

## From Representation to Apotheosis: Nō's Modern Myth of Okina

*Eric C. Rath*

*Modern discussions of ritual and the origins of the six-hundred-year-old Japanese nō theatre have focused on the enigmatic Okina dance—one of the “three rites,” shikisanban, enacted today by performers at the New Year’s and other ceremonial occasions. For modern nō actors, Okina is the heart of nō: a living prototype of the ritual theatre nō once supposedly embodied but somehow lost. Yet Okina’s very rituality differentiates it from nō. Hence Okina is cited both as an archetype of nō’s past and as a salient point of contrast for defining nō’s artistry today.*

*This article declares this relationship between Okina and nō to be a modern formulation resulting from three factors: a change in religiosity in the early twentieth century, the role of scholars and performers of that era in reclaiming Okina’s centrality to nō, and assumptions in the fields of anthropology and folklore studies about the origin of theatre in ritual. The modern conceptualization of Okina functions as an invented tradition engendering authority for nō professionals, particularly the hereditary elite, who compete to lay claim to its mystery, sanctity, and power.*

*Eric C. Rath received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Michigan and is currently an assistant professor of premodern Japanese history at the University of Kansas. This study of Okina is part of his wider research on the ethos and professionalization of nō from the era of Zeami to the present.*

The ritual dance of the “old man,” Okina, has been important to *nō* theatre from before the time of Zeami (d. 1443), and its relationship to *nō* and its meaning have been debated ever since. One of “three rites,” *shikisanban*, Okina is part of a series of dances now reserved for special occasions. Okina is called a ritual.<sup>1</sup> And the so-called ritual aspects of the dance are reversals of the typical dramaturgical conventions of *nō*. For example: secret ceremonies take place backstage before

the performance, actors don their masks onstage in full view of the audience, and they use atypical modes of performance. Paradoxically, scholars and performers consider Okina to be the basis for *nō* drama, and it is a familiar point of comparison for delineating *nō*'s salient features. The interpretation of Okina as a ritual is supported by the view that the actor in the role of Okina is said to become, or unite with, a divinity when he puts on the Okina mask.

The interpretation of Okina as a ritual act of apotheosis, or shamanistic possession, as described below, is a modern replacement for premodern explanations of Okina. In the premodern era, Okina and the rest of the dances of the *shikisanban* were viewed as representations of the divine. But in the modern era, Okina has come to be called an act of apotheosis. Premodern views of Okina relied on religious exegesis; the modern interpretation was created after the underpinnings of these religious modes of thinking came into dispute. Consequently, the modern version can be termed an "invented tradition" that testifies to the authority of the *nō* profession while masquerading as a ritual reenactment of an ancient spiritual rite.<sup>2</sup> I will begin with a brief description of the modern performance of Okina before outlining the evolution of its interpretation.

Although Okina is performed by the same actors who enact *nō*, certain theatrical conventions found in *nō* are transgressed to distinguish Okina as a ritual. Okina is usually performed on special occasions, such as New Year's, and, whenever it is performed, it is always the first work on the program.<sup>3</sup> Three other characteristics mark Okina as different from *nō*. First, in contrast to *nō* plays, Okina begins with elaborate ceremonies enacted backstage. Second, Okina lacks typical elements of *nō* including identifiable characters, plot, and setting—to name the most outstanding differences. And third, the actor dancing the role of Okina is said not to be representing a god as in a *nō* play: rather he is said to magically become the god.

The audience can catch only a glimpse of the rituals occurring backstage prior to the performance, when one of the performers momentarily parts the curtain separating the greenroom from the stage and strikes a flint and steel together. This moment provides the audience with the only visible indication that ceremonies of purification and worship are occurring in the liminal area of the backstage in the aptly named mirror room (*kagami no ma*), where performers customarily don their masks and contemplate their dramatic personae in a large mirror before a play. That these rites occur in an area accessible only to the performers, as opposed to the public space of the stage, reinforces the notion that the performers are engaged in acts of worship as opposed to merely acting worshipful for the audience.

