Lakehead University

"The Urban Mirror"

Kabuki's Reflection of Tokugawa Social Trends

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Contents

Introduction

I

The Tokugawa period (1615-1868) ushered in an era of unprecedented peace and unity for Japan, a nation that had been engulfed by several hundred years of internal warfare. It was during this unique period of time that the theatrical performance of kabuki blossomed, and became a prominent feature of Japanese society. Although kabuki drew its roots from *Bunraku* (puppet plays) and Nō, it differed from these two theatrical styles as it was entertainment patronized primarily by the commoners of urban Japan.[1] The presence of large numbers of commoners is an aspect of kabuki that begins to shed light on its cultural importance. At the present time, there are numerous studies dealing with kabuki; however, kabuki theatre as a reflection of Tokugawa society has been relatively neglected. This study will not attempt to refute the importance owed to social, economic and political changes during the period of early modern Japan in the development of kabuki. Instead, the intent of this work is to demonstrate how kabuki can be used as a mirror through which to view certain trends of Tokugawa Japan.

Kabuki has been extensively researched in Japan, but has not been extensively examined outside of its country of origin. Owing to the language requirements, kabuki is not widely studied and is often given a cursory look within history courses. Many students of history can recognize kabuki, but cannot explain its importance or significance to Japanese history. It is the hope of this study to alter this situation so as to bring an improved understanding of kabuki as a useful tool for the study of Tokugawa

[1] Nō was a theatre form associated with the aristocracy of Japan and was meant exclusively for them during the Tokugawa period. The performances were intricate in meaning and supposedly beyond the comprehension of the average commoner. Bunraku were puppet performances that predated kabuki, but which kabuki borrowed heavily from. The famous kabuki playwright Chikamatsu Monzaemon wrote for both actors and bunraku.

Japan and Japanese history in general. This is not to say that kabuki is an unknown avenue of research in the West. However, kabuki has often been a component of other studies or been the backdrop of larger works. This work brings together information from a wide variety of sources to offer a well rounded study with kabuki as its central focus. The results provide a greater appreciation for kabuki and its ability to offer insights into Japanese history.

The existence of kabuki begins in the early seventeenth century and stretches to present times. However, the scope of this study will be restricted to a limited portion of the Tokugawa era (1615-1868). While the Tokugawa government attempted to preserve the status quo of the period, social, economic and political situations changed over time. The beginning of the decline of the shogunate in the nineteenth century will be the limit of this work. The amount of space required to provide a detailed examination of the theatre and its reflections of society's changes at the end of the shogunate is not possible for this study. Thus, this work will examine kabuki from its earliest days until the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

The emergence of kabuki relied on the presence of certain conditions and factors. The quelling of domestic warfare and the subsequent peace that followed was a cornerstone for the birth of kabuki. With peace came a large number of changes that permitted the rapid growth and expansion of both the economy and population of Japan. These factors combined with government policies to spur on the rapid urbanization and development of the *chōnin* (commoner) class. It was this class that supported and patronized kabuki throughout the Tokugawa era. Kabuki in turn was influenced and

moulded by the world of the chōnin, which began to appear on the stage, structures and facets of this unique theatre form.

It is vital to examine the conditions leading to kabuki's development. This process of examination will shed light upon the requirements of peace, the growth of markets, the centralization of government authority, the stimulus for urbanization and the world this created. These factors will all combine to provide a general understanding of the world kabuki and its patrons inhabited. It will also demonstrate how this world affected kabuki and its structures and began manifesting itself on the stage.

The appearance of the Tokugawa world upon the kabuki stage was a gradual process. This process was in essence the maturation of kabuki, which increased the inclusion of the chōnin's world in all its components. Kabuki's maturation occurred as it was gradually forced away from relying upon sex and wild entertainment to attract audiences. For kabuki to remain financially successful it shifted its focus to other avenues of the chōnin world. Sex and sexuality would remain with the theatre but would not take so prominent a role after the mid-seventeenth century. Performances turned to the urban world for the inspiration for themes, characters, costumes and plots. Thus a close examination of plays results in insight into features of the chōnin's lifestyle, condition and woes. Issues of emotional connections and love, conflicts between *giri* (duty) and *ninjō* (personal feelings) and social advancement were routine themes of plays. Kabuki's inclusion of such topics notes their importance in the fabric of the chōnins' lives. Kabuki's maturation pulled these issues into performances not only to entertain chōnin, but also because this was the world surrounding theatres and stages.

Present in the chōnin and theatrical world was the constant presence of sexuality in a variety of forms. Kabuki, from its earliest days, had an intimate connection to sexuality and its ability to draw large crowds. As kabuki changed and matured, so too did the use of sex and sexuality. Kabuki utilized the open attitudes towards sexual interactions prevalent in Tokugawa culture to build its popularity. The actors of *onna* (woman's) and *wakashū* (youth's) kabuki relied on negotiable gender and sexual roles to gain notoriety as well as a living. The *onnagata* (female role specialist) further stylized the use of sex and gender confusion to cement their position in the urban world. Examining the onnagata provides clues as to society's views on sexuality, gender and the conditions of men and women. The onnagata moved away from simple imitation of a courtesan to being a messenger of male control and dominance in society. The role, education of, style, manners and mind set of women can be seen from an examination of the onnagata actor. Kabuki and sexuality were closely linked and one cannot be studied without attention being given to the other.

The growth of the physical theatre contains multiple implications in the world of the chōnin. It underlines the continued success and prominence of chōnin within society. Actors began commanding large salaries and productions forced theatre's costs ever higher. Kabuki soon required vast sums of financing, which the chōnin fans began to provide as they had the means and desire to do so. The growth of kabuki parallels the growth of the chōnin class. The development of a specific set of rituals, traditions and ceremonies based exclusively on kabuki notes the chōnin's heightened cultural awareness. The commoner class was creating its own cultural practices and activities based upon a

theatre form geared exclusively for them. Thus kabuki provides evidence for the growth of the chōnin class and their development of class-specific cultural practices.

A historiography of several researchers utilized in this work will provide a historical context for this study and its goals. James L. McClain provides several studies that detail the process of urbanization during the Tokugawa period, focusing especially on the formation of castle towns which became large urban centers. McClain argues that these centers developed as *daimyō* (lords) moved to central locations within the nation and developed these areas. This in turn attracted an ever increasing numbers of artisans, merchants and other commoners. This was critical in the urbanization of the nation and to the development of the chōnin class. The work of Thomas Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, reinforces McClain's theory on the urbanization of Japan. Throughout his work, Smith, details the improvements to the agricultural processes that permitted the expansion of markets, populations and urban centres. McClain focuses more on the development of major centres and markets, while Smith details the refined practices of resource utilization so as to allow economic expansion and its side effects. In conjunction these researchers assist in facilitating a solid comprehension of the process of urbanization in pre-modern Japan.

Donald H. Shively focuses on the attempts of the Tokugawa government to maintain the peace of the nation by applying strict regulations and controls to the country. Shively highlights the edicts and legislation used to implement this control and the opposition such government constraints provoked. Shively also looks directly at kabuki and its interaction with the government during the Tokugawa time period and thus will contribute substantial information for reinterpretation for this study.

A critical aspect of this work will be the examination of sexuality in the Edo era. Gary P. Leupp's work, *Male Colours*, is an important piece of research in the field of Tokugawa sexuality and examines in detail the sexual culture that permeated kabuki during the era. Leupp states that homosexuality was common throughout Japan and gender roles were bent and blended in kabuki theatre. Leupp's work will be an essential item of re-examination for this study and its endeavour to show kabuki's reflection of cultural trends.

Beautiful Boys Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-likeness, by Katherine Mezur, focuses upon the image of the female role specialists (onnagata). Like Leupp, Mezur focuses upon the sexuality of the kabuki world in an attempt to fully understand the intent of the onnagata. She contends that the 'ideal' female that the onnagata attempts to portray is false, that the onnagata is more closely connected to homosexual desires. Mezur's work highlights the intricacy of Tokugawa sexuality and its crucial role within the world of kabuki.

Samuel Leiter provides another critical work in the area of sexuality and women in the theatre world. *From Gay to Gei: The Onnagata and the Creation of Kabuki's Female Characters*" details the diversification of the theatre and the female role types the onnagata performed for audiences. Leiter supports the view that as the Tokugawa era progressed kabuki became more structured and intricate in its presentation and structures. Leiter's work also provides details on the ideological underpinnings of Tokugawa society's views of women. While these views did not necessarily translate into daily practices, they do provide a basis for comprehending the male perception of women. It further supports Mezur's claim that the "ideal" female as envisioned by male actors and

playwrights was false.

The audience was an influential component of kabuki, having an effect upon its structures, presentations and path of maturation. There are several works which detail the progression of kabuki into a more structured theatre form by examining the patrons surrounding the stage. Susumu Matsudaira focuses upon the emergence and proliferation of the kabuki fan association (*hiiki renchū*) to note the rising status of kabuki and its chōnin patrons. Matsudaira notes the support and involvement of kabuki fan associations in supporting kabuki and fostering sets of rituals and traditions associated with the commoner theatre. Not only does Matsudaira's work highlight the importance of patrons, but also draws attention to the rising status of both the chōnin and kabuki.

The significance of the audience is also the focus of multiple works by Jacob Raz. While Matsudaira focuses exclusively on fan clubs, Raz addresses the entire audience and categorizes the types of patrons frequenting performances. Raz utilizes the work of Tokugawa author Shikitei Samba to provide a picture of the break down of kabuki patrons. The varied audience members highlight the maturation of kabuki, as the audience evolved and diversified in order to appreciate the growing components of the theatre. *Audience and Actor: A Study of their Interaction in the Japanese Theatre*, also by Jacob Raz, details the development of kabuki from onna to wakashu and finally the onnagata style. Through the examination of participating in the theatre, much like Matsudaira, Raz demonstrates the fans importance to and in the theatre world.

This study will rely on a significant amount of textual analysis to support the theoretical and conceptual material laid out in the majority of chapters. Textual analysis has been a relatively neglected avenue of study, but one of great value. In order for a

solid analysis to be completed a varied selection of kabuki plays in translation will be examined. A major source of such plays is the multivolume work, *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, edited by James Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter. The works draw on the work of multiple scholars and researchers as well as interviews and scripts from modern day performers and performances. Each play provides a small general amount of background information while essentially focusing on presenting translated plays. These volumes permit access to a wide spectrum of plays and the world they portrayed upon the stage.

Another valuable source for kabuki plays in translation is Herwig Arendie's *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage: An Introduction to the World of Kabuki with Retellings of Famous Plays, Illustrated with Woodblock Prints*. Arendie's work provides multiple translated plays, which accent the vast work of Brandon and Leiter. This source also supplies information on the growth and development of the physical theatre itself. Much like Brandon and Leiter's works, Arendie supports and furthers the textual analysis required in this study.

This work will also start with a general overview of the historical conditions leading up to the foundation of the Tokugawa shogunate, and how these conditions affected the emergence of kabuki. Topics will include improved resource management techniques; land reclamation projects, enhanced mining procedures, as well as a heightened comprehension of the processing of raw goods. This provided the stimulus for market growth and the expansion of the population. These processes will be examined so as to demonstrate their effect upon the urbanization of Japanese cities and setting the conditions for kabuki's rise to fame.

The rise of the chōnin segment of Tokugawa society will further constitute a significant portion of this study. Kabuki's popularity and importance in Tokugawa society was intimately linked to the rise of the chōnin class. This theatre form's comprehension and commitment to chōnin interests and passions fostered an intimate bond between audience and institution. It is for this reason that aspects of urban culture can be viewed through the lens of kabuki. The topics of kabuki characters, settings, plots, and styles of acting will facilitate this insight into the chōnin urban group. These areas of research will attempt to highlight the composition of the commoner world, the challenges they faced throughout their lives as well as the passions and desires that were relevant to commoner city dwellers.

The love affair between kabuki and sexuality and its ramifications on the stage and audience will be the focus of the third chapter. The onnagata was an essential component of kabuki's connection to sexuality. The female role specialist's popularity made them superb vessels for the propagation of ideas of male dominance. The onnagata displayed attitudes and behaviours that were inline with maintaining women's inferior social positions. Both sexes were intimately attracted to the onnagata, and this wide spread sexual popularity displayed the varied and malleable sexual attitudes of the era. Kabuki's use and connection to such manipulation of sexual desires made it especially socially relevant and influential. The attempts of the male onnagata actors to accurately portray the 'ideal' woman on stage demands examination. These actors utilized established codes of behaviour and ideals to spread the dominant social principles of the Tokugawa period. These avenues of research are significant in displaying the onnagata's

popularity, and power to influence the urban world. This influence was taken up by the theatre world and used to disseminate the beliefs concerning the role of women in society.

The final section of this research work will peer across the stage and examine the audience and its impact on kabuki. While kabuki has been used to highlight components of the audience's lives; the audience can also be utilized to note the social relevance and importance of kabuki to Tokugawa era society. The development of *hiiki-renchū* (fan clubs/associations) was significant as it signalled a heightened appreciation and understanding of kabuki as a theatre form/production. This entailed a detailed understanding of its features: plots, settings, characters, acting methods, script variations and staging techniques. This required both time and money in order to pursue such dedicated activities in the name of kabuki. An examination of the composition of these fan clubs will demonstrate the dominance of the chōnin in these groups and how this displays the chōnin improved social standing. In order to dedicate such time and money to the hiiki-renchū its members would be required to have access to the required funds and time. Thus, the proliferation of these clubs and their continued presence notes the rising status of the chōnin and their development of artistic and cultural consciousness.

As the cities and towns of Japan grew, a distinct urban commoner culture developed and prospered. It is possible to witness the impact kabuki theatre had on this chōnin-centered culture during the Tokugawa era by examining certain aspects of urban culture. Urbanization, the development of the merchant class, monetary systems and other such cultural trends are all reflected in the plays and culture of kabuki theatre. The roles of actors in Japan move outside of the plays to show how gender lines were crossed and blended and further highlight the sexual culture present in Tokugawa society. Thus,

urban trends and cultural characteristics used and presented in kabuki theatre bring into focus the life and experiences of early modern Japan's city dwellers. By moving behind the text of plays, kabuki becomes an urban mirror.

Here Come the Chōnin: Settings for Urban Expansion

II

The Tokugawa era (1603-1868) has been noted by historians as one of long-term stability and peace for the entire nation of Japan. After decades of civil warfare, the country was unified by a strong central military figure, the shogun. The shogun and his immediate supporters instituted political, economic and social changes that altered the face of the nation. A rigid social system was introduced to stabilize social classes and attempted to prevent future civil conflicts. Foreign contacts were limited to prevent possible corrupting foreign influences arriving from across the seas. The infrastructure of the nation was strengthened and expanded in order to facilitate the growth of trade. Commerce was also promoted by consolidating the regional powers into central locations and offering tax exemptions in order to induce merchants into establishing businesses in these areas. These policies, combined with stable leadership, permitted the rapid urban and economic expansion of Japan and would lay the foundations for kabuki.

Before beginning a general overview of the pre-Tokugawa eras and their effects on the Tokugawa shogunate, it is useful to define some general terms. The term "central elite" is used to denote the traditional aristocracy of medieval Japan. These individuals generally resided in Kyoto, the capital, and were engrossed in court life. These elites based their status and power upon the rural lands to which they held hereditary title to throughout the country.[1] The administration of these tracts of land was often entrusted to retainers, as central elites did not frequently leave the capital. Local elites were often those individuals left in charge of the central elite's land and who began basing their claim to power upon these lands. Through strength of arms and military prowess, local

[1] Conrad Totman, *Early Modern Japan*, (California: University of California Press, 1995), 63.

elites carved vast tracts of power and deposed the absentee central elite.[2] It was this shifting of power that would be a cause of the Ōnin War (1467-1477), which would plunge Japan into over a hundred years of civil war.

This period of chaos and disorder, stemming from the late thirteenth to mid-sixteenth centuries, was also due to weak and inconsequential central leadership. Local elites began expanding their local power base at the expense of the central elites. This also resulted in continual conflict among these regional strongmen. The means of legitimating the control of land was shifted away from court titles, and to arms-based control of territory and production, contributing to the general disarray of the era. The Ashikaga shogunate (1336 - 1573) lacked the ability to field the effective military forces, due to weak central authority, needed to curb the rise and cooptation of power by the local elites. The situation was altered only after three dominant strongmen emerged to consolidate control over vast tracts of land and quell the civil unrest. These men halted the continual warfare and allowed the nation's resources to be turned towards political stabilization and economic expansion. It was through this stability and prosperity that urban development met with such success and permitted the ushering in of kabuki theatre.

Pre-Tokugawa Settings

A brief explanation of Japan's political system leading up to and during the Tokugawa era is of use at this point. The shogun of Japan was a military leader as well as the head official in the government or *bakufu* (tent government). During the rule of the shogunate the land was under military control, but the traditional aristocracy and emperor still existed. These individuals were kept from any positions of power and did

[2] Totman, *Early Modern Japan*, 67-8.

not play a role in the government. The term bakufu refers to the office of the shogun as well as all its connected officials, who were responsible for the administration of the country. The shogunate and bakufu are analogous terms and imply the form of military government that controlled and administered Japan throughout the pre-modern era.

The Muromachi bakufu (1338 -1573) was plagued by domestic disorder and strife throughout its two hundred year existence and contributed to the conditions leading to the establishment of the Tokugawa bakufu. The turmoil of the period started before the Muromachi shogunate was founded. The *nanbokuchō* (time of Northern and Southern courts 1336 - 1392) conflict split Japan into two rival Northern and Southern courts and led to domestic conflicts that disrupted the peace of the nation.[3] Warriors changed allegiances as would best benefit them and local warriors rose up to capture territory from absentee landowners.

Order was restored in 1392 by Yoshimitsu, the third Muromachi shogun, when he eliminated the Southern court and established a semblance of control over the warriors of the nation. After Yoshimitsu's death in 1408, the country again began to be hampered by weak central authority, ineffective shoguns and underage rulers, which witnessed the rebirth of provincial disruptions. The difficulties of the bakufu finally came to a head in 1446 with the outbreak of the Ōnin War.[4] The war devastated Kyoto, the site of power, crippled central authority and ushered in the *Sengoku jidai* (Warring States period) that plunged Japan into over a century of civil warfare. The combination of weak central authority and the rise of local and provincial warriors were central to the disorder of the period and eventual unification and urbanization of the nation.

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[3] Conrad Totman, *A History of Japan*, (Oxford, U.K: Blackwell Publishers, 2000), 162.
[4] Mikiso Hane, *Premodern Japan: A Historical Survey*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 91-92.

Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu were integral to the stabilization of the nation after the Warring States period. Each of these individuals contributed to the process of defeating rivals, solidifying control and implementing policies that would maintain stability and peace for years to come. Due to this prolonged era of peace, the attention of the nation was finally able to turn away from war, and concentrate on the rapid development of the realm.

While Oda Nobunaga died in 1582 before witnessing his dream of unifying Japan he was instrumental in its eventual outcome. Nobunaga utilized new and innovative tactics, such as guns, to destroy all those who opposed him. The tactics employed by Nobunaga were oftentimes brutal, but they left few niches of resistance in the regions he controlled. Nobunaga also implemented a class system within his realm that saw those of ability achieve notable positions, not just those with title and ancestry. The economy also attracted Nobunaga's attention as he strengthened infrastructure in his realm in Owari to promote trade via better roads and transportation. This also assisted in Nobunaga's military conquests, as he could quickly amass and deploy forces. To promote increased trade, Nobunaga removed the checkpoints within his realms of Owari, Mino and southern Omi in central Japan in 1568. Nobunaga also dissolved monopolies, guilds and other privileged unions as he viewed them as an impediment to economic development.[5] The economy needed to be free to grow, not stifled by the personal interests of select groups of businessmen. He also used tax exemptions to further stimulate trade and commerce in his lands. All of Nobunaga's economic policies and military strategies assisted in his

[5] John Whitney Hall, Nagahara Keiji, & Kozo Yamamura ed., *Japan before Tokugawa: Political Consolidation and Economic Growth, 1500-1650*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 227-28.

unification of almost half of Japan and would provide the building blocks for both Hideyoshi and Tokugawa's later triumphs.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi, one of Nobunaga's generals, rose to power upon Nobunaga's death and in 1590 brought all sixty-six provinces under his sway and began stabilizing his regime.[6] Once peace was achieved, Hideyoshi took steps to ensure civil war did not once again plunge the nation into chaos. The rise of local lords and military strong men was a major cause of the Ōnin War as well as the continuation of the Sengoku period. In order to prevent a repeat of similar circumstances, Hideyoshi instituted a strict social class system that would freeze the status of all citizens. Farmers were disarmed, preventing them from fighting in armed conflicts and ensuring they would only tend the land. Samurai were pulled from the land in order to break their connection to local populations and maintained their sole right to possess arms. They were to have the authority and respect of administrators of the nation's affairs. Artisans and merchants were relegated to inferior status as their contribution to society was not viewed as essential as samurai and farmers. Like Nobunaga before him, Hideyoshi implemented tax free areas in order to promote trade by attracting merchants and artisans to centralized locations and thus developing the economy.[7] In 1585, Hideyoshi curbed the power of trade guilds by ordering them to stop imposing additional taxes on merchants. This reduced the burden on merchants as well as broke the monopolistic tendencies of the guilds, who often acted as a hindrance to trade.[8] Hideyoshi had united Japan and taken steps to ensure rebellion by the peasants was but a thing of the past while securing the

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[6] Hane, *Premodern Japan*, 114.
[7] John Whitney Hall, Nagahara Keiji, Kozo Yamamura ed., *Japan before Tokugawa*, 233.
[8] Ibid., 229.

elite status of the samurai. The economy was also a focus of Hideyoshi as he sought to encourage its growth through his policies of tax exemption.

Following Hideyoshi's death in 1598, Tokugawa Ieyasu, another of Nobunaga's generals, moved against Hideyori, heir to Hideyoshi. At this time Ieyasu was one of five regents entrusted with providing guidance for the young Hideyori. After arranging several political marriages between his family and other important supporters of his leadership, Ieyasu began to marshal his forces and in 1599, he occupied Osaka castle. These moves resulted in flaring tensions and hostilities between the five regents as Ieyasu was violating rules set down to prevent political infighting among those in power.[9] As the situation worsened and Ieyasu was increasingly distrusted, the other regents began to marshal their forces in preparation for war. After learning of Uesugi Kagekatsu's (one of the five regents) construction of a new castle, Ieyasu took it upon himself to finally begin moving against his opponents. He set out from Osaka on June 18, 1600 and headed east to stop Uesugi and his supporter Ishida Mistunari, who was daimyō of Sawayama and a strong supporter of Hideyori and the anti-Ieyasu movement.[10] As Ieyasu marched, Ishida Mistunari declared war in the east and set the stage for the decisive battle of Sekigahara in 1600. Ieyasu's forces defeated Ishida and his allies thus securing the realm for himself Ieyasu would later be given the title of shogun in 1603.

With Ieyasu's victory and elevation to the position of shogun it seemed hostilities had ceased and peace would reign. Hideyori was not put to death, but was allowed to relinquish all claims to title and live at Osaka castle. This was until opposition forces to Ieyasu began to rally around the rightful heir of the realm. Ieyasu, now retired shogun,

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[9] Arthur Lindsay Sadler, *The Maker of Modern Japan: The Life of Tokugawa Ieyasu*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1937), 183.
[10] Ibid., 190.

did not permit this threat to remain and laid siege to Osaka castle in 1614 with his son Hidetada.[11] A truce was negotiated in 1615, but Ieyasu quickly violated this agreement, killing Hideyori and his supporters, and securing the realm for the Tokugawa bakufu.[12] These events ended the era of disorder and warfare that had been so prevalent in Japan during the medieval period and ushered in a time of peace and stability.

One of the greatest things Tokugawa Ieyasu was able to achieve was a stable line of succession for his family. This not only ensured he and his offspring would remain in power for years to come it also ensured stable leadership for the nation. With a plethora of sons and grandsons to succeed to the position of shogun, the infighting that was so common with underage or weak rulers was safely pushed to the background. Ieyasu also ruthlessly eliminated his rivals, most notably Hideyori and his supporters, leaving little doubt as to where the power of the nation rested. Ieyasu relegated the imperial court to the status of figure heads and patrons of the arts with the signing of the *Kuge shohatto* (Laws for the Imperial and Court Officials) in 1613. In 1615 Ieyasu set down regulations dictating the behaviour and conduct of the daimyō in the *Buke shohatto* (Laws for the Military Houses).[13] Not only did the daimyō owe their allegiance directly to the shogun and were thus under his control, they now were forced to adhere to principles that were aimed at reducing and restricting their power and dominance in society. Both the Kuge and Buke shohatto were designed to reduce the power of the court and daimyō, thus reducing the threat they posed to the shogun and his supporters. The retention of control and authority was paramount.

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[11] Hane, *Premodern Japan*, 133.
[12] Marius B. Jansen, *Warrior Rule in Japan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 160-63.
[13] Donald H. Shively, "Sumpturary Regulation and Status in Early Tokugawa Japan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 25 (1964-1965): 144.

Each of these men was instrumental in uniting Japan and ensuring the maintenance of this stability for years to come. It was through stability that Japan was able to turn away from war and focus on expanding the prosperity of the nation. Nobunaga and Hideyoshi's economic policies focused on strengthening trade through improved infrastructure and removing impediments to trade and commerce. Hideyoshi's policy of a frozen social structure ensured the status quo would be maintained in the realm, reducing the chance of rebellions. Tokugawa Ieyasu stripped power from the court and weakened the daimyō in a bid to maintain the dominance of the shogun and ensure peace in the land by removing all rivals. He was also able to provide a stable descent line, leaving no question as to the leadership of Japan. These factors all combined, along with other policies of the Tokugawa bakufu, to usher in an era of impressive economic and urban expansion and development unmatched at the time. Major cities would grow and witness an urban migration that fostered the emergence of a new chōnin style of culture.

Class and Urbanisation

As stability was returned to Japan in the late sixteenth century, those in power began to solidify their control by exerting dominance over the daimyō and commoners of the realm. To this end, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu cemented the realm's class structure, removed the samurai from their lands and regulated production in agriculture, commerce and industry. These policies aimed to prevent possible avenues of discontent and turmoil from cropping up and threatening the stability and economic potential of the nation. The

policies of Hideyoshi and Ieyasu were essential to the expansion of urban centres and the culture which developed there in.

The creation of the four classes began in 1588 when Hideyoshi sought to separate warrior and peasant. During the Sengoku period, peasants had readily taken up arms and fought for the various warlords. Hideyoshi strove to prevent peasants from becoming embroiled in armed conflicts by removing their ability to participate in war. This was achieved through the 'sword hunt' which removed all weapons from peasants and eliminated concentrations of armed individuals who might threaten the stability of Hideyoshi's rule.[14] At the same time, Hideyoshi hoped to prevent any local strong man from rising, like he had, to a position of authority.[15] By making the right to bear arms the exclusive purview of the samurai, Hideyoshi had achieved this and reduced the threat of armed uprisings from peasants.

Hideyoshi further solidified the class structure he instituted with an edict in the eighth month of 1591 that froze the social classes and forbade social mobility. The social system was split into four distinct social groups with social mobility between groups strictly forbidden. An individual born a farmer would never become a samurai, nor a samurai a farmer. Again, this was an attempt to prevent a repeat of the Sengoku era and the rise of local strong man such as Hideyoshi and Nobunaga. The samurai class possessed the sole right to bear arms, a sign of high status, and their elite status would witness them become the administrators of the nation. Farmers occupied the second rung of the social ladder and ideologically were of extreme importance. These individuals worked with the land and created life from it, and gave that life to others in the realm.

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[14] Elizabeth Mary Berry, *Hideyoshi,* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 104.
[15] Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: from Tokugawa Times to the Present*, (Oxford: Oxford Univeristy Press, 2003), 10.

This permitted the rest of society to progress Japan towards economic prosperity. In reality, the farmer led an abysmal life of toil and brutal labour and was restricted from partaking in any form of indulgence. Their sole focus was to be producing life for the nation, from the land. The artisan's ability to create and mould materials into useful items gave them significant status in the new class system. Yet their value was below that of the farmer as they did not provide services essential to life; they did not work the land to make food. Merchants were the last of the four classes and were often viewed with disdain as they produced nothing and operated for profit and personal gain.[16] The ideology of this system placed importance on each class and its contribution to society as a whole, and emphasised that each class must fulfill its duties in order for society to continue to exist.

Hideyoshi further strove to break down the traditional power structure of the warrior class. In the past, the samurai had lived in rural areas and administered the land, resulting in the rise of local elites during the Sengoku period. Just as the peasants had been disarmed, the warrior class was removed from rural areas and forced into the castle towns of their lords.[17] Samurai no longer collected taxes from the rural population and relied instead on their lord to provide them with stipends according to their designated rank. Hideyoshi's policy effectively removed the samurai from their traditional power base, and linked their survival to their service to the realm. This eliminated the possible threat of an uprising from samurai attempting to become local strong men and usurping the power of the daimyō. The samurai was no longer an independent warrior able to

[16] Totman, *A History of Japan*, 211-2.
[17] Berry, *Hideyoshi.* 106.

draw on the resources of the land for power. Instead, he owed his livelihood and welfare to the service of his lord. The samurai's teeth had been effectively pulled.

