have written down the points that he wanted to remind his descendants about and omit the ones with which he assumed they were already familiar. Buddhist precepts from the Lotus Sutra were so prevalent in premodern Japan that they might be considered common knowledge among Zeami’s contemporaries. Therefore, I conclude that in Nue and Kinuta, Zeami could count on prior familiarity with these Buddhist teachings from the Lotus Sutra and therefore could employ them as a kind of original source material, or honzetsu. Furthermore, introducing such allusions to the sutra into these plays is one tactic that Zeami could use to challenge audiences to look from fresh vantage points at characters who in all likelihood would have been perceived as estranged from Buddhist teachings, and to make the argument that they too had it in them to achieve Buddhist enlightenment.
Chapter Four

The Roles of Lotus Sutra Ritual in Nue and Kinuta

In Chapter Three I argued that Zeami employed Buddhist precepts as another type of original source material in Nue and Kinuta. In addition to the Lotus Sutra teachings, a Lotus-based practice—intoning of the sutra—also appears in both of the plays. It seems that the chanting of the Lotus Sutra is a ritual practice inserted into the dramatic action. However, does it also work to help the audiences understand the play? In this chapter, I will explore how the Lotus chanting works in the plays, not only as a ritual to placate a spirit, but also as a type of original source material. Because such practice was so familiar to medieval Japanese, it may have formed the cultural backdrop for contemporary audiences and thus have influenced their interpretation of the stories.

I have presented how Zeami employs the Lotus teachings to offer the audience the possibility of the nue and the Kinuta woman achieving Buddhist enlightenment, even though they do not seem to be likely candidates according to orthodox Buddhist doctrines. Next I will argue that it is the performance of Lotus ritual that has the effect of clearing away the impediments to Buddhist enlightenment suffered by the protagonists in the two play.
4.1 Nue

In Nue, the shite listens to the waki chanting the sutra in the machiutai (waiting song) that opens the second half of the play and thus accrues the merit it was thought one gained by hearing the holy teachings.

WAKI  Mi-nori no koe mo  The voice that chants the prayer
       uranami mo  and the inlet waves,
       mi-nori no koe mo  the voice that chants the prayer
       uranami mo  and inlet waves,
       mina jissō no  tell us that the Way of Truth
       michihiroki  opens wide for all;
       nori o ukeyo to  so that the nue too receives
       yo to tomo ni  its holy blessing
       kono on-kyō o  all night long I chant for him
       dokuju suru  the Buddhist sutra,
       kono on-kyō o  all night long I chant for him
       dokuju suru  the Buddhist sutra.110

This passage describes a Buddhist ritual for placation of the nue’s spirit, which seems to separate from the plot development of the play. As Plutschow has noted, the placation of spirits, “including both Shinto and Buddhist practice,” “extends from modern times back into prehistory,” and, “bears upon the interpretation of early Japanese literature and drama.”111 In my opinion, the nue can be considered to be a spirit that requires ritual placation. This might first result from its abnormal death. In

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110 Yasuda, Masterworks of the Nō Theater, 431.
the Muromachi period and periods prior to it, Japanese believed that one who had, “died in ‘unnatural’ circumstances would be unable to rest but would roam around causing all sorts of evil until it was placated.” They also believed that during wartime and adverse political events, evil spirits appeared nationwide. Therefore to preserve the national peace and harmony, it was necessary to provide for their placation. Because the nue not only dies unnaturally but also is one of the spirits that appears “at times of political or social flux,” it has to be placated. Thus, it is likely that the chanting of the sutra onstage is meant as a ritual to placate the nue’s spirit. This is one of the roles that the performance of the ritual plays on stage.

The Buddhist ritual is also greatly important in dispelling suspicion regarding whether the nue achieves enlightenment at the end of the play. The ending is ambiguous because Zeami does not clearly indicate in the text that the nue has done so. The result is that two possible interpretations emerge regarding the nue’s enlightenment. The first possibility is that the nue does not achieve Buddhahood, and returns to the endless darkness again. However, the Buddhist philosophy Zeami employs in the passage makes it also possible that the nue does achieve Buddhist enlightenment. Under this complex of possibilities, I would suggest that the ritual works as a powerful backdrop for the audience to rely on to believe that the nue eventually attains enlightenment. I will clarify this argument in the following paragraphs.