Spectators cannot watch the backstage ceremonies, but the curious can easily find information about the ritual preparations for Okina in performers' memoirs (*geidan*). Readers can learn, first, that the backstage rites are often preceded by several days of sexual abstinence and ceremonies of purification. Authorities note that the length of the period of purification has changed historically and is different for each school of *nō*.<sup>4</sup> A Kita school actor, Takabayashi Kōji (b. 1935), said that the preperformance rites lasted for a week to ten days for his school (Bethe 1984, 97); the head of the Kongō school, Kongō Iwao II (d. 1998), claimed that actors in his school still practiced a week of austerities (Teele 1984, 77). The period of ritual purification includes two specifications. First, actors are supposed to follow a special—but largely unspecified—diet. Second, they are to avoid contact with women—to the point of refraining from using the same bathwater or eating food prepared by women—for fear that women might transfer “impurities” to the actor through the fire used for cooking or heating the bathwater. Performers therefore maintain a “separate fire” (*bekka*)—referring to the fire used expressly by an actor who will perform Okina. Few Japanese still cook over open fires, however, and in the present age of microwaves and hot water on demand, some *nō* performers have acknowledged the impossibility of maintaining the strictures of “separate fire” even if they wanted.<sup>5</sup>

Without detailed descriptions of “separate fire” rites from the earliest period, it is difficult to determine their history.<sup>6</sup> In his fifteenth-century treatise on Okina, *Meishukushū*, Konparu Zenchiku (d. 1470?) mentioned a ritual meal of five offertory grains taken before performance (*Meishukushū*, p. 401). The sixteenth-century *Hachijō kadensho* required performers to conduct seven days of ritual purification prior to performances of Okina (p. 516) but did not mention the “separate fire.” The first mention I found of the term “*bekka*” was in a *nō* treatise from the mid-seventeenth century (*Jikkanshō taikōbon*, p. 149). Time does not permit me to explore all the implications of this point, but the concept of *bekka* came to be applied to *nō* at a time when performers began clarifying bloodlines and writing genealogies to strengthen the hereditary boundaries of their profession. This was partially in reaction to the demands of the Tokugawa shogunate to limit social mobility, but it was also a proactive move to secure occupational rights. Patri-lineal bloodlines were the most critical. Women are mentioned in genealogies only as daughters or wives exchanged in marriage to solidify bonds between two unrelated males, especially between a master and his chief successor (Rath 1998, 159–191). The concept of *bekka* deploys sexuality in the same way as the genealogy: as a means to mark vertical and horizontal unions among male performers. *Bekka* indicates

the absence of women—thereby calling attention to the bond among male performers conducting Okina. *Bekka* also draws attention to the fact that professional expertise in *nō* is still constructed as flowing patrilineally from father to son, or from a male teacher, such as the “family head” (*iemoto*) to a male disciple. Today women can become professional *nō* performers, but only men can participate in Okina. *Nō* actors stigmatize women as a way of setting themselves apart, not just from women, but from the rest of society by virtue of their “purity” preserved by esoteric rites.

On the day of the performance of Okina, a small altar is erected backstage in the mirror room for a ceremony called the *okina kazari*.<sup>7</sup> The altar serves as a temporary place of enshrinement for the two masks used: the white mask of Okina and the black mask of Sanbasō. Props used in the performance such as Sanbasō’s bell-stick (*suzu*) are also placed on this altar along with offerings of consecrated rice, sake (or water), salt, and other items.<sup>8</sup> The performers assemble and take seats on the floor; the actor playing Okina sits closest to the altar. Beginning with Okina, the performers sip from a cup containing the sake or water (Morita 1992, 19–20). The performers are then purified by a “fire ritual” of sparks made from steel and flint. Before taking the stage, the actor playing Okina utters a final “incantation” called the *okina watashi* before he passes through the curtain (Konparu 1983, 4).

There are many unique points about the performance of Okina that distinguish it from other *nō* plays. First, the staging for Okina is distinctive, since the chorus lines up behind the musicians, not at the side of the main stage, their usual position. Three shoulder-drum players perform in Okina, when usually only one performs. Finally, for performances of Okina the customary dress of the chorus and musicians, consisting of a kimono and trousers (*hakama*), is replaced with formal dress (*suōkamishimo*) and *kariginu*, a loose cloak with a round collar and flared shoulders worn over the kimono. The actors also wear courtiers’ hats (*eboshi*) and long-legged trousers (*nagabakama*), which complete their formal dress.

Technically the Okina dance is one of the “three rites” (*shikisamban*)—a program consisting of a series of dances by separate actors in the roles of Senzai, Okina, and Sanbasō. Okina is performed by an actor from one of the five *shite* schools. Sanbasō is danced by a *kyōgen* performer. Senzai is danced either by a *kyōgen* or a *shite* actor, and it is the only role performed without a mask.<sup>9</sup>

The dances are performed in the order of Senzai, Okina, and Sanbasō, but here the discussion will focus on Okina since it is the principal focus in modern *nō* discourse. One of the high points of the performance occurs halfway through Senzai’s dance, when the actor play-

ing Okina dons his mask in view of the audience. This point is said to mark the actor's transformation into a deity. The actor Takabayashi Kōji gave his account of this transformation: "Once I wear the mask I am in communion with the god inside me, with the universal part that transcends the mundane. That part of me which is godlike dances and that same universal god resides in the mask; therefore both mask and performer are god" (Bethe 1984, 96). Instead of "getting into character" and representing a deity or any other figure as in a *nō* play, the actor performing Okina becomes (or unites with) a higher power.