The status of the various daimyō of Japan was set in precise order after the establishment of the Tokugawa bakufu in 1603. This was done not by Hideyoshi, but by Tokugawa Ieyasu after the Battle of Sekigahara. This was a move to solidify the hierarchy of the elite warriors of Japan, rewarding the faithful while relegating the rebellious to obscurity. The ancestral vassals of the Tokugawa house before the Battle of Sekigahara were known as *fudai* daimyō. The loyalty of these lords was rewarded by their heavy involvement in the government, occupying the most influential and important offices. The fudai daimyō also were given realms that protected essential trade routes or key strategic areas in the nation.[18] Their faithful service to Tokugawa Ieyasu before his unification of the country was rewarded and created the upper echelon of the elite samurai. The *shinpan* daimyō were directly related to the Tokugawa clan and as such were accorded significant status in Japan. These daimyō occupied similar governmental positions as the fudai. There was, however, a note of competition among the fudai and shinpan daimyō as the shinpan were seen as border line vassals and a distinctly different group from fudai daimyō. The fudai were Ieyasu's trusted warlords and generals while the shinpan were seen simply as relatives. The final class of daimyō were the *tozama*, who joined the Tokugawa cause after their defeat at Sekigahara. These lords controlled large domains but were placed on the fringes of the realm and were not permitted to hold

[18] Conrad Totman, *Politics in the Tokugawa Bakufu, 1600-1864*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 4.

high political offices.[19] The tozama were the lowest of the daimyō class and were not considered as important or influential as the fudai or shinpan lords, for obvious reasons.

One of the most essential policies implemented by the bakufu to check daimyō authority and ensure peace across the nation was *sankin-kōtai* (alternate attendance). Sankin-kōtai was a policy enforced by the third Tokugawa shogun, Iemitsu, and required all daimyō to alternate between their domains and the capital, Edo, every other year.[20] This policy was designed to ensure the rule and power of the shogun while weakening the daimyō in multiple ways. Much like Hideyoshi's policy of removing the samurai from the land, sankin-kōtai sought to fracture the daimyō's local power base. Prior to Iemitsu's policy, Ieyasu had also attempted to fracture daimyō power by moving daimyō from their home domains to administer far away areas. Daimyō were forced to continually travel back and forth from the capital, at times spending extended periods in Edo. This made it difficult for the daimyō to effectively create a following or power base within their domains. This meant that daimyō would find it extremely difficult to draw on the local populace of their realms if they sought to challenge the authority of the shogunate. The Tokugawa shogunate granted the daimyō social status but it would not give them the means by which to overthrow the bakufu. Daimyō were beholden to the shogun.

Iemitsu's policy also aimed to drain the funds and threaten the descent lines of daimyō. Sankin-kōtai required daimyō to travel and live in Edo according to their status within society. This meant that daimyō were forced to travel with a certain number of servants, retainers, warriors and maintain at least one household in the capital even while

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[19] Yazaki Takeo, David L. Swain, trans., *Social Change and the City in Japan: From the Earliest Times through the Industrial Revolution,* (Tokyo, Japan: Japan Publications, 1968), 131-32.
[20] Constantine, Vaporis, *A Tour of Duty: Kurume Hanshi Edo Kinban Nagaya Emaki,*" *Monumenta Nipponica* 51, no. 3 (1996), 279.

residing elsewhere.[21] The financial burden this placed upon the daimyō was massive and was designed to be so, as it would divert funds away from raising trouble in the realm. It was also expected that daimyō would leave their wife and heir in the capital as hostages while away, thereby providing collateral against any possible rebellious actions.

As daimyō were required to live according to their status by the policy of sankin-kōtai, it directly impacted urban development. The city of Edo witnessed a dramatic increase in population as daimyō brought their family, retainers and servants when they were in attendance with the shogun. This in turn led merchants and artisans to enter the city in order to profit from the wide range of services and goods they could supply to the elite samurai. The arrival of large numbers of merchants and artisans spurred on the growth of markets. This market development drew more people seeking employment as well as access to goods and services.

Sankin-kōtai created a cycle of growth in Edo which would enhance the urban development taking place in the city. The presence of the daimyō and their retinue dramatically increased the population of the city, and at the same time it created increased economic demand. The lavish life style of the lords of Japan meant there was a market for the goods and services needed to satisfy their daily and luxury needs. The amount of money spent by the daimyō while travelling, as well as in Edo, acted as a further incentive to the development of the markets. Edo quickly outgrew the capacity of the local region to supply it with goods. This meant large cities like Edo relied on markets and merchants to bring in an assortment of goods from outlying and distant areas. Thus, demand in Edo stimulated market growth in cities like Osaka and its outlying regions as they developed in the face of the capital's demands. Sankin-kōtai developed

[21] Vaporis, *A Tour of Duty*, 282.

Edo's economy as well as those of areas that supplied goods to the city and its inhabitants and stimulated trade across the country.

As war dissipated from the domestic theatre, the focus of the country's population shifted towards stable economic growth. Peasants returned to their land, merchants and artisans developed markets and an array of industries. The lessening of military service requirements also permitted peasants to dedicate increased amounts of labour to the fields and secondary industry production. War ceased to monopolize the resources of the nation, which were employed in other fashions, such as land reclamation, commerce, market and industrial development.

During the medieval period, the population had grown from seven million in 1200 to twelve million in 1600 and almost tripled to 33,110,796 by 1872.[22] The rapid expansion of the population after 1600 was partially dependent on the stability of the Tokugawa era. The increase in population led to increased resource production as more hands were turned to planting fields, harvesting, riparian works, land reclamation and other yield improving activities. This led to a surplus of agricultural products which were then funnelled to urban centers to feed the expanding urban populations. The increased population directly affected the growth of urbanization as there was now excess labour that could leave the countryside and not adversely affect the production potential of those areas. As will be discussed in the following sections, Tokugawa cities offered new avenues for employment and other incentives that drew ever increasing numbers of people into these urban areas. Urban centers owed a vast amount of their growth to the excess rice coming in from the countryside, which was due to the improvements in yields.

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[22] Totman, *A History of Japan*, 146, 247.

Agricultural Improvements

The improved harvests of the provinces were influenced by the population increase, but also by the spreading of technologies, bringing more land to seed, riparian projects and land surveys. All of these advances and practices not only bolstered the yields of farms, but in many cases reduced or allowed labour to be directed towards other tasks on the farm. This in turn meant excess labour could be used to increase production and or diversify the crops and materials being produced in rural areas. This facilitated expanding amounts of products being available for urban populations and markets, thus fuelling and maintaining Tokugawa urban expansion.

The use of fertilizers witnessed developments that improved crop yields while reducing the amount of required labour. The fertilization method utilized before the Tokugawa period involved collecting grass, transporting it back to the fields and stomping it into the fields. This technique required enormous amounts of labour to cut, transport, and apply the grass to the fields. An example of the intensity of this fertilization method can be gleaned from documents from Kōzuke province in 1780 that indicated it took seventy to eighty horse loads of cut grass per *tan* of paddy.[23] Commercial fertilizers, namely sardine cakes and manure, were more potent and intense applications that began to be utilized during the seventeenth century to facilitate double, and even triple cropping. Not all fields could be double or triple planted, but those that could, improved the production value of farms. Portions of this extra profit were used to purchase more fertilizer, draft animals, tools and other items that could help further

[23] Thomas C. Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 93. 1 tan = 99. 1736 m^2

increase the productivity of a farm.[24] As fields began producing excess product it was channelled into markets, normally located at a daimyō castle town or large urban center. These markets aided in feeding the non-farming populations of the towns, but also attracted larger numbers to the cities themselves to do business and purchase necessary and luxury products.

Intense fertilizers were one method used to improve yields, but were not the only technique employed. Farmers also started to maximize productivity by developing diverse plant varieties and planting according to environmental conditions. Farmers diversified the varieties of crops used, leading to crops that were stronger and suited to different climates and environments. Mulberries were suited to cool moist conditions, while sugar cane flourished in high temperatures with large amounts of rain, and cotton prospered in the Kinai region of Central Japan where there was not a lot of rainfall.[25] Knowledge of local conditions and crop needs became an essential aspect of bolstering crop yields. Farmers also began planting multiple varieties of a single crop and recording the results, using simple methods of experimentation to select the best strain for their specific planting conditions. This further increased harvests, as crops could be tailored to specific ecological conditions. This knowledge of crop varieties spread throughout the country and permitted farmers to maximize their potential yields, and greatly increased the resources coming to market.[26] This improved understanding of environmental conditions and crop varieties combined to create more efficient and prosperous farms. This in turn translated into increased resources for local and national markets and helped sustain the population and urban growth of the Tokugawa era.

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[24] Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, 94.
[25] Ibid., 69.
[26] Ibid., 94-5.

A major concern in agricultural production was access to water throughout the entire planting season to guarantee maximum yields. To this end, peasants of the medieval (1185-1600) and Tokugawa periods began pursuing riparian works to supplement the water resources they could tap into. The constant supply of water became a mandatory tool for farmers as dry rice paddies were converted to wet, which produced better harvests. Villages throughout the realm constructed thousands of small wells, ponds, ditches and canals to collect or channel water from rivers, streams or runoff from the rainy season. Peasants also used devices to move water from streams and rivers into irrigation ditches. These devices were often labour intensive, like the foot operated water elevator.[27] In addition to water moving devices and the construction of ponds and ditches, techniques were developed to improve the strength of embankments, dikes, reservoirs, water gates and waterways. Crucial to these developments was a better understanding of water pressure and how to measure it. Baskets and nets, normally constructed of bamboo, were filled with rocks and used to support and construct the walls and borders of areas used to move and hold water, replacing clay and wooden posts previously used in this type of construction. The selection of the sites to construct irrigation and riparian structures became more complex as the flow, direction, and speed were considered, as was the type of soil in the area.[28] These criteria all impacted the efficiency of any structure designed to move and contain water. Watergates were important aspects of waterways and were improved in the early Tokugawa period as well. Sturdier, durable gates were developed to control and withstand the increased amounts of water that emerged due to the expansion of water works. The stronger gates also allowed for larger

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[27] Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan,* 97.
[28] Ibid., 98.

and sustained amounts of water to be utilized, which resulted in elevated pressure on the gates.[29]

As harvests were being increased on existing fields, projects were undertaken to clear land and create new fields. Land reclamation projects were spurred on by the land surveys carried out in the late Sengoku period and early Tokugawa period. Land reclamation contributed to urbanization as it created larger output for a region, which meant additional product for the growing national population as well as increased tax revenues for daimyō and the government.[30] By channelling the waters from rivers and directing it to previously unreachable areas and clearing brush and forested parcels of land, land reclamation dramatically increased the number of viable fields throughout the realm.[31] An examination of several examples of the increase of arable land is useful for noting the success land surveys and reclamation projects achieved. It is estimated that around 1450, there were 946,000 chō of paddy fields on record in Japan.[32] By the beginning of the seventeenth century, this amount had been expanded to 1,635,000 chō and ballooned to 2,970,000 by around 1720.[33] Another example of the expansion of arable land can be seen in Musashi province in eastern Japan, which increased its overall yield from 667,000 *koku* to 1,167,000 koku from the late sixteenth to late seventeenth

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[29] Keiji Nagahara, Kozo Yamamura, "Shaping the Process of Unification: Technological Progress in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 14, no. 1 (Winter, 1988): 84-5.
[30] Current data notes the increase in production (noted in *koku*) throughout Tokugawa provinces. However, there is no clear indication whether these increase were due to land reclamation or land survey projects. As Stephen Vlastos argues, it was most probably a combination of the two with no clear way of discerning between them. He does state that land reclamation projects assisted in bringing more land to tillage. Stephen Vlastos, *Peasants, Protests, and Uprisings in Tokugawa Japan*, (Berkley: University of California Press, 1986), 30-41.
[31] Improved irrigation techniques and stronger materials to build waterways and ditches further assisted in the reclamation projects. Stronger and sturdier tools for clearing land were also developed and implemented during the pre-modern period. This was a result of improved mining and smelting techniques.
[32] 1 chō = 1145m²
[33] Totman, *A History of Japan*, 233.

century.[34] As the amount of arable land swelled, the daimyō and shogunate added the land to the tax registries and increased the taxes of the peasants. This enhanced the revenues of daimyō that began shipping their excess rice to large markets for sale.

Another important factor in the increase of production and expansion of markets and urban centers was the dissolution of communal village ties and the decreasing number of land surveys. Individual farmers could alter their techniques and tools as suited their own personal harvests and thus, increase their potential profits. Increased profits became a major incentive for farmers to invest their resources in fertilizers, irrigation works, crop varieties and cash crops. During the late sixteenth and into the late seventeenth centuries, land surveys were continually carried out across the realm. Daimyō, under the orders of the bakufu, performed these surveys to gain a better understanding and control of the resources present in their domains. These surveys were an attempt to improve tax revenue by gaining accurate knowledge of the amount of land under tillage throughout the nation, and correctly controlling and managing it. As daimyō demanded major portions of the harvest in taxes, it served the daimyō's own interests to increase the amount of land under their jurisdiction.

These constant surveys initially resulted in increased taxes for peasants, ranging from 40 to 60 percent of total yield. However, surveys were not consistently carried out and as surveys dwindled in execution, peasant farmers were capable of retaining the profits from reclaimed land or improved crop yields.[35] This was possible as the actual production value of a given tract of land changed and was often underestimated which

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[34] 1 *koku* = 0.1761 m^3. John W. Dower ed. *Origins of the Modern Japanese State: selected writings of E.H. Norman*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 120; Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, 97.
[35] Philip C. Brown, "The Mismeasure of Land: Land Surveying in the Tokugawa Period," *Monumenta Nipponica* 42, no. 2 (Summer, 1987), 116.

allowed for farmers to retain any excess after taxes. The inconsistency of land surveys was an incentive for farmers to pursue techniques that would expand the potential production of their fields. When land surveys failed to be carried out on a regular basis, peasant farmers gained more from their investments in production increasing practices. As production increased, markets developed to process the excess agricultural products. Along with markets, a monetary system also developed due to certain pressures. Land surveys contributed to increasing amounts of land coming to seed and expanded the available resources for the growth of populations and markets.

Farmers therefore had incentive to improve their plots of land as they could keep any excess after paying taxes. This excess could be sold in markets, kept to ensure stability in lean harvest seasons, drought or some other disaster, thus protecting the viability and stability of agricultural development. Increased yields and high taxes led to large amounts of rice and other agricultural products being shipped to markets and urban centers to be sold, thus further promoting and encouraging urban growth.

More attention and care was also taken with crops before and during the growing season which had the effect of increasing a farm's potential yield. Crop seeds were soaked before planting, allowing them to sprout beforehand and as a result, increasing the length of the growth season. Rice ceased to be planted haphazardly; ordered rows were utilized which made for easier weeding as well as the placement of the maximum number of plants per field. Paddies were also levelled to allow for uniform water depth. This promoted more constant water temperatures throughout the field and consequently improved yields.[36]

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[36] Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, 98.

Combined with the important progress made in farming during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, advances were made in mining and smelting, which resulted in better tools and access to valuable mineral resources. Mining became a more efficient process that witnessed the tapping of mineral resources that were ineffectively utilized or unreachable.[37] The process of *sunpō-kiri* (measured cutting) was developed near the end of the fifteenth century and replaced the old technique of mining exposed veins or haphazardly driving shafts to tap buried veins. Although implemented well before the Tokugawa period it is still an essential development that allowed for increased collection of gold, silver, copper and iron.[38] The development of better ventilation, drainage and support structures allowed for extensive mining that exploited large veins of gold, silver, copper and other minerals. Improved tools such as chisels, hammers, and picks were made more readily available and were constructed of stronger materials, making mining operations more efficient. The advances in tools were also employed in farming, allowing for tougher and more durable tools that assisted in increasing production.

The improved quality of metal tools was due to the advances in smelting techniques that allowed for higher temperatures to be reached and maintained during the process. This also aided in removing smaller particles of gold, silver and copper from rock, increasing the supply of these precious metals.[39] The increase in the supply of gold, silver and copper facilitated the development of a monetary system based on coins of standard weight regulated by the Tokugawa bakufu. This became significant as markets developed and daimyō required cash to cover their expenses related to the demands and regulations placed upon them by the shogunate. The improved availability and higher

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[37] Yamamura, "Shaping the Process of Unification," 79-80.
[38] Ibid., 80.
[39] Ibid., 80-83.

quality of metals was a boon to farmers, daimyō and the bakufu. Smelting techniques permitted better tools to be utilized for agricultural production, creating agricultural surpluses. The bakufu also benefited from the improved exploitation of mining operations and the resources this made available to the nation.

Expansion of Urban Centres

The development of urban culture involved three important factors: peace and stability, expanded production, and growth of urban centres. Increased production supported a rising population, expanded markets, and promoted increased levels of trade all of which in turn developed the national economy. Urban centres, primarily castle towns, began to grow at the same time and daimyō promoted them as places of commerce and industry. Edo, the shogunal capital, moved from a fishing village in 1590 to a city of 500,000 by 1731. Osaka and Kyoto both expanded their populations to over 400,000 by 1800 while ports like Nagasaki, Nagoya and Kanazawa ranged from 50-60,000.[40] By 1700, it is estimated that over ten percent of Japan's population lived in urban areas.[41] The growth of castle towns was due to factors such as expanded production, market development, government policies, and daimyō ambition. These aspects of urban development combined in various ways to create diverse urban cultures throughout the nation, most notably in the cities of Edo, Osaka, and Kyoto.

The concentration of daimyō authority in central locations combined with improved agricultural production to foster urban growth. During the Sengoku period, daimyō possessed multiple castles and auxiliary fortresses to protect trade lines and

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[40] Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, 68.
[41] James L. McClain, "Castle Towns and Daimyō Authority: Kanazawa in the Years 1583-1630," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 6, no. 2 (Summer, 1980): 267.

strategic areas of their domains.[42] As Nobunaga took control of an ever expanding portion of the nation, he commanded the destruction of numerous small fortifications and castles were torn down. This was a clear move to reduce the power and threat of the daimyō he had subjugated.[43] Tokugawa Ieyasu sought to further check the power of the daimyō in 1615 when he decreed each domain was permitted to posses a single castle town. He then ordered daimyō to establish themselves in these castles and set them as their seats of power.[44] This created centralized provincial power and epicentres of importance that in turn attracted commerce and population growth.

Although these actions were critical steps in the reduction of daimyō power, they also had a significant impact on the development of urban culture. The innumerable fortifications and castles across the realm were often sites of small markets and operated as administrative zones within a domain. When the smaller castles and fortifications were destroyed and daimyō moved administrative and military control to their primary castle, it shifted the focus of urban life to these individual centres. This is not to say that small rural markets ceased to exist. Most provinces had scores of developing markets where everyday items could be purchased. However, the larger scale markets were located near urban populations, which tended to be castle towns, ports or other large cities.[45] With the reduction in the number of castles and fortifications, urban growth became focused on select sites throughout the nation. This combined with the fact that castle towns functioned as administrative and military centres for domains, which together naturally encouraged urban expansion in these areas.

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[42] Hane, *Premodern Japan*, 95.
[43] Totman, *A History of Japan*, 205.
[44] McClain, "Castle Towns and Daimyō Authority: Kanazawa in the Years 1583-1630," 276.
[45] McClain, "Castle Towns and Daimyō Authority: Kanazawa in the Years 1583-1630," 268; Smith, *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, 73.

Another factor contributing to castle town expansion was the severing of the samurai's connection to the land and forcing them to become the administrative arm of the nation. It became essential to fracture the connection a lord's samurai retainers possessed with the peasant populations they administered. It was feared that this close connection with the peasants represented a potential for rebellion and the destabilization of the shogunate. Thus the samurai were moved into the daimyō castle towns, tying them closely to the daimyō and further solidifying the hierarchal makeup of the provinces.[46] By establishing a clear set of responsibilities between ruling lord, administrative retainers and producing peasants, the social hierarchy established by Hideyoshi was further entrenched in Japan. As daimyō were permitted a single castle that functioned as their administrative headquarters, this was where the samurai administrators moved to. This severed the samurai's intimate connection to the land and peasants, while at the same time increasing the importance of the administrative centres.

The samurai's connection to the land was further weakened when samurai began to receive their stipends directly from the daimyō. Prior to this, samurai kept an amount of the tax rice they collected from the peasants. This again was too close of a connection to the local population and represented a possible avenue of revolution.[47] Being paid by the daimyō tied the samurais' livelihood directly to their lord. It also increased the urban population of castle towns as samurai retainers moved to their lord's castle to carry out their administrative duties and live their daily lives. This created an urban population that was no longer connected to the land and relied on others to provide their daily and

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[46] John Hall, "Rule by Status in Tokugawa Japan," *Journal of Japanese Studies* 1, no. 1 (Autumn, 1974): 42.
[47] Ibid., 46.

luxury requirements. This development became a major driving force for the expansion of markets in an attempt to meet the needs of the daimyō and their retainers.

The policy of a single castle for each domain and the removal of samurai from the land affected the expansion of urban populations, as well as the development of markets. As urban populations grew, they increasingly relied on the production capabilities of rural areas to supply their daily needs. As has been stated above, peasants funnelled products ranging from fish, grains, and cloth to timber and minerals into castle towns as taxes or excess production brought in by merchants or village associations.[48] The samurai population and daimyō of castle towns also relied on others to produce or import luxury goods to meet their high status life style. This resulted in the growth of markets across the country and the diversification of the goods they sold.

The expansion of markets had begun before the Tokugawa period as Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu took steps to encourage economic growth within their own realms and across the nation. To encourage merchants to set up in his domain and strengthen his markets, Oda Nobunaga offered tax exemptions and curbed monopolies to promote commerce.[49] After taking control of Osaka, Ieyasu unfurled a banner from the castle announcing tax exemptions for merchants in the city. Maeda Toshiie, daimyō of the Noto, Kaga and Etchū areas, also provided tax exemptions as well as free residential land to encourage merchants to head to Kanazawa, which saw its population increase from 50,000 in 1640 to close to 100,000 by 1667.[50] These early

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[48] Anne Walthall, "Village Networks: Sodai and Sale of Edo Nightsoil," *Monumenta Nipponica* 43, no. 3 (Autumn, 1988): 283, Smith, *Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*, 68.
[49] Hikino, *Premodern Japan*, 114.
[50] McClain, "Castle Towns and Daimyō Authority: Kanazawa in the Years 1583-1630," 274.

incentives for merchants helped to strengthen commerce and markets and fuelled the process of attracting larger urban populations seeking improved access to resources.

As the variety of goods and services available in urban centres expanded so too did the configuration of markets. Before the Tokugawa era, merchants were actively involved in foreign trade, but this avenue of trade diminished when regulations were placed upon international trade, culminating in the closure of the nation in 1623. This forced merchants to turn to domestic trade to fill the void in their businesses, which in turn provided a new stimulus for the growth of trade and domestic markets across the realm.[51]

This new emphasis on domestic transactions expanded interregional trade and brought in various goods from outlying and distant regions. The increased availability of a diverse selection of goods and the urban demand for such items combined to develop markets and further fuel urban growth. Thus, the closing of the nation and an inward facing trade focus facilitated market and city growth. With a rise in the importance of domestic trade, infrastructure became a concern.

A crucial aspect of trade was the movement of products from producer to market and from smaller markets to larger markets and with the rise of domestic trade attention to trade routes increased. As the amount of agricultural, mineral and other resources were being moved from rural areas to Edo, Osaka and Kyoto increased, transportation routes were created, expanded and upgraded so as to make transportation as efficient as possible. Roads were widened, made more extensive and maintained better so as to

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[51] Charles D. Sheldon, "'Pre-Modern' Merchants and Modernization in Japan," *Modern Asian Studies* 5, No. 3 (1971): 196. Restrictions on trade began in early Tokugawa and resulted in closing of country in 1630s. The nation was closed as a means to prevent any outside influences from destabilizing the peace the shogunate had introduced.

permit rapid access between rural and urban areas. Highways, such as the Tōkaidō, were strictly regulated by the bakufu to ensure they did not fall into disrepair. Maintenance was carried out in accordance with government regulations, usually by the regions it ran through. The bakufu also abolished toll stations declaring that, "roads, post-horses, boats and bridges shall be used freely, without interruption."[52] This greatly reduced costs and hindrances to interregional trade. The conditions were noted to be decent on the main thoroughfares but became hazardous in remote and mountainous areas.[53]

Waterways also were improved and expanded to aid in transportation of resources throughout the nation. Kanazawa constructed a new road to the port of Miyanokoshi and cleared the Sai and Asano rivers to make navigation safer and easier for small boats. These small craft were used to transported goods up and down the rivers as well as unload cargo directly to the wharves in Kanazawa.[54] In Osaka, canals were constructed and improved to create an extensive network of waterways that permitted small craft to collect and deliver goods to ships anchored in the harbour. The Yodo River was dredged to allow larger boats to move to and from Kyoto and the interior of the country and greatly expanded trade between these areas.[55] The coastal water ways of Japan were also upgraded and enhanced, making shipping safer and faster. The waters along the East and West coasts of Japan were chartered, noting potential dangers, lighthouses and rescue facilities were also constructed.[56] This had the effect of promoting inter-island trade, drawing in an ever increasing amount of resources to areas such as Osaka and Edo.

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[52] Totman, *A History of Japan*, 233.
[53] Ibid., 234.
[54] McClain, "Castle Towns and Daimyō Authority: Kanazawa in the Years 1583-1630," 268.
[55] James L McClain, Wakita Osamu ed., *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), 56.
[56] Ibid., 60.

Highways stretched across the country and networks of waterways criss-crossed cities and rivers and the oceans were made safer, aiding the growth of markets and trade. This in turn satisfied the growing needs of the rising urban centres and permitted their continued expansion.

The expansion and diversification of the markets, services and job possibilities in urban centres quickly became a major aspect of the attraction these areas held for the people of Tokugawa Japan. Not only could common everyday items be obtained in markets throughout the castle towns, but luxury goods ranging from silk to lacquer ware could also be procured as the markets of castle towns began to expand the products they had access to. This was partially due to the spread of cash crops throughout Japan during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as farmers sought to profit from the demand for items such as cotton, sugar cane, mulberries, silkworm cocoons and other non-subsistence items. This allowed a multitude of products to reach markets and fall into the hands of the townsmen and elites of urban cities.

With the growth of urban areas the possibility for employment and a better life was possible due to the increased types and avenues of work. There began an urban migration, with a heavy male emphasis, in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. James McClain states in his work "Castle Towns and Daimyō Authority" that many of these people were second and third sons, samurai servants and shop clerks hoping to improve their condition in life.[57] Large centres like Edo, Osaka and Kyoto symbolised the possibility of advancing one's station, much like the American expansion westward in the early nineteenth century. Yet, it must be understood that since social mobility was strictly forbidden, one could only truly hope to improve one's status within one's own

[57] McClain, "Castle Towns and Daimyō Authority: Kanazawa in the Years 1583-1630," 268.

social class. A farmer would never enter one of the major cities and through hard work become a lord. Hideyoshi's social policies were designed to halt just such possibilities.

Feeding this urban migration was the demand for skilled and unskilled labour in the major urban centres. During the early Tokugawa period there were massive construction projects that demanded vast amounts of labour and material. The daimyō were charged with supplying large portions of the resources for these projects, another method of draining daimyō power. Often, daimyō could not satisfy their labour needs solely from the corvée services of their domains and were forced to draw from the local work pool. The reconstruction of Osaka castle in 1615 involved over sixty daimyō who each employed thousands of labourers, some from their own domains and others from Osaka itself.[58] The construction processes lasted for more than four years and was a source of employment for many townsmen from other domains, who remained in the city, increasing its population. Similar projects were carried out in other castle towns and provided steady employment for the growing urban populations and attracted even more to cities. This resulted in the blossoming of a labour market in major urban areas that promoted and sustained the move from rural to urban for many individuals.

These projects drew in great numbers of people who relied upon the markets to provide them with their daily necessities. Encouraged by the increased consumption, new employment opportunities were created to handle the increased trade. *Ongoku-doiya* (purchasing agents) dealt with products such as cotton, sake and oil from various provinces and secured their purchase in order to bring them to markets and cities. *Niuke-doiya* (receiving agents) took possession of goods from ongoku-doiya and sold them on commission to *nakagai* (distributors) who then sold the product to third parties such as

[58] McClain, Osamu, ed., *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan*, 49.

merchants or retailers in various cities like Edo or Osaka.[59] These new positions were required to handle the increasing amount of products being funnelled into the growing markets. Trade was no longer simply done between farmers and merchants, but included a variety of middlemen who ensured the smooth flow of products. Such services were necessary as not all cities had the capacity to store vast quantities of products or the ability to refine and process items such as copper or rape seed. This meant that for cities such as Edo, a great number of products arrived through intermediaries in Osaka and other cities. Cities and markets no longer always possessed a direct line to the producers. This is demonstrated by the fact that in Osaka, some 5,500 people claimed to be ongoku-doiya with nearly 400 shops operating as such while another 8,756 shop owners claimed to be nakagai.[60] These new agents were required to assist in the processing of the increasing amount of goods coming to market.