To see how this is so, it is necessary to examine the ending in the second part of the play. Chanting the poem of Izumi Shikibu, the nue then finishes singing the last line as follows:

\[^{112}\text{Ibid}, 204.\]
\[^{113}\text{Ibid}, 206.\]
\[^{114}\text{Oyler, “The Nue and Other Monsters in Heike monogatari”, 5.}\]
CHORUS  *kaigetsu mo*  [The moon] upon the ocean,
*irinikeri*  too, is going down,
*kaigetsu to tomo ni*  with the moon upon the ocean,
*irinikeri*  now I, too, go down.\textsuperscript{115}

The exit scene is similar to that in the first part of the play, right before the interlude:

CHORUS  *Noru to mieshi ga*  he seems to board the dugout
SHITE  *yoru no nami ni*  but midst the surging waves
*ukinu*  of the night,
*shizuminu*  he floats, he sinks,
*mietsu kakure*  hiding and appearing,
*taedae ni*  faintly, dimly, there\textsuperscript{116}

Both scenes describe the *nue* disappearing into the water, indicating its exit from the present world. The place where the *nue* goes upon its first exit is where it came from, because in the first part of the play, the *nue* merely comes to see the *waki* and then returns back to the darkness where it has been plunged since its death. Then, where does the *nue* go at the second exit? Does it successfully go to the Pure Land as it wishes? In my opinion, the answer is not clear. The word *irinikeri*  入りにけり  here refers to entering into the water. This reminds the audience of the action of floating and sinking (*ukinu*  浮きぬ  and *shizuminu*  沈みぬ*), which the *nue* did at the end of Part One: after hiding and appearing, that scene ends with the *nue’s* disappearance into the water. The similar scene at the end of the second part seems to indicate that

\textsuperscript{115}Yasuda, *Masterworks of the Nō Theater*, 436.
\textsuperscript{116}Ibid, 427.
the nue returns to the unenlightened darkness in which he has been immersed since being killed by Yorimasa.

On the other hand, however, the Buddhist philosophy that he introduces into his adaptation of the nue’s story implies the final salvation of the nue. Despite the nue’s seeming inability to reach salvation in the play, I argue that Zeami implies and predicts, through his invoking of Buddhist philosophical ideas, the nue’s enlightenment at the end of the play.

The final scene of the play reveals the nue’s future enlightenment based on the Tendai hongaku thought. As has been discussed in the second chapter of this study, the Chinese patriarch, Zhiyi, wrote that the relation of the moon in the sky to its reflection on the water was like that of the original Buddha and the historical Buddha. As Stone states regarding hongaku thinking in medieval Japan, “historical manifestation and origin are neither separate nor hierarchical.” Substantially there is no difference between the honji and suijaku. Therefore both the moon shining from the mountain ridge and its reflection on the water symbolize true enlightenment. I argue that the nue seems to be apart from the “moon” at the end of the play, probably because, as a monster, he is marginalized by certain orthodox teachings. However, when he exits, he touches the reflection of the moon, which, in medieval hongaku thought, may also be taken as the symbol of the true Buddha, indicating that in spite of being a marginalized and sinful character, the way to Buddhist enlightenment is still open to the nue. In fact, the action of touching the reflection of the moon might even be interpreted as a sudden enlightenment. By adopting the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and its hongaku-style interpretations as strategies, Zeami depicts a promising prospect for the nue’s achievement of enlightenment. Adopting such interpretive strategies evidences Zeami’s special concern and sympathy for the marginalized
character of the *nue*.

In addition to the *hongaku* thought, the Buddhist belief in *sōmoku jōbutsu* (the grasses and trees all achieve enlightenment), as discussed in Chapter Three, also predicts that the *nue*’s aspiration will eventually be realized. I am arguing that Zeami endows the *nue* with human sensibilities, with the effect that we come to perceive this creature as a sentient being who is a candidate for enlightenment. Once a being has attained the way of becoming Buddha, even the grasses and trees too will attain enlightenment. This is the core thought that Zeami is presenting to the audience. Even the grasses and trees can attain enlightenment on the condition that one Buddha wins the way to enlightenment. Therefore it is certain for the *nue* to be enlightened on that condition.