The second highlight of the performance occurs when Okina utters his famous incomprehensible lines—the "god song" (*kamiuta*)—prior to his own dance. The god song is impenetrable even in written form, since it consists of strings of syllables threaded around auspicious verses, some taken from medieval ballads: *imayō* and *saibara*. (See Appendix 1.) Scholars have suggested possible meanings for some of the opaque words. Some have proposed that they are magical incantations, vocalizations of musical instruments, or even classical Tibetan.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps the god song is meaningless. In his discussion of the three-thousand-year-old Vedic Agnicayanna ritual, the philosopher Frits Staal argues that the inherent meaninglessness of the ritual verses accounts for their preservation and allows for a multitude of interpretations.<sup>11</sup> Whether or not the lack of a clear meaning has helped preserve the integrity of Okina's god song is uncertain, but the absence of stable meaning has allowed performers and scholars to impute many different interpretations.<sup>12</sup> This is not to say that performers consider the drama of Okina itself meaningless—for to do so would deny *nō*'s ethos. In fact, the modern interpretation resists the meaninglessness of Okina to propose a definition that substantiates the rights of professional performers. Apparent meaninglessness is presented as a hidden mystery that the audience simply cannot access but professional performers know intimately.

Describing Okina as a mysterious ritual may absolve modern *nō* performers from having to explain the full meaning of the dance, but the meanings of the dance's religiosity have changed historically. The oldest form of the *shikisanban*, which predates Zeami, originally had two other roles: the masked character of the old man Chichinojō and his young unmasked counterpart, Enmeikaja.<sup>13</sup> The oldest surviving version of the text for this part is from the sixteenth-century *Hachijō kadensho* (see Appendix 2).<sup>14</sup> The setting of the dance appears to be India, and it is a short dialogue between Enmeikaja, representing the historical Buddha Shakyamuni, and Chichinojō, who represents Shakyamuni's father, King Jōbon (Sanskrit: Suddhobodana) (Amano 1995, 39). One medieval explanation of the origin of the Okina dance

posited King Jōbon as the creator of the *shikisanban*.<sup>15</sup> From that perspective, the dialogue between Enmeikaja and Chichinojō presents both a historical-religious vignette and a Buddhist framework for explaining the entire *shikisanban*. Besides the religious undertones, the scene of Chichinojō and Enmeikaja is also more explicitly dramatic since the masked characters represent specific figures. Their dialogue suggests that Okina is also a representation of a deity if not simply an elderly man. Why the dialogue of Enmeikaja and Chichinojō was dropped from most performances of the *shikisanban* in the late fourteenth century remains uncertain. Its absence dilutes the *shikisanban* of dramatic qualities, however, and marks a profound change in the work's religious meaning. It should be noted that the transformation of the *shikisanban* occurred at the same time that actors including Zeami began defining the aesthetics of *nō*. This suggests a connection, still unclear, between the development of a *nō* "ritual" and the formation of *nō*'s artistic language.

Medieval and early modern performers posited a wide range of interpretations of the *shikisanban* in their secret treatises. While these writings differ in their conclusions, they agree that the actor playing Okina represented a divinity—but not so specific a deity as a divine character in a *nō* play. In some cases, interpretations of the *shikisanban* encompassed all the performers on stage including the musicians, so that the entire cast is described as representing a wide range of male and female deities, buddhas, cosmic elements, and heavenly bodies simultaneously.<sup>16</sup> In *Style and the Flower (Fūshikaden)*, Zeami gave a Buddhist interpretation of Okina, but his contemporary Konparu Zenchiku portrayed Okina as representing a manifold of Shinto and Buddhist deities and even historical figures such as the Heian-period (794–1185) statesman and poet Sugawara no Michizane (Komatsu 1985, 155). In the late sixteenth century, Okina was most often depicted in *nō* writings as representing the Kasuga deity, but the character Sanbasō who appears later in the dance was variously interpreted as the Sumiyoshi deity, as Amaterasu, as Togakushi Myōjin, and as the Kasuga deity (Nakamura 1994, 505). Similar interpretations can be found in *nō* writings up through the end of the early modern period. In the mid-Meiji period, Kinoshita Keiken's (d. 1916) landmark work, *A Collection of Nō Secrets (Nōgaku unnōshū)*, followed these precedents of interpretation, associating both Okina and Senzai with the deity Amaterasu.<sup>17</sup>