The restrictions and expectations placed on the daimyō and samurai created a unique set of circumstances that required special services. The practice of sankin-kōtai required daimyō to spend at least every other year living in Edo. Daimyō were also expected to live according to their station, which meant maintaining lavish residences in Edo even during their absences. This required vast sums of money as goods and services had to be purchased in the cash economy of Edo. Due to this fact, daimyō sent vast quantities of rice and other products to markets to be stored and sold. In cities controlled by the Tokugawa it was expressly forbidden for daimyō to own land, thus they could not control the facilities that were required for storing their rice. Nor were daimyō and samurai expected to possess any knowledge of finances or business, as this was not their

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[59] McClain, Osamu, ed., *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan*, 59.
[60] Ibid., 59-61.

position in society. Further complicating this matter was the fact that most domains issued their own coinage, but in the capital as has been noted, the shogunate's currency was in use. In order to address the issue of storage the *kuramoto* (warehouse manager) became an important asset to the daimyō. These individuals handled the transportation, storage and sale of daimyō goods coming into most major cities.[61] The daimyō relied on these individuals to conduct much of their business, while at the same time understanding very little of the process. It is believed many daimyō lost significant portions of their income to excessive fees and unscrupulous dealings with the kuramoto. Once daimyō rice had arrived at market and had found a buyer, it fell to the *ryōgae* (currency changer) to process the sale and transfer the funds back to the daimyō. Ryōgae also handled similar monetary conversions and transfers for merchants as well, providing the funds required for purchasing products from the provinces and bringing them to market. The ryōgae also issued letters of credit, promissory notes and bills of exchange for the daimyō and other customers, enabling the sale and purchase of large and diverse products.[62] Thus, the kuramoto and ryōgae ensured the daimyō possessed the funds to maintain their lifestyles and merchants had the capital to bring products to markets and customers

The expansion of the job market was further aided by the development of a manufacturing industry in some of the larger urban centres. A strong manufacturing industry necessitated the migration of large numbers of skilled artisans to such urban centres. It has been estimated that there were some 30-40,000 artisans in Osaka alone by

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[61] E. S. Crawcour, "Changes in Japanese Commerce in the Tokugawa Period", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 4 (Aug., 1963): 392.
[62] McClain, Osamu, ed., *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan*, 64-65.

1714.[63] These artisans processed cotton, rapeseed, dried sardines and copper ore into finished goods that were then sold by merchants inside and outside the cities. Technological advances, such as smelting which has been previously mentioned, helped improve the manufacturing industry and led to the creation of products for all segments of society. The falling price of lamp oil is an example of how improved processing of rapeseed made it available to a larger portion of the population in larger quantities. The falling costs of processed items, such as rapeseed oil, witnessed the increase in the variety of such goods available at markets.[64] The processing industry not only created new jobs but strengthened and diversified markets and the products available within cities like Osaka and Edo. As has already been noted, this became an important reason for peasants, townsmen, samurai, merchants and daimyō alike to travel and even stay in urban centres.

Conclusion

Japanese pre-modern urbanization is rooted in the actions and policies of the times leading up to and into the Tokugawa shogunate. Before the establishment of the shogunate in 1603, war had been a constant influence in Japan. It was through the dissolution of widespread hostilities that resources could be dedicated to other projects. It was due to a long lasting era of peace that production and expansion of the economy, its infrastructure could come about. This in turn spurred on rapid urban expansion and created the settings for kabuki theatre.

The military conquest of Oda Nobunaga brought a significant portion of the country under the control of a single individual. While Nobunaga died before uniting all

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[63] William B. Hauser, "Osaka: A Commercial City in Tokugawa Japan," *Urbanism Past and Present* 5 (1977/78): 30.
[64] McClain, Osamu, ed., *Osaka: The Merchants' Capital of Early Modern Japan,* 68.

of Japan, he did lay the ground work for its eventual culmination. Nobunaga also instilled policies encouraging trade and commerce in his domains, improving infrastructure and trade routes while also dissolving privileged associations. Toyotomi Hideyoshi sought to end the possibility of social upheaval by freezing the social structure of Japan. He set out clear definitions of the roles of all four classes and their status within society as a whole. This brought about order and stability to society and also made challenges to the status of the elite impossible. This eliminated the potential for local strongmen to rise up, seize power and create the same class conflict that led to the instability Sengoku period. Tokugawa Ieyasu officially established the Tokugawa shogunate, but also contributed to its strength and stability. Ieyasu eliminated the last remaining vestiges of opposition to his rule, produced a stable descent line and promoted further economic growth. Ieyasu also sought to weaken the royal court and the daimyō, the major areas of possible revolution in his realm, and in doing so promoted the nearly two hundred and fifty years of peace to follow. It was because of this peace and stability that economic production, market and population growth and technological advances developed during the Tokugawa era. These all combined to create rapid urban expansion and the creation of urban culture.

The work of these three warlords was essential to setting the conditions for peace and stability in Japan, but these were not the only factors contributing to the urbanization of the nation. Improved agricultural production was also a key factor in urban expansion. Without the means to feed large urban populations, cities would not have grown as quickly as they did. Agricultural production increased as better farming techniques and materials were brought to bear upon the land. Land reclamation projects were conducted

to bring more land into production. Improved mining and smelting procedures were also utilized to create strong and more durable tools for farming and processing raw materials. All of these events combined to significantly raise production and the ability of the land to support massive urban populations.

With an increased amount of produce coming from the fields, oceans, forests and mountains of the nation, transportation and markets grew. Roads, highways and seaways were created, improved and rigorously maintained so as to better facilitate the rapid transportation of goods to market. Improved transportation also permitted the utilization of larger resource areas. Markets grew from small locations supplying simple basic needs to massive areas supplying the most luxurious goods. The concentration of administrative power into a single castle town in every domain created a focal point for products as well. The daimyō and their retainers demanded daily necessities as well as luxury goods. These demands and the excess product available to meet them created supported an ever growing population.

Larger markets fed and clothed the urban populations as well as contributed to the attraction of market towns and big cities. Many individuals began leaving rural areas for the cities, hoping to find work and improve their condition in life. Jobs became available in growing cities as general labourers were routinely required, as were individuals to staff the growing number of businesses and shops springing up in cities like Edo and Osaka. This constant demand for workers helped spur on the urban migration of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It also promoted increased urban expansion in central locations.

All of the above factors, and more, combined to create the most dramatic urban expansion of the time. This development of large urban populations also began to create

a unique and intricate social culture. Those individuals and families residing in the urban cities lived outside the walls of the castles and fortresses; they were not samurai or farmers. The large majority of urban populations were composed of artisans and merchants, the lowest social classes. These groups were not permitted to be involved in the elite rituals of the samurai, no permitted to enjoy wealth and status. Yet, the power and influence of the artisans and merchants increased due to the invaluable services they provided to the rulers of the realm. Outlets for the wealth, time and energies of the urban masses fed the development of their own cultural practices. One of these cultural products was the commoner theatre known as kabuki. This bawdy and rowdy theatre form blossomed in urban centres and captured the attention of Japanese urbanites in short order. Kabuki's emergence was tied to, but not exclusively dependent on, the efforts and policies of Nobunaga, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu. The expansion of production, markets, the population and cities were also essential components to the appearance of kabuki.

The Development of Kabuki: Growth of Characters, Settings, Plots and Acting Styles

III

The maturation of kabuki was a critical process that spanned several decades as the theatre became increasingly structured and complex. While this process was not always carried out voluntarily, it still demonstrates important aspects of Edo culture. Chief among these is the rise to prominence of the chōnin class. The changes to kabuki were carried out with this group in mind. The increased attention to details, structures and facets of performances were all aimed at bringing, and keeping, chōnin in the theatres. Thus, their interests and desires were continually kept in mind

In order to keep the seats filled and the audiences cheering, theatres had to provide an interesting product. Kabuki initially put forth numerous entertainers catering the wares of the flesh, which were readily and eagerly enjoyed by audiences. The boiling over of excitement and emotions at performances drew the wrath of the bakufu which sought to limit these disruptions to society. After women and young boys were banned from the stage and kabuki was forced away from advertising prostitution, characters became a major area of concern. Characters progressed from prostitutes and their young clients, most often performed by actual prostitutes, to feature a wide array of characters/individuals. The characters quickly became as varied and diverse as the chōnin audience attending performances. Characters had to be relevant to the chōnin or fans simply would not attend and support kabuki. This meant characters that commoners

understood, despised, loved and experienced in their daily lives took to the stage.[1] It is indicative of the power the chōnin possessed. This class of citizens easily influenced kabuki's growth and maturation during the Edo era. Much as they played a significant role in shaping the Tokugawa shogunate.

The development of characters was not the only area of kabuki that experienced change after women left the stage. The settings of plays evolved to include a multitude of local, historical and famous locations. These expanded settings demonstrate the presence of the commoners' world on the stage and its usefulness as a tool for examining the era, as well as the heightened attention to detail. Settings developed so as to provide areas for the characters to roam about and interact. They also became crucial components of plays that could create specific moods and atmospheres. This was critical as the plots and themes of plays also expanded and became more complex.

The themes and plots of plays grew from simple interactions between courtesans and their clients to more intricate and varied topics. The plots of plays were always relevant to the chōnin, keeping them in the theatre while catering to their specific tastes. Plays focused on themes that were prevalent in the life of the commoners, conflicts between *giri* (duty) and *ninjō* (personal feelings), the pursuit of love, and personal advancement.

In a society so stringently regulated and controlled, it is of little surprise that many themes dealt with escaping and coping with the system. Giri entailed a strict adherence to the social rules of the era, this included loyalty and duty to ones lord and master, filial piety and loyalty owed to ones family and relatives with little concern for

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[1] Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-Likeness*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 9.

any other matters. There was an oppressive sense of obligation implicit in the concept of giri that commoners understood. The personal feelings of individuals were routinely sacrificed in the face of the ever constant giri. Thus, themes representing the challenges, turmoil and also the circumvention of giri and ninjō were popular in kabuki performances. Relationships focusing on love and emotional connections were also another popular theme which fit hand in hand with the conflicts between giri and ninjō. For this reason, plays dealing with the pursuit of love and emotional relationships captured the imagination and hearts of the audience. So too did the possibility of advancing in society, not by birth or rank, but by skill or luck. Commoners often were forced to gaze up at the fortunes of the samurai, not always so in kabuki dramas.

The final component needed when discussing the maturation of kabuki was the growth of acting skills. Acting skills and styles developed to effectively play the new and varied characters as well as carry out the more involved plots of plays. This witnessed the birth of *aragoto* (rough business) and *wagoto* (gentle style). These acting styles also became indicative of specific regions, denoting the demographics of certain areas. The improved acting of performers drew larger crowds who began to appreciate the improved skills and plays. It also began to heighten their comprehension, and criticism of such skills which brought fans ever deeper into the theatre world.

Kabuki grew and blossomed as the shogunate progressed. It began to develop into a theatre form, leaving behind its past connection to the sale of sex. Throughout this entire process the theatre remained dedicated to and for the commoner masses. This meant all of it structures were aimed at entertaining and amusing the chōnin. For this

reason kabuki is an especially poignant tool for gaining a stronger understand of the chōnin world.

Kabuki Origins

The origin of kabuki dates to the earliest decades of the Tokugawa shogunate. It is believed by most scholars that kabuki first appeared in Kyoto around 1603. The introduction of kabuki performances are most commonly attributed to a young woman named Okuni, rumoured to be from a Shinto shrine in Izumo.[2]

During the summer months in Kyoto, the Kamo River would dry up to a small stream, leaving a significant portion of the riverbed exposed. This open area was where Okuni staged her first kabuki performances. She is credited with utilizing traditional folk and religious forms and incorporating aspects of the erotic into them.[3] These performances involved *odori* (dancing) that made use of vigorous and lively movement, set to capture and hold the attention of the audience.[4] This would become an important feature that differentiated kabuki, which strove to involve the audience in the performances, from older theatrical forms, such as Nō. This combination of enticing and lively dance routines was one component of early kabuki's appeal and allure to the urban population. The dances sought to engage and entertain the audience and as such used material the crowd could access, namely traditional folk and religious forms. In this fashion it differed from the stylized, refined and often esoteric Nō, which was intended to appeal more to the elites of society.

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[2] Arendie Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage: An Introduction to Kabuki, with Retellings of Famous Plays Illustrated by Woodblock Prints*, (Amsterdam: Hotei Publishing, 2004), 20.
[3] Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage*, 19.
[4] Jacob Raz, *Audience and Actor: A Study of their Interaction in the Japanese Theatre*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 145.

Okuni's work was also popular among the masses as it featured characters that the audience could relate to such ask young men visiting brothels or young lovers.[5] This is a demonstration of the fact that kabuki, from its origins, was entertainment aimed at and for the commoner population of Japan. Okuni's identifiable characters held the audience's attention, but the situations these characters were placed in further heightened this connection. Many of the themes of her short dramas involved a young man meeting his lover or soliciting the services of a courtesan. This indicates the early connection and interest of audiences in the lives and activities of the courtesan in Tokugawa society. There was also a blurring of gender roles in Okuni's work, which will be discussed more in chapter three. At this point it needs only be mentioned that this blurring of gender roles was popular among the audiences and echoed the open sexual perceptions and attractions of Tokugawa Japan.[6]

During the summer months in Kyoto, Okuni was not the only entertainer to be found. The riverbed, and the city itself, were brimming with performers such as jugglers, musicians, vendors as well as other dancers. As Okuni's kabuki performances attracted a large number of urban dwellers, it was quickly taken up by others seeking to profit from its popularity. The new performances that sprung up in the early seventeenth century adapted and modified Okuni's work. It was these new performances that would establish the popular connection between kabuki and prostitution.

The cause for kabuki's close affiliation with prostitution is a simple one. Those who began imitating Okuni's work were prostitutes. There is still some debate over whether or not Okuni herself was also a prostitute, however. These new performances

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[5] Raz, *Audience and Actor,* 146.

[6] As will be discussed in chapter three, kabuki audiences were interested in the ambiguous image Okuni's troupe, and its imitators, were performing on the stage.

picked up on Okuni's erotic atmosphere and added more sexual overtones.[7] The shows operated as advertisements for specific brothels and prostitutes and this style of kabuki quickly became known as *onna kabuki* (women's kabuki) or *yūjo kabuki* (prostitute's kabuki). The sexual appearance and availability of the performers took center stage in this version of early kabuki, which would continue for more than four decades.

Onna kabuki focused almost exclusively on the interaction of courtesans and their patrons to form the scenarios of performances. The audiences were captivated by courtesans and the pleasure quarters[8], and this translated into avid interest in onna kabuki. Since the creation of pleasure quarters in Kyoto in 1589 by Toyotomi Hideyoshi[9], they had captured and held the imagination of the people.[10] The pleasure quarters held the commoners' imagination because commoners could escape the restrictions and burdens of their daily life there. It also offered commoners an avenue through which to pursue there varied sexual interests. For these reasons, the erotic dances and sexual availability of onna kabuki's performers gained kabuki a notorious status during the early decades of the Tokugawa shogunate.

The heady and wild atmosphere of onna kabuki performances created difficulties for troupes and their masters. The popularity of the courtesan and the prostitute actor attracted commoners and samurai alike to the kabuki theatre. Patrons jostled to see their favourite courtesan and garner her attention and services, often leading to disputes and violence, which was only escalated by the inclusion of alcohol at most performances. A

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[7] Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage*, 20.
[8] James R. Brandon, trans., *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays,* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1975), 7.
[9] Andrew Gerstle, *18th Century Japan: Culture and Society*, (Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin Publishing, 1989), 4.
[10] Donald H. Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance* ed. Leiter L. Samuel, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 35.

brawl that broke out in Kyoto between samurai watching a popular courtesan, Yoshino, is speculated to be the final social disturbance that pushed the bakufu too far.[11] After the violent disruption the bakufu took steps to curb the influences of kabuki that it viewed as detrimental to Tokugawa society.

The bakufu was also unwilling to allow kabuki to influence and threaten the social structure of society. However, as C. Andrew Grestle contends, the bakufu understood that kabuki was a necessary evil, one that had to be tolerated in order to keep the frozen social structure intact.[12] To deny the large number of urban commoners some form of entertainment was a risky endeavour. However, the outbreaks of violence and the social turmoil kabuki caused due to competition for courtesans' favours were viewed as potential threats to the stable domestic peace the bakufu strove to maintain. Another troubling issue with early kabuki was that many samurai attended kabuki plays. The bakufu considered this a source of "pollution" for the elite samurai, as they were attending a commoner form of entertainment. In the eyes of the bakufu, kabuki's detrimental influence upon the samurai had to be halted. Thus, in 1629 women were banned from the kabuki stage in an attempt to reduce social outbursts and limit kabuki's attraction to the samurai. By removing the objects of samurai desires, it was hoped that the samurai would tire of such theatre and frequent Nō, thus halting any class mingling.

With women forced from the stage, a new focus for the audiences' attention was required. The abolition of onna kabuki left a void in the demand for a wild and sexual form of entrainment, one that was quickly filled by *wakashū kabuki* (youth's kabuki). Wakashū kabuki was not new, having first appeared around 1614, but it had previously

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[11] Brandon, trans., *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays,* 7.
[12] Andrew C. Gerstle, "Flowers of Edo: Eighteenth-Century Kabuki and its Patrons", *Asian Theatre Journal* 4, no 1 (Spring 1987): 89.

been eclipsed in popularity by onna kabuki. Just like onna kabuki, the actors of wakashū kabuki were prostitutes advertising their wares and relied heavily on appearance. These young actors/prostitutes were sought after by both men and women and offer a glimpse into the flexible sexual orientations of Tokugawa Japan. Most of the actors were under the age of fifteen and retained their forelocks, a symbol of youth and also a homoerotic symbol during the period.[13] The youthful looks of the actors allowed for a sense of androgyny and shifting of gender identities that tricked and teased the imagination of the audience.[14] Wakashū kabuki utilized the setting of the pleasure quarters and plots revolving around courtesans to captivate the audience just as other kabuki forms had. Just like with onna kabuki, wakashū kabuki became immensely popular and caused outbursts of violence and social instability much like onna kabuki had. The removal of women from the stage did not bring about the end of the spats of violence and trouble over the affections of performers. Instead, the audience turned its attention from the women of onna kabuki to the youths of wakashū kabuki.

In the eyes of the bakufu, wakashū kabuki was yet another source of immoral influences attempting to pollute Japanese society.[15] Samurai were still frequenting performances meant for the commoner class, which threatened the stringent social class system laid out by Hideyoshi. The social ideals attached to Confucianism were also seen to be under attack, just as in onna kabuki, as young men ignored their filial responsibilities in pursuit of actors. Like onna kabuki, the bakufu was leery of allowing wakashū kabuki to excessively promote and glorify commoner lifestyles. This celebration was a possible threat as it could make the chōnin overly bold, perhaps enough

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[13] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys Outlaw Bodies*, 66.
[14] Ibid., 68.
[15] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 150

to begin to question and challenge the social structure they inhabited. The chōnin were expected by the bakufu to accept their lower status and abide by the system that placed them in such a position. With the continued popularity of wakashū kabuki, the government took steps to remedy and halt the social unrest caused by the youthful stage performers. In 1652, the bakufu banned wakashū kabuki for reasons similar to the prohibition against onna kabuki. Both forms of entertainment caused similar social problems and were regulated because of it. As a result, the theatre community was forced to affect a major shift in the presentation and aim of kabuki in order to survive. It was clear the bakufu would not tolerate the social disruptions that onna and wakashū kabuki caused.

As women and youths were banned from the stage it fell to *yarō kabuki* (men's kabuki) to entertain the commoner populace. Donald H. Shively notes how the bakufu placed regulations on the appearance and actions of actors so as to limit their immoral influence upon society. Actors' forelocks had to be shaved in accordance to their age and their hair was required to be dressed in a fashion befitting a man.[16] Regulations banning actors from leaving the pleasure quarters were reissued, but this indicates how ineffective these restrictions were at secluding actors from the rest of society.[17] As Shively states, these were all meant to limit the influence of the actors and their trade, but not completely remove them from society. Kabuki was never permanently banned, as the bakufu recognised its importance in distracting commoners, as well as maintaining social

[16] Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance* ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 39.
[17] Ibid., 44.

divisions.[18] The constant regulations did force kabuki to alter its approaches to entertaining. No longer could performances simply function as advertisements for prostitutes and brothels. Yarō kabuki became the site of the development of complex plots, characters and acting methods associated with the contemporary art form of kabuki.

Characters and Settings

Even as kabuki began taking steps towards becoming more artistic, it still remained a mirror of urban trends. Much as in Okuni's work, kabuki performances after 1652 continued to feature characters that struck a cord with the commoner audience. Historical plays (*jidaimono*) featured famous samurai, generals and lords who were well known to the gathered crowds. Domestic plays (*sewamono*) included characters from the commoner world that spoke and resembled the crowd gathered about the stage.[19] These characters demonstrate the composition of the urban population of Tokugawa cities. One of the aspects of kabuki's appeal was that the audience watched individuals like themselves deal with issues that plagued their own daily lives. Thus, the characters on the stage resembled those in the audience, and also suffered through similar conditions. These shared experiences fostered a bond between character and audience.

One of the most popular and enduring characters to take the stage was that of the courtesan. This character possessed a solid base in kabuki's history and was well known in the world kabuki imitated. Courtesans were a common feature of the Tokugawa era,

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[18] The social division was maintained by the bakufu's belief that kabuki was the purview of commoners while the warrior class was supposed to patronise Nō performances. This was not always the case, but the government did take steps to regulate higher lever samurai from attending kabuki performances and interacting with actors.

[19] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, *Villainy and Vengeance, 1773-1799* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 286-317.

and were featured in critiques and guides to the pleasure districts. The courtesan was an avenue of fantasy and escape as they represented the dream of love and emotional attachment.[20] However, the higher priced courtesans were not simply attractive lovers, but highly skilled individuals who interested the mind as well as the body with their abilities. They could play music, sing, and dance as well as display the proper etiquette patriarchal society demanded. There were almost three thousand licensed prostitutes in Edo in the late seventeenth century; this figure does not include the unlicensed prostitutes that were also prevalent in most cities.[21] As Teruoka Yasutaka notes from the number and prevalence of courtesans, it can be understood that these women held the interest of many a commoner. This interest was then taken up by early kabuki practitioners, who sought to profit from the wide appeal of the courtesan.

The popularity of the courtesan resulted in their appearing on stage in several forms. At first the dancer dressed as a courtesan on the kabuki stage was in reality a courtesan enticing his or her customers. However, as kabuki was forced away from advertising sex it began to stage characters that would capture and intrigue the imagination of the audience. The popularity of the courtesan on and off the stage up unto this time made it only natural for the theatre to turn to this type of character. The kabuki actors performing courtesan roles often imitated the pleasure world so much so that they modelled themselves off of actual courtesans. The courtesan of the play "Farewell to Yūgiri at New Year" (1678) was based on an actual Osaka courtesan named Yūgiri from the Ogiya House.[22] The real Yūgiri was immensely popular and her notoriety assisted in

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[20] Brandon, trans., *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays*, 7.
[21] Teruoka Yasutaka, "The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture.", in *18th Century Japan: Culture and Society* ed. Andrew C.Gerstle, (Sydney: Allen & Unwin Austrailia Pty Ltd, 1989), 8.
[22] Ibid., 12. See this article for further examples of famous courtesans adapted into kabuki plays.

endearing the character Yūgiri to the kabuki crowd. "Farewell to Yūgiri at New Year" was continually performed and restructured. New plays involving Yūgiri were also continually produced and met with financial success, highlighting her as well as the popularity of the courtesan in urban society.[23]

Kabuki's courtesans were not limited to the imitation of famous prostitutes; they also adhered to the hierarchal status of the pleasure quarters. Just as in the rest of Tokugawa society, pleasure quarters possessed a hierarchal structure and the kabuki courtesans highlighted this in plays. The appearance of the two courtesan characters Kotoura and Umegawa is a demonstration of the level of distinction among the women of the floating world. It shows the importance of hierarchy in Tokugawa society and how widespread the concept was.

In the play "Summer Festival: Mirror of Osaka", Kotoura wears a figured kimono, lacquered clogs as well as tortoise shell hairpins in her fanciful hairstyle.[24] Kotoura's elaborate appearance denotes her elevated status in the world of the courtesan. As a higher-ranking courtesan, she is entitled to wear and can afford to wear such attire. By contrast Umegawa of "A Message of Love from Yamato" is described as wearing a "plain blue outer robe" and a "simple inner kimono".[25] Her appearance is much simpler then the elegant Kotoura and denotes her lower status within the courtesan ranks. The different status of the two courtesans can also been seen through an examination of their lovers. Kotoura is the lover of a young samurai, Isonojō, who is the son of a local lord

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[23] Other plays based on Yūgiri's characters are "Seventh Anniversary of Yūgiri's Death" (1684), "Yūgiri and the Straights of Naruto" (1712), "Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter" (1720). Brandon, trans., *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays*, 215.

[24] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, *Brilliance and Bravado, 1697 – 1766* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 207.

[25] Brandon, Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 290.

and thus an elite member of society. Isonojō has pursued, fallen in love with and bought the contract out of a high level courtesan. It is unlikely that this young samurai would have settled for the comforts of a low level courtesan.

Umegawa is the lover of Chūbei, a young farmer who has been adopted by a money courier, and has difficulty raising the money to ransom her. Umegawa does not have a high class or wealthy lover, and her choice is reflective of her status within the pleasure world. These factors help highlight the hierarchy that existed in the floating world, just as it did in other areas of society. The courtesan character demonstrated the hierarchy of Tokugawa culture, something that permeated all of society. Audiences understood this and the situations such conditions would place upon characters like Kotoura and Umegawa, thus strengthening the connection between the audience and characters.

Courtesans of the stage demonstrate another aspect of urban culture through their imitation of courtesan styles, mannerisms and etiquette. By donning the elaborate clothing, makeup and hairstyles of courtesans, characters like Kotoura expressed the significance of the courtesan in urban culture. The women of the brothels were trendsetters, especially during the Genroku era (1688 – 1703). Women of all strata of society imitated the fashion and styles of the courtesan, much to the disdain of the Tokugawa shogunate.[26] Shively again notes that this imitation of courtesans was seen as a issue in society, the courtesan was outside the Neo-Confucian hierarchy.[27] The onstage embodiment of the courtesans quickly became trendsetters themselves. Women copied the hairstyles and mannerisms of popular kabuki courtesans, and the *onnagata* (female

[26] Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance* ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 46-47.
[27] More will be said below on the courtesan and her role in the social hierarchy of Edo Japan.

role specialist) in general. Popular prints of actors in their roles were affixed to the walls and screens of fan's rooms, denoting their pop culture status.[28] Kabuki courtesans at first replicated the appearance of actual prostitutes, but soon became conduits of popular trends themselves as their esteem rose to match that of real world courtesans.

The original settings of kabuki focused on the brothel and bathhouses as well as the procurement of a courtesan's services in the pleasure districts. This remained a feature of many plays even after women were banned from the stage in 1629. However, by the mid-seventeenth century, kabuki was moving towards more sophisticated performances. This maturation process also shaped the setting of performances. A lover's spat was believable within the brothel districts, but an attempt to foil a coup was better suited to a daimyō mansion. Settings became more important to the overall structure of kabuki, directly impacting the atmosphere and plot of a given performance. The diversification of settings also assisted in progressing kabuki towards a distinct urban art form, instead of a simple advertisement for prostitution. Settings were also reflective of the interests of the commoner audience, as it was still crucial to satisfy this social group.

"A Message of Love from Yamato" (1796) is an example of a play imitating the world of the commoner population of Tokugawa Japan. The majority of the play transpires in Osaka's Shinmachi pleasure district, an area that was well known to an Osaka audience. The Shinmachi setting is also crucial to the development of the play's plot. The young lover, Chūbei, attempts to buy the contract of his love Umegawa. The pleasure quarter setting enhances Chūbei's love and lends the required atmosphere of

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[28] Jacob Raz, *Audience and Actors: A Study of their Interaction in the Japanese Traditional Theatre*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 180.

desire, passion and fantasy to the performance. Many marriages were arranged and rested upon economic ties more than upon emotional connections between partners.[29] Chūbei's prospects for a loving marriage are destined to follow this same pattern. He is from a farming family and had he stayed would not have married for love, but for the necessity of enlarging and supporting this family. Chūbei escaped that life and has been adopted by a merchant family. However, he will likely enter a marriage arranged by his foster parents that best suits their needs and desires. A relationship based on love and emotion seems unlikely for the young Chūbei; it is this that motivates his journeys to the pleasure quarters and visits to see Umegawa.

The pleasure quarters were areas of fantasy, a place one could escape the responsibilities and constraints of everyday life. The pleasure districts were areas where commoners could attempt to find relationships based on passion and love. Chūbei's decision to steal his employer's money is understood by the audience as an attempt to find this love, despite its costs.[30] Operating as areas to escape the constraints of the real world, the pleasure quarter setting was required for the audience to understand and sympathise with the characters.

The settings of bathhouse and brothels remained important and commonly used locations in kabuki performances. However, other well-known localities became the backdrops for the romantic, intriguing and tragic events of many plays. Teahouses had quickly sprouted up in the pleasure districts, and operated as locations at which one could

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[29] Jacob Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 142-43.
[30] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 286-317.

entertain and cavort with courtesans.[31] These common urban settings factored into plays such as "Five Great Powers that Secure Love", but did not focus exclusively on the sexual aspect of the courtesans. Instead, the setting of the teahouse was used to carry out the tragic condition of love experienced by lovers such as Gengobei and Koman, a popular theme with urban dwellers. Gengobei attempts to follow his ninjō (personal feelings) by pursuing Koman only to see it end in tragedy for the two young lovers.[32] The teahouse and other settings were becoming important locations for plays, much like bathhouses and brothels.

