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The Use of Costumes in Nō Drama

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The rich gorgeous brocades, embroidered satins, and diaphanous glittering gauzes that are labeled “Nō costume” in a museum were originally intended to be draped in layers over an actor, molding him into the image of a role. Elaborate rules determine the types of garments to be worn for the roles of soldier or woodsman, heavenly maiden or wrathful god, playful lion or menacing demon. Although social station dictates that courtiers wear the ankle-bound pantaloons of the nobility (*sashinuki*), and priests a simple traveling cloak, in general the costumes make little attempt to be realistic. For example, the lowly girls collecting brine for salt-making wear richly embroidered robes sparkling with gold leaf. In addition to designating a role, the costumes are meant to evoke the atmosphere of the play, functioning much like a stage set in Western theater. Since the plain wooden stage of the Nō theater remains unadorned, costumes are the primary focus of visual interest. The patterns of the costumes suggest season and setting, often echoing verbal imagery central to the play, while their colors evoke mood and suggest sensibility.

Nō drama began as folk theater performed as part of religious ceremonies. But under the patronage of the shogunate, Nō theater from the middle of the fourteenth century onward developed into a highly refined poetic theater centered on music and dance. During the Edo period (1603–1868), Nō was the official entertainment of the shogunate court and was performed at state functions. Both the shogun and regional lords, *daimyo*, patronized actor troupes, and competed in accumulating the finest masks and costumes. The official role of the shogunate in the growth of Nō drama, as well as the patronage of the upper class, contrasts with the role of the

middle class in the rise of Kabuki, which developed in the entertainment districts of Osaka, Kyoto, and Edo during the seventeenth century. While Kabuki aggrandizes the drama of life in society with elaborate sets, exaggerated makeup, and flashy costumes, Nō intensifies the vision of the spirit with a single painted pine as a constant “set,” with subtle masks, and with conservatively magnificent costumes. Internalized, understated, and very refined, the Nō performance is a well-wrought poem in which imagistic integrity overshadows plot. The costumes function within the tightly intertwined poetic fiber. Not only is the patterning on the costumes a visual poetry in itself, but references to costuming elaborate the poetry, and the visual impact of the costumes supports and underscores the words of the text.

The uses of costume as they appear in the texts are many-leveled. Costumes can serve as identification cards, or precipitate the fusion of personalities. Other uses reflect Japanese social customs of the period when Nō drama developed. At that time, cloth and clothing were customary payments and presents. The textual enumera-

FIGURE 1. Tsukioka Kogyo (Japanese, 1869–1927). *Aoinue*, early twentieth century. Print no. 11 from the series *Nōgaku hyakuban* (vol. 2). Woodblock print; 25.9 x 38 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Bequest of Henry C. Schwab Estate (1943.834). In this scene from the Nō play *Aoinue*, the spirit of Lady Rokujo menaces the ailing Aoi, who is represented by a kimono laid on the stage. The pattern of triangles on Rokujo's upper kimono (*suribaku*) represents scales and are intended to suggest her serpentine—and evil—nature, which can also be detected in her horned, gnashing mask. Rokujo's dark-ground *nuibaku* is worn as skirts in *kosbimaki* style over the *suribaku*, and is similar in its ornamentation to a *nuibaku* in the Art Institute's collection (see pl. 5; cat. no. 3).



tion of the attire of a character, which is not necessarily identical with the actual costume worn, stems from a concern with dress as a statement of rank and personality, a concern that runs through much of Japanese literature and reflects long-standing attitudes of society. In many plays, articles of clothing—a robe, hat, or cloak—also function as props. They are draped over an object, placed onstage, or handed from actor to actor. The action surrounding a garment is often central to the unfolding of a play.

Costume as Identity

Perhaps the most striking example of the ingenious use of costume as a prop appears in the play *Aoinoue*. The ailing wife of Hikaru Genji, Lady Aoi, is haunted by the menacing, jealous spirit of one of Genji's lady loves, Rokujo Miyasudokoro. Throughout the play, Aoi lies prostrate and immobilized on the stage, represented by a *kosode*-style robe folded neatly and placed downstage center (see fig. 1). Any *karaori* (brocade kimono) or *nuihaku* (kimono with needlework and gold—or silver—leaf imprint designs) with red in its design would serve. *Nuihaku* are often preferred because they are lighter, and the densely embroidered sixteenth-century *nuihaku* in The Art Institute of Chicago's collection (pl. 1; cat. no. 1) would be a most elegant choice. One of the Art Institute's *karaori* (see pl. 10; cat. no. 8) would add a further dimension—its design of interlocking circles and flower carts recalls an incident that festers in Rokujo's psyche. During a festival procession, the ox cart of Lady Aoi jostles that of Rokujo out of line, blocking her view and greatly embittering her. Circles, wheels, and the revolution of fate dominate the play's imagery.