Premodern interpretations of Okina faced their first significant scholarly challenge in 1906 with Yoshida Tōgo's seminal article in the journal *Nōgaku*. Yoshida, who would win fame a few years later for publishing Zeami's secret treatises, presented one of the first scholarly

accounts of the history of Okina. He began with Kinoshita Keiken's analysis and proceeded chronologically, dismissing premodern views of Okina as representing a divinity (Yoshida 1906, 15–28). Yoshida did not offer a satisfactory explanation of the dance in place of these older interpretations, however, beyond simply noting its antiquity and sacredness. Yoshida's article challenged performers to reconcile their interpretations of Okina with modern scholarship, but performers also reacted to changes in the religious zeitgeist that witnessed government persecution of Buddhism and the development of emperor-centered State Shinto in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>18</sup>

In subsequent interpretations of Okina, performers deemphasized Buddhist, polyvalent, and syncretic interpretations in favor of connecting Okina with the sun goddess, Amaterasu. This shift conveniently linked the origin of *nō* to the divine progenitor of the imperial line and the modern myths surrounding the emperor—a helpful move in a period when the court and imperial household ministry (*kunaishō*) became key patrons of *nō*.<sup>19</sup> Thus the head of the Kongō school, Kongō Ukyō (d. 1936), explained that Okina represented Ninigi, the grandson of Amaterasu. Ukyō strengthened the connection between Okina and the imperial line by stipulating that the box holding the Okina mask stood for the imperial regalia (*sanshū no shinki*).<sup>20</sup> The renowned actor Umewaka Minoru II (d. 1959) stated in 1935 that Okina represented Amaterasu in certain moments of the dance and at other times signified heaven, earth, and humanity (Ōwada 1935, 1 and 5). In contrast to premodern interpretations—which viewed many, if not all, of the performers as representations of the divine—modern performers from this period onward focused almost entirely on Okina.<sup>21</sup> Lacking the salient religious worldview that formerly had grounded interpretations of the deities portrayed on stage, modern actors needed to mark the moment of the actor's apotheosis. Hence the focus in modern *nō* discourse on the point of transubstantiation when the actor dons the Okina mask.

The view that Okina is a preserved form of shamanistic possession is an invented tradition, dating from after World War II, and was inspired by folklore studies (*minzokugaku*). The historian Carol Gluck (1978) has illustrated the impact of the research of folklorists such as Yanagita Kunio (d. 1962) and Orikuchi Shinobu (d. 1953) on the field of Japanese history. Their work provoked historians to search for the people's place in the historical past. Likewise, scholars of the performing arts in the postwar period turned to folklore, Western anthropology, and the scholarly study of folk performing arts, *minzoku geinō*, to theorize about *nō*'s origins and the early history of theatre. These

scholars showed particular fascination with Okina, suggesting that the Okina mask enshrined a deity (*goshintai*) and that the dance revealed *nō*'s possible beginnings as an agricultural rite (Toida 1985, 35–36). In one study, the influential *nō* scholar Nogami Toyochirō compared *nō* with classical Greek drama and noted the universal origin of theatre in ritual. In primitive societies, he explained, a dancer representing a deity in an act of worship frequently becomes associated with that divinity in the eyes of the audience (Nogami 1948, 211). Nogami's argument was more than just a nod to the supposed origins of theatre in ritual, for it bore strong similarities to prevailing theories about the relationship between ritual and drama accepted by contemporary Western scholars including Lucien Levy-Bruhl and Mircea Eliade. In a 1968 work, Eliade made a general observation about mask wearing in primitive societies: mask wearers ritually transform into the objects of their representation, he argued, becoming gods in the eyes of the primitive audience.<sup>22</sup> Japanese scholars applied this argument to the Okina ritual: Yokomichi Mario, for instance, wrote that the actor donning the Okina mask becomes a god.<sup>23</sup>

Performers in the postwar era became acquainted with academic interpretations of Okina through involvement in collaborative projects,<sup>24</sup> chiefly the study of the newly discovered treatises of Zeami. Zeami's writings, now viewed as central to *nō* discourse, once remained secret and scarcely known from the era of Zeami's lifetime up to the first decade of the twentieth century when they were published. It was not until the postwar era that performers began to read Zeami in significant numbers and with scholarly attention. Kanze Hisao was among the most enthusiastic. He attended university lectures on Zeami by Nose Asaji in 1949 and 1950 and later helped found a Zeami study group for performers, Zeami densho kenkyūkai, in 1952 for the purpose of understanding Zeami's theories and applying them in performance. Prominent scholars including Nishio Minoru, Yokomichi Mario, and Omote Akira participated in these seminars. The view that Okina constituted the "foundational root" of *nō* dance, as Zeami described in *Kyakuraika*, and of *nō* chant (*utai*), as Zeami's son Motoyoshi reiterated in *Sarugaku dangi*, became buzzwords for Kanze Hisao and other actors (*Kyakuraika*, p. 246; *Sarugaku dangi*, p. 260). Hisao, for instance, called Okina the "original art" (*motogei*) (Kanze Hisao 1991, 170). Takabayashi Kōji expressed the same concept and influence from Zeami when he proclaimed: "Okina is the source of all Nō. In Okina lies the spiritual core of Nō and from Okina stem many of the technical bases of Nō, such as the rules of choreography" (Bethe 1984, 95).