In addition to such urban settings, kabuki performances began to make use of well-known and famous locations throughout Japan. The Golden Pavilion in Kyoto in "The Golden Pavilion" (*Kinkakuji*)[33] is the setting for the political intrigue of the play. The pavilion was an excellent setting for the scheming carried out between good and evil. The samurai lord Daizen represented the great evil in the play, attempting to destroy the nation, while Konoshita Tōkichi, agent of Mashiba Hisayoshi the protector of the land, dons the mantle of good.[34] The historical aspect of the play's plot is further accented by the historical setting as well, again lending the performance a distinct historical atmosphere and moving beyond the simple soliciting of sexual services.

The security checkpoint was another setting that was common before and during Tokugawa times, limiting and controlling travel between provinces. As many citizens made pilgrimages or conducted business outside of the many cities the barriers were

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[31] Donald H. Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki." in *Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context*, ed. James R. Brandon, William P. Malm, and Donald H. Shively, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978),.27.
[32] The above mentioned play can be found in James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 244-282.
[33] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 290.
[34] Ibid.,

familiar features of the landscape. The Ataka Barrier in Kaga province, appearing in "Great Favourite Subscription List" was a structure familiar to audiences, and one that they would understand as hindering the safety of the young Minamoto no Yoshitsune.[35] The barrier gate operates as a highpoint in Yoshitsune's escape from the clutches of his brother Yoritomo. Audiences knew the story of Yoshitsune and would comprehend the danger of attempting to pass the barrier gate in a hope of reaching safety on the other side. Much like the Golden Pavilion, the Ataka gate contributed to the historical atmosphere as well as made the plot of the performance slightly more identifiable for the audience. Thus, the settings of plays began to diversify as did the plots and scenarios carried out on the stage. These settings continued to feature locations popular or familiar with audiences so as to connect viewers to the events of the stage. No longer were plays set only in the brothel where young men secured the services of a courtesan. Settings were used to create specific atmospheres of lust, romance, tragedy and daring all to the delight of the assembled crowds.

As has already been noted in describing the Golden Pavilion and Akata barrier gate, historical settings were of great interest and significance in kabuki. As prevalent as shrines, brothels and teahouses were to plays, time was also an important criterion. Historical plays featuring the exploits of historical and fictional characters gained immense popularity. The Kamakura (1185 – 1333) and Ashikaga (1336 – 1573) shogunates as well as the Genpei War (1180 – 1185) were popular periods for plays and were known by urban crowds. Although period pieces featured historical settings and characters, they focused on issues that were not essential to historical events. Instead

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[35] The above mentioned play can be found in James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 26-47.

plays retold stories in historical settings and with historical characters, but with contemporary themes and plots.[36] Plays refocused plots, created new characters and situations that amused the audience and spoke to their common experiences. Audiences easily comprehended and appreciated the experiences of characters they both knew and witnessed enduring the same hardships as themselves. An example of such a play is "The Stone-Cutting Feat of Kajiwara" (*Kajiwara Heizō Homare no Ishikiri*), which is historically set but shifts its attention to the common theme of giri and ninjō.

"The Stone-Cutting Feat of Kajiwara" is set during the Genpei War (1180-1185), but is focused upon the personal conflicts of Kajiwara Kagetoki.[37] Kajiwara is a Heike general, renowned for his prowess with the sword, who has secretly shifted his allegiance to the opposing Genji clan. Kajiwara is asked to authenticate an ancient sword before it is purchased and used by the Heike to combat the Genji. The play centres upon Kajiwara's conflict between his duty to the Heike, and his personal feelings towards the Genji, most specifically Yoshitomo, a Genji general. Yoshitomo was a popular figure in history and Kajiwara's personal feelings for him endeared him to the crowd. His conflict with his giri and ninjō, much like in *sewamono* (domestic plays) plays, was well understood by the audiences who grasped and experienced such conflicts.

The play further espouses concepts familiar to the Tokugawa audience with the creation of the characters Rokurōdayū and his daughter Kozue.[38] Rokurōdayū is attempting to sell the ancient sword in order to raise funds for the Genji cause, which his son is involved in. When the only way to prove the authenticity of the sword is to cut

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[36] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 108.
[37] The above mentioned play can be found in James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 114-138.
[38] Ibid,. 116.

through two men, Rokurōdayū volunteers himself. He demonstrates his adherence to giri, as he is a sworn member of the Genji and owes his life, which he will willingly lay down, to his master.[39] Kozue is another character who follows her giri by assisting her father to sell the sword in order to raise funds for her husband in the war. However, she also upholds the trend of kabuki plays allowing characters to side with their ninjō. Instead of allowing her father-in-law to die, as he commands her to, she cries out and attempts to halt the test. None of the assembled warriors pay her any heed as she is simply being an unfilial daughter.[40] As in sewamono performances, the ninjō of Kajiwara and Kozue is satisfied when the sword is rejected by the Heike and Rokurōdayū is spared.[41] Thus, while historical performances like "The Stone-Cutting Feat of Kajiwara" were based in the past, they still propagated such common Tokugawa beliefs as filial piety, duty and responsibility. However, the plays, much like their sewamono counterparts, often allowed characters to violate their social obligations in order to appease their personal feelings. Thus, historically set performances dealt with the ideas and troubles that the commoner audience understood and experienced.[42]

Content

Kabuki was the theatre of the chōnin and the content of its plays were structured to satisfy this social group's tastes. The scenarios and antics of performances were

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[39] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 126.
[40] Ibid., 130.
[41] The violation of giri is argued to lead to some form of punishment; however not all plays show this. Kajiwara is later killed in battle, suggesting the possible punishment for his violation of his giri. A further discussion is provided upon this in the following section.
[42] Other plays such as "The Golden Pavilion", "Japan's Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety", "The Tale of Shiroishi and the Taihei Chronicles" all feature historical settings and redirected plots. These plays are available in the series of Kabuki plays in English translation by James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter. James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, 4 vols. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002-03).

designed to woo and win the praise, and money, of the commoner crowd. To draw in the largest crowds and placate their desires, theatres included the hopes, perceptions, aspirations, troubles and fears of the audience into plays. This demonstrated the rising power of the chōnin, who composed the majority of the crowd, as plots and themes were designed to be understood and appreciated by such a crowd. The content of plays began to display the rise of chōnin characters, not through birth or claims to power, but through hard work, ability and luck. Themes of love and emotion were popular and often took the form of love suicides, the pinnacle of escaping the trappings of the social system. The crushing difficulties of duty were another significant cultural attribute that manifested itself in kabuki productions. All of these themes were prevalent features of kabuki plays and highlight the increasing importance of chōnin in the development of urban culture.

The audiences of kabuki performances generally came from the lower spectrum of the class system. Artisans and merchants made up the bottom two rungs of the four class social ladder with commoner labourers falling somewhere in between.[43] However, as has been noted, the actual status of merchants and other chōnin was rising while that of the warrior class was on the decline. This fuelled the dream of a significant segment of the urban population that one's station in life could be improved despite the rigid hierarchal status system. The characters Matahei from "Matahei the Stutterer" and Chūbei from "A Message of Love from Yamato" demonstrate this hope of advancing in society.

[43] Here labourer is used to define those who relied upon the sale of their labourer potential to earn a living. This includes but is not limited to servants, day labourers and maids.

Matahei is a low level samurai who aspires to raise his rank by obtaining the Tosa family name from his master, the painter Tosa no Shōgen.[44] However, Matahei is hindered by his stuttering problem and struggles in his life of poverty. He eventually overcomes his stutter and obtains the Tosa name through "greatness of spirit".[45] He demonstrates that birth is not the only way to achieve greatness and that skill and desire can lead to one elevating their status in life. Chūbei represents an alternative path to advancing one's status. Through his adoption he has altered his position in life, improving his ability for economic advancement.[46] He is a common enough character that the audience empathised with and understand the desire and possibility of gaining a solid career, earning money and experiencing activities such as visiting the pleasure quarters. Both characters highlight the belief that qualities other than birth can determine one's status in society. This idea is relevant when noting the fact that merchants, considered the lowest of the four classes, became wealthy and prominent in society while samurai dwindled in status.

Plays focusing on love-suicides were also popular kabuki dramas, often based on local and current events that audiences so readily enjoyed seeing portrayed on stage. The bakufu opposed plays featuring love suicides as these were considered to be signs of disrespect for the social and moral system of Japan. These acts of love were considered immoral and unfilial as those involved ignored their duties to family, society and Confucianism. In 1723, stories featuring double suicides were banned from publication;

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[44] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 72.
[45] The above mentioned play can be found in James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 68 – 92.
[46] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Masterpieces of Kabuki: Eighteen Plays on Stage*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 2004), 140-157. His status is not actually heightened in the scheme of Hideyoshi's four class system. Instead, Chūbei improves his economic situation, social standing within the urban community as well as his ability to access luxury and varied services not available to farmers.

however, this was not the only step the bakufu took in order to limit the influence of love-suicides. The bakufu imposed harsh punishments on those who survived a double suicide and dishonoured the descendents of those who succeeded.[47] Despite these moves, love-suicides remained immensely popular plays, since they showcased exciting and scandalous current events, but also had an aspect of fantasy tied into them.

The pact of a love-suicide represented a commitment between two individuals that was based not on social necessities or rules, but on love and emotion. These plays allowed the audience to indulge in the fantasy of pursuing one's love, passion and personal feelings (*ninjō*), regardless of the social system. Lovers took their lives believing their love would transcend their earthly bodies and unite them after death. Chikamatsu Monzaemon's "Love Suicides at Sonezaki" is a solid example of the desire to find love and escape the social constraints that so often prevented it. The play's initial and continued popularity set forth just how relevant this fantasy of love was to the commoner audience.[48] The fantasy of pursuing and uniting with a partner one truly desired occupied the imagination of many and accounts for part of the popularity of love-suicides. In a society of arranged marriages and stringent social codes, such fantasies could only live in the pleasure quarters and contributed to its allure and draw.

"Love Suicides at Sonezaki" presents two young lovers, Tokubei and Ohatsu, and their possible separation due to social circumstances, and their desire to maintain their love. Tokubei, a soy sauce seller, refuses the hand of his master's niece and her two

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[47] Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance* ed. Leiter L. Samuel, 53.

[48] Donald Keene, trans., *Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 39.

kamme silver dowry.[49] After a dispute with his master, Tokubei is fired and must repay the dowry, which his stepmother took, before the twenty-second of the month. Tokubei regains the money, but encounters his friend Kuheiji who asks to borrow the money in order to pay his monthly bills. After loaning Kuheiji the money, Tokubei is then cheated of his repayment by his friend and disgraced. Unable to repay his master, he must flee the city or die. To flee would mean leaving his love Ohatsu behind, something Tokubei is unable to do.

Tokubei comes to Ohatsu at the Temma House and explains to her his circumstances, and how he is loath to leave her behind. The two pledge not to be separated and to die together to preserve their love. They sneak away at night to Sonezaki temple with the intention of committing suicide together. Before dying, they pledge their love and faith that they will see each other in the next life. They then escape the worldly constraints placed upon their love.[50]

As popular as love-suicides were, they paled in comparison to scenarios depicting the conflict between duty (*giri*) and personal feelings (*ninjō*). This conflict was a constant presence for all those living in Edo era Japan. Giri versus ninjō highlights the existence of an inflexible social and moral system imposed by the Tokugawa shogunate.[51] Based on Neo-Confucian philosophy, all members of society were to obey certain ideals. These included loyalty and faithful service to one's lord, honouring one's family through the adherence to the rules of filial piety, respect and loyalty to one's brother and friends. This social order constantly pitted one's sense of giri against their

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[49] Two kamme is calculated to be about one thousand dollars. Keene, *Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, 42.
[50] Keene, *Four Major Plays of Chikamatsu Monzaemon*, 56.
[51] James R. Brandon, *Studies in Kabuki: Acting, Music, and Historical Context*, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 1978), 2.

ninjō, and to transgress this system was to suffer the consequences. The social system was unforgiving, and did not permit for any form of violation of its codes.[52] The conflict between giri and ninjō provides a window into the lives of urban dwellers, and their daily situations and some of the conditions of Tokugawa Japan. Kabuki plays presented such conflicts and challenges to the audiences, but again installed an aspect of fantasy into the performances. Often characters actually ignore their giri in favour of their personal feelings. Here, kabuki provides another avenue of escape for the chōnin crowd, while demonstrating how complex daily life could be.

The conflict between giri and ninjō is deftly utilized by kabuki playwrights in reinterpreting historical events for the stage. As has already been noted, historical plays often refocused the plot upon events other than the major conflict of their period setting. Performances were set in previous eras, but presented contemporary and relevant situations that audiences appreciated. The "Stone-Cutting Feat of Kajiwara" and "The Sanemori Story" (*Sanemori Monogatari)* demonstrate this fact as neither truly deals with the Genpei War, but both present the troubles of giri and ninjō for all segments of society.

Both Kajiwara and Sanemori battle conflicts between their giri to the Heike clan and their ninjō for the Genji clan.[53] As has already been detailed, Kajiwara allows his personal feelings to triumph over his duty to the Heike. The play does not examine the military exploits of Kajiwara or his role in the Genpei War, instead focusing on a fictitious plot. It is unknown at the end of the play if Kajiwara ever suffers any repercussions for his failure to adhere to his giri. Sanemori is also a Heike general who betrays his giri when he purposely fails to capture the Genji war banner being carried by

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[52] Brandon, *Studies in Kabuki: Acting, Music, and Historical Context,* 2.
[53] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage,* vol. 1, 134,273.

a young woman he saves from the ocean. He has secretly altered his allegiance to the Genji, and is unable to doom their cause by capturing their war banner. When Sanemori is sent to discover Lady Aoi, wife of Kiso Yoshikata the Genji leader, and kill her child he again allows his ninjō to triumph over his giri. Sanemori permits Lady Aoi to give birth to a male heir of the Genji clan and refuses to put the child to the sword.[54] Like Kajiwara's play, Sanemori's tale deals with themes that the audience could internalize and empathize with not the actual historical events of the era.

Both Kajiwara and Sanemori's conflicts were understood by the audience viewing the performances. Whether the audience sympathised with the characters' actions or motivations is not important here; the fact that they would have understood the conflicts these characters faced is the illuminating fact. The theme of giri and ninjō was well known to audiences, and they would understand the difficulties the characters were experiencing. The audience watched characters they knew battling challenges they themselves faced on a daily basis. Thus, the audience would understand, and appreciate the conflicts of interests that Kajiwara and Sanemori were experiencing. Even though the content and themes of plays appeared far away from daily life, they were in fact still designed to have an impact on the audience. This was important as kabuki's popularity and influence, after it shifted away from prostitution, was dependent upon enticing and holding the audience's attention. The utilization of socially relevant content, giri and ninjō, was one such process that the theatre implemented.

Situations involving giri and ninjō were not exclusive to historical plays. They were also prevalent themes in domestic dramas. The use of giri and ninjō in these performances tended to be more accessible for a commoner audience, featuring scenarios

[54] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 283.

and characters that were easily identifiable with the urban population.[55] Characters appeared from various walks of life, inhabited the urban world and faced issues like conflicts with giri and ninjō. This created a closer bond with the audience and functioned as a window into urban life, noting the conflict between personal desire and the restrictions of the social order.

The conflict between giri and ninjō creates havoc in the life of the character Danshichi in "Summer Festival: Mirror of Osaka" (*Natsu Matsuri Naniwa Kagami*). Danshichi is a rough and tumble fishmonger who frequently finds himself embroiled in physical altercations, which results in his stay at Izuma prison. He is freed from prison by Tamashima Hyōdayū, an area official, and in turn Danshichi swears his loyalty and service to the lord's young samurai son, Isonojō.[56] Danshichi's new giri soon comes into conflict with his ninjō. Kotoura, Isonojō's lover, is kidnapped by an evil samurai and Danshichi goes off in pursuit, only to find his father-in-law, Giheiji, is responsible for the removal of Kotoura.[57] Danshichi is forced to choose between his loyalty, and the feelings he has for his father-in-law, who assisted Danshichi's wife and son while he was in prison, and his duty to Isonojō. His duty to his lord wins out and Danshichi is able to appeal to Giheiji's sense of greed as a means to return Kotoura to the young samurai. However, when Giheiji learns there is no money for him he attacks Danshichi, insulting and abusing him. Danshichi is torn between his giri to his father-in-law, filial piety, and

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[55] Audiences knew many of the historical figures and the contemporary individuals they were supposed to represent. However, these characters were often of the elite segment of society and operated in similar high class circles. The sewamono character appeared much like any member of the audience and lived in the same environs as the crowd. This made their problems and challenges more accessible.
[56] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 204.
[57] Ibid., 227 – 229.

his raging emotions over being insulted and slighted.[58] In the end, Danchishi's ninjō proves to be stronger then his sense of giri, which results in Giheiji's murder.

Giheiji is himself an example of the conflict between giri and ninjō, although Giheiji does not have trouble in choosing where his interests rest. His duty should lie with his family, yet Giheiji is consumed by greed and his personal desire for wealth forces him to violate his giri. He kidnaps Isonojō's lover Kotoura for the money promised him by Sagaemon, an evil samurai from Isonojō's clan.[59] He utilizes his connection with his family to whisk her away from Sabu's, Danshichi's friend, home and off to Sagaemon. When confronted by Danshichi, Giheiji refuses to acknowledge his duty to Danshichi and his family, instead siding with his desire for wealth. It is this desire that finally allows Danshichi to convince his father-in-law to return Kotoura to Sabu's house. When Giheiji learns that Danshichi does not have the promised money, he beats and insults his son-in-law resulting in his own death.

It is a reoccurring theme in kabuki plays that the violation of one's giri typically results in some form of punishment. "Summer Festival: Mirror of Osaka" sees Danshichi adhere to his giri by returning Kotoura, but failing in his duty to his father-in-law. At the conclusion of the play Danshichi has not been punished for his crime, nor is there any indication if he will be.[60] However, Danshichi's killing of his father-in-law can be viewed as punishment for Giheiji's failure to conform to his giri. Giheiji, as the senior male member of the household, should not have assisted Sagaemon in stealing Kotoura away. Giheiji should have resisted his desire for wealth, and upheld his duty to his

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[58] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 227.
[59] Ibid., 213.
[60] Ibid., 233.

family who was protecting the young woman. His disrespect of Danshichi was further fuelled by his feelings of greed, and as a result brought about his punishment.

The play "The Skylight" (*Hikimado*) offers several more examples of the giri/ ninjō conflict, and how it affects the various characters of the play. Oko is an elderly mother who is torn between her love for her lost son Chōgorō, who is also a murderer, and her obligations to Yohei, her adopted son. She desires to protect and shelter Chōgorō, but knows her duty lies with her son Yohei, and must inform him of the fact that Chōgorō is hiding in the house.[61] Throughout the performance there are examples of Oko swaying between her giri and ninjō. She bows to her ninjō as she convinces Chōgorō to escape, shaves his topknot so as to alter his appearance, and buys the portrait of Chōgorō from Yohei in an attempt to prevent her adopted son from finding Chōgorō. The skylight in the play functions to highlight the shifts between giri and ninjō during the performance. When closed, giri takes precedence and when open, the opposite holds true. Oko eventually recognises the importance of giri and ties Chōgorō up in order to present him to Yohei.[62] Her responsibility and duty to not only her son, who is a magistrate, but also to her dead husband demands that she turn in the criminal Chōgorō. In the process of siding with her giri she shuts the skylight, and emphasises her need to satisfy her duty when she says, "I protected him in the daytime and will hand him over at night."[63]

The difficulties inherent with giri and ninjō are also demonstrated in Yohei's conflicting actions in the play. Yohei notices Chōgorō and as the skylight slams shut he notes that it is time for him to go on duty and as such will apprehend the stranger in his

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[61] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 241.
[62] Ibid., 257.
[63] Ibid.,

mother's house.[64] However, he allows himself to be distracted by the actions of his wife and mother, letting his ninjō take control. He permits his ninjō to come to the forefront again when he removes his two swords, symbols of his position as magistrate, and sells the portrait of Chōgorō to his mother.[65] Yohei then leaves the house to search for Chōgorō. However, before he leaves he returns the money he has received from his mother. He gives it to his wife Ohaya, letting her know it is to be given to Chōgorō then calls out a possible escape route for his brother.[66] He then assists in removing Chōgorō's mole, so as to make him harder to recognize. In the final scene Oko has turned Chōgorō over to Yohei, who promptly inquires as to the time, notes how his wife is incorrect that it is midnight. Instead, Yohei claims it is near dawn, the time his shift and duty end, and that he must hurry to bring Chōgorō to his lord. Yohei notes the incorrect length of the rope binding Chōgorō and slashes it free.[67] This rope is tied to the skylight, which opens and Yohei claims it is now dawn and his shift is over. The bell he hears is the one announcing the dawn he delcares, not the late night hour, and he lets Chōgorō go free.

Throughout the play Yohei permitted his ninjō to dictate his actions, ignoring his duties to his lord and social position. As the new magistrate, his first and overriding responsibility is to capture his criminal brother. His duty dictates that he should have no interest in Chōgorō other than as a task that must be accomplished. His removal of his swords, assistance in altering Chōgorō's appearance and assisting in his escape are all strict violations of his duty as a magistrate and official of the realm, and its rules. Instead, he allows his personal feelings for his mother and family to influence his actions,

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[64] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 250.
[65] Ibid., 251.
[66] Ibid., 252.
[67] Ibid., 258.

permitting the release of Chōgorō. Yohei has ignored his giri in favour of his ninjō. It is unknown if he is punished for this.

Chōgorō himself wrestles with his personal desire to see his mother before being captured, and his duty to turn himself in to authorities. When Chōgorō first enters his mother's home, the skylight is open and he is free to pursue his desire to see her. As the play progresses, it is "out of consideration for Yohei..."[68] that Chōgorō decides to give himself up, and forgo his desire to live and be with his family. He has a duty to turn himself in, to ensure that his brother and mother are not dishonoured. The giri Chōgorō feels, as society demands, has superseded his ninjō and that of his family. Yet, Chōgorō accepts his adopted brother's help in escaping, and in doing so sides with his ninjō, just as his brother has.

The conflict between giri and ninjō was a theme that audience members understood and experienced in their daily lives. The oppressive social system of the Tokugawa bakufu stressed following prescribed social codes at the cost of personal feelings and desires. Farmers were to toil in the fields for the benefit of the nation, yet were never to dream of altering or improving the conditions of their lives. The merchant and commoner were not to flaunt their new found wealth, but remain at the feet of the samurai elite. Individuals were also constrained by aspects of filial piety, family obligations and gender roles. As the major themes of these two plays, which are a small selection of the many that revolve around giri and ninjō, it is possible to take note of the importance such issues played in society.

The plays however, also are examples of ninjō in themselves. It is never known if Danshichi is punished for his betrayal of his giri and the murder of his father-in-law. Yet,

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[68] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 252.

it hints at the possibility that Danshichi is able to escape punishment for his crime, both in regards to the law and social code. Danshichi is able to wash his body off and sneak into the crowd of people pulling a portable shrine. He begs his father-in-law's forgiveness and the play draws to a close with no one suspecting what Danshichi has done.[69] Here the play operates as an aspect of fantasy and desire, just like the pleasure quarters where theatres were located. The subversion of the dominance of giri operates as a way for the commoner audience to escape the restrictions of their daily lives. Just as the pleasure quarters were avenues of escape from one's family and social class, the plays of the theatres were routes of escape from the social restrictions of society. Such plays tantalized the audience into hoping that one might be able to escape the bonds of giri and side with personal desire. Although Danshichi's murder of Giheiji is not a positive action, it does seem to uphold this theory. None of the characters in "The Skylight" are punished for their desires either. Instead, the play is another example of the fantasy of ninjō. Yohei as a magistrate would have to face some consequences for his failure to capture Chōgorō. Oko would also have to be punished for her failure to turn her son in and for attempting to alter his appearance and assist in his escape. She has failed in her duty to her son and to authorities looking for Chōgorō. Chōgorō himself is able to escape any punishment he would receive for his murder of members of his rival's fan club.

[69] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 233.

Acting Styles

Kabuki's development into a more stylized form of entertainment led to the creation of several distinct methods of acting. Kabuki performances were required to rely on qualities other than sex to sell their art after 1652. Actors required skill to capture and maintain the interests of the audience. This in turn led to the creation of specific acting styles that were indicative of the composition of urban populations. This shift towards a more complex form of kabuki theatre was a result of bakufu regulations, but also the rising power and importance of chōnin populations. The development of *aragoto* (rough business) and *wagoto* (soft style) can be viewed as reflections of the composition of urban populations in specific regions. The aragoto characters were an outlet of resistance for the chōnin, challenging and confronting the samurai elite and seeming to snub their noses at society. The wagoto character was a much gentler individual that demonstrated the sophistication and refinement that chōnin culture strove to achieve. The origins of these acting styles can be utilized to display the different demographic configurations of urban centres.

The development and support of kabuki after 1652 displays the growing power of the commoner population in Tokugawa society. Regardless of their position within the social hierarchy, chōnin from the beginning of the shogunate onwards began exerting ever increasing amounts of power.[70] This social group delivered the services and products demanded by all segments of society, and profited from doing so. They also functioned as the important money changers who could convert a domain's currency or rice into the required funds. This was an essential service for the samurai as they received their salaries in rice stipends and the market in most urban areas had shifted to a

[70] A. C. Scott, *The Kabuki Theatre of Japan*, (London: Allen and Unwin, 1956), 36.

cash economy. In order to live by the means dictated to them by the bakufu's social codes, the samurai were forced to convert their stipends in order to purchase the needed goods and services.[71] Yet, the social hierarchy did not change to reflect this shifting of power. Instead chōnin found other avenues of expressing their improved status.

Aragoto is defined as "rough business" and focused on the loud, exaggerated movements, lines and appearance of select kabuki characters. The creation of aragoto is attributed to Ichikawa Danjūrō I (1660 – 1704) in Edo around 1673.[72] The aragoto character is an extreme representation of the warrior of feudal Japan. These characters are powerful individuals both in presence and appearance. An aragoto character is decorated in red and blue paint denoting "sinews of power" which represent the physical strength of the warrior. The costumes of these characters also tend to be large and exaggerated such as Gongoro Kagemasa in "Wait a Moment" (*Shibaraku*). Aragoto characters also delivered their lines at exaggerated levels, further accentuating the super-human like attributes of these characters.[73] Combined, these factors all had the affect of creating a very specific style of acting that was enjoyed by both the commoner and samurai population of urban Japan. However, the reasons for the popularity of aragoto characters differed between the elites and non-elites of society.

Danjūrō's creation of the aragoto style in Edo is an echo of the social composition of the city. In 1673, Edo was becoming one of the largest cities in the world, with a reported population of more than one million residents by the end of the century. Almost

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[71] For examples of the large financial dealings of chōnin with the warrior class, see C. Andrew Gerstle, 18.
[72] Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia,* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 15.
[73] Laurence R. Kominz, *Origins of Kabuki in Medieval Japanese Drama*, in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002), 17-18.

half of the total numbers of those dwelling in Edo were of the warrior class.[74] With such a large number of samurai composing the audience of Edo kabuki, any acting style would need to meet their tastes. The bombastic, confrontational aragoto style warrior character was an instant success with this portion of the audience. These characters were also popular with the chōnin/commoner members of the audience, but for different reasons. For many commoner theatre goers, the aragoto character represented a type of social hero fighting for their interests. To more fully draw out this interaction between commoner and aragoto hero, it is useful to consider E.J. Hobsbawm's concept of the social bandit.

The aragoto character defied and mocked the samurai class, representing an avenue of challenge to this dominant social group. However, this challenge was not meant to topple or destroy the bakufu, and therefore Hobsbawm's concept of a social bandit is useful. The social bandit, according to Hobsbawm, did not seek to confront the entire social system they lived in, but attempted to correct or alleviate some of what were considered injustices in the system.[75] These types of individuals often opposed the rich and elite of a society because of their unfair treatment of the poor or lower classes. Social bandits did not necessarily target society as a whole, seeking to change the root of the problem, instead they treated a symptom. In kabuki plays, these characters helped or stood up for the commoner or challenged and insulted the samurai. These characters were able to do what the commoner population was not, challenge and oppose in some fashion the status and rule of the elite. Such actions endeared these characters to the crowds as the majority of the audience was composed of the lower two ranks of society. Thus Hobsbawm's social bandit operates within the system, not seeking to destroy or

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[74] This was a result of policies such as *sankin-kōtai* and Edo being the seat of the national government.
[75] Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1971), 22.

alter it, but to simply relieve injustices or wrong doings. This is the aragoto character, offering a medium of challenge to samurai authority but doing so within the constraints of the social system and never seeking to truly change it.

The social bandit characters of kabuki were often set against the wealthy, corrupt or uncaring agents of the social system. These agents were often 'evil' samurai and lords as well as magistrates. These were figures, that in Tokugawa times, held negative views of commoners, viewing them like sesame seeds, "the more you squeezed them the more oil you get."[76] Other elites in society saw those coming to the cities as lazy and failing in their "appointed tasks" such as providing sustenance for the nation. In general, the samurai class of Japan possessed little understanding or concern for commoners, and this was reflected in their treatment of those beneath them. Due to this fact, when aragoto characters challenged or humiliated the elites of society and their opinions of commoners in kabuki dramas the audience adored them. These characters were their champions, challenging the elites of society in ways commoners could not.[77]

The aragoto character challenged the samurai in another significant fashion. From the outset, the aragoto character was intended to be bold, brash and decked out in flamboyant and loud costumes and makeup. These actors thundered about the stage, creating a great roar and storm of sound with exaggerated voices and motions. This was a clear mocking of the samurai bravado, the mighty warrior who took themselves and their place in society far too seriously. The overacted and outlandish routines of aragoto characters amused the audience who comprehended the obvious mocking of the elite

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[76] Gary Leupp, *Servants, Shophands, and Laborers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 66.

