CHAPTER 2

PLOTTING THE HERITAGE OF NOH

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Noh or Nogaku is one of the most important and oldest traditional forms of Japanese theater, which has been in vogue since 14th century. As a live tradition, Noh theatre has survived over all these centuries and has developed itself in to a form of stage art. Sekine (1985) observes that six hundred years old Noh theatre, can now be studied not only in its own right but as an introduction and explanation to Japanese culture in a wider sense. All these six hundred years Noh were performed as a stage art and continued to develop through the changes in Japanese culture. According to Konparu (1983) Noh is the classical stage art of Japan, developed from a variety of sacred rituals and festival entertainment arts. This was brought to a state of refinement and maturity during the Muromachi period (1336-1568).

Even though there is not much evidence of the origin of Noh, it is obvious that Noh drew the theatrical motivation from such art forms as Sangaku, Gigaku, Bugaku, Dengaku and Kusemai, etc… The earliest form of Japanese theatrical entertainment is Gigaku which was introduced into Japan in AD 612 from Southern China. There are also arguments that attach the origin of this art to India and Greece.
Nomura Shiro (1997)\textsuperscript{1} is of the firm opinion that to recognize Noh one should be aware of its origination which dates back to more than thousand years. Art forms like Sarugaku and Dengaku was by the Chinese and Koreans and was popularized in Japan over years. During Muromachi period the Ashikaga Shoguns and later the Tokugawa shoguns of the Edo Period, raised it to a dignified art form. This later added elegance of the art, which is visible in its present form.

The introduction of Chinese culture to Japan was thought to be the reason for the new philosophical religious concepts introduced then or imbibed and the art seems to demonstrate this at on a physical level. On the one hand it was Bugaku and Gigaku court dance and music forms that employed masks and rich fabrics in their costumes and on the other Sangaku-an acrobatic and mime entertainment form which was popular in public were the major art forms that were to Japan.

2.2 THE HISTORICAL ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT

Noh’s first Origins have not yet been traced although an immense amount of time and labor has been spent by academics and art historians in investigating its roots. It is indeed worthwhile to study the different stages and developments Noh have through as an art form over centuries. To grasp the meanings of Noh as an art it is necessary to have an understanding of its centuries-old traditions, for these traditions
have been the language through which Noh performers and audiences have spoken about Noh from the medieval age to the present (Sekine, 1985). Naturally all traditional art forms are deeply connected with costumes in the community from where it originated. Thus it is important to know both mythical and historical versions’ of the origin and development of Noh.

2.2.1 Pre-Historical Period

Documentation of pre-historical period depends on the legendary stories that are handed through oral communication from generation to generation. These stories on the legends of gods and their supernatural activities deal with mythology than with facts and logical thoughts. These myths contain tales of supernatural activities of heroes in harmony with the conservative meaning of the word. It can also be a formulation of fundamental beliefs and experiences handed down to a particular community in the memorable way. As fundamental beliefs, myths are building blocks of an ethos that constitute a group’s mode of self-understanding.

The word *Nogaku* is a recent term that refers to both Noh and Kyogen which was known as *Sarugaku* in the early stages. *Sarugaku* was an older performing art that developed in to *Sarugaku Noh* and gave rise to Noh. As Ortolani (1995) indicates there is little scholarly consensus on the use of the terms *Sarugaku, Sarugaku Noh* and
Noh to indicate different historical stages in development of this art and he adds that Noh performers might have referred to themselves as Sarugaku performers until recently. There are several interpretations on the origin of Sarugaku that is closely combined with the mythical stories and facts. The first and important version is from the writings of Zeami Motokiyō.

Zeami Motokiyō (1363-1443) was both the author and stage performer of the finest plays in the repertoire. He and his father Kanami Kiyotsugu (1333-1384), synthesized the form of Sarugaku that became so popular a stage art performed as Noh, today. In addition, Zeami was a fruitful theoretician who left a cluster of treatises on the art of acting for his heirs meant to be studied in secret. Zeami claimed in his first essay, Fushi-Kadan, that the origin of Sarugaku (as Noh was called in his time) was enacted in the episode of Amano-Iwato in the Age of the Gods (Sekine, 1985).