If Okina was the basis for *nō*, this made it critical for performers to reassert their claim to it. *Nō* performers reclaimed Okina by abandoning views of Okina's religiosity that had been made to glorify the emperor system during wartime and embracing the scholarly discourse on Okina as an ancient ritual of shamanistic possession. Rather than assume the passive role of informants to academic narrative, actors portrayed themselves as gatekeepers of the Okina tradition and offered their own testimony to Okina's power. Okina has since become the most powerful myth in the *nō* profession. Today it is used to designate authenticity, confer legitimacy, and define artistry.

The mantra of Okina's power is expressed in the oxymoron "Okina is and is not *nō*," which appears frequently in the writings of late-twentieth-century performers (Morita 1992, 13; Konparu 1983, 3). Okina is not *nō* because it is perceived to be ritual, not drama. For it to be read as ritual, Okina by necessity must be outside the parameters of *nō*. Therefore, the ritualistic aspects of Okina, such as the backstage rites, transgress the dramaturgical rules of *nō* theatre. Conversely, performers argue that Okina is *nō* because they assert that it represents the living past and core of *nō* theatre. While actors such as Hisao and Takabayashi may cite Zeami to argue that Okina was the prototype for *nō*, they conceptualize Okina in different terms. Nowhere in his writings did Zeami state that the actor dancing the role of Okina actually becomes a deity; nor did he call attention to the moment when the actor puts on the Okina mask.

Although Okina is a dominant symbol of *nō*'s traditions, performers cannot make equal claims to Okina's legacy. The number of women professionals continues to increase, but women cannot take part in the Okina performance. Men too face restrictions based on their status, age, and birth. Only senior actors are allowed to take the role of Okina, and the hereditary head of the school, the *iemoto*, usually enacts Okina on the most important occasions. High-ranking performers describe their privileged experience in writings and interviews and use these forums as bully pulpits to keep other performers in line and fascinate their audiences with hints of secret knowledge and paranormal experiences. Kanze Hisao, for instance, contrasted the spiritual cultivation needed to perform Okina properly with the worldliness of modern actors, condemning those who gossiped and watched television before taking the stage.<sup>25</sup> Invoking the sanctity of Okina has also been used to argue against allowing any changes in the accepted staging of plays.<sup>26</sup> Finally, in their descriptions of Okina, the most powerful performers make mention of knowledge to which only they are privileged. The former leader of the Kongō troupe, Kongō Iwao II,

alluded to secret writings about Okina in his possession: “Our hidden writings concerning Okina are contained in a book several centimeters thick. The details of the ritual include many esoteric Buddhist mantras and mudras to be done throughout the performance.”<sup>27</sup> Such testimonials reinforce the authority of the few actors allowed to take the Okina role. They are part of a much longer and wider practice of invoking secrets and tradition to reinforce institutional hierarchies and reaffirm familial and professional boundaries.

Today Okina is said to be the source and embodiment of all of *nō*'s authenticity and its original sanctity. Thus it is *nō*'s most central tradition. Performers refer to their stage experience to impose a reading of Okina as a timeless, first-person encounter with the absolute. That only senior, male actors may dance the title role reinforces the notion that knowledge is a function of hierarchy, bloodlines, and gender. Audiences may glimpse a portion of the Okina rite, but they are said to have no bearing on its meaning. They are invited to honor the rite, not interpret it. Given the constructed nature and meanings imputed in the Okina ritual described here, Okina ought to be viewed less as a premodern religious artifact than as a modern myth of the postwar *nō* profession.<sup>28</sup> This myth is sustained through its reenactment in performances and *nō* discourse, where it is resuscitated again and again, as a strategy of domination.