[77] Under the 'Legacy of Ieyasu' any samurai could kill a commoner for the slightest insult or misdemeanour. Leupp, *Servants, Shophands, and Labourers in the Cities of Tokugawa Japan*, 83.

samurai. In this sense, the aragoto characters were a not so subtle poke at the ruling elite. Yet, the presence of this form of mockery displays the conflict and difficulties commoners faced in their lives when it came to the ruling elite.

Characters such as Gorō Soga, of the numerous Soga brother plays, Danshichi of "Summer Festival: Mirror of Osaka", Sukeroku of the "Sukeroku: Flower of Edo" are examples of the challenging social bandit. Gorō and his brother Jūrō spend years seeking the evil samurai lord who murdered their father. The brothers plot their revenge and finally receive justice when they kill Lord Suketsune. Danshichi, a commoner tough guy, foils the plans of the old samurai Ōtari Sagaemon to possess the courtesan Kotoura. Danshichi overpowers Sagaemon and tosses him about as if he were a child. He provides directions to Kotoura by pointing with the immobilized Sagaemon's arms, and embarrasses and mocks the samurai. He then stares down the challenge of Sagaemon, a reversal of the traditional roles of dominance.[78] Through his actions, Danshichi has challenged and dominated Sagaemon as a representation of the samurai class. Sukeroku is confronted with the rich old samurai Ikyū in the pleasure quarter and goes about insulting and mocking the warrior for his high airs. Sukeroku constantly strikes strong threatening poses towards Ikyū, demonstrating his disregard for the man's elite social status. When confronted by Ikyū's henchman, Mombei, Sukeroku embarrasses him by dumping noodles all over his head. He then proceeds to fight several of Mombei's supporters, easily defeating them in exaggerated and boisterous fashion.[79] Sukeroku mocks and battles Ikyū and his supporters, challenging their position in the social

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[78] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 209.
[79] Brandon, trans., *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays*, 64 – 70.

hierarchy. These three are solid examples of the social rebel who moves against aspects of society that are seen as repressive like the elite samurai.

In contrast to the boisterous, superhero aragoto style developed in Edo was the "gentle style" (wagoto). This style of acting appeared around the same time as aragoto, but in the Kamigata region (Kyoto and Osaka). First developed by Saka Tōjūrō in 1678 it featured a handsome gentle male character.[80] The wagoto character was often a young lover, meek and sensitive, but was not considered to be weak.[81] This style of acting was reflective of the Kamigata area's audience composition.

The cities of Kyoto and Osaka differed from Edo greatly, and not just in size. Kyoto was the seat of the Emperor, a figurehead during the Tokugawa shogunate, and the Imperial court.[82] Ieyasu had gone to great pains to separate the traditional nobility from the warrior elites of society. This was designed to prevent political conflicts and possible uprisings against the shogunate. The court was to engage in the cultivation of the arts such as Nō, calligraphy, poetry and other pastimes. Ties between warriors and the nobility were discouraged and because of this, the population of Kyoto was not so heavily dominated by the warrior class. It possessed a refined and sophisticated nature, and this can explain the popularity of the delicate and elegant wagoto characters. This did not mean that aragoto characters were not popular in Kyoto. Both styles were popular across the nation, but some are reflective of specific areas.

The demographic breakdown of Osaka was similar to Kyoto. Instead of being dominated by samurai, Osaka was known as the merchant capital of Japan. The city

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[80] Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia,* 422.
[81] Kominz, "Origins of Kabuki in Medieval Japanese Drama", in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 27.
[82] Yasutaka, *The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture,* 8.

functioned as a key junction for the collection, production and distribution of raw, semi-processed and processed goods.[83] The soft wagoto style was popular among the merchants of Osaka who enjoyed the love affairs, and refined nature of the young characters. The wagoto style's creation in the Kamigata area is indicative of the social makeup of the two most influential cities of the region. This was similar to aragoto's mirroring of the rowdy samurai nature of Edo.

The plays featuring the Soga brothers are an excellent example of the contrast between the two styles of acting, and some of the qualities of the wagoto character. In the late seventeenth century the elder of the two Soga brothers, Soga Jūrō Sukenari, began to be played as a wagoto style character in contrast to his rougher impetuous younger brother Gorō. Jūrō is portrayed as a character that is, "cautious, sensitive and who is a restraint..." upon his younger brother's rash actions, characteristic of the aragoto character.[84] In the "Felicitous Soga Encounter" (*Kotobuki Soga no Taimen*), Jūrō is the calm, reasoning controlling force when the two brothers meet Lord Kudō Saemon Suketsune, the man the brothers have sworn revenge upon. When first entering the play, Jūrō leads the way in a "stately manner", restraining his brother's attempts to get to Suketsune.[85] This is not the last time that Jūrō's composure and restraint are contrasted to Gorō's brash intentions. The two brothers are invited to approach Suketsune and Jūrō holds back his brother from attacking their enemy, preaching patients and restraint at such a vital juncture. Later in the scene, Gorō is offered sake by Suketsune and told he will never be able to come to blows with the important lord. It again falls to Jūrō to utilize his composure to prevent his brother from attacking Suketsune. Jūrō's wagoto

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[83] Yasutaka, *The Pleasure Quarters and Tokugawa Culture,* 8.
[84] Kominz, "Origins of Kabuki in Medieval Japanese Drama", 21.
[85] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 32.

characteristics also come forth in his manner of speaking and holding himself. When he addresses his younger brother, it is with a calm voice urging Gorō to remain strong in the face of adversity.

Jūrō's wagoto is contrasted to Gorō's aragoto when they finally introduce themselves to Suketsune. Jūrō does so in a composed and controlled manner, bowing with respect and manners when he is finished. His younger brother rages, and shouts out his name and strikes a strong pose.[86] Throughout the play, Jūrō is the foil to Gorō's strong and boisterous aragoto character, rarely losing his composure and remaining focused on the objective of revenge. Jūrō is the refined and sophisticated young male character that, while not weak, is not overtly aggressive in nature. He contemplates and views the situation objectively instead of carrying out a rash and ill conceived plan. For these reasons, Jūrō was a popular and prototypical wagoto character.

The young lover Chūbei, in "A Message of Love from Yamato", is another example of the wagoto character in action. Chūbei's wagoto character differs from Jūrō's in several ways and displays the variation present within the role. Where Jūrō appears as the sophisticated and refined young warrior carrying out his noble cause of revenge, Chūbei is a young and self-centred farmer who has moved to the city when he was adopted by a merchant family.[87] Chūbei allows himself to be goaded by his rival Tanba no Hachiemon into breaking the seal on the borrowed money he is delivering. He is focused upon his own desires, buying out his courtesan lover's contract, and is mindless to the responsibilities owed his adopted and natural families. Like Jūrō though, Chūbei is described as a well dressed and handsome young man who frequents the pleasure

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[86] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 32-38.
[87] The above mentioned play can be found in James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 286-317.

quarters. He is a passionate individual who pursues his personal feelings for his lover Umegawa at all costs, even his own life. When he breaks the seal on the money he is carrying he knows he will die, and he romantically thinks of only one possible solution, to die with his lover.[88] Chūbei and Umegawa sneak out of the city and before dying together make contact for one last time with Chūbei's father. While Chūbei is a flawed character he is an excellent example of the caring and passionate young lover, frequenting the pleasure quarters chasing his after love.

Conclusion

Kabuki prospered during the time of the Tokugawa shogunate due in large part to the rise of the chōnin, the patrons of kabuki. Kabuki's rise to prominence in Japanese society is an indication of the chōnin's power in society. While positioned in the lower half of the social hierarchy, merchants, artisans and other commoners experienced an explosion of economic success during the Edo era. Kabuki was the theatre of the commoners, and as they rose to prominence in society, so too did kabuki. It is for this reason that kabuki is an excellent tool for viewing select aspects of urban commoner society. The structural components of kabuki are the tools used to view these components of society.

The urban world came to life on the kabuki stage, as the characters that appeared there were familiar individuals. Kabuki characters represented the presence of the daily individuals who carried on their lives within Japan's cities. These characters were imitations of the real people of Japan's urban centres, and represented the composition of chōnin society. The courtesan character was massively popular and demonstrates the

[88] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 296.

chōnin interest in the pleasure districts and the world of these places. The courtesan was at times viewed as a sophisticated woman able to satisfy both the body and mind. However, the courtesan could still function as a tool of male dominance, as she continually protected, served and sacrificed for the men in her life. The courtesan character imitated the fashion, mannerism and etiquette of the pleasure district courtesan. However, the kabuki courtesan gained such popularity that they began to dictate fashion and manners in Edo society. Courtesans and actors occupied the lower areas of the social hierarchy, but their popularity permitted them to play significant roles in urban society. This mirrors the rise of the chōnin, who while socially inferior to the samurai still possessed large amounts of power in society.

With a diversified range of characters able to take the stage, settings also became more varied. Kabuki plays began featuring locations that were outside of the pleasure districts, daimyō mansions, local temples and markets. However, the pleasure districts remained influential settings as teahouses, bathhouses and brothels continued to feature prominently in plays. Thanks to the larger array of settings, performances could be carried out in venues that were familiar to the commoner audience. Settings also began using historical sites and famous locations such as the Golden Pavilion, barrier gates and areas of famous battles. The commoner audience knew these places and had possibly even visited them. The expansion of kabuki settings also allowed for the creation of specific atmospheres for performances. The pursuit of love often transpired within the pleasure districts while a great confrontation between forces of good and evil happened at a famous location such as the Akata barrier gate or Golden Pavilion. Kabuki was becoming more structured and complex, paying closer attention to the details, like

settings, of plays. It also parallels the development of chōnin audiences that comprehended, and appreciated, the significance of a play featuring an intriguing political plot transpiring in a daimyō mansion. The commoner class was developing a sense for kabuki as a theatrical art form that did not rely solely on the sale of sex to attract audiences.

As kabuki was the theatre of the commoners it is of no great surprise that the themes and content of plays were designed for this social group. The content of plays focused on the conflicts, difficulties and aspirations that commoners routinely faced in their lives. This ensured the success of kabuki as performances were exceedingly relevant to the majority of the audience. This permitted the theatre to capture the imagination and interest of the chōnin, especially when kabuki was moving away from its purely sexual aspects. The themes of plays revolved around topics such as social advancement, love and duty, as has been demonstrated in the examples previously provided. These plays create a comprehension of the world of the chōnin, how they continually confronted social obstacles in their attempts to create successful lives.

Plays also displayed how chōnin, just like the upper class samurai, were bounded and constrained by conditions of duty. These constraints affected all facets of the chōnin world and as such were constant themes in kabuki plays. These plays, at times, functioned as avenues of resistance and opposition as characters were permitted to ignore their giri and pursue their personal feelings instead. Love suicides, aragoto acting, favouring one's giri, and strong female characters were means of opposition to the ideological trappings of the bakufu. These areas of resistance did not openly challenge and confront the bakufu; instead they operated on the stage as imagined situations. Yet,

the audience comprehended such scenarios and embraced them as a view differing from that of the shogunate. While it would be exceedingly difficult to buy out the contract of one's lover and establishing a life with them, it seemed possible on the kabuki stage. This is not to say that kabuki challenged and opposed all aspects of Tokugawa society and offered a positive outlook on all social situations. While kabuki strove to create a world of interest for the chōnin audience, it still inculcated aspects of society's ideologies. Characters were at times able to avoid their giri, but often were punished at some later date. Women were able to occupy positions of strength yet, continually conformed to male dominance by sacrificing for men in their lives or working for the betterment of their husband or son. Thus, while offering resistance in one hand, kabuki espoused conformity in the other.

From around 1650 on kabuki began to change, the content and themes of plays became more complex and structured. Kabuki no longer simply followed the pursuit of courtesans, but expanded to include historical content and plays from the commoner world. These themes and topics were aimed at the chōnin and demonstrated their rise in society. The chōnin possessed the means to support kabuki, an indication of their power in society. This only happened because the kabuki theatres offered performances catering specifically to the commoner classes. Similar to the content of kabuki, the methods of acting also showed aspects of change and paralleled the growth of the chōnin class.

Aragoto and wagoto styles appeared and show the progression of acting skills and a move away from the purely sexual aspect of actors. These new acting styles improved the range and variety of the characters seen on stage. Aragoto and wagoto also

highlighted the composition of the three major cities, Edo, Ōsaka and Kyōto. While aragoto pleased the strong samurai, this style of character also represented a type of commoner champion. A character in plays that often supported some aspect of chōnin interests in the face of the socially superior samurai. The wagoto actor was a symbol of the sophistication of the Edo commoner. These characters possessed an air of responsibility, intelligence, refinement and style which paralleled the acquisition of such qualities by commoners. While aragoto and wagoto still retained aspects of sexuality it was not the fundamental component to these acting styles.

However, sexuality does play an important part in the *onnagata* (female role specialist), but not in a way similar to early kabuki. The third major style of acting, onnagata, utilized sexuality to heighten the qualities of the character on stage. It was not purely an advertisement for sexual services, the onnagata represented and presented a more varied style of acting to the audience. The emergence of the female role specialist, like aragoto and wagoto, highlights the progression of kabuki into a more structured art form. The onnagata can be used to demonstrate certain ideologies of the Tokugawa period, while shedding further light upon the role and position of women. The onnagata held an important position in the kabuki world and as such will comprise the majority of the next chapter.

Men in Women's Clothing

IV

The *onnagata* (female role specialist) has for a long time been intimately connected to sex and sexuality. From the inception of kabuki, the female role actor openly negotiated sexuality and gender roles. However, this process has always functioned within the confines of Tokugawa society. This was done to satisfy the desires of the crowd, who were intrigued by youthful men appearing as women and women playing men. The gender confusion inherent in this process created an amazing stir in the audience and fuelled the early popularity of kabuki. The crowds were fascinated by the androgynistic qualities of these actors and the games they sought to play on the fans' minds and bodies. As kabuki matured, so too did the onnagata who created more complex and detailed roles and messages. These messages would reach out, inundating the assembled audiences. The development of more structured roles and the meaning of the images the onnagata put forth are essential to understanding kabuki and chōnin life.

The sexuality surrounding the onnagata was not the exclusive product of the Edo era. Past traditions of monastic and samurai *nanshoku* (homosexual relationships) and bisexual relationships influenced the sexual perceptions of Tokugawa society. Audiences were captivated by the actor that teased the mind and body through gender blurring and androgyny. This is seen in the popularity of *onna* (woman's) kabuki and *wakashū* (youth's) kabuki that featured actors taking on the roles of the opposite gender. Both forms strove to keep their sexuality ambiguous, and this thrilled the audience. These early performers further complicated their gender roles by servicing the sexual needs of

men and women alike. Yet, these interactions always paid close attention to social regulations such as class hierarchy.

While the early female role actors focused primarily on sex, this was forced to change after several decades of social disruptions. The onnagata began to rely on acting skills as the female roles became more stylized and structured. Similar to plots and characters, the onnagata developed forms and methodologies that would echo the maturation of kabuki. This structuring of onnagata acting methods witnessed actors attempting to become women who portrayed the 'ideal' female. Important to this was the fact that the onnagata were male actors, playing roles created by the males of the theatre world. Thus, the 'ideal' female of the kabuki theatre was, as Katherine Mezur argues in "Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-likeness", a false construction based on the ideology of the Tokugawa bakufu[1].

The popularity of the onnagata meant they were an ideal vessel for the message of the bakufu and its views on men and women. These actors were trend setters and pop-stars to Tokugawa men and women, but their message went far beyond fashion. The onnagata put forth ideas concerning the appropriate behaviour, etiquette, and beliefs women in society should hold. These were in line with Confucian and Tokugawa ideology concerning the qualities of a 'proper' Edo era women. This ideology placed women in continual positions of inferiority in comparison to the men in their lives. Examining these messages opens a window into the lives of chōnin women and their social upbringing during the Tokugawa shogunate.

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[1] Katherine Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies: Devising Kabuki Female-likeness*, (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 2.

The female role actor began as a prostitute, was modelled off actual courtesans and eventually became models themselves. The onnagata's progression to a disciplined and structured set of roles was an important process. It was another sign of kabuki's development into a stylized theatre form, one based upon the chōnin. The onnagata also highlights the malleable gender roles of the era and how important this was to the chōnin audiences. Had the blurring of gender and sexuality not been so popular and prevalent in the theatre, the onnagata would not have remained so fashionable for so long. Yet, tied to this popularity was a strong adherence to the status quo of the era's gender hierarchy. The onnagata was a symbol of androgyny as well as a vessel for the preservation of Tokugawa society.

Monastic and Samurai *Nanshoku* Traditions

The practice of *nanshoku* (homosexual relationship) traditions in monastic and samurai culture are two major customs that influenced Tokugawa social perceptions on sexuality and gender. There are some references to homosexual practices being carried on in the Chinese and Japanese courts prior to the eleventh century, but these accounts will not be extensively used for this study. The monastic and samurai practices were longer lasting traditions that more directly impacted Tokugawa society and its gender perceptions. It will suffice to note that nanshoku practices existed and were an aspect of society for an extended amount of time before the Tokugawa shogunate.

The first strong indication of a homosexual tradition in Japan is found in Buddhist monasteries around the thirteenth century. The presence of such a tradition was a precursor to Tokugawa bisexuality and perceptions of male superiority. Buddhism was a

major aspect of the cultural make-up of Japan in pre-modern times, and its endorsement of a homosexual tradition facilitated its acceptance in society at large.[2] There was a lack of a negative connotation to nanshoku practices from other cultural institutions such as Confucianism and the government. After 1600, Confucian condemnation of nanshoku practices were based more on transgressions of class boundaries then sexuality. These flexible views of gender roles and sexual practices were a factor in the onnagata's rise in popularity. Buddhist nanshoku practices demonstrate an interest in the beauty of the male body, as the young acolytes became objects of desire and love. The priests were enthralled and captivated by the beauty of these youths. This desire for the young male body would continue in the samurai tradition and commoner nanshoku practices. As Katherine Mezur argues, this male beauty was a major contribution to the success and popularity of the wakashu and onnagata. Young men dressed as women; be it in onna kabuki, wakashu or monastic nanshoku were men beneath the social structures; clothes, make-up, posture and gestures of women.[3] It is Mezur's contention that this created a continual interplay between the performer's male body beneath, and the female gender acts on the surface.[4] This negotiation between male body and female gender acts created a sense of ambiguity and allure with the audience, allowing them to interpret their impression of the wakashu or onnagata as they pleased.[5] This interplay was effective and popular, contends Mezur, because audiences were attracted to both the young male body

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[2] Gary Leupp, *Male Colours: the Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan*, (Berkley, University of California Press, 1995), 94.
[3] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 67, 71.
[4] Mezur notes that gender acts are the "specific physical actions that comprise a role type" such things as the postures, gestures, tones of voice, and stage positioning a female character would be expected to exhibit. Ibid., 7.
[5] Ibid., 9.

beneath, via nanshoku practices and the female gender acts on the surface.[6] Thus, aspects of the wakashu and onnagata actor's appeal are intimately linked to nanshoku traditions and their acceptance and cultural significance during the Tokugawa era.

In his work "Male Colors: the Construction of Homosexuality in Tokugawa Japan", Gary Leupp contends that monastic nanshoku was a precursor to Tokugawa bisexuality and shares several similar characteristics but also differed in certain ways. A major difference was the stimulus for homosexual relationships; monastic nanshoku was strongly influenced by the lack of women in monasteries.[7] The passive member of the relationship frequently functioned as a surrogate for women, often appearing dressed and made-up as a woman.[8] This would not be the case in chōnin practices, as women were present but the attraction to young males remained. In the monastic nanshoku tradition, partners were considered to be members of a relationship. It was considered to be a brotherhood, and at times contracts were signed by both members pledging their loyalty and love.[9] This practice would not remain in the chōnin nanshoku tradition as the basis for such sexual interactions were viewed in different ways. A feature common to all forms of nanshoku in pre-modern Japan was the hierarchal composition of interactions. The young acolytes (*chigo*) always functioned as the passive participants in monasteries, denoting their lower status within these institutions. A similar situation would hold true in the samurai practice of nanshoku as well. In Tokugawa nanshoku the prostitute was the passive partner, as the customer was always considered higher in status. Monastic

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[6] These female gender acts were representative of society's ideals on beauty and attraction in female roles. These acts soon became stylized and made it possible for older actors to still maintain the aesthetic of female beauty via ritualistic aesthetic actions such as certain gestures, postures and costumes.
[7] The lack of women worked in tandem with the tradition of being attracted to young males as Mezur notes was the case in earlier eras. Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 53.
[8] Leupp, *Male Colors*, 46.
[9] Ibid., 43-44.

nanshoku possessed different motivating factors, but it influenced and set a precedent for homosexual relationships within society. It is also important to note that these interactions still upheld certain aspects of society, such as the emphasis on a social hierarchy.

It was common practice during the medieval period (1185-1600) for elite and affluent families to send their sons to Buddhist monasteries to receive an education. Many of these young boys would become the *nyake* (younger partner) in a nanshoku relationship.[10] It created an acceptance in Japanese society for such activities, and would trickle down to other classes over time. It also continued the tradition of appreciating and comprehending the beauty of the young male body.[11] In Tokugawa times, the rising chōnin took up the practices of the elite as they witnessed their power rise, and believed they deserved to participate in such traditions. This also combined with a military tradition to create the samurai nanshoku practice.

At the turn of the thirteenth century the monastic practice of nanshoku was dominant. However, as Leupp states, this would not remain the case for much longer as the practice of nanshoku would become popular in another segment of society. This would later help facilitate the chōnin adoption of such practices. The new raising segment of society was the warrior class. The warrior acceptance of nanshoku resulted in the development of a strong warrior class practice of homosexual and bisexual relationships. Much like monastic nanshoku relations, samurai nanshoku is thought to have similar roots. During periods of war, warriors were deprived for extended periods of time from any interaction with women. Present however, were boys and youths

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[10] Leupp, *Male Colors*, 43.
[11] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 3.

accompanying warriors and armies for an assortment of reasons. In the prolonged absence of women, warriors turned their attention to the beauty of the young boys within their ranks. These warriors were also drawn from the elites of society and as such stood a strong chance of having already been involved in a nanshoku relationship as a nyake.

These boys and youths began filling the roles of women in the camps and retinues of thirteenth century warriors. They were not simple objects of sexual pleasure for warriors, as the relationships these youths engaged in were complex. Like in monasteries, boys were dressed like women; however, they still carried out tasks assigned to the masculine world. The samurai nanshoku relations were based upon the strict hierarchy of the day. Passive partners were younger and formed a brotherhood bond with an older warrior.[12] Again, there was no negative connotation to occupying the role of the passive member of such a relationship. It often led to the elevation of a nyake's status if he was partnered with a distinguished lord or general.[13] With the prominence of armed conflicts from the thirteenth till seventeenth centuries, samurai nanshoku relations had solid roots in pre-modern Japanese culture.

It is unsurprising that the samurai practice of nanshoku continued into the Tokugawa age, as no policy or stipulations had developed that forbade such traditions. Nor is it surprising that the commoners of the time created their own nanshoku practices. However, the form, regulations and participants of commoner nanshoku differed from its predecessors. Chōnin nanshoku was not stimulated by a prolonged seclusion from women; women were a part of the chōnin world. As mentioned above, nanshoku was heavily based on the attraction to the young male body. Thus, chōnin nanshoku can be

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[12] Leupp, *Male Colors*, 56.
[13] Ibid., 182.

seen as a solid indicator of the bisexual tendencies and preferences of segments of Tokugawa society. Individuals yearned for partners of both sexes and were socially permitted to fulfill these desires. The onna and wakashū kabuki actresses and actors were the focal point of desire as they were quite often advertisements for sexual liaisons. The onnagata was tied to such traditions, and also represented a blurring of gender identity that was extremely alluring in chōnin nanshoku.[14] This attraction can be noted by the numerous accounts of violent outbursts over the affections of such individuals. Onnagata actors were not initially replacements for absent actresses, but over time became women as envisioned by men under the ideologies and structures of Tokugawa and Confucian doctrines.

After the establishment of the Tokugawa shogunate (1603), commoner influence and status began to rise. As commoners' status rose, so too did their perceptions of the rights and practices they felt entitled to. No longer would nanshoku be the purview only of the elites. Tokugawa chōnin imitated and engaged in the homosexual traditions of the samurai and monastic orders, but with slight alterations. The focus of the commoner nanshoku tradition was still young boys and youths. The popularity and sexual appeal of wakashū kabuki from around 1612 on is an indicator of the continued sexual interest in youths.[15] Commoner nanshoku also conformed to, and reflected the Confucian ideals of the Tokugawa and earlier eras. The younger participant was always the passive member in a nanshoku relationship, regardless of social standing.[16] The only exception to this was when engaging in intercourse with an actor or prostitute, who always was relegated

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[14] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies, 59.*
[15] Ibid., 64.
[16] Leupp, *Male Colors*, 109.

to a passive role, due to their inferior social status.[17] Thus, commoner nanshoku practices conformed and upheld social hierarchy as implemented by the shogunate and Confucian ideology.

Unlike previous nanshoku traditions, the commoner practice of homosexual interactions did not possess the same relationship commitments as seen in the monastic and samurai traditions. Commoner nanshoku lacked a brotherhood bond or any contract establishing loyalty between partners.[18] This did not preclude such relationships from forming. However, relationships were predominantly based on an economic exchange, not feelings and emotions. This is reflective of the late seventeenth century trends and the rise of the commoner/merchant class. Economic prosperity shifted the national economy to a hard currency base where commodities were bought and sold. The world of pleasure, including nanshoku, followed this practice as sex became commodified and became more available to individuals with the means to afford it.

The lack of a bond between nanshoku partners is suggestive of this commodification of the economy and society as a whole. An ever-diversifying field of 'products' were becoming accessible for the right price. The lack of a bond between nanshoku partners is indicative of how this process became more focused on business transactions than emotional connections. Engaging in nanshoku acts was a transaction, not a commitment to a relationship, although there are numerous examples of intensely dedicated bonds being formed.[19] The commodification of sexual interactions was not limited to nanshoku, but covered male-female and female-female interactions as well.

Commoner nanshoku incorporated the major components of monastic and

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[17] This can be seen in any number of Tokugawa era ukiyo-e depicting the sexual encounters. Ibid., 76.
[18] Leupp, *Male Colors*, 65.
[19] Ibid., 94.

samurai homosexual traditions, but also expanded on the practice. Common to all three traditions was the desire and beauty of the young male body beneath the times female gender acts, posture, gestures, wearing make-up, and feminine hairstyles. However in monastic and samurai traditions, they did not speak like women or reserve themselves to the activities of women.[20] During the Tokugawa shogunate, the early female role actors not only appeared as women, but also began to perform the gender roles of women by speaking, acting, and appearing like women. This was done in an attempt to create a heightened sense of androgyny and further enthral the audience who were also potential customers for sexual interactions. A sense of androgyny was an integral component to all three nanshoku practices, but was especially so for the female role specialist and kabuki. Early kabuki performances relied on the shifting of the young male body beneath the female guise to lure in audiences and potential customers for the actors/prostitutes.

The blurring of gender, an aspect of androgyny, fascinated members of urban society and not just monks and samurai. Okuni's early performances and the various types of prostitutes available in the pleasure districts were indicative of how those in the crowd were intrigued by the androgyny of performers and prostitutes.[21] Crowds became extremely excited over young men and women dressed and acting as members of the opposite sex, enticing and playing to the desires of the audience. Visitors to the pleasure districts could also find a variety of prostitutes that catered to their androgynous tastes. Courtesans dressed like boys (*wakashū jorō*) and female prostitutes imitating men (*kagema-onna*) were all available for purchase. The cross-dressing kabuki actors and

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[20] Warriors could be dressed as women and still learn martial skills and be great warriors. This was the same for the monastic tradition. Leupp, *Male Colors*, 174.

[21] Nicholas Bornoff, *Pink Samurai: The Pursuit and Politics of Sex in Japan*, (London, HarperCollins, 1994), 255.

prostitutes were tremendously popular and this popularity was tied to the acceptance of androgyny and confusion of gender roles in segments of society.

The sexual practices of the seventeenth century presented complex views on gender roles. These views further demonstrate the fluid negotiation of gender roles; however these negotiations transpired within the confines of Tokugawa ideology. It was common for males to assume the dominant role in sexual relationships. In nanshoku relationships of the monastic and samurai variety, dominance and passivity were determined by age, the younger partner being passive. This generally also meant that the nyake were of lower status in society in comparison to the dominant partner. However, this was generally predicated on the fact that monks and samurai pursued younger and therefore lower status youths. Thus age and status may have seemed mutually exclusive to nanshoku relations, but this was not the case in chōnin nanshoku. The gender roles fluxed and were in constant shift as participants changed. A famous or popular wakashū prostitute could command a large sum of money for a single tryst, but was always relegated to the role of passive partner. This was due to the fact that the client was dominant and placed in a position of authority and respect, regardless of the prostitute's or client's age or social standing. The same wakashū prostitute could take a dominant position with a female client or other younger male prostitute.[22] The argument that women lacked the correct genitalia to achieve penetration and thus the dominant role is false. Women had access to and used various sexual aids, and it is not beyond reasoning that such items could be used in intercourse with males.[23] While the gender roles during

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[22] Leupp, *Male Colors*, 172.
[23] See Leupp for pictures of women and use of dildos.