Now I will introduce how important the chanting of the Lotus Sutra was among medieval Japanese. In his classification of the different teachings in the Lotus Sutra that occur in Nō plays, Anezaki identifies one group of plays that include scenes in which the Lotus Sutra is chanted. According to him, the chant of the *Lotus Sutra* has been an important Buddhist practice since the Heian period. Through either chanting the sutra by oneself or listening to others chant, people remind themselves of its Buddhist doctrines. It is commonly recognized that even spirits could be enlightened by listening to the sound of the chanting of the sutra.\(^{117}\) This prevalent idea originated in Chapter Eighteen of the Lotus, “The Merits of Appropriate Joy.” It is as follows:

> The merit gained by this man for giving all manner of playthings to living beings of the six destinies in four hundred myriads of millions of asamkhṣeyas of world-spheres, and also enabling them to obtain the fruit of the arhat, does not equal one-hundredth, not one-thousandth, not one-hundred-thousand-thousand-thousandth part of the merit of that fiftieth person for appropriately rejoicing at hearing a single gāthā of the Scripture of the Dharma Blossom, for it is something that cannot be known through

According to this, the protagonists’ listening to the chant allows them to attain the merit that the hearing of the sutra actualizes. Such merit would be one of the essential elements to help the nue and the woman achieve Buddhist enlightenment.

Anezaki believes that the sutra the waki chants is the Lotus Sutra. He puts the play Nue in the group of plays having scenes of chanting the Lotus Sutra, but he does not clarify his reason for doing so. However, in fact, the name of the Lotus Sutra does not appear in the ritual of chanting the sutra, whereupon a question arises. What is the sutra chanted in Nue? Is it the Lotus Sutra, according to Anezaki, or not?

I agree with Anezaki and believe that the sutra chanted in Nue is the Lotus Sutra. There are two main arguments for my perspective. One is that in the original Japanese text, the word in the “minori” 御法 (Dharma) is used in the scene of chanting the sutra. This is an honorific usage that refers to the Buddhist dharma. However, in some cases, the word can specifically refer to the Lotus Sutra. One example is in Genji monogatari. The word minori is used as the title of Chapter Forty in Genji, which is translated as “The Law” by Royall Tyler. This chapter describes a Buddhist ceremony in which Murasaki no Ue dedicates a thousand copies of the Lotus Sutra. It is very likely that the allusion to minori in Nue could remind the audiences familiar with Genji of the content of that chapter and this well-known precedent is evidence that the sutra the Nō waki chants is also intended to refer to the Lotus Sutra. Besides, the Tendai school sometimes uses minori no hana 御法の花 to refer to the Lotus Sutra. According to Kōjien 広辞苑, this usage originates in the kunyomi 訓読み (Japanese-style kanji reading) of the name of the Lotus Sutra, Hokkekyō. Hokkekyō is

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118 Hurvitz, Scripture of the Lotus Blossom of the Fine Dharma, 259-260.
120 Kun’yomi is a treatment of kanji characters as Japanese words, and “on’yomi” is the Sino-Japanese rendering of kanji characters.
the onyomi 音読み (Sino-Japanese-style kanji reading) of the Chinese characters 法華. The kunyomi is nori no hana, and in order to show respect to the Lotus Sutra, the honorific mi 御 is added at the beginning. Since the Lotus Sutra can also be called as minori no hana,\textsuperscript{121} it is possible for audiences to interpret the word minori in Nue to refer to the Lotus.

The other reason is that when the waki chants the sutra, he mentions the Buddhist idea of mina jissō no michi 皆実相の道 (“the Way of Truth opens wide for all”).\textsuperscript{122} It will be recalled from Chapter Three that this idea of shohō jissō is a fundamental tenet in the Lotus Sutra and in the Tendai School. Because of this realtion to Lotus teachings, I suggest that the reference to mina jissō no michi during the ritual of chanting the sutra implies that what the waki chants is indeed the Lotus Sutra.

At this time, if the audiences were reminded of the efficacy it was believed the hearing the chanting of the Lotus Sutra entailed, it might well have occurred to them that the ritual has already ensured the enlightenment of the nue. From the excerpt in the Lotus Sutra quoted above, it is clear that the nue stands in a position to accrue merit from its exposure to the chanted sutra. That is to say, the chanting of the Lotus Sutra per se is a ritual, and in the context dramatized onstage, this ritual serves as a basis for actualizing the nue’s attainment of Buddhahood. Given the cultural familiarity with the Lotus Sutra since the Heian period, it is not surprising that the ritual of chanting the sutra only grew more prevalent among medieval Japanese. This familiarity stood to inform the perspective of medieval audiences, and existed as a kind of foreknowledge that Zeami could draw on and exploit. The ritual itself

\textsuperscript{121}Ôno Susumu, Akihiro Satake, and Kingorō Maeda, eds., Iwanami kogo jiten (Tōkyō: Iwanami), 1990, 1270.