Drawn by the twang of a shaman's catalpa bow, a beautiful woman (in fact, the wandering spirit of Rokujo) approaches the ailing body of Lady Aoi. The beautiful woman sidles up to the folded cloth, beats it, and retreats. Later, she returns as a snake figure with a horned mask and a scale pattern on her garments to batter the poor Aoi again, attacking her with a magic wand. Aoi, frail to begin with, has but a thread of identity left by the time Rokujo's wandering spirit is through with her and the priest has managed to quell her spirit with the help of incantations.¹

In *Aoinoue*, the folded robe replaces a human being. In the play *Utō*, a part of a garment serves to identify a character. The ghost of a hunter waylays a wandering priest and requests that he ask his wife to set up a holy stupa—that is, a memorial reliquary mound—for his soul. Sure that word of mouth alone will be insufficient to convince her of his identity, he rips off his left sleeve and asks the priest to get her to verify it against his death robe. On reaching the house the priest presents the wife

with the ripped-off sleeve. Taking out his death robe woven with “crude wisteria bark,” she finds one sleeve missing, and declares, “There can be no mistake. His thin, unlined summer robe matches the sleeve perfectly.” Overcome with nostalgia, she asks the monk to pray for his soul.²

In the Nō play *Hagoromo* (*The Feather Robe*), the identity of a heavenly maiden of the moon is thematically linked to her feather robe. Without it, she tells Hakuryō, the fisherman who has found and picked up her garment while she was having a dip in the sea, she is unable to fly back to the sky and join her moon sisters. When the fisherman refuses to give back the robe, the signs of her celestial nature begin to fade, and even “the flowers in her hair wilt and droop.”³ The fisherman finally gives in, and, donning her feather robe (achieved by retreating to the rear of the stage and kneeling down so stage attendants can drape it over her shoulders, stitch it in place, and tie the strings in bows), she immediately regains her self-possession. In thanks, she performs the dances of “Rain-bow Skirts” and “Feather Cloak.”

The feather robe of the heavenly maiden completes her identity, and the sleeve of the hunter's robe in *Utō* acts as an identification card. In a similar way, the various elements of the dress of the *yamabushi*, the mountain ascetic or wandering monk, symbolize his religious powers. In the play *Ataka*, the warrior Minamoto Yoshitsune and his retainers are trying to escape persecution by traveling in the disguise of twelve *yamabushi*. Before reaching a barrier where they will be minutely scrutinized, the elegant Yoshitsune is urged to “exchange his brocaded robes for the crude hemp clothes” of the baggage carrier and to be sure to pull the broad hat of the carrier well over his face.⁴ At the barrier, the sentinel demands their death. In *yamabushi* style, they say their last rites, enumerating the meaning of their costumes, according to a catechism still heard in *yamabushi* rites today:

The small round cap is a crown of the Five Wisdoms
 The twelve pleats are the Twelve Causes.
 The persimmon-colored brocaded cloth appears in the
 nine-fold *mandala*.
 Black leggings for the black in the Womb *mandala*
 And the eight-eyed straw sandals?
 To tread on eight petaled lotus flowers.⁵

An amusing parody on this incantation of articles of clothing appears in the Kyōgen (or comic) play entitled *Kagyū*, or *The Snail*, which would be performed between the more serious Nō plays (see fig. 2). A man is told to procure some snails to present as a medicine for long life. Searching for something with “black on the head” and “shell on the hip” that sometimes “sticks out horns,” the man comes upon a sleeping *yamabushi*. Sure enough, this

must be a snail, he thinks, for it has black on the head (a small round cap, or *tokin*), a shell on the hip, (a conch shell the *yamabusshi* blow to signal each other), and horns (the pompons decorating the vest). For a while the *yamabusshi* leads the man on in his deception, and then the two go off the stage singing and dancing to a chant of “snail, snail, nail, nail, snail, snail, nail.”⁶

In *Sotoba Komachi*, one finds a recitation of possessions reminiscent of the clothing incantation of the *yamabusshi*. Over one hundred years old, the former beauty and poetess Ono no Komachi appears now as a destitute hag. While she once had “thin silk gauzes and patterned brocades innumerable,” now all that is left of her identity are parched millet and beans in the pouch

around her neck, and in the pouch on her back, remnants,
her filthy garb, stained with dirt and oil. . .
Torn straw cloak
Torn bamboo hat. . .

“If only I had a sleeve,” she wails, “to hold back my tears.”⁷

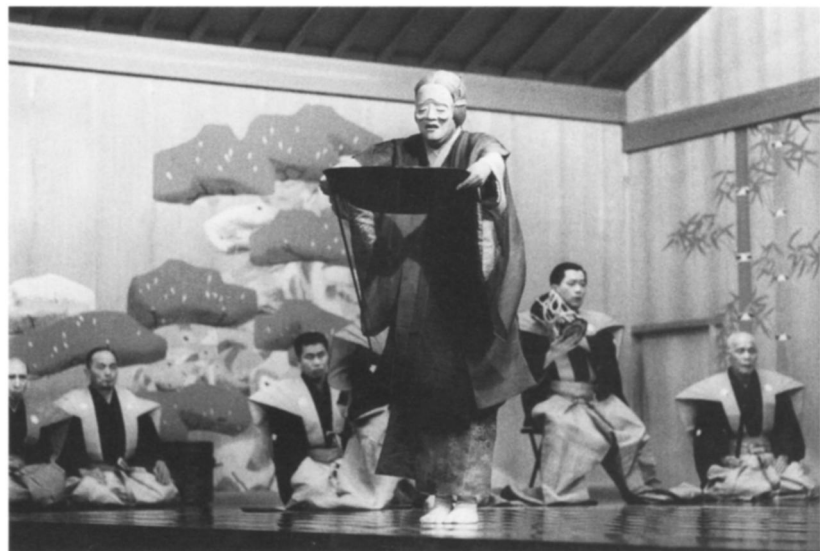
Garments as Devices of Spirit Possession

As *Sotoba Komachi* continues, Komachi begins to beg with her bamboo hat (see fig. 3). The spirit within it takes hold of her, and the pent-up voice of a lover of long ago, Captain Fukakusa of the Fourth Rank, echoes through her body. His spirit describes how, in vain, he had gone

FIGURE 2. In this photograph of a contemporary performance of the *Kyōgen* (or comic) play *Kagyū*, the wandering *yamabusshi* priest shows the conch shell on his hip to the gullible servant in order to convince him that he is indeed a snail carrying a shell on its back. Photo: Masakatsu Ushimado.