Tokugawa times were malleable and flexible, they display the overriding importance of society's hierarchal composition.

The acceptance and popularity of androgyny and gender role confusion is demonstrated by the reaction of the bakufu to this form of entertainment. The bakufu did not regulate the theatre to prevent the spread of androgynous inclinations, but instead aimed to curb the rowdy and disruptive aspects of performances. The disturbances caused by such outbursts of enjoyment necessitated the government's move to ban onna and wakashū kabuki in 1629 and 1652 respectively.[24] Yet this prohibition was not based on homosexual or bisexual practices linked to gender role manipulation. Instead, the bakufu focused on the social mingling of commoners and samurai, the instability civil strife such disputes over lovers could cause, and individuals' failure to uphold their social responsibilities to families and masters. The negotiation of gender roles and sexual interactions were permitted as long as they adhered to social regulations.

The regulations the bakufu put into place in attempts to decrease kabuki's disturbances are reflective of some of the causes for the audiences' androgynous attractions. The bakufu aimed to decrease the attractive features of the female role actors and thereby limit the enthusiasm and discord caused by these performers. By clearly noting an actor's gender it was hoped that the play between an actor's gender beneath and gender acts performed would be lessened.[25] To combat the ambiguity of young men playing female roles, the bakufu forced theatres to clearly display the names of all actors. It was hoped that this action would diminish the illusion of femininity that female impersonators sought and audiences craved. However, it had little effect as crowds

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[24] Laurence R. Kominz, "Origins of Kabuki Acting in Medieval Japan", in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2001) 17.
[25] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 66-67.

continued to swoon over onnagata actors and became lost in their androgynous qualities.[26] The bakufu sought to further decrease the androgyny of onnagata by forcing all female impersonators to shave their forelocks. This was a highly erotic aspect of appearance for the gender blurring onnagata and other female impersonators. Actors were to at times report to shogunate offices to have their forelocks measured, although this seems to have been an inconsistent practice. To sidestep the loss of forelocks, many female role specialists began wearing wigs to maintain their female appearance.[27] These regulations attempted to limit the appeal of the female role specialist, but did not seek to completely destroy this avenue of attraction. The potential trouble that a full banning of kabuki could have had on Tokugawa society was far greater than the troubles the androgynous qualities of the onnagata caused. For this reason the bakufu permitted the continued existence of kabuki, but sought to limit its corrupting influences as much as possible. These corrupting influences did not include nanshoku or gender blurring as long as they remained within the borders of Confucian and Tokugawa ideology.

Female Impersonators 'becoming' Female

Chōnin nanshoku quickly grew and became complex and diverse, no longer simply relegated to the sexual realm. The original female impersonators were prostitutes, advertising their wares and catering to the androgynous desires of the crowds and patrons of the pleasure districts. As kabuki was gradually forced away from acting as a front for prostitution the actors' roles began to gradually morph. The female impersonator slowly moved away from being a male prostitute catering to androgynous desires towards being

[26] Donald Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 40.
[27] Ibid,. 334.

an actor attempting to become a woman so as to represent and portray them as accurately as possible on the stage. It must be noted that this concept of accuracy is false as it is based upon the assumption that trained male actors can more successful carry off a sense of femininity than women.[28] It was the ideological perception of femininity as held by the bakufu and its institutions, which continually sought to place women in positions of inferiroty in regards to their binary opposites, men.[29] As onnagata sought to embody the 'ideal' woman, they began to shift away from simple carnal androgyny and towards portraying women on the stage. Androgyny ceased to be purely sexual in nature, instead becoming an attempt to represent women, who were absent from the stage, and define women as men perceived them. This was carried out by defining a set of actions for positioning the body, gestures and other such actions that embodied a gender role type.[30] Androgyny became a tool in the ideological representation of female and the female role within society as put forth by the medium of theatre. The onnagata became the physical manifestation of this ideological undertaking.

The onnagata and other professions that continually altered and negotiated the gender guidelines of Edo Japan highlight some of the changes in this period's nanshoku and sexual practices. The female role specialist became immensely popular, not simply because they appeared to look like women, but because they became the embodiment of the female image. They dictated fashion, manners and etiquette in the cities of Japan. They marketed their own lines of products, make-up and personal grooming products that

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[28] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 5.
[29] Ibid., 62. See the section Gender and Kabuki below for more information on the views of the bakufu on women and their position with in society.
[30] Ibid., 6.

were eagerly purchased in urban areas.[31] The onnagata shifted the focus from males physically appearing as females like in onna and wakashū kabuki, to males 'becoming' female in as many areas of their lives as possible. The onnagata's progression into the opposite gender was deepened, and complicated, by the fact that men and women both desired them as sexual partners. This also highlights Mezur's theory of the male body beneath; and the attraction to this male form, and female role type above. Audience members were attracted to either aspect or both. The onnagata appeared as male and female to different portions of the kabuki audience, but captivated the minds and body of all.

As the role types played by the onnagata expanded with ever more elaborate and involved plots and scenarios, so too did the acting talents and rules for the female role specialist. The onnagata were originally modelled off the courtesans of the pleasure districts.[32] It became imperative that the audience saw a courtesan upon the stage, not an actor dressed as one. Here the blurring of gender in kabuki is taken to its furthest point, as the actor attempted to 'become' female.

In order to achieve this goal, the role of onnagata became complex and structured. The main division of roles in kabuki are primarily based on gender; male roles (*tachiyaku*) and female roles (*onnagata*).[33] It was common in the seventeenth century for actors to play both tachiyaku and onnagata roles, as they could appear more frequently and earn more. In the Genroku period (1688 - 1703) the famous onnagata actor, Ayame

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[31] Andrew C. Gerstle, "Flowers of Edo: Eighteenth-Century Kabuki and its Patrons", *Asian Theatre Journal* 4, no 1 (Spring 1987): 89.
[32] Tsuneo Watanabe and Jun'Ichi Iwata, *Love of the Samurai: A Thousand Years of Japanese Homosexuality*, (Gay Men's Press) 1990, 86; Gerstle, "Flowers of Edo." *Asian Theatre Journal* 4, no 1., 98.
[33] Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia: An English Language Adaption of Kabuki jiten,* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 389.

Yoshizawa (1673 - 1729), began to structure and define the rules for an onnagata's successful portrayal of women. In order to perform as realistic a portrayal as possible an actor had to specialize and perform only one role type. An onnagata who successfully plays tachiyaku roles is incapable of correctly depicting women, argues Ayame.[34] He attributes this to the fact that a woman cannot naturally become a man and must remain always a woman; the onnagata is no different.[35] To accurately portray women on the stage, an onnagata must refrain from acting in male roles.

Ayame Yoshizawa also believed that those who took up the onnagata were incapable of effectively portraying a woman if they only did so when on the stage. An actor had to become a woman in their daily lives in order to deliver an effective portrayal of their subject. This spread to all areas of the actor's life, appearance, grooming habits, manners and behaviours. An example of some of these behaviours can be seen in the interaction of Ayame and a friend at a teahouse. When the two were served *tororo* (Japanese root vegetable), Ayame turned down the dish, as it was unbecoming for him to eat it. This was due to the fact that to consume tororo, a jelly-like item, required noises deemed inappropriate for a woman to make.[36] Ayame was an onnagata, and as such refused to eat the tororo in order to maintain his accurate portrayal of the appropriate manners of an Edo woman. Ayame's arguments not only established regulations for onnagata practices, but also highlight the progression of kabuki acting. The importance of accurate and authentic roles and depictions was becoming critical and replaced the sexual allure of a character as their essential quality. Kabuki as a theatre was progressing

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[34] Bunzō Torigoe, Charles J. Dunn, ed. *Actors' Analects,* (Tokyo, Japan: University of Tokyo Press, 1969), 54-55.
[35] More will be mentioned on how this portrayal of women as male was generated and centred.
[36] Torigoe, Dunn, ed., *Actors' Analects,* 51.

away from prostitution and into the realm of structured acting. The onnagata role demonstrates this in its increased focus on portraying an 'authentic' male vision of women on stage.

Ayame endorsed the male construction of appropriate female behaviours, manners and appearance. The onnagata actor was a popular figure for women and many women emulated their style and etiquette as has been noted by their ability to affect fashion and market their own lines of products.[37] Ayame is thus, through his popularity and creation of rules for the onnagata, attempting to further his perception and interpretation of ideal female behaviour. Thus, the onnagata actor functioned as a physical representation of Tokugawa male society's ideas of women. Ayame however conformed to the male dominated underpinnings of Tokugawa society by stating that women must be elegant and refined at all times. This will combine with other beliefs, examined below, noting women's virtue and duty and inferiority to the men in their lives.

Onnagata techniques became progressively more complex as the role was further refined and the interpretation of women became increasingly varied. The onnagata continued to push and shift the concepts of gender characteristics as they continually attempted to reduce the distinction between male actor and female subject. In the earliest days of kabuki and the onnagata, there were only two distinct roles: young women (*waka onnagata*) and older women (*kashagata*).[38] As kabuki plots progressed and became increasingly elaborate, the appearance of new onnagata roles were required to depict new interpretations of women. It became necessary to further structure onnagata skills to

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[37] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 1.
[38] Bunzō Torigoe, "A Note on the Genesis of Onnagata." in *Transvestism and the Onnagata Traditions in Shakespeare and Kabuki*, ed. Minoru Fujita, Michael Shapiro, (Folkestone, Kent, U.K.: Global Oriental, 2006), 2.

match the emerging variety in roles. Female role specialists were required to effectively portray nuns, virgins, housewives, female warriors and princesses, all of which could not simply be waka onnagata or kashagata. The onnagata was originally required to effectively depict woman so as not to be simply taken as cross-dressing males. As roles developed, they had to appear as a virgin and demonstrate the difference between such a character and a courtesan, and at the same time instil different female qualities and virtues that the audience could internalize.[39] This led to onnagata further embodying a wider image of women as they strove to perform these different roles.

All of these alterations to the onnagata character and method of acting highlight components of Tokugawa culture. The onnagata, especially as a prostitute, represented the chōnin interest in androgyny. It progressed from simple young males dressed as woman in nanshoku relationships to actors, many of whom were prostitutes, focusing on their physical attributes to actors striving to embody a male perception of women. In this their methods and processes of portraying femininity became stylized or ritualized and formed the aesthetics of female gender roles.[40] While this aesthetic was based on a false sense of femininity (how can a male more accurately portray femininity than a female), it remained popular and influential during the period. This also parallels the popularity/acceptance of malleable gender roles and open sexual practices in pre-modern Japan. The female role specialists were defining female beauty, yet still remained male beneath their costumes and permitted the audience to view and comprehend this fact. Yet, these shifts in gender perceptions did not subvert the gendered hierarchy of the time period. It simply demonstrated that aspects of gender roles and sexuality were openly

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[39] Samuel L. Leiter, "From Gay to Gei: The Onnagata and the Creation of Kabuki's Female Characters." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 217.
[40] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 6.

negotiated, but only within the framework of the overriding social principals of the shogunate's social hierarchy. This did not mean the status of women was elevated during this era, quiet the opposite, as onnagata were creating gender roles that conformed to male perceptions and rules and sought to maintain the status quo of the time. This was achieved in such ways as having the meek princess who strives to sacrifice herself for her husband, the docile virgin who agrees to a double suicide, or the mother who gives her life in order to serve her lord.

The female role specialist can be examined to show how aspects of the hegemonic powers of Edo Japan were embodied in these stage characters. By doing so the onnagata can be interpreted as a Tokugawa male construction, attempting to maintain the social position of females. The onnagata was a tool to inculcate social values in men and women, done so by audiences embracing them as popular characters. As these socially constructed concepts are examined the use of kabuki plays and characters will be investigated to reinforce and support this argument.

Before beginning an examination of the onnagata representations of male dominance and social perceptions, it is useful to provide some details on the ideology of patriarchy. Sylvia Walby in her work "Theorizing Patriarchy" defines patriarchy as a "system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women."[41] This definition corresponds to the hierarchal relationship between men and women in Tokugawa Japan. During this era, women were noticeably absent from the creation of the arts, as is evidenced by the lack of significant numbers of female

[41] Sylvia, Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, (Oxford, Oxfordshire: B. Blackwell, 1990), 20.

contributors to literature and theatre.[42] A brief look at the lives of women during the Edo era will further elaborate upon this fact and present further information on the male perceptions of female roles. It will also highlight the aims of using the onnagata character to continue social trends.

Gender and Kabuki

Long before the Tokugawa shogunate was established, Confucianism possessed an influential presence in Japan. From the seventeenth century until the Meiji Restoration, Confucianism was used to freeze the social order and maintain the social hierarchy of the day.[43] This included the relationship between men and women, which already placed women in a socially inferior position to men. Confucianism held that women should be dominated by the men in their lives.[44] This dominance was spread across their entire lifetime; first to their father, then husband and finally to their son when widowed. Women were further constrained by regulations which ordered females of society protected from improprieties.[45] These included theatre (kabuki), extravagance, and the presence of men other than their husbands, in wealthier families women were cut off almost entirely from the outside world. However, lower class women possessed a greater freedom of movement due to such reasons as economic needs and means. Education of girls, heavily influenced by Confucian ideals, was utilized to engrain such hierarchal attitudes.

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[42] This is in relation to earlier times with writers such as *Murasaki Shikibo*, *Sei Shonagon*. There is no record of any female Tokugawa playwrights. Hasuo Shirone, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature: An Anthology 1600-1900*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 12.
[43] Peter Nosco ed. *Confucianism and Tokugawa Culture*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 10.
[44] Bettina L. Knapp, *Images of Japanese women: A Westerner's View*, (Troy, N.Y.: Whitston Pub. Co., 1992), 123.
[45] Leiter, "From Gay to Gei." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 213.

Boys and girls were educated together until the age of seven. At this time, girls were separated and educated on their role within the family and world in general, a world ruled by men. The overriding theme was that the female world was focused on, "domestic tasks and family concerns."[46] By age ten, girls rarely left home and focused on learning domestic duties that would assist in running the household of their future husband.[47] A major tool in the education of girls was Kaibara Ekken's (1631 – 1714) "Great Learning for Women" (*Onna daigaku*). This was a Confucian influenced text which strove to produce subservient wives, daughters and mothers.[48] The *Onna daigaku* was a resource for families to utilize in the process of raising a 'virtuous' and 'loyal' daughter. A daughter needed to be free of "indocility, discontent, slander, jealousy and silliness," which were considered the "five worst maladies" by the *Onna daigaku*.[49] These lessons combined to ensure a difficult and secluded life for Tokugawa women. This education began early and fostered the subservient role of women towards the men in their lives.

Overall, the ideological view of women in Edo era society was appallingly low in comparison to their male counterparts. Always relegated to secondary status in regards to men, women were expected to live a chaste and virtuous life. This was in contrast to men who were free to drink, entertain and carry on affairs with other men and women, just as long as they did not neglect their family roles and duties to their wife as a symbol and her family. It is this position of inferiority that is an aspect of the onnagata, which can be seen in many of the roles these actors performed.

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[46] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 62.
[47] Knapp, *Images of Japanese women*, 124.
[48] Ibid., 123.
[49] Leiter, "From Gay to Gei," in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 213.

The ideological underpinnings of society did not always fully manifest themselves in the actual cultural practices of the day. If women remained shut up in their husband's home their entire lives or forced to perform constant domestic duties, how could kabuki influence them? Both Bettira L. Knapp and Gary Leupp offer interpretations of Tokugawa women that seem to offer insight into this issue. Knapp notes that while upper class women were cloistered in the family of the husband's home, they had access to literature.[50] As noted in the first chapter of Richard Lane's "Images from the Floating World", the printing press and commercial publishing houses made it possible for the wide spread distribution of printed material such as kabuki reviews and play books.[51] It is plausible that upper-class women had access to such materials and read them, and that they had access to classical materials. Thus, women would have been exposed to kabuki, via print, and its concepts of the proper behaviour and attitudes for women.

As it is conceivable that upper class women were gaining exposure to kabuki, Knapp also notes that the somewhat freer lives of lower class women also allowed for their exposure to kabuki in various forms. Female workers did possess the funds and at select times the time to attend kabuki performances.[52] It was also common for large segments of the urban population to read and purchase printed kabuki works. Many such prints were primarily pictorial which made them accessible for a wider portion of the population.[53] Just like wealthier women, middle class women were exposed to the onnagata and their male constructed images of the ideal female.

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[50] Knapp, *Images of Japanese Women*, 124.
[51] Richard Lane, *Images from the Floating World: the Japanese Print: Including an Illustrated Dictionary of Ukiyo-e*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 33.
[52] Ibid., 33.
[53] Hasuo Shirone, ed., *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 11.

Gary Leupp argues that while Confucian and Tokugawa regulations aimed at keeping women away from such events as kabuki existed, they were not stringently followed.[54] Donald Shively also notes that such regulations controlling behaviour in society were continually reissued and were not successful.[55] Even if a large portion of women were forced to spend their lives in the homes of their husbands it is unrealistic to assume it was the entire female population. Female workers may have spent large numbers of hours in the service of their employers, but it is also unrealistic to assume they did not find free time.[56] Thus, Leupp like Knapp believes that Tokugawa women had access to kabuki and that it influenced their lives.

Leupp's hypothesis that women were able to attend kabuki and internalize its ideals is supported in several ways. First, in an 1816 publication, Seji Kenmonroku, laments the crumbling morals of women. This document alludes that the exposure to events like kabuki was a cause of such moral degradation.[57] While the onnagata on stage was portraying ideal female characters, there were other less desirable influences in the theatre. The undisciplined, rowdy and at times lewd atmosphere of the theatre was seen as a detrimental influence on women. Drinking, lavish displays of wealth and even sexual liaisons were common and seen to have a negative impact of the women in attendance. Thus, this demonstrates that a significant number of women were able to

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[54] Leupp, *Male Colours,* 183.
[55] Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki" in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance*, ed. Samuel L. Leiter, 44-46.
[56] Constantine N. Vaporis in his article "A Tour of Duty: Kurume Hanshi Edo Kinban Nagaya Emaki", records how the male servants of a household devised ways to spend their time and ensure they had free time. It is assumed that women who were under similar restrictions and contracts for work would also have devised similar means to acquire free time. Constantine N. Vaporis, "A Tour of Duty: *Kurume Hanshi Edo Kinban Nagaya Emaki*," in *Monumenta Nipponica* 51, No. 3 (1996).
[57] Leupp, *Male Colours*, 174.

attend such events for it to be noted as a cause of such an issue in relation to Confucian ethics.

Secondly, in examining *ukiyo-e* (colour woodblock prints) of the period (1603-1868) the presence of women can clearly be noted at kabuki performances. The composition of the theatre crowd is key in displaying the different classes of women that were able to attend plays and gain first hand exposure to kabuki's patriarchal concepts. In boxes surrounding the stage, women of wealth, as well as courtesans, can be seen in attendance. This fact can be gleaned from their appearance, clothing, hairstyle and the presence of servants. As secluded as upper class women were supposedly kept, there is some evidence that they attended plays. The floor and rear areas of the stage were reserved for the commoner components of the audience.[58] Here women dressed as courtesans, nuns and mothers can clearly be identified. From these prints it is clear that women from various levels of society attended kabuki and were subjected to the concept of the onnagata.[59] These women were inundated with the restrictive views of patriarchal and Confucian society, both in the home and in the outside world.

It is clear that women from all walks of life attended kabuki. They also became fans of kabuki, imitating the fashion and mannerisms seen on stage. Thus, onnagata had an impact on the lives of women and were symbols imitated and idolized by women in Edo society. It is through this imitation and idolization that onnagata become effective tools for aspects of a patriarchal discourse. These characters were created by male

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[58] This was primarily due to the economic means of those attending kabuki, the price of the box seats was beyond the average urban citizen's budget. Jacob Raz, *Audience and Actors: A Study of Their Interactions in the Japanese Traditional Theatre*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 169.

[59] Robert T. Singer, *Edo: Art in Japan, 1615-1865*, (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 432, Charles J. Dunn, Bunzō Torigoe, ed., *Actors' Analects,* 161, Shively, H. Donald. "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki." in *Studies in Kabuki: Its Acting, Music, and Historical Context*, ed. James R. Brandon, William P. Malm, and Donald H. Shively, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), 17,19.

playwrights, given qualities and characteristics that men believed women should possess, and were further born on the stage via the interpretation of male actors. A closer examination of this interplay between onnagata and the ideals of the male dominated Edo era is of use at this point.

The emergence of the onnagata as a function of Edo society's acceptance of male dominance can be traced to the banning of women from the stage in 1629. With women removed from the theatre, it left this avenue of entertainment in the control of men, who in turn began to create and maintain female kabuki characters.[60] However, it was not until the mid-seventeenth century that onnagata took further steps towards becoming representations of male views of females in society. This process gathered force, as has been noted, when the theatre and acting troupes began focusing on acting skills in place of physical appearance. Onnagata actors began to focus on creating an 'authentic' representation of women on the stage in order to satisfy the demands of the audience.[61] This 'authentic' representation took the form of the women seen in the teachings of Confucianism and certain facets of Tokugawa society.

The courtesan was a major influence on the onnagata character, and would continue to be so for the majority of the Tokugawa era.[62] This influence was in addition to the influence of the beauty of the young male body that carried over from nanshoku practices. These women were believed to be some of the most skilled individuals in the areas of preferred social/cultural practices such as poetry, music, and intelligent

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[60] Not only were women no longer on the stage, but there were also no female playwrights. Shirone, ed. *Early Modern Japanese Literature*, 12.

[61] As already noted, this authentic representation had to carry the actor as a real woman to the crowd, not a man in women's clothing as was the case in *wakashū kabuki*. Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 150.

[62] Samuel L. Leiter, "Female-Role Specialization in Kabuki: How Real is Real?" in *Transvestism and the Onnagata Traditions in Shakespeare and Kabuki*, ed. Fujita, Shapiro, (Folkestone, Kent: U.K.: Global Oriental), 2006.
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conversation. They were often seen as virtuous individuals as many had not chosen their professions. Young girls were often sold into prostitution to pay family debt, thus their sacrifice was viewed as an act of filial piety by many in society.[63] These qualities combined to create an image of the 'ideal' woman based on Tokugawa society's ideologies. The popularity of the courtesan character was not just her sexual allure/availability, but also her adherence to patriarchal society.

The condition of the Edo era courtesan was similar to the life style for women outlined in *Onna daigaku.* Thus, it is not surprising that these individuals were taken up as the symbol of the 'ideal' woman. For all the mystery and allure of the courtesan, they were in reality highly skilled slaves. They were owned by a brothel and owed their loyalty and money to its owner.[64] Women under the Tokugawa system were in reality slaves to the males of their families. They were highly trained like a courtesan was, to please and satisfy their life long customer, their husband. The courtesan however, does present a seeming contradiction to the ideal woman. Courtesans were figures that existed outside of the Confucian hierarchy as they were considered outcasts. Courtesans remained outside of the system that placed them under the control of their father, husband or son. However, the kabuki courtesan can still be seen as a model of the ideal woman. While courtesans remained outside the family structure, they did portray women as loyal to the male figures in their lives. Courtesans were loyal and self-sacrificing in order to help their lovers, the male figures in their lives. Thus, the courtesan was an outcast but at the same time displayed traditional Confucian characteristics that were valued in women.

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[63] Arendie Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage: an Introduction to Kabuki, with Retellings of Famous Plays Illustrated by Woodblock Prints*, (Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2004), 18.
[64] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 61.

Several examples from kabuki demonstrate the male perception of women as being the loyal self-sacrificing individual. Ohaya from "The Skylight" is a former courtesan ransomed by her lover Yohei. She was once outside the Confucian hierarchy but has since re-entered it by marry and committing herself to the family unit and the male domination of it. Ohaya is an example of how the courtesan can be 'saved' and reintegrated into Tokugawa society, that all such women were not lost. While preparing for a festival, Ohaya is reminded of her duties to her husband. She must honour her husband's guests and serve them with the proper decorum, "as a good wife should."[65] Here Ohaya demonstrates how she is responsible for ensuring her husband, and his affairs, are always cared for.

Oko, Ohaya's mother-in-law, shows the progressive responsibilities of a woman in society. Her husband has passed away and now she concerns herself with serving her son, Yohei. Following the prescribed ideals on remarriage for women, Oko does not take a new husband but remains the faithful and loyal widow attempting to advance her family's fortunes. When Yohei is summoned to the offices of the local bakufu official and may possibly be reinstated as a magistrate, Oko prays and makes offerings to the gods on Yohei's behalf. Oko also attempts to display her unwavering loyalty to Yohei by keeping him ignorant of her first son Chōgorō's existence. She fears that Yohei will think she has intentionally sought out Chōgorō, and in so doing has been unfaithful by favouring the son of another marriage who is no longer important to her life. Oko further demonstrates her giri to Yohei, the dominant male in her life, by attempting to assist in

[65] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, *Brilliance and Bravado, 1697 – 1766* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 293.

his capture of Chōgorō.[66] If Chōgorō is captured it will surely mean great things for Yohei's status and reputation, and this is of the utmost importance to Oko, the loyal and faithful mother.

Princess Yuki in "The Golden Pavilion" highlights the loyalty and commitment due a husband under the Tokugawa Confucian belief system. The antagonistic Matsunaga Daizen has imprisoned Yuki's husband in order to force her to paint for him.[67] Yuki is forced to choose either to paint a sacred dragon for Daizen or commit adultery with the evil lord, a crime punishable by death. However, the real conflict is Yuki's loyalty to her husband and her willingness to die in order to maintain this loyalty. After Daizen increases the pressure by threatening to kill Naonobu, Yuki's husband, Yuki decides that in order to free her husband she will commit adultery. Yuki would know of, and understand the punishment for committing adultery, but this does not dissuade her from her course of action. Yuki's social upbringing dictates that sacrificing her body and life in order to save her husband is her responsibility, giri, to her husband. Her sacrifice is the greatest honour she can give to her husband, saving him by enduring the unendurable.[68] The wife or female character sacrificing her life or status to save her husband or dominant male figure in her life was a common feature of kabuki.

"The Tale of Shiroishi and Taihei Chronicles" demonstrates how filial piety was an integral aspect of female characters and figured into their on stage performances. After being separated for many years the sisters Miyagino and Shinobu are reunited and lament the murder of their father. Remembering their filial responsibilities the sisters do

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[66] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 240,257.
[67] This was a common feature for forcing women into choosing between their husbands and social obligations.
[68] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 299.

not attempt to create a new life, but launch a plot to exact revenge upon their father's murderer.[69] The two daughters can be seen as female counterparts to the widely popular and well-known forty-seven ronin, as they are daughters of a samurai family and must honour and avenge their father, their sole master and lord. The sisters place filial duty before all other concerns and seek to uphold their family's samurai values and traditions by seeking revenge. While revenge was not a practice permitted to commoners of the Edo era, the adherence to filial piety was something fully endorsed and supported by the major segments of society. Miyagino and Shinobu were effective examples of the loyalty women owed to their families, especially the male head, and should internalize in their lives. Miyagino is also a courtesan at the beginning of the play and Shinobu has begun to enter that life, so they are not ideal women but then they take up filial duty as their sole concern and thus become important embodiments of women in society. Each of these characters demonstrates an aspect of the Tokugawa culture that places men in positions of authority over women. They serve as a small selection of the numerous female characters in kabuki and their dissemination of dominant social and cultural views.

However, some of these characters appear as strong capable women, who even flout the system at points in the plays. Once again, ideologically the onnagata could function as a tool of the bakufu`s restrictive philosophies on women. However, the female role specialist could also enact roles that subverted and challenged the dominant social system. Characters like Otoku in "Matahei the Stutter" and Yaegaki in "Japan's Twenty-Four Paragon's of Filial Piety" are examples of strong female roles in kabuki plays. Each character challenges their substandard role to males in the cultural system by

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[69] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, *Villainy and Vengeance, 1773-1799* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 84-105.

ignoring the codes of conduct or their giri as dictated by society. This includes their devotion to social codes for women found in the *Onna daigaku*, Confucian beliefs of women's duties to the dominant male in their lives. While these characters can still be seen to fall into aspects of the male dominated social system,Otoku striving to improve her husband`s social position and Yaegaki protecting and sacrificing for her lover, they were still offering an alternative view within the system.

Yaegaki portrays a passionate and strong young woman who follows her lover, and emotions in an attempt to save her love, Katsuyori. Katsuyori's and Yaegaki's families are engaged in a dispute over an ancient relic called the Suwa Hosshō helmet, which Yaegaki's family now possesses. Katsuyori is discovered to be a member of the enemy's camp and is sent to take a message with the intentions of seeing him murdered on the way.[70] Yaegaki follows her ninjō over her giri, and ignores her filial duties by siding with Katsuyori's family in the dispute over the Suwa Hosshō helmet. She learns of the plot against her love, steals the Suwa Hosshō helmet and strikes out in the dead of winter to save Katsuyori.[71] In the process of saving Katsuyori, Yaegaki completely disregards her duties to her family and braves the harsh winter paths alone. Yaegaki seems the image of the strong, courageous young lover, yet there are aspects of her character that still conform to social regulations. Yaegaki may have thrown off the filial bonds to her father, but has replaced them with her sense of giri to Katsuyori, the new dominant male figure in her life. She is also risking and possibly sacrificing her life in order to save Katsuyori, like a loyal Confucian woman should. While Yaegaki does

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[70] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 337.
[71] Ibid., 350.

present a strong female character she does not attempt to destroy or challenge the social structures of the time, instead she operates within them.