\textsuperscript{122}Yasuda, Masterworks of the Nō Theater, 431.
becomes a certain type of source material, because, similar to allusions to canonical textual precedents, religious and belle-lettistic, the ritual action of chanting the sutra enjoyed a shared cultural familiarity upon which the playwright could build. Zeami could thus exploit such materials in creating his own fresh interpretations that audiences would find natural and credible.

4.2 Kinuta

As for Kinuta, the denouement is less complex than Nue, because the play clearly articulates that the woman achieves enlightenment with the help of the Lotus chanting ritual at the end of the play. I argue that, as in the case of Nue, the chanting of the sutra also works both as a ritual of placation and as source material that enriches the experience of watching the play.

The passage of the Lotus chanted by the chorus at the end of the second part of the play is as follows:

**CHORUS**

- *Hokke dokuju no chikara nite* So powerful, the chanted Lotus Sutra
- *Hokke dokuju no chikara nite* so powerful, the chanted Lotus Sutra,
- *Yūrei masa ni jōbutsu no* before the spirit a bright path of light
- *Michi akiraka ni narinikeri* opens out straight to Buddhahood.
- *Kore mo omoeba karisome ni* See, how from the block she briefly beat,
- *Uchishi kinuta no koe no uchi* its complaint her own, a perfect flower
- *Akuru nori no hanagokoro* has blossomed: the true Teaching,
- *Bodai no tane to narinikeri* now the seed of her illumination
Bodai no tane to narinikeri  
now the seed of her illumination.123

First, I would suggest that this passage is a ritual for the purpose of placation. The passage is chanted by the chorus—jiutai 地謡. In fact, in the second half of the play, the jiutai chants not only this passage but also several prior passages in the second part. Furthermore, there are varying narrative perspectives in these jiutai passages. It is clear that the passages before the final passage containing the chanting of the sutra (quoted above) are narrated from the first-person perspective of the woman’s spirit. Words that describe emotion, such as osoroshiki 恐ろしき (terrible) and urameshiki 恨めしき (resentful) in these passages tell of the woman’s innermost feelings.

However, in the ensuing passage of the chanted sutra, we find more objective recitation of the lines in the ritual than subjective description of emotions in most of the passage. This is revealed by the music used in actual performance. In the chanting part, the music changes abruptly to an undemonstrative tone, which implies the narrative perspective shifted from subjective to objective description. Tyler’s translation also supports my argument. In the fifth and sixth lines of the passage that I cited above, he uses “she” and “her” to refer to the shite, whereas in all the jiutai passages in the second part of the play that precede the final passage, he opts for first-person pronouns such as “I” and “my”. Some of the original lines and his translations are as follows:

SHITE

*Sobu ga ryogan ni fumi o tuke*  
How rightly I recalled Sobu

*banri no nangoku ni itari shi mo*  
who, to a wild goose

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123Tyler, Japanese Nō Dramas, 170.
To examine the narrative perspectives in this passage, it is necessary to take its grammatical elements into account. In the fourth line of the passage cited above, Zeami uses the auxiliary *keri*. *Keri* was an evidential auxiliary that indicated that the predicate it applied to was an externally established fact.\(^{125}\) *Keri* was thus regularly indicative of a third-person perspective on the situation represented in the predicate and, in this case, narrated. Regarding the content of the first four lines, I suggest that in these sentences the chorus works as the observer to state the fact that the spirit of the *Kinuta* woman achieves Buddhahood. In the next two lines, however, the narrative perspective modulates slightly toward a first-person perspective. The word *omoeba* in the fifth line may be glossed as “when thinking [about it],” a presupposing conditional form whose subject was regularly the speaker, not a third party. The auxiliary *shi* (the adnominal form of *ki*) in the next line regularly implied that the information of the narration was personally familiar to the narrator. In contrast to *keri*, the auxiliary *ki* (including its adnominal form *shi*) was commonly used when relating “internally” established fact—information that the speaker knows on the basis of

\(^{124}\)Ibid, 169-170.

\(^{125}\)This characterization of *keri*, like that of *ki* below, follow Charles Quinn's J601 course notes for 2008, as well as his "A Functional Grammar of Predication in Classical Japanese," 3 vols. (PhD diss.: University of Michigan, 1987). See, for example, pp. 268-272.
personal experience or as received, in-group knowledge. The “insider’s” perspective suggested with *omoeba* and *shi* (*i.e.* *ki*) indexed in these two lines, works to introduce the wife’s personal experience of the process by which she was able to achieve enlightenment. It is also possible that the auxiliary *shi* (*ki*) includes the audience along with the woman, in the epistemic position it indexes. After all, they are not only the observers of the play, but also participants in the Buddhist ritual unfolding before them.