FIGURE 3. In this scene from a modern production of *Sotoba Komachi*, the aged Ono no Komachi begs with her straw hat. She wears a traveling cloak (*mizugoromo*), indicating her age as well as her miserable circumstances. Photo: Masakatsu Ushimado.





up to her door for ninety-nine nights enduring rain and snow,

Hitching up his pure white trousers,
his lacquered courtier's cap wind-bent backward,
his hunting cloak's sleeve flipped over head.⁸

The visitation of the spirit of Captain Fukakusa in *Sotoba Komachi* comes like a sudden shower and departs abruptly.

The play *Futari Shizuka* presents the theme of possession in a more fully developed way. While gathering early spring herbs, a shrine girl is waylaid by a strange woman who demands that she go back to the shrine and ask the priests there to copy holy sutras (Buddhist precepts) for her, a form of prayer to ensure a soul safe passage after death. Returning to the shrine, the girl begins to give an evasive account of her adventure to the priests. But the impatient spirit of the mysterious woman invades the shrine girl and interrupts her narrative. To achieve this effect, the actor changes the quality of his voice, lowering the pitch and slowing his enunciation: "What do you mean? Incredible?"⁹ Eventually, the spirit reveals that she once was Shizuka Gozen, the mistress of the valiant, yet hunted, Genji warrior Yoshitsune (see the description of the play *Ataka* above):

"Shizuka Gozen was a renown[ed] dancer, show us a step or two," demand the priests.

"My dancing costume was offered up to the deity of Katsute Shrine," she answers.

"What was the color of your dance costume?"

"The *hakama* skirts were of red silk."

"And the *suikan* robe?"

"[It is decorated with] myriad flowers from autumn fields."¹⁰

Donning the robe, which is indeed in the storage house, the shrine maiden begins to dance, trailing the flowing sleeves of the cloak, and behind her the real ghost of Shizuka looks on, seemingly manipulating her with invisible strings. Then Shizuka, too, enters the dance and two identical cloaks circle the stage side by side with gossamer sleeves swishing in complete unison (see fig. 4). A single being has produced a double image through the transference of a garment.¹¹

Time, too, has doubled up as memories accumulate. Both women chant together:

<i>shizu ya shizu</i>	Whirring, whirring
<i>shizu ya odamaki</i>	bobbins of humble women
<i>kurikaeshi</i>	turning, turning
<i>mukashi o ima ni.</i>	the past into now. ¹²

(The sound of *shizu* begins the name *Shizuka* and means both "quiet, still" and "lower-class woman.")

The type of possessed dance presented in *Futari Shizuka* is known as an *utsurimai*, a dance performed by



FIGURE 5. In the Nō play *Izutsu*, the wife of Ariwara no Narihira dresses in her late husband's court cap and robe. As she peers into the well (represented figuratively onstage) that was the setting for their childhood romance, she sees his reflection in her own. Although the hat she wears is indeed a court cap, her *chōken* bears little resemblance to a Heian courtier's cloak; this, however, presents no hindrance to the imagination of the Nō audience, for the *chōken* is a standard costume for a female role with a long dance in the second half of a play. Photo: Masakatsu Ushimado.

FIGURE 4. Tsukioka Kogyo. *Futari Shizuka*, early twentieth century. Print no. 27 from the series *Nōgaku byakuban* (vol. 2). Woodblock print; 25.9 x 38 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Bequest of Henry C. Schwab Estate (1943.834). The theme of doubling in *Futari Shizuka* is dramatized when a shrine maiden and the ghost of Shizuka Gozen, the mistress of a Genji warrior, dance in unison in identical costumes.

the spirit of another that has entered the body, generally through the donning of a robe. It has its origins in ancient Shinto rituals, where the shrine maiden, *miko*, functioned also as a shaman. Possessed dances can be found as well in Korean shamanistic practices. *Utsurimai* appear in quite a number of Nō plays, particularly plays about women.

In the play *Matsukaze*, two sisters who live on Suma beach collecting brine to make into salt cannot free themselves from their attachment, even after his death, to their one-time lover, the poet and courtier Ariwara no Yuki-hira. In particular, the older sister, Pine Wind (*Matsukaze*), recalling the parting poem of Yuki-hira in which he promises to return “if she pines for him” (a deliberate pun), becomes quite deranged. The cloak and hat that Yuki-hira left behind seem to her to be the man himself. Donning the garments (a *monogi*, or onstage costume change), she now mistakes a pine tree (a stage prop and a memorial to the girls as well as a central symbol in the play) for Yuki-hira. Her more realistic sister tries to dissuade her of the illusion, but Pine Wind only enters deeper into madness and rushes to embrace the pine tree “Yuki-hira.” The sleeves of his former robe envelope the symbol of his memory.¹³

In *Matsukaze*, the donning of the robe of a former lover has precipitated a mad scene where time is collapsed and wishes become reality. More commonly the donning of the robe creates a double identity. In *Izutsu*, for example, the devoted and constant wife of the playboy Ariwara no Narihira (Yuki-hira’s brother, and a subject of the tenth-century poetic sketches *Tales of Ise*) dons her late husband’s robe and momentarily becomes one with him:

In his clothes I appear
as the Man of Long Ago.
Court cap and gown—
then, no longer a woman—
a man, I have become
Narihira’s image.¹⁴

She looks down into the well that inspired their childhood romance, and the double image of man in woman fills her with nostalgia (see fig. 5).