Otoku is another strong, confident woman who, although not the focus of the play, provides powerful female images. While watching Matahei, her husband, plead his case Otoku steps forward to ask Tosa no Shōgen to give his name to her husband.[72] Otoku dominates her husband at this juncture, representing the family unit and its best interests in acquiring the Tosa name. She has attempted to do what Matahei himself cannot, as he is presented as a weak and ineffectual character. The dominance and strength of Otoku is again displayed when she watches Matahei walk about after obtaining samurai status. She is critical of his style of holding himself and gets up and shows Matahei how to move like a samurai. She is showing her husband how to be a samurai, taking the dominant and leading position within their relationship.[73] Despite all of this Otoku still conforms to the social trappings of her day, her whole life and forward nature is geared towards improving her husband's position in life. Her beseeching of Tosa no Shōgen is all for Matahei, as is everything else she does. Otoku's single minded drive to assist her husband makes her an example of a 'model' Tokugawa woman. Both Yaegaki and Otoku at times seem to move against certain components of male dominant society, by stepping outside the proscribed roles for women.

Paul G. Schalow argues that beyond the female characters, the onnagata role itself was a cog in the wheel of patriarchy.[74] The female role specialist strove to

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[72] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, 72.
[73] Ibid., 92.
[74] Schalow G. Paul, "Figures of Worship: Responses to Onnagata on the Kabuki Stage in the 17th Century Japanese Vernacular." in *Transvestism and the Onnagata Traditions*, ed. Fujita, Shapiro, (Folkestone, Kent: U.K.: Global Oriental), 2006.

become a woman in order to perfect the art form of playing onnagata type characters.[75] Actors took their methods to the point of assuming the role of woman on and off stage, which meant accepting the social constraints placed upon women. As the anecdotes of Ayame Yoshizawa highlight, the female role specialist lived by the rules governing women, which included their reduced social status. Yet, the onnagata achieved aspects of their notoriety from portraying strong female characters, as seen in the above examples. However, according to Schalow, this portrayal of strong women on stage was permitted for a specific reason. The male onnagata actors were seen as men becoming women, and accepting their diminished social status. They were also still viewed as men creating and defining female gender qualities. Even with a reduced social status, men still retained control over the formation of female identities in the theatre. Thus, the female role specialist did not represent a challenge or threat to Tokugawa ideology in regards to the social position or qualities of women in society. The onnagata did not try to play female characters in an attempt to elevate their status and harbour change in society. For this reason, the Tokugawa shogunate permitted and even perhaps encouraged the onnagata's portrayal of women on the stage.

Mezur supports the view that the ideology of the bakufu sought to control female gender qualities being displayed on the kabuki stage.[76] The bakufu`s decision to ban women from the stage was an aspect of controlling the creation of female gender qualities. As early kabuki troupes were routinely sponsored and run by brothels, the female actresses were under the control of the male owners. However, independent performers appeared and worked outside this male control. Mezur states that the bakufu, in 1629,

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[75] Dunn, Torigoe, ed., *Actor's Analects*, 53.
[76] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies*, 2.

regulated primarily against these independent female performers, who were creating female gender acts outside of the ideological constraints of the bakufu.[77] She notes that brothel girls, who were in the service of male brothel owners, were still permitted to perform and offer their sexual services.

Schalow delves further into the bakufu's concern with whom was creating female gender characteristics, and how it was a motivation for banning onna and wakashū kabuki. The dominant political power, the shogunate, was a male dominated institution and through the use of the restrictive regulations it attempted to control the image of women on stage.[78] The binary opposition of male (superior) to female (inferior) was threatened by onna kabuki. Onna kabuki featured women dressing as men and assuming the social status of men in performances. This, argues Schalow, reversed the binary opposition and was "an act of *insubordination* in a Confucian context where 'station' (*kurai)* was the central fact of life."[79] Onna kabuki thus challenged the morals and gender hierarchy of Tokugawa society. The shogunate expended great amounts of resources to ensure the social system remained frozen and free of possible strife.[80] In view of this knowledge, the banning of onna kabuki was a conscious move to contain a possible avenue of opposition to Tokugawa social control.

Wakashū kabuki was also regulated to manage the social image of women and thus enforce a rigid social structure. The highly androgynous males of wakashū were

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[77] Mezur, *Beautiful Boys/Outlaw Bodies,* 60-61.
[78] Schalow, "Figures of Worship." in *Transvestism and the Onnagata Traditions*, ed. Fujita, Shapiro, 68.
[79] Ibid., 67.
[80] The shogunate imposed the rigid social structure of four classes (see chapter 1), made continual loans and stipend increases to the samurai class to ensure their elevated social status, Kozo Yakamura, *Study of Samurai Income and Entrepreneurship: Quantitative Analyses of Economic and Social Aspects of the Samurai in Tokugawa and Meiji Japan*, (London, Harvard University Press. 1978).

regulated in appearance in order to announce an actor's gender.[81] The uncertain gender image presented by wakashū kabuki drew uncertainty upon the individual's position within the social hierarchy, an unacceptable scenario. The onnagata was forced away from relying on physical beauty and towards acting as a result of these measures taken by the government. This required the development of characters and attributes, all of which were created by men, actors and playwrights. This allowed men to create female characters that did not disturb the established social order and perpetuated the stereotypical female.

The onnagata character was restrictive and embodied male society's desires and views of women. Yet, there are numerous strong female characters, as has already been noted, in kabuki. The presences of these characters, which conform to trappings of the male world but offered an active female role model, are of significance. These characters do not offer an explicit challenge or contestation to Tokugawa society. They do function as models of active women engaging society in roles other then those the shogunate espoused. Masaoka of "The Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai" is a character that helps avert the destruction of her lord's house. Although she allows her young son to die in service to his lord, adhering to her giri allows this to transpire.[82] Masaoka does not simply lie down and weep or loose herself to her loss and the harshness of the world she lives in. Her giri to the young lord by her side has some effect, but Masaoka is not a weak woman. She actively involves herself in tricking Sakae, the play's antagonist, into giving her the list of the conspirators.[83] She functions within the bounds of male society but shows to the women of the kabuki audience that women do

[81] Schalow, "Figures of Worship." in *Transvestism and the Onnagata Traditions*, ed. Fujita, Shapiro, 67.
[82] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 2, 60.
[83] Ibid., 62-64.

not have to be passive and uninvolved in the world around them. Yet, Masaoka does not challenge the world as she upholds her responsibilities as a woman.

Another example of a strong female character that can be viewed as a role model to Tokugawa women is Agemaki. Agemaki is a courtesan in the play "Sukeroku: Flower of Edo" who observes her giri to her lover Sukeroku. The wealthy samurai Ikyū insults and defames Agemaki's lover Sukeroku in hopes of winning Agemaki away from the young blade. Agemaki maintains her loyalty to her lover as the dominant male in her life, but does so in a dynamic fashion. The young courtesan ignores the social controls of class and gender and demeans and insults Ikyū.[84] Although she does this to justify her love and dedication to Sukeroku, Agemaki is still a strong and intriguing female character. Thus, even though such characters as Masaoka and Agemaki conformed in some fashion or another to patriarchal restrictions and views, they also confronted them. The onnagata role largely exploited the position of women in society, but could be used to show women in a more active role within society. However, this role never moved into an active challenging of the male-dominated culture of Tokugawa Japan.

Conclusion

Tokugawa perceptions and attitudes towards sexuality were heavily influenced by past traditions. These attitudes manifested themselves in the early onnagata and would continue to influence this acting style throughout the Tokugawa era. This would in turn create an intimate connection between the female role specialist and the sexual desires and general interests of the chōnin audience. Several centuries of nanshoku practices,

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[84] James R. Brandon, trans. *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays,* (Cambridge, Mass; Harvard University Press, 1975), 61.

both monastic and samurai, created practices of homosexual, bisexual relationships and cross dressing trends that became accepted aspects of society. Nanshoku practices also created the tradition of the alluring young male body as an aspect of beauty which would carry on through the Edo era. These factors fostered an interest in the confusion of gender in the earliest kabuki performances, as young women played men and men donned the guise of women. These past traditions translated into the excitement and interest of the urban crowds who began viewing these performances. As many early kabuki performances were little more than advertisements for prostitutes, these stage performers carefully catered to the desires of the crowds. The young men of monastic and samurai nanshoku traditions, who appeared as women and imparted a sense of sexual ambiguity, took to the stage during the Tokugawa shogunate. A major component of this sexual ambiguity was the interplay between male body beneath female gender acts. Audiences glimpsed qualities of both male and female in the performer, both aspects of which were sexual attractive to both genders in Tokguawa Japan. For this reason the early female role specialist was adored and sought after by both men and women. This was an essential aspect of the onnagata's early popularity. This popularity mirrors the sexual interests and desires of the urban population of Edo era Japan. The female role specialist's popularity also affected the ideological influence these actors had on the audience.

Like the aragoto and wagoto acting styles, the progression and development of the onnagata acting style notes kabuki's maturation as a theatre form. This maturation process was closely tied to the chōnin's increased interest in culture products such as kabuki. While more will be mentioned on this topic in the following chapter, it is

important to note that the development of female role specialists' skills is linked to the rise of the chōnin. This heightening of acting skills is also tied to regulations against the onnagata, who were progressively forced away from pure sexual advertisement. Onnagata actors were intimately connected to prostitution, as was kabuki theatre, in the early decades of the seventeenth century. However, the shogunate took steps to force the gender of the onnagata to be more clearly pronounced via continual regulations and bans on kabuki. This forced the female role specialists to focus on acting skills and the development of new and diverse characters to attract audiences. While the aspect of sexual allure and intrigue never fully left the role, it ceased to be the driving force by the mid-seventeenth century. This in turn forced the prostitute off the stage, with the actors replacing them. While spectators still came to the theatre to view the alluring onnagata, others began attending in order to note the skill and diversity of characters appearing on the mid-seventeenth century kabuki stage. The interest of the audience notes their economic ability to attend and patronise the theatre. As acting became ever more important the salaries of skilled actors rose. This in turn drove production cost higher, which resulted in higher ticket prices and increased sponsorship from local commoners.

The effective portrayal of the 'ideal' woman became the main focus of the onnagata actor. The development of a stylized method of acting permitted this 'ideal' woman to take a more concrete form on the kabuki stage. The variation of female characters increased and rules and regulations appeared to govern the female role specialist. Actors were encouraged to focus exclusively on female roles and, Confucian ideas on the moral upbringing and characteristics of women appeared in the onnagata's portrayal of women. Thus, the onnagata began to propagate the ideological components

of Confucian and Tokugawa society. Female characters continually recognised their duty to the male figures in their lives, their families as well as the proper female decorum. As has been cited in several examples, these characters were willing to even sacrifice their lives in order to satisfy the needs of their fathers, husbands and sons. Plays and characters also noted the accepted behaviour and attitudes for women, based off works like *Onna Daigaku*, and the popularity and trendiness of the onnagata facilitated this process. The diversification of skills and abilities were required for the onnagata to portray the different scenarios and characters that were utilized in putting forth these ideals on the stage.

Of further interest is the fact that these perceptions of the 'ideal' woman and her role in society were created by men. Hideyoshi was interested in freezing the social hierarchy of pre-modern Japan and preventing social mobility and the destabilizing effects it had on a society. The onnagata was a tool for freezing the gender hierarchy of Tokugawa Japan, and ensuring woman occupied a socially inferior position to men. The appearance of playwrights, the development of plots and characters further influenced the female role specialist. Those creating the themes and scenarios of plays were also men, and those running theatres were also men. Thus, it is easy to understand how the 'ideal' woman, as envisioned by the kabuki onnagata, is a component of male control over Tokugawa society.

The onnagata did portray active women, who engaged and participated in their world. However, these interactions adhered to and did not threaten the established gender hierarchy. While, as noted in the examples, these portrayals provided positive examples of women becoming involved in their world, it did not allow them to actively

negotiate with it. However, this is a common theme in kabuki, working within the system but not challenging and reforming it.[85] At all times the female characters of kabuki were in positions that witnessed them sacrifice for, serve, assist and obey the men in their lives. The onnagata was an actor attempting to accurately portray women on stage, and in doing so the actor accepted a reduced status in the gender hierarchy. For this reason the onnagata was not a threat to the male dominated world of Tokugawa Japan. The onnagata actor did not play female roles in ways similar to strong dominant men, like the aragoto. Instead, the female role specialist created female characters that routinely functioned within the confines of the bakufu's ideology. This often witnessed female characters occupying socially inferior positions in relation to the male characters in plays. These female characters also often conformed to the Confucian ideals of filial piety and duty. Yet, there were avenues of resistance in the form of strong female characters engaging their world. These examples are important in noting that while women were seen as inferior in the eyes of the bakufu's ideological structures, ideology and reality did not always correspond.

Another important aspect of the development of the onnagata, as well as aragoto and wagoto, style of acting was a heightened sense of culture in urban dwellers. As acting developed along with sets, plots and the theatre itself, the chōnin of Japan also began developing a heightened sense and appreciation of kabuki as a cultural product. It was a form of entertainment aimed specifically towards commoners and, featured characters and scenarios from their world and focused on material that was relevant and intriguing to them. Audiences began to appreciate the various styles of acting, the diverse characters on the stage and the captivating stories of plays. This appreciation

[85] See the discussion on aragoto characters in the second chapter for more examples of this concept.

began to translate into chōnin direct involvement in kabuki theatre. Fans became regulars and patronized specific actors, engaged in debates over acting styles, wealthy and elite chōnin began supporting entire theatres. The ability to spend the time and money pursuing kabuki was facilitated by the chōnin's raising economic status. This connection, between the growth of the kabuki theatre and its various components and the rise of the chōnin will be examined in the next chapter.

Fans and Actors: The Different Sides of the Kabuki Stage

V

Kabuki began as a simple display of dancing and sensuality. Over the decades since its inception, this theatre style started to create its own cultural by-products. These by-products were influenced by both kabuki and the social environment surrounding the lives of patrons, actors and commoners. These cultural by-products not only indicate the popularity of kabuki, but also draw attention to the social conditions of the Tokugawa era. *Hiiki renchū* (fan clubs/associations) emerged as not only avenues for the expression of fans' love of the theatre and individual actors, but as symbols of chōnin wealth and power. The rituals created and practiced by the hiiki renchū combined with an increasing number of ceremonies and traditions appearing alongside kabuki. These ceremonies tied patrons, actors and theatres closer together, creating a uniquely commoner culture based upon kabuki. These ceremonies allowed for the interaction of patrons with a world created by and for such lower class individuals.

The hiiki renchū are of special interest as their composition, ideals, goals and structure highlight social and cultural conditions of the era. An examination of the composition of the hiiki renchū will note the almost exclusive involvement of chōnin in these social groups. The fan clubs were places that wealthy chōnin assembled to express an interest and understanding of a cultural art form, kabuki. Hiiki renchū also became an expression for wealth, status and power within the chōnin world. Their makeup and regulations co-opted aspects of Tokugawa and elite society into a distinctly commoner representation.

Ceremonies and rituals were a crucial component of the hiiki renchū, but were not their exclusive purview. All patrons of the theatre were able to witness and experience the various ceremonies from welcoming new actors (*kaomise*) to *akutai* (words of disapproval). These ceremonies fostered a sense of unity and relationship between the audience and the actors on the stage. This was essential, as many actors and theatres relied upon the patronage of fans in order to survive. Ceremonies and rituals such as *homekotoba* (words of praise) required an in-depth understanding and knowledge of plays and acting skills. It is from these ceremonies that a deeper comprehension and appreciation of the developing acting styles and techniques emerged in the audience. Fans began to debate and critique performances and actors, moving away from the raw physical attraction and appreciating art. Thus, ceremonies and rituals were critical aspects of the development of kabuki into a serious theatre form.

The growth of the physical theatre is another indication of the power and wealth the chōnin possessed. The theatre building progressed from a simple open air stage with a rough wooden fence to large multi-floored permanent structures. Only through increased revenue and sponsorship was this growth able to occur. Supporting the theatre and troupes became a sign of class and cultural sophistication among the chōnin elites. The steady development of the theatres also highlights kabuki's popularity and use as a business. Theatre owners employed various techniques to attract large crowds and keep them in the theatre for extended periods of time. Marketing, advertising and the procurement of high level actors were some avenues explored by theatre owners.

While the actors, playwrights and other performers are integral parts of the theatre it is also of value to examine the other side of the stage. The audience was an

indispensable aspect of kabuki's growth and development away from the sale of sex. The audience supported actors and theatres financially and emotionally, able to bring actors to unfound glory or lay their careers to waste. Fans and patrons created the hiiki renchū to reflect their interest in kabuki, but also as expressions of their wealth and status. Knowledge of and involvement in kabuki was one way of expressing chōnin status and power. The hiiki renchū, along with non-affiliated fans, created and embraced the ceremonies and rituals that blossomed in the theatre. This strengthened chōnin culture by supporting and developing kabuki as a cultural product of its social environment. Thus, an examination of kabuki must include mention of the audience, fans, ceremonies, rituals and structures that developed along side such an intricate theatre style.

Fan Associations (*Hiiki renchū*)

By the eighteenth century, kabuki was maturing into a strong urban art form. Several cultural by-products such as fan clubs resulted from this maturation process. While tied intimately to kabuki, fan associations/clubs (*hiiki renchū*) displayed many characteristics of the cultural environment of Japan. Hiiki renchū incorporated a hierarchal structure that set out positions and demanded strict loyalty and duties. In his work Matsudaira Susumu notes how these associations also offer another example of the chōnin's rising social status as members were able to afford to participate in such activities as hiiki renchū. Matsudaira draws attention to the fact that hiiki renchū were products of kabuki, but also provided the impetus for kabuki to progress and evolve its structural components.[1] This was carried out through the support of actors, troupes and

[1] Susumu, Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū (Theatre Fan Clubs) in Osaka in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 699-709.

theatres by individual fans and hiiki renchū as well as their criticism and comprehension of the structural components of the theatre.

Hiiki renchū were believed to have originated in Ōsaka during the early days of the eighteenth century, thus imbuing the city with a strong tradition of fan culture. These associations then spread to Kyōto, Edo and other cities with permanent kabuki troupes.[2] The major cities of Edo, Kyōto, and Ōsaka possessed not one but several hiiki renchū, often locked in continual competition.[3] Over time these associations grew in size, a process which was analogous with the continued popularity of kabuki. Chōnin viewed kabuki as a unique cultural product, and this permitted the growth and strengthening of the hiiki renchū. This growth in turn contributed to a distinct set of chōnin traditions and rituals that were based upon chōnin values, beliefs and views of society. Again, this was a result of rising chōnin status. These individuals emulated the elite's practice of rituals and traditions associated with their social position to legitimize and strengthen a commoner claim to a distinct culture. The rigid social structure imposed by Hideyoshi forbade the mixing of social classes, forcing the chōnin to establish their own set of rituals and traditions that would support and empower their specific culture.[4] The hiiki renchū were an aspect of this process of establishing specific cultural rituals and traditions in support of chōnin urban culture.

Fan associations progressed from loose collections of individuals into structured groups focused on their goal of supporting actors, troupes and later, theatres. The

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[2] Cities could possess the facilities for kabuki performances but did not always have a permanent set of actors. This would be due to location and the size of the local population. However, troupes routinely toured provinces.

[3] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū (Theatre Fan Clubs) in Osaka in the Early Nineteenth Century," 700.

[4] Hideyoshi's social system was rigid, but there was aspects of social mobility. Nearing the end of the Tokugawa shogunate there are examples of samurai becoming merchants, and commoners buying titles and status.

composition of hiiki renchū highlights how these groups were dominated by chōnin members. Hiiki renchū were composed of the wealthy and well off urban dwellers that possessed the means to pursue such activities as becoming patrons of the theatre. In his research, Susumu Matsudaira notes that a large majority of the members of hiiki renchū were local business men, store owners and merchants.[5] This was a necessity as being a member of a fan association was not a cheap or easy task to accomplish. Being a hiiki renchū member was not a simple thing; it entailed that, "all the year round they have to spend a great deal of money; so poor men cannot afford to join."[6] With the time and money to dedicate to kabuki related activities, the hiiki renchū were primarily a pastime of wealthy chōnin.

Membership in a hiiki renchū required a significant contribution of time and money to the club and was strictly controlled and monitored. This naturally excluded certain segments of the urban population from being able to join these groups. While it meant poorer commoners could not participate, it more importantly meant that the samurai were also excluded. Regulations existed that forbade samurai from attending kabuki, and it would be assumed joining hiiki renchū would be part of this ban.[7] However, a far more concrete hindrance to samurai joining hiiki renchū was a lack of the funds required to participate in the clubs. Samurai relied on their inadequate rice stipends for income, which did not increase at the same rate that the price of daily and luxury commodities did. Due to this, from the early 1700s on, a lack of funds began to beggar this elite social group. This further reinforces the fact that hiiki renchū were a

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[5] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 704.
[6] Ibid., 700.
[7] Donald H. Shively, "Bakufu versus Kabuki." in *A Kabuki Reader: History and Performance* ed. Leiter L. Samuel, 46.

demonstration of chōnin wealth and power as well as their ability to create rituals and traditions intended solely for their social class.

In addition to highlighting the declining fortunes of the samurai, hiiki renchū, also incorporated other fundamental aspects of Tokugawa culture. There existed an established hierarchy among the members of hiiki renchū that delineated certain responsibilities and honours among members. Hiiki renchū possessed specific positions, associated with elevated status within the group, such as senior consultants (*sewayaku*) or official representatives. These individuals mounted the stage during various ceremonies and present gifts to the actors or read out a speech.[8] Individuals were also designated lead clappers and usually were trained by a master clapper, and led the practice and performance of the synchronized clapping rituals (*teuchi-shiki*) in support of actors.[9] There was a sense of importance attached to learning skills from a 'master' who could impart some form of special talent that could not be gained on one's own. There is a sense of ritual and tradition attached to this concept of gaining skills from a more experienced individual.

Going to kabuki was not a pastime that lacked structure or form; ritual practices and traditions are proof of this fact. As has already been noted, acting techniques developed and improved, moving kabuki away from a simple advertisement for prostitution by adding components of form and technique. Fan clubs followed suit by investing in ideas and concepts of rituals, hand clapping ceremonies, and traditions, receiving one's training from a master or highly experienced individual. As the hiiki renchū were the purview of the chōnin and focused on a theatre form of the chōnin, these

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[8] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 702.
[9] Ibid., 700.

fan clubs can be viewed as expressions of the commoner world. The hiiki renchū and kabuki were cultural products due to the fact that they were influenced and based upon the urban environment that surrounded commoners. Chōnin witnessed their economic importance increase during the Tokugawa era and their desire to participate in social events also grew. This is displayed by their participation in events such as hiiki renchū, welcoming ceremonies and debating acting skills. Much as the upper-class samurai had established traditions and rituals that distinguished themselves from the urban masses, so too did the chōnin differentiate themselves from the samurai. It was this heightened sense of status that led the chōnin to create commoner practices of nanshoku, poetry writing, theatre criticism and fan associations.

Loyalty and a sense of *giri* were components of membership in a hiiki renchū and integral parts of society. *Hiiki* (patrons) were expected to display unflinching loyalty to a single actor of their choosing. To favour another actor or even possibly hint at this was viewed as a distinctly disloyal act and would result in some form of punishment from the hiiki renchū. The hiiki Kane shifted her support from Utaemon to a "young and beautiful" actor named Tanosuke who played women's roles. Her faltering loyalty risked her membership; she was forgiven only after she begged forgiveness from a portrait of Utaemon she owned.[10] Kane's violation of her giri, in favour of her *ninjō*, resulted in a punishment designed to bring her back in line with her duty. This anecdote notes how hiiki renchū were structured around similar principles of loyalty and duty as daily Tokugawa culture.

In larger clubs, hiiki also owed their loyalty to the club and the actors it supported, even if at times this came into conflict with their personal feelings for an actor they

[10] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 706.

personally favoured. This was similar to the samurai sense of giri owed, above all other considerations, to a warrior's lord. For a hiiki, loyalty was owed to the hiiki renchū. Again, here can be seen an example of chōnin co-opting and fashioning their own sense of ritual and tradition based on examples in Tokugawa society and earlier times. Hayashima, a hiiki of the Ōte hiiki renchū, provides an excellent example of this dominance of giri over ninjō. Hayashima was known to be a devoted Utaemon fan. However, during a teuchi-shiki (hand clapping ritual) for the troupe his club supported, he showed no favouritism.[11] He applauded all members of the troupe with equal fervour, demonstrating his giri to the hiiki renchū and its support of the entire troupe above his personal preference for Utaemon.

The support of actors and theatres was not a novel activity taken up by the enthusiastic members of hiiki renchū. Fans and patrons of kabuki had been supporting kabuki since its first performances. During the early decades of the seventeenth century, actors and prostitutes did not receive a large salary for their work on the stage. This was because prostitutes would be fulfilling the contracts they owed their brothels when they worked on and off stage. Consequently, early kabuki performers saw little of the funds their acting and sexual liaisons secured. Even as kabuki moved away from its focus on prostitution, the salaries of actors were not high. Salaries did not expand until it was financially viable for theatres to offer larger sums, and until actors developed elevated acting styles and skills. These elevated skills led to actors' increased popularity, which in turn permitted them to command larger salaries.[12] Thus, many sources note the reliance of actors on fan contributions to supplement their income and living requirements. Gifts

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[11] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 705.
[12] Jacob Raz, "The Audience Evaulated. Shikitei Samba's Kyakusha Hyobanki", *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 2 (Summer, 1980): 190.

of rice, cloth (for costumes as well as daily clothes), props for their performances, rice, horses, land and even titles were presented to actors.[13] It was not common to give money until after the Genroku period (1688-1704), thus permitting some actors to live even more extravagant lives.

During the Genroku era, kabuki began to focus upon various structural components of performances in order to increase popularity and revenue. In order to achieve financial success commoner theatre was fast becoming a business that demanded large amounts of capital. Sets and costumes became more elaborate, popular actors demanded lucrative contracts and the theatre itself was becoming an intricate physical structure.[14] Hiiki renchū, already an important element in the support of actors, began to turn their collective attention towards the support of the actual theatres. The fan associations not only assisted in decorating theatres and providing props, but they also provided financial backing.[15] This made hiiki renchū increasingly influential in the running of theatres and their troupes and the desires of these clubs were routinely taken into consideration when staging a play. This was also another avenue for chōnin to express their status as well as their perception of and involvement in the creation of a cultural product geared towards commoners.

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[13] Jacob Raz, *Audience and Actors: A Study of Their Interactions in the Japanese Traditional Theatre*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1983), 138.

[14] Actors became popular based on acting skill as well as appearance and as such began to command higher salaries as theatres competed to put them on stage. See Arendie Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage: an Introduction to kabuki, with retellings of famous plays illustrated by woodblock prints*, (Amsterdam, Hotei Publishing, 2004).

[15] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 189.

Fan Rituals and Traditions

Fans and members of hiiki renchū did not limit their involvement in kabuki simply to the attendance of performances. Jacob Raz demonstrates that members of the audience were involved in a continual process of evaluation, refinement and development of performance styles. Fans were actively involved through the use of *homekotoba* (words of praise), *kakegoe* (cries of approval) and *akutai* (abusive words of disapproval).[16] These techniques highlight the involvement and knowledge of the theatre fan. Raz highlights how fans had to understand what a skilled piece of acting was and what was not, as well as how to express their enjoyment or distaste for it. From his analysis of the audience, Raz argues that as kabuki was becoming more structure so too was the patron's appreciation and criticism of it.

Techniques of praise and disapproval were important aspects in the progression of kabuki away from being a theatre based solely on sexuality and androgyny. These practices are a method by which to demonstrate the varied demographics of the different cities and their audiences. Homekotoba were words of praise for actors that were shouted out during a performance. This practice is believed to have originated in Edo around 1679.[17] This is not surprising when the make-up of Edo generally meant a rowdy and vocal crowd was in attendance. This point seems to be further upheld by the Kyōto audiences' opinion that the practice of shouting out homekotoba was crass and unrefined. Fans from the imperial seat would write down their words of praise and send them to the

[16] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 183.
[17] Ibid.,

intended actor, a more refined and dignified way to express their approval.[18] This practice is even more interesting for the fact that it meant that a large percentage of fans and actors could read and write. The practice of homekotoba, in some form or another, soon spread to all kabuki theatres.

Homekotoba, kakegoe, and akutai were all forms of fan interaction and involvement in kabuki performances that displayed the audience's comprehension of the theatre. Homekotoba moved from simple shouting of praise into more elaborate chants and shouted phrases that were intricate and complicated. Kakegoe were much less complex or detailed words of praise that were shouted out during similar segments of a performance. These words ranged from the actor's name, *yagō* (hereditary family stage name), the area the actor resided in, the number the actor was in a family line, or a witty phrase.[19] Homekotoba and kakegoe were used to encourage actors in their elaboration of a *mie* (pose), dance or other technique which the audience found enjoyable. A 1741 performance by Danjūrō II in Ōsaka is an excellent example of this encouragement and elaboration of a segment of a performance. During the play, Danjūrō II recited a well-known but difficult speech, but was interrupted by fans reciting the speech word for word for him. Danjūrō II politely thanked the crowd for memorizing such a complex passage, and then proceeded to recite the entire speech backwards, to much acclaim.[20] Kabuki became a more structured art form through this support expressed by homekotoba and

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[18] Donald, H. Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki", in *Studies in Kabuki: its Acting, Music, and Historical Context*. ed. James R. Brandon, William P. Malm, Donald H. Shively, (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1978), 20.
[19] Samuel L Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia: An English-language Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979), 185.
[20] James R. Brandon, Samuel L. Leiter, ed. *Kabuki Plays on Stage*, vol. 1, *Brilliance and Bravado, 1697 – 1766* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 96.

kakegoe, which encouraged actors to develop and modify their acting skills and presentations of plays.