After the modulation to usages reflective of a first-person perspective, in the last three lines of the passage, the narrative perspective changes to a third-person one again. In the last two lines, the narrator describes the scene in which the wife eventually becomes the seed of Buddhist enlightenment. Here the particle *to* rather than *ni* is used to present the action of becoming (*Bodai no tane to narinikeri*). The complementizer *to* whether as a quotative, essive (“as (if) ~”), or manner marker, generally indicates the speaker’s way of construing something outside herself, thus indexing a third-person point of view, which contrasts with the particle *ni*, which simply places things where they are, *i.e.* does not indicate their location as a matter of construal. Moreover, the externally established fact auxiliary *keri* appears again at the end of the two lines, which also evidences the return to the third-person perspective in the last three lines. Based on these grammatical signposts, I conclude that the last passage chanted by the chorus is mainly from an observer’s perspective, with slight modulation to a first-person point of view.

Therefore, the chanting of the Lotus Sutra in *Kinuta* is also a form of religious ritual that is presented live during the performance. Since the woman dies unnaturally, her spirit also needs to be placated (not unlike the *nue*). Therefore I conclude that the passage is chanted mainly from a third-person perspective as a religious ritual to
placate the spirit of the woman, and thus stands separate from the narration of specific events of her story. This is one of the effects the Lotus chanting works in the play.

However, this Lotus chanting does not merely work as a religious practice of placation. As I argued above, the merits of chanting the Lotus Sutra were widely recognized among medieval Japanese, so that it would have constituted a kind of foreknowledge on the part of the audience when they interpreted what they saw on stage. This passage of chant would have strongly suggested to audiences that the woman has attained Buddhahood because of the merits of exposure to the chanting of the sutra, which provides the means for interpreting this play as ending on a happy note. At this point, the passage also works as a type of original source because it is based on the familiarity of the medieval audiences with the Lotus-based practice. I conclude that it is the Lotus ritual that finishes the process of making the woman’s enlightenment persuasive enough to the audience, so that they can fully accept Zeami’s adaptation of the original literary materials. This is what the Buddhist rituals performed in Kinuta and Nue have in common.

I have argued that the Buddhist practice of chanting passages of the Lotus Sutra works first as a rite to placate the spirits. This is a religious tradition that goes a long way back in Japanese cultural traditions. In addition, the ritual also serves as a type of original source used to exploit the audience’s foreknowledge in order to guide them to accept Zeami’s particular adaptations of original stories or legends. On these grounds, we may consider Buddhist ritual to be another type of honzetsu, a means that Zeami employs to facilitate the audience’s reception of the Buddhist enlightenment of the protagonists in Nue and Kinuta.
In conclusion, *Nue* and *Kinuta*, two plays that Zeami composed late in his career, are exemplars that merit discussion in regard to their treatments of original source materials. The identities of both protagonists, the *nue* and the female protagonist of *Kinuta*, differ significantly from those of the characters Zeami depicts in his early years. They represent a group of more humble characters who enjoy no illustrious status and are not the central characters of earlier literary works. However, Zeami kindly offered the Nō stage as a site where some of these humble ones might be shown to warrant public attention. Some literary works, such as the *Heike* and writings related to the Sobu story, offer original materials to the playwright, and Zeami used those materials in the creation of *Nue* and *Kinuta* respectively. Zeami’s adaptation worked to shift the audience focus from the traditional hero or heroine as depicted in the earlier literary rendering to humble characters. His adaptations further employ various allusions not only to literary works, but also to Buddhist philosophical works and even to Buddhist rituals. By the added invocation of both Buddhist texts and rituals in these plays, Zeami was able to add new dimensions to story material already familiar from the literary tradition and to thereby encourage audiences to interpret old materials in fresh ways.