The doubling of identities that occurs in *Izutsu* with the putting on of a robe becomes more complex in the Nō play *Kakitsubata* (*The Iris*). A monk on his way to the eastern lands comes to a swamp filled with blooming irises and traversed by a web of eight bridges. When a young lady appears, he gets her to recite a poem composed in that very spot by the same poet-lover Ariwara no Narihira when he was exiled from the capital because of an illicit relationship:

Karakoromo
kitsutsu narenishi
tsuma shi areba
harubaru kinuru
tabi o shi zo omou.

China robe
worn through with love
by my absent wife:
far, far, I have come
traveling with heavy heart.¹⁵

This is an acrostic, with the first syllable of each line spelling *kakitsubata* (*ba* can be read *ba*), or iris. It also uses clothing imagery to express Narihira’s deep longing for the woman he has left behind. As can be seen below, the opening *karakoromo* is a standard epithet (*makurakotoba*, or pillow word) for “to wear” (*kiru*), which in certain conjugations sounds identical with “to come.” A similar wordplay runs through the whole poem, with



FIGURE 6. In the Kyōgen play *Futari Daimyo*, a passerby is asked by two *daimyo* (or samurai) lords to carry their swords. The passerby, however, uses the swords to force the *daimyo* to strip down to their leggings and perform silly dances. Photo: Kawanabe Gyōsai (painter), *Sketches of Nō* (1887).

clothing-related words forming a minor theme (underlining indicates words associated with clothing):

karakoromo

China robe (elegant, like the karaori)

kitsutsu

worn and worn
come

narenishi

till soft
having grown fond of

tsuma shi areba

wife I have, so
robe hem

harubaru

distant
stretch cloth

kinuru

I have come
wear

tabi o shi zo omou

traveling: (sad) thoughts

Later the young maid dons a *chōken*, or cloak, that is purple like an iris, as well as a cap and a sword, thereby taking on the being of the poet-lover Narihira himself (see pl. 14; cat. no. 11).¹⁶ She calls to the monk, “Look here, a court cap and Chinese robe.” He exclaims that she is “wearing a robe of radiant color and a young man’s court cap. What can it mean?” She replies, “This is that very Chinese robe sung of in the poem, the *karakoromo* worn by Empress Takako. The court cap, Narihira wore when he performed the ceremonial dance of *gosechi* in autumn.”

Next she discloses that she is in fact the spirit of the iris, about whom the poem was composed. As the threads of imagery in the play interweave, she becomes as well the memory of Narihira’s love. And since he was the god of Music and Dance incarnate, she dances in celebration of his divinity. The robe and hat accumulate meanings of their own. The sleeves of the dancing robe “turn back” (*sode o kaesu*, a standard phrase evoking the fluttering of broad sleeves when a person dances) to the capital, and the lining bears traces of bitterness (*ura* means lining, *urameshi* means bitter feeling). The hat worn as a “cap of manhood” is also known as the “coming-of-age hat.”

The play ends in a swirl of images interrelated by the incantation of numerous names for types of irises and the evocation of the color purple. Like the “cicada which casts off its empty Chinese robe for sleeves of dazzling white,” the heart of the iris unfurls to enlightenment. The monk awakens to the purpling sky from a dream of paradise.

The Art Institute’s collection includes a *nuihaku* that features a navy blue and silver checkerboard ground as well as embroidered patterns of irises with bridges illustrates the scene in the *Tales of Ise* on which *Kakitsubata* is based (see pl. 4; cat. no. 2). Various colored irises rise out of water represented by swerving lines etched in silver.

Swaying irises border the edges of overlapping rectangular planks. The theme, rendered here against background colors reminiscent of the night sky with a luminescent moon (symbol of the enlightenment that the spirit of the iris seeks), is a favorite not only for *nuihaku*, but also for fan decorations and standing screens. The most famous are those of the eighteenth-century artist Ogata Kōrin that can be seen in the Nezu Art Museum, Tokyo.

A Nō actor performing *Kakitsubata* might well choose a *nuihaku* with iris motifs to wear in the second part of the play. It would be wrapped snugly around the legs and tied at the waist; the upper half would be folded down with the sleeves hanging over the hips (*koshimaki* style). A white *suribaku* in satin weave would be worn under it, but this would be barely visible on the upper half of the body when covered by Narihira’s robe, a purple *chōken*. (For an example of a *suribaku* in the Art Institute’s collection, see pl. 6, cat. no. 4.)

Garments as Gifts

Since prehistoric times, cloth has played a central role in the economics of Japanese society and in maintaining personal relationships. In 243, the Japanese princess Himiko is said to have returned a gift of silk from China with natively woven silks and colored cloths. Beginning in the Nara period (710–794) and continuing until the nineteenth century, textile-related products (silk thread, cloth, clothing, dyes) were a major item of tribute and of tax payment. Records verify that, by the fourteenth century, Nō actors received a portion of their wages in cloth. Bonus payment came in the form of appreciative members of the audience stripping their cloaks and throwing them on stage.¹⁷

The custom of stripping is presented comically in the Kyōgen play *Futari Daimyo*. Here two *daimyo* look for someone to carry their swords. The man they find uses the weapons he is forced to carry to threaten the pretentious lords and get them to strip off layers of clothing down to their underwear (fig. 6). After he has forced them to perform a number of debasing roles, he runs off with the clothes and swords as well.

Only slightly less monetary in purpose is the Japanese custom of giving garments on special occasions. In the tenth-century novel *The Tale of Genji*, the hero Hikaru Genji goes to considerable lengths to choose the right robes to give to each of his girlfriends for the New Year’s celebration. He must match colors with their station and sensibility.