### Okina's God Song (*kamiuta*)

OKINA:	<i>Tōtō tarari tararira, tarari agarirararitō.</i>
CHORUS:	<i>Chiryatarari tararira, tarari agarirararitō.</i>
OKINA:	Dwell here for a thousand generations,
CHORUS:	We will serve you for a thousand autumns.
OKINA:	For the life span of the crane and tortoise, <sup>29</sup>
CHORUS:	Happiness will rule our hearts.
OKINA:	<i>Tōtō tarari tararira.</i>
CHORUS:	<i>Chiryatarari tararira, tarari agarirararitō.</i>

### The Scene of Chichinojō and Enmeikaja

CHICHINOJŌ:	What do we pray for, young lord? Oh, young lord, Shakyamuni Buddha.
ENMEIKAJA:	My father is King Jōbon. My mother is his wife Maya, the daughter of Zengaku Chōja. I was born in the heaven of Tōriten. <sup>30</sup> I lived in the flower garden there. Chichinojō is here with me. Let's pray together as father and son. The young lord has arrived again.
CHICHINOJŌ:	Under heaven, the old man [Okina] gathers the winds

and the people boast of the paradise of the five lakes.<sup>31</sup>  
 He is the old man with the body of heaven. He lives  
 without change, longer than the Kirin's horn, living  
 since the creation of heaven and earth, older than the  
 five emperors and three kings of China. He is the one.  
 Blessings and celebrations. He holds the pine branch,  
 aritōtōtō.<sup>32</sup>

## NOTES

I wish to thank Laurence Kominz for his comments on this article and the Reischauer Institute for Japanese Studies at Harvard University for support in the form of a postdoctoral fellowship.

1. The twenty-fourth leader of the Kanze school, Kanze Sakon (d. 1939), termed Okina a "*shikiten*" (Kanze Sakon 1939, 121). Other performers use the terms "*gishiki*" and "*matsuri*," which are all loose synonyms for the word "ritual."

2. "Invented tradition is taken to mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 1). This continuity is "invented" to disguise disruptions and absences that threaten claims to legitimacy based on reference to a past legacy.

3. Moreover, any collection of *nō* plays that includes Okina prints the text before other plays—for example, Kanze Sakon (1995, 2).

4. The period is once said to have lasted for three to seven days, but the practice has allegedly been abbreviated since the Meiji era. Today the length of time depends on the actor's school and family traditions. Some performers maintain their austerities just on the morning of the performance; others have abandoned the practice entirely (Nishino and Haneda 1987:II-12).

5. A Kanze school performer confided in me that it was impossible to maintain *bekka* while traveling and staying in a hotel. One family of *kyōgen* actors reportedly abandoned the custom after a young family member quipped he would just eat instant noodles during his period of *bekka* (Salz 1997, 125).

6. Amano Fumio (1995, 32) notes that there are no descriptions of the *okina kazari* ceremony dating from the medieval period.

7. For a photograph of the altar used for a Kanze school performance of Okina (and a useful description of the entire *shikisanban*) see Honda (1958, 194).

8. See Morita (1992, 19). Konparu Kunio (1983, 4) says that rice wine (sake) was used instead of water. A photograph of *okina kazari* in Umewaka Rokurō's book *Utai o hajimeru hito no tame* also shows a fish on the altar but provides no explanation (Umewaka 1964, 21).

9. In the Konparu, Kongō, and Kita schools of the *shimogakari* tradition, the role of Senzai is played by a *kyōgen* actor who also carries the box containing the masks for Okina and Sanbasō. In the Kanze and Hōshō versions of the *kamigakari* tradition, the person responsible for the mask box is a *kyōgen* actor, but the role of Senzai is acted by a *shite* actor.

10. Omote Akira (1979, 344–360) disputes all these propositions but offers no other theories about the words' meanings.

11. “Languages change because they express meaning, are functional and constantly used. Meaningless sounds do not change; they can only be remembered or forgotten” (Staal 1996, 489).

12. There are a few instances when performers—notably the fifteenth head of the Kanze troupe, Kanze Motoakira (d. 1774)—changed the verses of Okina (see note no. 29), but the overall substance of the work is said to have endured since the early fifteenth century.

13. See Amano (1995, 102). The mask used for the role of Chichinojō resembles an old man and is similar to the mask worn by Okina. A young boy performs the role of Enmeikaja and does not wear a mask.

14. For background about *Hachijō kadensho* see Rath (1999).

15. The theory that Shakyamuni's father created Okina is found in the early-sixteenth-century *Zenpō zōdan*—the notes of a student of Konparu Zenpō (b. 1454), Zenchiku's grandson and leader of the Konparu troupe (*Zenpō zōdan* 1995, 506).

16. See Rath (1999, 172). Henry Pernet (1992, 79) notes a similar polyvalency in masked performances in diverse cultural contexts. He criticizes scholars who give static interpretations of these performances; instead, he argues, they represent events and cosmic moments in shared lore.

17. See Kinoshita (1890, I:1–5). Kinoshita's text professed to contain the most important teachings of the *nō* profession, including the descriptions of dance patterns (*katazuke*) and teachings (*narai*) conveyed only to select disciples. The author's subsequent banishment from the Kanze school for publishing this work speaks to the authority of his claims.