According to Zeami (1974)² the myth on the very origin of Sarugaku happened as follows when the sun goddess, Amaterasu-Omikami, hid herself in a rock cave called Amano-Iwato, darkness covered the world. Myriads of deities, including Himanemino-Mikoto who was the son of the Moon God, gathered at the Amano-Kaguyama Mountain and tried to coax her out by playing Kagura music and giving comical performances. Amongst them, Amano-Uzumeno-Mikoto came
forward and put a branch of the sacred tree on her head and danced and sang, stamping her feet in a state of trance. The Sun goddess heard this faintly and opened the door of her cave a crack, so that light once again fell on the world. The faces of all the deities looked white. This performance by Amano-Uzumeno-Mikoto was the origin of Sarugaku. However another version of the same story says that Sun Goddess opened the door of her cave upon hearing the laughter of the Gods as they watched Amano-Uzumeno-Mikoto shedding her upper garments and letting her lower garments fall into disarray as she danced in a trance. It was the hilarity caused by this topless goddess that brought light back to the world.

In the third version Zeami suggested a possible Indian origin for Sarugaku. During Buddhist reign a rich man builds a Gionshoja temple and holds a service in it for the dead. While Gautama, the preacher was making his peroration, Aryadeva came in with thousands of skeptics. Following the sign of brandishing branches from the sacred tree Sariputra, a disciple of Gautama slipped into a room behind the hall where he presented sixty-six sketches of mimes. As the skeptics heard the entertainment they gathered in the room to listen to the music of the flutes and drums. Thus Gautama was able to conclude his preaching. This is considered as an origin of Sarugaku in India.
From the discussions above it is revealed that the first version on the origin of *Sarugaku* concentrates on its divine roots; the second on dance, while the final version was aimed at giving a prestigious origin to *Srugaku* in an era where the performers were considered as untouchables. These legendary origins of *Sarugaku*, whether in India or in Japan, is obviously mythological but at the same time the writings of Zeami provides a fundamental understanding of the origin and traces its dependency on religious organizations and its Buddhist influence that originated from India.

2.3 DEVELOPMENT THROUGH VARIOUS STAGES IN HISTORY

The study attempts to divide the development of Noh in the various periods in history for the convenient understanding based on the changes of kingdoms and rulers in Japan. The main period in that includes the Nara Period (710-794), the Heian Period (794-1192), the Kamakura Period (1192-1333), the Muromachi Period (1333-1573) and the Edo Period (1600-1868). Conversely, the transformation in Noh can also be measured by the different names obtained along its development namely *Sangaku, Sarugaku, Sarugaku Noh* which now is known as Noh.
2.3.1 The Nara Period (710-794)

The early form of Noh was shaped in the Nara Period, when the Sangaku and Sarugaku spread into Japan from China. Both forms consist of lively dances, song and mysticism. This was the first step of the development of the great Noh tradition. Sangaku was rather like a circus with its acrobats, conjurors, jugglers and clowns. Sangaku was beginning to include music and dance in its repertoire towards the end of the period of the Tang dynasty in China. This made it more theatrical in concept and soon even began to include dialogue (Sekine, 1985). Sangaku was protected by the imperial court and gradually extended among to the common people.

Sarugaku, a derivative of the sankaku, first appeared as an entertainment with trained monkeys. The name itself came from saru which means monkey. Later it become more formal and was used on ritualistic religious occasions. From there it developed as the Sarugaku Noh where the art form gained a reliable story and a plot for its performance.