Naturally, the topic of gifts of textiles appears in Nō plays, as well. In the play *Miwa*, a woman gives a secluded monk, Genpin Sōzu, a present of fresh water every day. It is a small gift that effectively piques his curiosity to ask her who she is. Although her answer to his question is



evasive, she has a request of her own: will he lend her a robe, for the nights are getting cold? She leaves with the garment, but later in the play Genpin is brought by a villager to the shrine of the god of Miwa, where he finds his robe hanging between two cedar trees with a poem attached:

Three circles
clean and clear:
The Chinese cloak,
not to be thought of as given
nor as taken.¹⁸

In this very intricate poem, which can be read on many levels in the original Japanese, we have the essence of true giving—no strings attached, a flow from soul to soul. The giving in the play has only begun, for soon the god appears from behind the symbolic robe, a woman in male attire.

Seen in the form of a woman
the deity of Miwa
dressed not in the garb of a priestess
but attired as a priest
with lacquer hat and hunting cloak
draped over skirts.

The doubling of sexes appears here in a different context from the union of lover and loved. The sex of the god of Miwa is an enigma. Clearly the mysterious character who gives water to the monk is female, and, if one believes the statement at the end of the play that “the deity of Miwa and the Sun Goddess are one and the same,” then the deity must be a she. But according to the story related in the narrative *kuse* section of the play, the deity of Miwa is definitely male.

This tale is a Japanese rendition of the story of Cupid and Psyche. It relates how a young wife is induced by her parents to ask her husband why he comes to her only at night. He answers that he is too ashamed to show his true form, and that this must be their last meeting. She quickly picks up her needle and stitches into his garment, leaving a long thread to trail behind him. Following the thread, she is led to the base of the two cedars that mark the shrine of the deity of Miwa. There she finds the end of the thread coiled into three circles (*mi-wa*): the three rings of the gift, the giver, and the receiver; or the *sanrin* (written with the same characters), the three agents of human action: the body, the mouth, and the spirit.

On hearing this story, the monk Genpin rejoices in the gift he has been given and asks for more. The deity next relates in dance the story of the Sun Goddess being trapped in a cave and lured out by a dance performance (see fig. 7). Just as in *Hagoromo*, where the feather robe was exchanged for a heavenly dance to be treasured by

FIGURE 7. Tsukioka Kogyo. *Miwa*, early twentieth century. Print no. 44 from the series *Nōgaku byakuban* (vol. 1). Woodblock print; 25.9 x 38 cm. The Art Institute of Chicago, Bequest of Henry C. Schwab Estate (1943.833). In this scene, the deity of Miwa performs a Shinto dance (*kagura*) for the monk Genpin in return for his gift of a robe.

FIGURE 8. As portrayed in this woodblock print from the collection of the Nishijin-ori Kaikan, Kyoto, the traditional Japanese draw loom (*sorabiki-bata*) required a team of workers to create textiles made of silk. The ground weave was manipulated by foot pedals while the pattern warps were picked up in a set order at appropriate moments by the draw boy sitting atop the loom. Photo: Alan Kennedy, *Japanese Costume: History and Tradition* (Paris, 1990), p. 30.

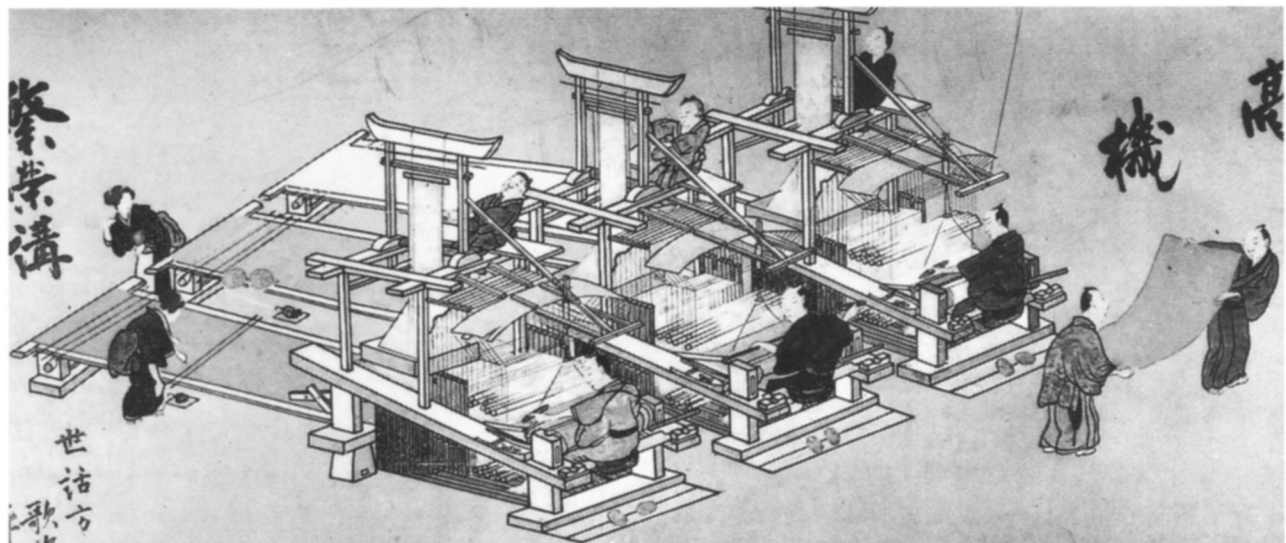




FIGURE 9. The making of textiles has a symbolic role in the Nō play *Adachigabara*. As the old woman winds thread onto a large bobbin, she complains to the audience that it is the “long and painful” thread of life. Her mesh traveling cloak (*yore mizugoromo*) is produced by pulling the loose weave out of shape after it is off the loom. Photo: Monica Bethe.

mankind, so here, too, a heavenly dance is presented in return for a robe.