18. For a discussion of the reconfiguration of Buddhism in this era see Ketelaar (1990). Helen Hardacre (1989, 21–40) describes the relations between government and Shinto in this period.

19. From the 1890s, the imperial household ministry became the chief financial backer of several successive *nō* societies that sponsored performances and operated the first public *nō* stage in Tokyo.

20. According to Kongō Ukyō, Okina stood for Ninigi, Senzai for Amenokoyane no Mikoto, and Sanbasō for Sarudahiko no Mikoto (De Poorter 1989, 29).

21. The dance of Okina shares many parallels with the dance of Sanbasō that follows. Yet with the exception of writings by *kyōgen* actors, Sanbasō is not given the same focus in modern *nō* discourse. Like Okina, Sanbasō dons his mask on stage. Nevertheless, in modern *nō* discourse only the actor who takes the role of Okina “becomes the divinity.” The stick drum (*taiko*) performer Konparu Kunio has clarified this point: “The actor who performs the

role of the mystical, old, godlike Okina must become the god" (Konparu 1983, 3).

22. "One becomes what one displays. The wearers of masks are really the mythical ancestors portrayed by their masks" (Mircea Eliade cited in Pernet 1992, 119). Pernet dates to the late nineteenth century the scholarly notion that the wearer of a mask becomes a spirit.

23. "Men o tsukeru koto ni yori shinkaku o emasu"; Yokomichi (1984, 23–24).

24. Another such project in the prewar period was Kanze Sakon's efforts to revise the texts of his school's canon of plays. Sakon enlisted the top *nō* specialists of the era, including Nonomura Kaizō, Nogami Toyochirō, Kobayashi Shizuo, and Miyake Noboru, to help edit and write commentary for plays. Besides being a strong proponent of the sanctity of Okina, Sakon was one of the few prewar actors to write about Zeami's theories and attempt to reconcile his school's traditional lore with scholarly interpretations of the same writings—as, for example, the date of Kan'ami's death (Kanze Sakon 1939, 62).

25. According to Kanze Hisao (1991, 171–172): "In the modern era, the number of performances has increased, and more and more *nō* actors are likely just to take stage shortly after engaging in mundane activities like gossiping among themselves or watching television. However, I believe that it is impossible for that bunch to produce an excellent *nō* even by accident. This is not just true for the lead actor. Unless every one of the chorus members and stage attendants manifests a sense of spiritual urgency inside themselves in some way or another the *nō* will not succeed on stage at all."

26. Kita Roppeita acknowledges there are many variations in the way to perform Okina, but he condemns such variations as contrary to the spirit of piety required to perform the dance. For similar reasons, he says that "deity *nō*" such as *Takasago* should be performed without alteration (Kita 1978, 11).

27. See Teele (1984, 77). Despite this assertion, Kongō Ukyō was said to have ordered the destruction of all of the Kongō school's secret writings at his death in 1936. See Miyake (1976, 202–203).

28. Roland Barthes (1972, 142) describes a myth as the effort to make the "contingency appear eternal."

29. The tortoise is said to live ten thousand years and the crane one thousand. This passage, included in Kanze Sakon (1994, 2) is from a late-Heian-era popular ballad (*imayō*). The Kanze school's rendering of the "god song" dates from the eighteenth century when Kanze Motoakira changed the verse "*dōdō tarari*" to "*tōtō tarari*." The Konparu, Kongō, and Kita schools still sing the former version.