Zeami composed *Nue* based on an episode in *Tale of the Heike*, and *Kinuta* on Sobu’s legends. These literary precedents would have already been instrumental in the formation of a horizon of expectations for audiences, and Zeami had to work with
those expectations. If he wished to alter the preconceived images about traditional materials that audiences were likely to bring to Nō performance, then he had to apply certain strategies. In fact, he uses different strategies to adapt these materials in the two plays. On the one hand, in Nue he depicts the story from a fresh perspective in order to alter the audience’s reception and interpretation of the episode in the older literary work, Tale of the Heike. On the other hand, in Kinuta, he creates a new story illuminated by Sobu-related literary precedents, which also works to alter the audience’s expectations. All these allusions to the literary materials in the two plays cohere with Zeami’s precepts on honzetsu that are set down in his earlier critical writing, Sandō. I conclude that Zeami not only directly adapts some traditional honzetsu, such as the Heike episode and Sobu’s legends, but also exploits these honzetsu to awaken audience recollection of a series of literary precedents. Allusion to canonical works may have served as a tactic for making humble protagonists seem more sophisticated and more elegant to audiences. Such ties with literary elegance would have made Zeami’s adaptations match general Nō aesthetic standards and would have worked to ease the way to audiences accepting his adaptations of the original stories.

In addition, and quite significantly, Zeami also invokes Buddhist philosophy from the Lotus Sutra in Nue and Kinuta. For a monster or a woman, orthodox Buddhist dogma held that the prospects for achieving enlightenment were dim, so the strategy Zeami uses in the two plays is to employ the Lotus teachings to broaden the possible scope of interpretation regarding the prospects of such marginalized characters. Allusions to Lotus Sutra precepts such as sōmoku jōbutsu (the grasses and trees all achieve enlightenment), akunin jōbutsu (enlightenment of evil people) and nyonin jōbutsu (women attaining Buddhahood) serve to remind the audience of some
of the more universalist teachings found in the Lotus Sutra. Such allusions to certain chapters of the Lotus Sutra might make Buddhist enlightenment seem a likelier prospect for the protagonists. Just as in the case of allusions to famous literary works, allusions to the Lotus teachings depended on a general familiarity on the part of medieval Japanese audiences. I argue that the allusions to the Lotus Sutra in effect also function as a type of source material, or *honzetsu*, in the two plays. Adding Buddhist scripture to the set of texts that may serve as original materials (*honzetsu*) upon which a Nō play draws might not fit the traditional definition of *honzetsu*, which generally refers to allusions to literary source materials. However, the Lotus teachings helped Zeami to alter audience expectation regarding whether the *nue* and the wife might be able to achieve Buddhahood. In the case of the late plays *Nue* and *Kinuta*, Lotus philosophy does work to allow fresh interpretation and reception of already familiar narratives.

Furthermore, Buddhist ritual—in this case, intoning the Lotus Sutra—also involves alteration in audience reception. It plays two main roles during the performance of the two plays on stage. One is to placate the spirits of the two protagonists. The placation of spirits can be considered to be a survival of the tradition from very early Japanese literature and drama. Because the *nue* and the wife died unnaturally in their past lives, the chanting of the Lotus Sutra works as a religious ritual to placate their spirits. The efficacy of intoning the Lotus Sutra would have been a concept familiar to audiences, and as such constitutes another type of foreknowledge that the playwright could tap. But along with its allusive potential, Zeami exploits the sutra chanting as an integral part of the plot development as well. During the chanting of the sutra, those who are exposed to the chanting are able to attain merit, which increases their chances for Buddhist enlightenment. When
witnessing the performance of the chanting, medieval audiences would have been
more disposed to conclude that the protagonists in these plays could attain
enlightenment. Such a denouement would be credible for spectators having a cultural
familiarity with the Lotus Sutra precepts. Such staging of this ritual can be considered
as integral to the denouement of the plays. In this way, Buddhist ritual too may
constitute another kind of source material to which a playwright may allude. Like the
Lotus text, Lotus ritual also serves to clear away the impediments to Buddhist
enlightenment for these protagonists. It is only through the intoning of the sutra that
the *nue* and the wife can be extricated from their current miserable predicaments.

In fact, Zeami’s treatments of original source materials, including traditional
literary works, a religious tract such as the Lotus Sutra, and Buddhist ritual, such as
chanting of the Lotus sutra, work in both plays to enable humble characters to attain
enlightenment. When invoking each of these types of source materials, Zeami was
working on the premise that they would be already familiar to contemporary
audiences. This familiarity ensures that an audience will easily recognize the
information contained in these materials when they are exposed to them in the play. I
conclude that Zeami could have guided audiences with foreknowledge of the original
source materials to naturally accept his adaptations of them in the plays, thus
facilitating fresh interpretations and reception of familiar humble characters and their
stories, by fresh depiction in his Nō plays. These allusions thus played a major role in
achieving his goal of depicting the stories of humble characters.
Bibliography