Sewing, Weaving, and Spinning

In *Miwa*, the young wife takes up her needle and thread and symbolically stitches into a garment. In other Nō plays, images of textile production appear as leitmotifs. Typical of these leitmotifs is the figurative cloth *tsukushi*, or listing of images associated with cloth. We noted one such listing above in the acrostic on “*kakitsubata*.” Of the plays mentioned so far, listings of textile-related images appear also in *Matsukaze*, *Aoinoue*, *Izutsu*, *Utō*, and *Sotoba Komachi*. Words that typically appear in such listings include types and parts of clothing (particularly sleeves, hems, linings, and the overlap of the kimono), actions related to dressing (such as putting on, taking off, and tying clothes), and actions related to textile production and care (such as spinning, weaving, sewing, winding bobbins, stretching cloth to remove creases, and fulling to soften cloth).

The play *Kureha* reads like one long weaving *tsukushi*. The play alludes to a passage in the eighth-century *Chronicles of Japan* (*nihon shokki*, book 10) in which Achi no Omi brought four women skilled in the textile arts back from the Chinese country of Wu (read Kure in Japanese) as presents for Emperor Ōjin (270–310). These women, later deified, passed on the secrets of their art and became the ancestors of Japanese weavers of pat-

terned cloths, like the many-colored *nishiki* and the figured twill (*aya*), and, by extension, also the brocaded silks used for Nō costumes like the *karaori* and *atsuita*.

This Nō play is set in the town of Kureha, or “Wu Weaving.” The central characters are two weaving girls named Kurehatori and Ayahatori. Kurehatori is “one who weaves on a Wu loom” while Ayahatori is “one who weaves on an *aya* loom.” Together they produce an array of cloths. Kurehatori sits at the loom; Ayahatori “picks up and pulls the threads.” This has been interpreted by some as meaning she spins, or winds bobbins. Considering, however, that the women are producing a complex patterned cloth, she may be pulling the heddle strings on a draw loom (see fig. 8). The sounds of the shuttle flying and the beater pounding reverberate, culminating in a final dance passage where the clatter of repeated “ta” sounds (*tanabata no tamatama aeru tabitito* . . .) expands the scene up to heaven where the Sky Weaving Girl (*tanabata*, or the star Vega) joins in producing “treasured figured cloth” (*takara no aya o oritate oritate*). With a swish of the fan, the dancer honors the loom and bestows its elegant produce on the emperor. In some performances, the imagery is further enhanced by placing on midstage a large loom prop strung with colorful ribbons.¹⁹

The first step in setting up a loom in preparation for weaving is to wind the threads onto bobbins. The play *Adachigabara*, also known as *Kurozuka*, presents a

bobbin-winding scene in which an old woman takes up a hand wheel and slowly rotates it; the eyes of the wooden mask eerily follow the thread as it winds on the bobbins (see fig. 9). The thread she winds becomes the thread of life—“long and painful,” she complains. In fact, this is but a disguise to cut the life thread of her unexpected visitors, for later she reveals her true form: a man-eating ogress.²⁰

After the cloth is woven, it must be softened and made glossy. For this procedure, two women sit on opposite sides of a cloth-padded board, known as a fulling block, and alternately pound cloth laid over the board. The play *Kinuta* (*The Fulling Block*) centers on a woman who pounds desperately on the fulling block, a small prop placed in center stage, in the hope that the sound of her beating will reverberate across many miles of land and sea to reach her husband, who is delayed in the capital. In the passage below, I have abbreviated a long scene that begins and ends with mimed beating on the block:

the block of angry pain
beat it; beat
the robe, cold
whistling wind
send the message. . .
Not too violently. . .
do not rip his dreams:
once dreams are broken
who will wear this robe?
If he returns, forever,
the robe shall be refashioned.
Still, summer clothes make thin promises. . .
(She begins to beat the block again)
A thousand ten thousand voices
of grief
if only their message reaches him. . . .
The pounding on the fulling block,
the wailing of night gales,
the shrill voices of insects
mix with the sobs of dripping dew
horohoro harhara harato.
Which is the sound of the fulling block?²¹

She dies in the effort, but when her husband returns and prays for her soul, the wrathful beating that occasioned her death becomes the tool for her salvation.

Dressing for the Occasion

The elaborate rules of etiquette that pervade Japanese life make appropriate dress extremely important. Choosing just the right colors to match the season, occasion, and one’s status is an art much revered and carefully taught. In Nō drama, we see this conscious calculation of attire both in the rules set down by a tradition that specifies a particular combination of layers of garments for each role, and in passages of text describing attire. Examples of

the latter have been quoted above in references to *Miwa* and *Kakitsubata*.

Another example appears in the play *Kayoi Komachi*. Komachi’s suitor, Captain Fukakusa (see *Sotoba Komachi* above), must come to Komachi’s doorstep for one hundred nights before she will give in to him. Each night, this nobleman disguised in a bamboo hat and straw cape, steals across town to mark a notch in the shaft of her carriage. Finally, the hundredth night comes. In high anticipation of at last being let into her dwelling, he exchanges his rags for finery. No actual costume change breaks the flow of action, but the words are underscored with dramatic gestures:

Wretched bamboo hat	(he looks at hat in right hand)
I replace with an elegant court cap.	(tosses hat away)
The straw cape I shed	(mimes slipping off cloak by circling right hand up and out to the side)
for flower-patterned robe	(displays sleeves, holding out first the left, then the right in <i>sayu</i> pattern)
of layered hues.	(completes the presentation)
Light purple are my wisteria-colored pantaloons	(stepping back, spreads arms) (focuses attention on the pants by placing the tips of the fingers of the left hand on the left leg and looking at it) ²²

In most plays, however, costume change is integral to the unfolding of the plot. We have seen instances of the donning of a robe on the main stage in full view of the audience (*monogi*) in *Matsukaze*, *Kakitsubata*, *Futari Shizuka*, and *Hagoromo*. More often costume changes are done between acts, during the action, in the dressing room backstage, or inside a covered prop placed at the rear of the stage. A figure who seems to be of this world—a young woman, say, or an old man—reappears as a ghost, demon, or god. Stripped of the guise of normal time and space, lured by the hum of sutras being chanted, the figure returns in the wee hours of the morning, its true form revealed. Thus runs the basic plot of “dream” Nō plays (*mugen nō*).