30. The Buddhist heaven of Tōriten (Sanskrit: Trayastrimsa) is the second of the six heavens of bliss.

31. The five lakes mentioned in this passage are in China near Lake Tai Fu.

32. From *Hachijō kadensho*, (1995, 517). For the translation I referred to Amano Fumio's analysis (1995, 36–37).

## REFERENCES

- Amano Fumio. 1995.  
*Okina sarugaku kenkyū*. Osaka: Izumi Shoin.
- Barthes, Roland. 1972.  
*Mythologies*. Translated by Annette Lavers. New York: Hill & Wang.
- Bethe, Monica. 1984.  
 “Okina: An Interview with Takabayashi Kōji, Actor of the Kita School.”  
*Mime Journal* 1984: 93–103.
- De Poorter, Erika, 1989.  
 “Nō Which Is No Nō: The Ritual Play Okina.” *Maske und Kothurn* 2–3:  
 21–30.
- Gluck, Carol. 1978.  
 “The People in History: Recent Trends in Japanese Historiography.”  
*Journal of Asian Studies* 38(1):25–50.
- Hachijō kadensho*. 1995.  
 Edited by Hayashiya Tatsusaburō. In *Nihon shisō taikai* 23. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Hardacre, Helen. 1989.  
*Shintō and the State, 1868–1988*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terrence Ranger, eds. 1983.  
*The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Honda Yasuji. 1958.  
*Okina sono hoka: Nō oyobi kyōgenko no futatsu*. Tokyo: Meizendō Shoten.
- Jikkanshō (taikōbon)*. 1992.  
 In *Jikkanshōkei densho*, vol. 1. Edited by Omote Akira. Tokyo: Wan’ya Shoten.
- Kanze Hisao. 1991.  
*Kokoro yori kokoro ni tsutaeru hana*. Tokyo: Hakusuisha.
- Kanze Sakon. 1939.  
*Nōgaku zuisho*. Tokyo: Kawade Shobō.
- , ed. 1994.  
*Kamiuta*. Tokyo: Hinoki Shoten.
- , ed. 1995.  
*Kanzeryū hyakubanshū*. Tokyo: Hinoki Shoten.
- Ketelaar, James Edward. 1990.  
*Of Heretics and Martyrs in Meiji Japan: Buddhism and Its Persecution*.  
 Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Kinoshita Keiken. 1890.  
*Nōgaku unnōshū*. Tokyo: Nōgakusha.
- Kita Roppeita. 1978.  
 “Roppeita Geidan.” In *Nō, kyōgen, bunraku*. Vol. 3 of *Nihon no geidan*.  
 Tokyo: Kyūgei Shuppan.
- Komatsu Kazuhiko. 1985.  
*Kamigami no seishinshi*. Tokyo: Hokuto Shuppan.

- Konparu Kunio. 1983.  
*The Noh Theater: Principles and Perspectives*. Tokyo: Weatherhill.
- Kyakuraika*. 1995.  
 Edited by Omote Akira and Katō Shūichi. In *Nihon shisō taikai* 22.  
 Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Meishukushū*. 1995.  
 Edited by Omote Akira and Katō Shūichi. In *Nihon shisō taikai* 22.  
 Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Miyake Noboru. 1976.  
*Nōgaku geiwa*. Tokyo: Hinoki Shoten.
- Morita Mitsuharu. 1992.  
*Nōgaku oboe no shochō*. Tokyo: Nōgaku Shorin.
- Nakamura Itaru. 1994.  
*Muromachi nōgaku ronkō*. Tokyo: Wan'ya Shoten.
- Nishino Haruo and Haneda Akira. 1987.  
*Nō, kyōgen jiten*. Tokyo: Heibonsha.
- Nogami Toyochirō. 1948.  
*Nō: Kenkyū to hakken*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Omote Akira. 1979.  
*Nōgakushi shinkō*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Ōwada Takechi. 1935.  
*Nō utai hiketsu*. Tokyo: Gen'yōsha.
- Pernet, Henry. 1992.  
*Ritual Masks: Deceptions and Revelations*. Translated by Laura Grillo.  
 Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Rath, Eric. 1998.  
 "Actors of Influence: Discourse and Institutional Growth in the History of the Noh Theater." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan.
- . 1999.  
 "Legends, Secrets, and Authority: Hachijō Kadensho and Early Modern Noh." *Monumenta Nipponica* 54(2):169–194.
- Salz, Jonah. 1997.  
 "Roles of Passage: Coming of Age as a Japanese Kyogen Actor." Ph.D. dissertation, New York University.
- Sarugaku dangi*. 1995.  
 Edited by Omote Akira and Katō Shūichi. In *Nihon shisō taikai* 22.  
 Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Shigeyama Sensaku. 1978.  
 "Kyōgen hachijūnen." In *Nō, kyōgen, bunraku*. Vol. 3 of *Nihon no geidan*.  
 Tokyo: Kyūgei Shuppan.
- Staal, Frits. 1996.  
 "The Meaninglessness of Ritual." In *Readings in Ritual Studies*. Edited by Ronald Grimes. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall.
- Teele, Rebecca. 1984.  
 "Recollections and Thoughts on Nō: An Interview with Kongō Iwao, Head of the Kongō School of Nō." *Mime Journal* 1984:74–92.

Toida Michizō. 1985.

*Nō: Kami to kōjiki no geijutsu.* Tokyo: Serika Shobō.

Umewaka Rokurō. 1964.

*Utai o hajimeru hito no tame ni.* Tokyo: Ikeda Shoten.

Yokomichi Mario. 1984.

*Nōgeki shōyō.* Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō.

Yoshida Tōgo. 1906.

“Okina (shikisanban) no koten ni tsuite.” *Nōgaku* 4(1):15–28.

*Zenpō Zōdan.* 1995.

Edited by Hayashiya Tatsusaburō. In *Nihon shisō taikēi* 23. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.