Akutai was a form of criticism that allowed audience members to display their displeasure with a play or actor. Most often akutai took the form of shouted words, but could also included throwing objects. If fans were highly displeased they would toss their sitting pillows (*hanjō*) onto the stage or at the offending actor (*hanjō wo ireru*), a practice again believed to have originated in Edo.[21] However, in order to be offended or disappointed with a performance, fans needed to understand the actor's abilities and the techniques of the theatre. Thus, akutai required the audience to engage and comprehend kabuki as something more than an advertisement for sex. All three of these rituals linked the audience to the performance as well as the atmosphere of the theatre itself. These forms of support and criticism also required knowledge of performances, acting techniques and other components of the theatre.

The delivery of homekotoba, kakegoe and akutai were controlled, like many other aspects of society, by a set of regulations and codes. Homekotoba, kakegoe and akutai were not simply shouted out at random points during a performance, but adhered to a code of conduct that dictated their delivery. Words of praise and admonishment were shouted at specific times such as the performance of a mie, a climatic scene or after a fine display of skill. These points in the plays were generally well known to those who regularly attended performances or read plays.[22] This knowledge and precise delivery of words of praise was required so that the mechanics of the play were not disturbed by these outbursts and the performance was not adversely affected. This was essential as

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[21] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 184.

[22] Andrew C Grestle, "The Culture of Play: Kabuki and the Production of Texts", Oral Tradition 20, no. 2 (October 2005): 195. More will be said on the publication of playbooks later in this chapter.

homekotoba, kakegoe and akutai functioned as aspects of performances, not disruptions. Often the delivery of homekotoba was reserved for the hiiki renchū who routinely practiced and rehearsed their words.[23] Delivering praise and criticism was becoming as much a cultural art form as kabuki theatre itself.

Implicitly connected to the knowledge of plays to deliver proper homekotoba was the need to possess the time and money to be able to pursue such endeavours. Again, membership in a hiiki renchū entailed the output of significant time and money, two things wealthy chōnin had access to. Involvement in a hiiki renchū's delivery of homekotoba became multifaceted as hiiki renchū sought to deliver perfect words of praise, and out do their competitors. Fans in the cheering groups began to wear uniforms, distinguishing groups as well as displaying their wealth. Matsudaira provides an example of the type of costume worn by an Ōsaka hiiki renchū. It was composed of black cotton kimonos with white silk sashes and head bands embroidered with golden thread. These were not cheap costumes and displayed the prestige of the club and its members.[24]

The practice of homekotoba became so structured, complex and popular that booklets and guides on technique were printed and sold throughout the major cities. This drew on an established print industry that published books ranging from actor and courtesan critiques to playbills.[25] Booklets were made for most new productions, rehearsal ceremonies were often held the day before a performance so as to facilitate practice.[26] The existence of these booklets is also indicative of a developed and thriving print culture based upon kabuki. It would not be profitable to print booklets for so many

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[23] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 184.
[24] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 701. The use of golden thread was actually regulated against by the bakufu as an example of chōnin displays of wealth.
[25] Grestle, "The Culture of Play", Oral Tradition 20, no. 2 (October 2005): 196.
[26] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 184.

performances unless there was a demand for such a product. Thus, print booklets are an indication of the relevance and social importance of kabuki plays. These performances possessed material that catered to the imagination and passions of the chōnin audience. Had kabuki plays been geared towards another social group it is unlikely that a thriving print culture would have developed. The continued production and success of booklets demonstrates that fans, chōnin expressly, also possessed the funds to continually purchase and support this segment of the print industry. Again this highlights how commoners supported, and endorsed kabuki as a form of entertainment designed for them. It also further highlights the interest chōnin had in kabuki and its importance and relevance to their lives and world.

Theatre Interactions: Ceremonies and the Development of Form

Kabuki's progression into a multifaceted theatre form further developed an awareness of cultural rituals and ideologies that were valuable to chōnin society. Rituals involving actors and the audience multiplied from words of praise and disapproval to ceremonies commemorating actors, welcoming troupes and thanking audiences. This facilitated a strong connection between audience and actor, creating a distinct atmosphere in the theatre. A matured comprehension and understanding of kabuki's structural components, such as acting and staging, created a continual dialogue among kabuki patrons. Critiques of styles and methods of acting appeared, and fans began to debate and engage these critiques. Actors were no longer seen exclusively as sexual objects, but now as embodiments of traditional or progressive forms of entertainment.

The importance of the crowd, and its interaction with the actors was a large aspect of many ceremonies in the theatre. The fan was of utmost importance. At the commencement of a performance, actors would at times appear before the crowd to thank them and praise the fan clubs for their support. Often after such an event, a designated member of a fan club would mount the stage in order to present a gift to the actor. This was frequently a gift that could be utilized in the performance such as a comb, fan or pipe.[27] It was also reported that in Edo there were occurrences of actors appearing on the stage to welcome fans and seek their permission to begin a play, upon acceptance the performance would commence. Plays were also stopped after a particularly accomplished piece of acting was put forth, as actors bowed to the crowd's demand for commendation. Not all actors, such as Nakamura Nakazō, enjoyed the fans interrupting the performance or having such influence and importance in the theatre, thinking it ruined the performance and play. However, they were powerless to stop it, for if a crowd of fans turned against an actor they could quickly find themselves without work and in the backwaters of the nation.[28] This could result in a representative from a hiiki renchū clambering on stage to present the actor with a gift or read out a speech commending the actor. Again, this representative was a coveted position and was assigned to an elite member of the club as dictated by the hierarchal structure of the hiiki renchū.

The practice of demonstrating appreciation for an actor or performance was so important to the audience that professional flatterers or geisha were at times hired to perform the task.[29] Fans understood and could differentiate between skilled and amateur actors and made it a point to highlight talented aspects of performances. The chōnin

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[27] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 701.
[28] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 702.
[29] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 185.

audience was embracing an urban specific art form and moulding it to their tastes and desires, and in doing so assisted in forming an expression of their specific urban cultural characteristics. Carrying out such simple ceremonies as presenting actors with gifts and tokens of appreciation, delivering homekotoba and being asked permission to start a play illustrates the involvement of chōnin in manufacturing kabuki's cultural by-products. This was important for creating the audiences' deeper understanding of kabuki as well as its development into an art form.

One such ceremony that drew audiences and actors closer together was a *kōjō* ceremony. This was performed when an actor joined one of the main acting families, thus taking a new name, or commemorating an old actor. The kōjō involved an actor greeting the audience and delivering words of praise for the actor in question. [30] Assuming a new name was an important feature of kabuki theatre and was shared with the audience. This created a closer link between actor and audience and recognised the importance the audience played in the career of an actor. The kōjō also created a sense of tradition and history to the theatre, commemorating past actors and remembering their accomplishments and glory. All the while making fans and audience members a focal point of creating a past and tradition in the theatre.

Kaomise (face showing) was performed at the start of every theatrical year, the eleventh month, and introduced the new members of a theatre troupe to the audience. This was a critical ceremony that not only reflected the connection of the audience to the theatre, but also displayed how kabuki was a business venture. Actors customarily signed one year contracts and stayed with a single theatre during the span of their

[30] Leiter, *Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 199.

contracts, which started at the beginning of the New Year.[31] Kaomise functioned as an advertisement for the theatre's new collection of actors, and was a show case of the talent on hand for the rest of the year. Securing a star performer could thus greatly boost attendance and the fortunes of theatre owners. Kaomise also occurred when new actors débuted before the audiences. This soon became a tradition, and represented an important link in the actor patron relationship. To create a strong bond with the fans could secure the future of a young actor while his failure could do the exact opposite.[32] The kaomise furthered the connection between the audience and the actors, as fans would be able to see their favourite actors as well as up and coming performers. It also reflects the need to involve and consider the audience when composing an acting troupe and beginning a new actor's career.

Fans and hiiki renchū were also influential in creating and fostering the rituals of greeting and welcoming troupes of visiting actors to a city. Actors arriving from the Kamigata area (Ōsaka and Kyōto) were termed *kudari yakusha* (going down actors) while those from Edo were termed *agari yakusha* (going-up actors).[33] When actors arrived in Ōsaka they commonly entered via boat (*fune norikomi*), due to the city's special waterways. Accompanying the actors' lavish boats were the equally impressive welcoming boats (*o mukai fune*) of the hiiki renchū.[34] The o mukai fune not only highlighted the fans' involvement in kabuki rituals, but again the excessive funds required to be involved in clubs and the theatre.

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[31] Ibid., 174.
[32] Raz, "The Audience Evaluated", *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 210.
[33] Raz, "The Audience Evaluated", *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 281.
[34] Matsudaira, "Hiiki Renchū in Osaka," *Modern Asian Studies* 18, no. 4 (1984): 701.

In cities that lacked an intricate system of canals, the welcoming of actors took the form of the *machi mawari* (around the town). In order to amass as much publicity and fanfare as was possible troupes paraded about the city. This let all know that a visiting kabuki troupe was entering the city and would be performing. Theatre employees, fans and hiiki renchū were present to welcome the actors and escort them about town in a show of support for the actors, as well as the theatre they would be performing at.[35] Similar to the norikomi, machi mawari were ceremonies and rituals that involved fans and created a bond between actor and audience, as well as attempting to make a troupe commercially successful.

Kabuki developed into an art form after the emphasis of performances was shifted away from prostitution. As has been detailed in previous chapters, plots, acting styles and characters emerged to replace the dancing prostitutes. Out of this progression of kabuki came an understanding and comprehension of the dynamics of acting and performance. Acting methods and the aim of performing became topics of debates between actors and fans alike. The structure of kabuki, not simply physical appearance, had become a point of interest. This signalled the presence of a cultural awareness of the structures that created acting and the attributes of kabuki.

Acting was no longer an advertisement for a brothel or prostitute, but instead became a facet of producing a successful performance. A major component of a successful performance was the actors and their skills. The creations of works such as the Actors' Analects (Yakusha Rongo) in the late seventeenth century began to critique and analyze the acting skill of performers. It began a dialogue between actors and critics

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[35] Samuel L Leiter, *Frozen Moments: Writings on Kabuki, 1966-2001* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 2002), 235.

and further diversified the field of acting, by creating debates on forms and methods of acting and staging plays. In *Yakusha Rongo*, the wakashū actor Sakata Tōjūrō states that, "It is bad to make applause the main purpose of your art."[36] Sakata Tōjūrō was critical of actors who were gearing their acting skills towards performing what the audience desired to see. Tōjūrō called for actors to focus not on the crowd, but on the performance, "upon playing the play as if it was really happening."[37] Tōjūrō's argument highlights the fact that there was variation in the style of acting performed in theatres, that actors adopted their own styles and methods. It also notes how through debate and discussion there arose variation in acting methods. It permitted kabuki to become a more complex theatre form and highlighted how actors began to see their work as something other than prostitution.

Another example of this debate between methods of acting can be gleaned from Shikitei Samba's audience critique *Kyakusha Hyobanki.* An anecdote recounts the debate between two young fans locked in a heated dispute over the merits of a traditionalist or innovative acting style. While the story witnessed the debate break down into a screaming match, it is illustrative of kabuki's development into an art form and the audience's appreciation and comprehension of such an art. The two male fans are not consumed by physical passion and desire for their favourite actor, although this quality still existed. Instead, they are intensely engrossed in the form and system of acting styles and roles. Each fan offers key points to their justifications. The traditionalist argues in favour of the intense skill that is required to "impart freshness to the same traditional

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[36] Hachimonjiya Jishō, *The Actors' Analects* (*Yakusha Rongo*), Charles Dunn, Bunzō Torigoe, ed., trans., (New York, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1969), 79.
[37] Ibid.,

conventions..."[38] His opponent counters by noting the skill it requires to modify and develop new roles and styles of acting. Present within this verbal dispute is the image of kabuki as a dynamic theatre form and its fan's comprehension of the diverse structure of acting. The audience's appreciation and understanding of a performance had matured from the lust driven enthusiasm of Okuni's first shows.

The Physical Theatre

With the progression of the Tokugawa era came the progression of kabuki and its various facets including the physical development of the theatre itself. Its growth is an indicator of several trends in Tokugawa society. The theatre seating and selection varied and grew in sophistication, carrying different implications with regard to status and wealth. The construction and materials came to symbolize chōnin power and wealth. Regulations were put in place to limit such displays and the appeal of the pleasure quarters, but were not overly successful as they were often reissued and did not decrease the draw of the quarters. The supporting structures and services of a kabuki theatre also grew and displayed the increase of urban power. Kabuki performances became longer in duration and created a stimulus for the increase in demand for such services as tea houses, food, alcohol and floor mats.

In Okuni's time, the kabuki theatre was a simple and temporary construction of the summer months. Performances were held in the Kamo River bed during the hot summer months when the river dwindled in size and there was ample free space to set up a stage. The theatre was also simple because of the large amount of capital it required to construct a permanent building; most troupes at this time did not possess such funds.

[38] Raz, "The Audience Evaluated", *Monumenta Nipponica* 35, no. 2 (Summer 1980): 211.

However, as kabuki grew in popularity, so too did the physical theatres themselves. They progressed from the small open air stages to walled, roofless buildings with a row of *sajiki* (box seats) along the sides.[39] The stage was roofed in 1724 after such restrictions were lifted by the bakufu and permitted performances to be carried out in various weather conditions.[40] Light was supplied for performances, after roofs were permitted, by windows located on each side of the theatre, either above or below the sajiki.[41] The entrance progressed from rough fencing to a small door (*nezumi kido*) that guests were forced to duck through to enter, thus preventing spectators from sneaking in.[42] Green rooms, where actors could prepare and rehearse before performing, were installed behind the stage. Two additional floors were installed in the aft of the theatre and expanded the building three floors up. The high status the lead and head actors' possessed was displayed in their occupation of the third floor of this rear area. Lower ranked actors were housed in rooms on the second and first floors as were costume and prop storage rooms and a manager's office.[43]

The interior of the theatre also began to expand skyward as buildings became more permanent and impressive structures. Theatres possessed various styles of seating available to the diverse economic makeup of the crowd. For those patrons who could afford large expenditures of funds, private boxes (*sajiki*) were built on either side of the stage, running most of the length of the theatre. A second floor of sajiki, known as upper sajiki, was later installed to increase seating and revenue. The sajiki were seats, boxes

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[39] Donald H Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki", in *Studies in Kabuki: its Acting, Music, and Historical Context.* ed. James R. Brandon, William P. Malm, Donald H. Shively, 11.
[40] Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage,* 29.
[41] Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki", 15.
[42] Leiter, *Frozen Moments*, 231.
[43] Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage*, 19.

really, that measured six feet by six feet square and possessed bamboo slats or curtains to ensure the privacy of those inside when desired.[44] This feature was continually forbidden by the bakufu, but slats and curtains were simply made to be quickly removed in case of inspection. These boxes permitted their wealthy renters to display to the rest of the audience their economic status in a number of ways. The simple possession of such seats was one sign, as was being seen in the finest clothes entertaining prominent actors and guests. All of which could be shown off from the sajiki.

Sajiki were well out of the price range of many commoners and samurai, costing about three hundred *mon* in 1724.[45] For samurai to attend a performance in the sajiki, the place their hierarchal status would demand them to sit, was unattainable. Thus, samurai were forced to rely on the patronage of wealthy merchants, or sit in the *doma* (parquet) with the commoners.[46] This is a fine example of the actual social status of the Tokugawa classes; while the chōnin may have inhabited the lowest rung of the ladder they still enjoyed, at times, better life styles than their elite samurai counterparts.[47] Chōnin could afford to enjoy the expensive luxuries of the pleasure quarters such as sajiki, visits with popular actors and the company of the highest level courtesan.

Alternate seating for those without the means to afford the sajiki was as varied as those in the audience. The doma was a collection of seats ranging from the front of the stage to the back of the theatre and were usually on the bare earth. Patrons could rent pillows to sit on from vendors in the theatres or they could be brought from home. By

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[44] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 157.
[45] Ibid., 169. 1 mon = 3¥ in 1959
[46] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 170.
[47] This reversed status was only in the pleasure quarters and chōnin still had to cautiously display their wealth as the bakufu could easily confiscate a family's holdings.

the mid-1700s the doma could seat around eight hundred spectators.[48] A seat in the doma cost roughly twenty-two mon in the mid-1700s while a lower sajiki seat cost one thousand and fifty mon and an upper cost thirteen hundred mon during the same era.[49] Despite the cost of the sajiki, theatres still recorded a substantial profit from the doma seats; it notes the importance and power of the average fan.[50] While a large amount of profit was made from the sajiki, the majority of fans within the theatre were those occupying the doma seats. Ignoring the tastes and desires of these patrons would be to risk the revenue and life blood of the theatre.

Fans that could not afford a seat in the doma could choose to sit in the *tsunbo sajiki*, located at very rear of the theatre and slightly above the doma. These seats were so far back that it was extremely difficult for a spectator to hear what was being said on the stage. Poorer fans could also sit in the *rakandai*, introduced during the Meiwa period (1764-72), a small onstage gallery set back on the left side of the stage and offering a poor view of the performance.[51] Although these seats both offered inadequate experiences of a play, the play was not the only performance fans attended the theatre for. The performance of homekotoba, akutai, teahouses and seeing the rich in their finest and the boisterous atmosphere of theatre itself drew fans in. The assorted types of seating reflected the varied economic backgrounds of fans and audiences coming to the theatre, and contributed to the diverse feel of the place. It further highlights the fact that kabuki was entertainment for all segments of the chōnin population.

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[48] Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage*, 32.
[49] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 169.
[50] A 1737 performance recorded that the sajiki brought in 110 kan 400 mon while the rest of the seats totalled 164 kan 914 mon. This notes the large number of spectators who could not afford sajiki but still contributed significant revenue and influence on the theatres. Ibid., 170.
[51] Herwig, *Heroes of the Kabuki Stage*, 35.

Another representation of the growth of chōnin status and kabuki's parallel progression were the services developed to attract fans and keep them once they came to the theatre. Theatres often burnt down, for this reason they were not permitted internal lighting.[52] Plays ran from dawn till dusk, the beginning and end signalled by a drum in the *yagura* (drum tower), although at times this was forbidden by the bakufu.[53] Signs or billboards were attached to the drum tower noting the name of the theatre owner and the leading actors. Signs were later added that stated the titles of the acts of the play that was currently being shown. These were an attempt to draw audiences in to see popular actors and plays, and increase revenue for the theatre.

The exterior of the theatre also developed into an area of entertainment and business in an attempt to lure in those passing by. Courtesans (*kido geisha*) were hired to perform mock segments of the plays outside the entrance ways. The kido geisha would whistle and call out to passers-by, hawking the wares of the theatre in an attempt to attract customers. They would also impersonate the voices, lines, gestures and well known poses of the theatre's lead actors. The kido geisha performed all of this upon a raised platform outside the theatre front entrance in clear sight of the passing crowds.[54] These advertisements were employed in hopes of drawing in more revenue. As previously mentioned, kabuki had become a business and the growth of the theatre attempted to satisfy this need.

Kabuki performances had turned into all day affairs, though not all fans stayed the entire time, and services were quick to develop to meet the demands of those staying for the plays. Theatre teahouses (*shibai-jaya*) rose to meet this need and provided a plethora

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[52] Leiter, *Frozen Moments*. 234.
[53] Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki", 12.
[54] Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki", 12.

of services for those with the means to purchase them. Shibai-jaya first appeared in Edo around 1624, by 1714 there were around fifty eight in Edo and another forty-seven in Ōsaka. The teahouses provided tea, food and held the tickets for sajiki seats as well as provided access to the passageway to the boxes themselves.[55] Refreshments were also delivered to guests in the sajiki and to actors. The attendants of shibai-jaya, usually women, prepared the sajiki and escorted patrons to their high price seats.[56] The shibai-jaya also functioned as a site for resting between shows, changing clothes as well as meeting with actors between and after shows.[57] Trysts between the shibai-jaya attendants as well as actors could also be arranged at the teahouses, for a price.[58] Teahouses also became the financial backers of many theatres, funding and sponsoring performances. The Shibai-jaya was an important symbol of the growth of the popularity of kabuki and the services rising to meet the demands of the patrons.

Within the theatre there were various services designed to make shows more enjoyable for the audience. For those unable to afford a sajiki ticket or the exclusive treatment of such a seat could still obtain certain amenities. There were vendors (*dekata*) selling food, alcohol, tobacco and cushions in the doma and other lower priced seats.[59] As kabuki theatres grew so too did the offshoot services provided to its patrons. These individuals had to possess the funds and time to be able to attend and afford the cost of tickets and other services in the theatre. It was not always simply about the performances on the stage, but the experience of the theatre itself. Fans could go to the theatre wearing

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[55] Ibid., 24-25.
[56] Some shibai-jaya employed young male attendants. This would be conducive with the bi-sexual tendencies of the Tokugawa population as well as further confirm the presence of women in the audience.
[57] Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki", 26.
[58] Raz, *Audience and Actors*, 171.
[59] Shively, "The Social Environment of Tokugawa Kabuki", 17.

their best clothes, enjoy the food and drink available to them, watch the courtesans and wealthy in the sajiki, listen to the hiiki renchū chant and participate in ceremonies with the actors upon the stage. A distinct atmosphere and world had developed in the kabuki theatre and this attracted as many fans as did the performances themselves. The theatre had grown into an expression of chōnin wealth and influence in Tokugawa society. However, it also was the physical by-product of chōnin awareness of their unique urban culture.

Conclusion

As kabuki grew in popularity it was shaped by the urban cultural characteristics of the chōnin world. Fans and fan clubs were by-products of kabuki, and evidence of its prominence and influence in the chōnin world. The popularity of kabuki highlights how this theatre form presented performances that were culturally relevant to the chōnin audience. Had this not been the case kabuki would not have grown and prospered to the extent that it did. Thus, the emergence of fan clubs, fan culture, rituals and ceremonies is a reflection of kabuki's urban origins and importance based on the presentation of material that was popular and relevant to the urban masses. Fans understood and loved the rough and tumble characters that were so similar to themselves. They comprehended the conflicts characters faced between their *giri* and *ninjō*, they loved the courtesan on the stage and the fantasy world such characters represented. The actors were interested in and catered to fan desires and whims, such as climbing on stage for speeches, presenting gifts or using homekotoba and akutai. The fans were a major factor in the world of the

theatre; unlike anywhere else in society their wants and desires were influential in the development and progression of kabuki.

The sway the chōnin held in the theatres is reflective of the culture of the pleasure districts themselves. These were areas focused exclusively on the desires of the commoner population. Fan culture, hiiki renchū, ceremonies, rituals and print culture are critical indicators of the audience's role to and in the theatre world. Chōnin were indispensable to the working of Tokugawa Japan, although this would not be known by viewing the social hierarchy. The world of kabuki presented a more realistic view of the social circumstances of the Tokugawa era. This world was focused upon the desires of the chōnin to see specific content, characters, ceremonies and activities presented for them specifically. In the theatre, the chōnin was the social superior, not samurai.

Conclusion

VI

The conditions leading to the creation and rise of kabuki theatre were in line with those leading to the establishment of the Tokugawa bakufu. The birth of both institutions required similar conditions. However, kabuki was not dependent upon the establishment of the bakufu. Kabuki required the stability and peace that was ushered in with the pacification of the realm as well as the policies implemented by Oda Nobunaga, Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. This stability permitted the rapid expansion of the population, brought excess labour to bear on the land, and rapidly expanded and diversified markets while also increasing the populations of castle towns. The policies of the Three Unifiers that focused on increased trade and economic growth were also important factors in the creation of kabuki as they centralized daimyō authority, thus focusing the attention of domains upon a single essential castle town. Both human and material resources were concentrated in these areas, growing markets, manufacturing and the demands for an increasing array of products. The chōnin rose to flourish in this massively expanding currency-based economy, delivering the goods and services required by the samurai elites, who occupied the major cities of Japan. The expansion of these cities had a cascading effect, drawing ever increasing numbers of commoners seeking work. Thus, the massive commoner populations of Edo, Ōsaka and Kyōto were realized and the conditions for kabuki's popularity were set. The rise of kabuki can be seen to parallel the conditions leading to the appearance of the bakufu as well as the chōnin commoner class.

The textual analysis of kabuki plays brings out examples of the lives and world of the chōnin. These examples demonstrate how kabuki is an effective tool with which to study Tokugawa culture and the lives of the urban commoner. The types of characters audiences enjoyed, found intriguing, empathized with, and despised are brought into focus by such procedures. The plays also provide information and details concerning the physical world of the chōnin via the exploration of settings, plots and acting styles. They also facilitate a stronger comprehension of the chōnin's world and the issues they faced. Textual analysis of these plays also makes it possible to provide concrete examples of the ideas and theories on kabuki's role and effect on society. By delving into the texts of plays, aspects of the chōnin world rise to the surface to support and bolster kabuki's significance to Japanese history.

The changes in kabuki, from the early onna to wakashū to male kabuki draw attention to the maturation of kabuki as a performing art. Kabuki was forced away from relying primarily on the sale of sex, instead developing characters, plots, sets, and acting techniques. The continued support of kabuki as it progressed away from a simple advertisement for sex brings out the chōnin's rising power in society. The urban commoner was invested in the growth of a theatre that catered to their interests and desires. Their continued support also illuminates the chōnin's increased sense of cultural awareness.

When studying kabuki, invariably the issue of sexuality surfaces as it played an integral part in the theatre. From its earliest performances, kabuki utilized aspects of sexuality to attract and captivate audiences. Aspects of sexual allure would remain features of kabuki for the decades to come, but over time gave way to acting skill. The

sexuality witnessed in kabuki leads to the argument that bisexuality, homosexuality and heterosexuality were all accepted aspects of Tokugawa and notably, chōnin culture. The sexual attitudes of commoners and elites were flexible, but only within the restrictions of the social regulations of the time. This included the respect and dedication to family and adherence to the social hierarchy. The accounts of uncontrolled emotions and social disturbances at kabuki performances over the favour of actors have been well recorded. It was for these reasons that the bakufu regulated against onna and wakashū kabuki, and forced strict rules upon the appearance of later actors. This was all in an attempt to limit the sexual allure and unrest caused by cross-dressing men and women. Had the urban inhabitants of pre-modern Japan not held open concepts of gender and sexuality, the social disturbances over actor's sexual favours would not have transpired.

The onnagata actor was another essential aspect of kabuki sexuality. Yet, this was not the only feature of the female role specialist. Their sexual allure, and manipulation of gender was vital, but the message the onnagata sent to the crowds is also noteworthy. The onnagata supported the male dominant position in Tokugawa Japan. These characters were created, acted and staged by men, with their perceptions of women in mind. While female characters could be strong and forceful individuals, their actions invariably fell into the realm of piety, loyalty and duty to the male figures in their lives. This is borne out by the textual examples examined in this study. The female role specialist used the popularity of the onnagata to propagate the ideals of a male dominant world with females occupying positions of inferiority. The male actors that took up onnagata roles witnessed their own social status decrease as they sought to become women in all aspects of their lives, including their place in society. In this examination

the use of textual analysis was once again a significant element. This allowed for concrete examples to be applied to theories and concepts. It also highlights the ability of kabuki to be utilized in the examination of the sexual atmosphere of the urban centres of Tokugawa Japan.

The growth of kabuki is indicative of the rising power of the chōnin who could afford to support and attend plays in such structures. It shows their commitment to the cultural creation that was kabuki, an entertainment form for, and of the chōnin. However, the growth of the physical theatre and its by-products such as fan clubs, ceremonies and rituals are also symbols of the maturation of kabuki as a profession. This process paralleled the maturation of the chōnin's sense of entitlement to cultural products geared exclusively towards them. The elite samurai possessed the nō theatre, patronized exclusively by the upper tier of society's social ladder. Its plots and themes were considered too complex and intricate for the commoner mind. The establishment of rituals and ceremonies highlights the urban commoner's attempts at creating a commoner centered set of traditions that focused exclusively upon chōnin values. The welcoming, face showing, handclapping, and chanting ceremonies were kabuki specific examples of this commoner focused tradition. Again, kabuki echoed the trends of Tokugawa and chōnin culture upon its stage.

It is for these reasons that kabuki is an essential instrument for analysing the urban commoner and the world they occupied. This unique theatre is not simply a by-product of the shogunate, along for the ride in the wake of the mighty Tokugawa bakufu. Instead, kabuki utilized many of the same conditions that contributed to the establishment and perpetuation of the bakufu to embed itself within the consciousness of the urban

masses. From this engrained position, kabuki took up the characteristics and facets of the world surrounding its stages and buildings. It bowed to the will of the urban crowd, staging performances that teased and tantalized both the body and mind, stimulating debate and debacles in the same moment. The power of the Tokugawa shogunate was unable to completely curtail the evils it saw in kabuki, as kabuki was not a product wholly of the bakufu. Instead, it was the creation of a young commoner woman, taken up by the masses of commoners in the cities, growing as they grew, outstripping the samurai elite and leaving them behind as relics of past ages.

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