The typical costume change involves taking off a layer or two of garments and replacing them, in most cases, with more voluminous robes and cloaks draped and stitched in place in a manner appropriate for the type of movement to be performed (in most instances, the second half of a play centers around a dance). In *Yamamba*, for example, an old woman waylays the dancer Hyakuma Yamamba on a pilgrimage through the mountains. She wears the tightly wrapped, sober-colored *karaori* that inhibits the size of her steps. After questioning Hyakuma Yamamba about the true nature of the real Yamamba whom Hyakuma presumes to impersonate in her dances,



the old woman declares she will reveal the real identity of Yamamba and then vanishes. She reappears “in form and speech human, yet,” like a demon, she has “snow-covered brambles for hair, eyes shining like stars, and cheeks the color of vermilion.”²³ She wears a voluminous costume suited to energetic action (see fig. 10). The choice of garments contains an enigma: the geometrically patterned *atsuita* (a brocaded garment of the same shape as the *karaori* with a more dynamic design), which is worn as an undergarment by demons, is draped here as an outer cloak in the style a court woman would wear a *karaori* (*tsuboori*). Her divided skirts are not the plain-colored *ōguchi* worn by women, but the boldly brocaded *hangiri* worn by supernatural beings (see pl. 17; cat. no. 15).

Despite her fearful appearance, Yamamba pleads to be recognized for her deeds of kindness. Realizing this desire lies at the root of delusion, she “casts it all away, and dragging good and evil, makes her mountain rounds.” Round and round she circles the stage, pinned to the wheel of Buddhist law, and as “dust piles up to become a mountain, so she becomes . . . a mountain-crone.” In a variant performance called *Shirogashira*, each word of this line of text is enacted with costume manipulation:

dust piles up	the actor unties his <i>atsuita</i> and, crouching, draws it over his head to encase his body
mountain	he begins to rise, covered by the robe
crone	while standing, he lifts both arms, displaying the form of Yamamba backed by the dark lining of the <i>atsuita</i>
becomes	he drops the garment and moves off at lightning speed, leaping over peaks and peering into valleys. ²⁴

The consummation of Yamamba’s identity, central to her quest for enlightenment, finds its final form in stripping away layers of clothing, just as earlier she had cast off delusions through enacting her own tale. In shedding her clothing, Yamamba sheds misinterpretations in an opposite process from the women in *Izutsu*, *Matsukaze*, and *Kakitsubata*, who, in donning extra layers of clothing, assume other identities.

FIGURE 10. The enigma of the identity of the Old Woman of the Mountains (Yamamba) can be seen in her costume: the pants (*hangiri*) and brocaded *atsuita*, which are both male garments, are draped in a style reserved for a female robe (*karaori*). The *karaori* is customarily used to represent women of the court, women suffering in hell, and sprites. Photo: Masakatsu Ushimado.

The visual impact of Nō costumes as they identify the sex, status, and profession of individual characters, and as they are used in performance, supports and reflects the poetic text of the Nō play, itself ornamented with textile imagery. This type of give-and-take between the elements of a performance lies at the core of the Nō aesthetic. The whole is far more than a sum of its parts, yet each of the parts is a whole in itself. The costume as a work of art, separated from the stage and its props, from the actor’s gestures, and from the poetry and music of a performance, nonetheless contains the same process of give-and-take. In a brocaded robe like the *karaori* or *atsuita*, the variation of color in each visual motif creates an ever-changing overall image despite the mechanically fixed repeated pattern. The eyes wander from sleeve to hem to body of the robe, focusing for a moment on an exquisite detail, then refocusing to enjoy the interplay of shapes, until the motifs and colors expand to create a complete vision.

Notes

BETHE, "The Use of Costumes in Nō Drama," pp. 6–19.

1. Kentarō Sanari, *Yōkyoku taikan (Anthology of Nō Plays)*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1982), pp. 156–68. For a translation of *Aoinoue*, see Arthur Waley, ed., *The Nob Plays of Japan* (New York, 1957), pp. 179–89. In the variant performance of *Aimoue* known as *Mumyōnoimori*, a white kimono represents Lady Aoi.
2. Sanari (note 1), vol. 1, p. 386. The Japanese texts of Nō plays are drawn from this edition. All translations in this essay are my own. I have discussed the use of the hunter's hat as a prop in *Dance in the Nob Theater* (Cornell University East Asia Papers, no. 29), vol. 1 (Ithaca, N.Y., 1982), pp. 91–95. For a translation of the play *Utō*, see "Birds of Sorrow," in Donald Keene, ed., *Anthology of Japanese Literature* (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 263–74.
3. Sanari (note 1), vol. 4, p. 2489. A good translation of *Hagoromo* is forthcoming in Royall Tyler, ed., *Japanese Nō Dramas* (London, 1992).
4. Sanari (note 1), vol. 1, p. 87. For a translation of *Ataka*, see Nippon Gakujitsu Shinkōkai, ed., *Japanese Nob Drama*, vol. 3 (Tokyo, 196c), pp. 149–72.
5. Sanari (note 1), vol. 1, p. 91.
6. Hiroshi Koyama, *Kyōgensbūge (Collection of Kyōgen Plays)*, vol. 2, in *Nihon bungaku taikai (Anthology of Japanese Literature)*, vol. 43 (Tokyo, 197c), pp. 180–86.
7. Sanari (note 1), vol. 3, p. 1727. For a translation of *Sotoba Komachi*, see Nippon Gakujitsu Shinkōkai (note 4), vol. 3, pp. 77–94. The version quoted here is inspired by an unpublished translation by Gus Held. In the Japanese poetic tradition, the sleeve is the primary receptacle for tears. This image is represented onstage by an actor raising his hand with his outstretched fingers pointing up until they shade his forehead, while the sleeve of his robe covers his eyes.
8. Sanari (note 1), vol. 3, p. 1729.
9. Ibid., vol. 4, p. 2716. For a translation of *Futari Shizuka*, see Chifumi Shimazaki, *The Nob, Vol. III: Woman Nob, Book 3* (Tokyo, 1981), pp. 32–63.
10. Sanari (note 1), vol. 4, p. 2717–18. The fabric is *seigo-o*, which is woven with glossed silk wefts, and sometimes warps, as well. It is commonly used for women's red *bakama*. *Suikan* are broad-sleeved, round-necked courtier's cloaks, similar to *kariginu* (see pl. 18, as well as cat. no. 16, for The Art Institute of Chicago's *kariginu*).
11. In modern performances of *Futari Shizuka*, both Shizuka and the shrine girl are dressed in similar *chōken*. But an eighteenth-century illustration of the play in the Date Collection shows one character dressed in a white *chōken*, and the other in a green *chōken*.
12. Sanari (note 1), vol. 4, p. 2721.
13. Sanari (note 1), vol. 5, pp. 2822–38. *Matsukaze* is translated by Royall Tyler in Donald Keene, ed., *Twenty Plays of the Nō Theater* (New York, 197c), pp. 17–34; an additional translation will appear in Tyler (note 3).
14. Sanari (note 1), vol. 5, pp. 3411–12. The phrase "Man of Long Ago" is an epithet for Narihira used in the *Tales of Ise*. For a translation of *Isutsu*, see Thomas Hare, *Zeami's Style: The Nob Plays of Zeami Motokiyo* (Stanford, Calif., 1986), pp. 135–53.
15. Sanari (note 1), vol. 1, p. 621. *Kakitsubata* is translated by Susan Klein in

Karen Brazell, ed., *Twelve Plays of the Nob and Kyōgen Theaters* (Cornell University East Asia Papers, no. 5c) (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988), pp. 63–80.

16. *Chōken* are unlined; therefore, the *chōken* belonging to the Art Institute must have been re sewn. See pls. 12 and 14, cat. nos. 10–11.

17. Kitamura Tetsurō, *Nō shōzoku (Nō Costumes)*, in *Nihon no bijutsu*, no. 46 (Tokyo, 197c), pp. 25–44.

18. Sanari (note 1), vol. 5, p. 2983. *Miwa* is translated by Monica Bethe in Brazell (note 15), pp. 23–38.

19. Sanari (note 1), vol. 2, pp. 975–88. For a translation of *Kureba*, see Tyler (note 3).

20. Sanari (note 1), vol. 1, p. 213.

21. Ibid., vol. 2, pp. 831–34. For a translation of *Kinuta*, see Tyler (note 3).

22. Sanari (note 1), vol. 2, p. 772. In a standard performance, the pants worn by the performers are the all-purpose, broadly divided skirts with bulging back known as *ōguchi*. In some performances of *Sotoba Komachi*, however, these skirts can be replaced by the courtier's ankle-bound *sashimuki*, which would then illustrate not Captain Fukakusa's hellish torment, but his rank among the nobility.

23. Sanari (note 1), vol. 5, p. 3179. For a translation and discussion of this scene in *Yamamba*, see Monica Bethe and Karen Brazell, *Nō as Performance: An Analysis of the Kuse Scene of Yamamba* (Cornell University East Asia Papers, no. 16) (Ithaca, N.Y., 1978). For a translation of *Yamamba* in its entirety, see Tyler (note 3).

24. Sanari (note 1), vol. 5, p. 3183. The performance version described here is a Kanze school variant known as *Shirogashira (White Headpiece)*, and can be viewed in the videotape *Yamamba Act II* available through the East Asia Papers, Cornell University.

HAYS and HAYS, "Nō Drama Costumes and Other Japanese Costumes in The Art Institute of Chicago," pp. 20–36.

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1. William K. Bunce, ed., *Religions in Japan* (Rutland, Vt., 1959), pp. 3, 105.

2. Earl Miner with Hiroko Odagiri and Robert E. Morrell, *The Princeton Companion to Classical Japanese Literature* (Princeton, N.J., 1985), pp. 185–86, 209–10.

3. Akihiko Takemura, *Fukusa, Japanese Gift-Covers* (Tokyo, 1991), p. 134. The symbolic relationship between the traditional Japanese patterning on *fukusa* and the emotion expressed by the giver of the gift is carefully analyzed in this definitive book on *fukusa*.

4. Ken Kirihata, "Textile Designs of the Edo Period: The Japanese Style of Beauty," in Akihiko Takemura, *Fukusa, the Gift-Covers: The Beauty of Japanese Exchanging Gifts*, exh. cat. (Tokyo, 1991), p. 7. This is the catalogue published for an exhibition of the Denosuki Miyai Fukusa Collection held in Kyoto and Tokyo in 1991.