2.3.2 The Heian Period, (794-1192)

While on one hand, Sangaku remained outside the literary culture, it could present amusement to the public on such occasions as religious festivals held at local shrines and at temples. The trained monkeys, its acrobats and magicians were a
gorgeous part of the show. *Sarugaku* was often performed on special occasions attended by high ranking aristocrats while *Sangaku*, remained a public entertainment for the masses. The *Sangaku* actors developed sketches and mimes to entertain the illiterate public. On the other hand, the upper class culture *Sarugaku*, was not at all shared by the ordinary people who remained illiterate. However, towards the end of the Heian period and with the rise of the Samurai kingdom the status of the *Sangaku* actors’ enhanced in the community. The Change in the name of their art from *Sangaku* to *Sarugaku* sounded impressive and more esteemed.

In the middle of the Heian period with the rise of religious movement Shinto became the origin of a new art form called *Dengaku*. *Dengaku* had been generally performed in the Heian period, in the rural areas outside Kyoto as part of the harvest festivals. The main part of *Dengaku* was a dance called *Dengaku-Odori*, accompanied by instruments such as *Binzasara* and acrobatics with *Kakaashi* and *Katanadama*. In the Kamakura period *Dengaku* and *Sangaku* (by then called *Sarugaku*) had strong mutual influence on each other (Sekine, 1985).

### 2.3.3 The Kamakura Period (1192 -1333)

*Sarugaku* and *Dengaku* remained as the main entertainment for ordinary people. *Sarugaku* concentrated on the performance in religious ritual. `In order to
perform its religious role, Sarugaku developed in complexity and came to include two quite different forms of drama. One was musical drama based on such serious themes as the portrayal of legendary heroes and of historical events; and the other was comedy which later developed into Kyogen (Sekine, 1985).

In the Kamakura Period, Sarugaku established more relationship between the temple and shrines which was symbolized by the importance of Okina in Sarugaku. Okina was thought to have been the portrayal of a dramatised Buddhist ritual. Zeami regarded Okina as the archetype of Noh dancing and singing. Assimilation of Okina gave a divine shade to the Sarugaku and the play became as important as a religious service itself. It soon began to be performed in the festivals as the most important program. As a result the Sarugaku actors were no longer complete outcasts. Religious events were of paramount significance to the Sarugaku troupes And so it became their most solemn duty to attend them apart from the regular source of income (Sekine, 1985). The association with temple made Sarugaku troupes more responsible and in case of failure of a member to attend the ceremonies of the temple forced him to leave the troupe forever.

Towards the end of the Kamakura era the troupes started giving occasional benefit performances. The mutual concern was with the temple, called Kanjin-Sarugaku meant in order to raise funds for the maintenance of the holy
buildings. They started public performances which were a mixture of all popular entertainment performances such as Sarugaku, Dengaku, furyu and shirabyoshi known as Kanjin-Kogyo.

Dengaku and Sarugaku became much more dramatic and were nominated as Dengaku Noh and Sarugaku Noh. Sarugaku further developed into a form called Kyogen-comedies made up of witty dialogues and improvisations. Through this development the actors of Sarugaku troupes started earning more money for their lively hood and acquiring more confidence to refine their performing techniques and contents of the plays.

2.3.4 The Muromachi Period (1333 – 1573)

During Muromachi periods, Sarugaku Noh and Dengaku Noh almost reached their peak of perfection as performing arts. In these periods there were many celebrated actors in both fields who influenced and encouraged each other that helped enhance the development of the Noh art. This was termed as the golden period of Noh. During the reign of third emperor (Shogun) the Noh was considered more than a temple ritual. The Shogun protected the art of Noh in place of the temple. The creative changes in stage, costume, props, acting all perfected the art of Noh theatre (Sekine, 1985).
As per Zeami’s consideration Itchu, Kiami (Dengaku actors), Kannami, and Doami (Sarugaku actors) were the popular actors who have done the preliminary works to establish Noh as a performing art. Noh was given what was essentially its final form by Kannami and Zeami father and son who may conveniently be regarded as having worked for Noh over hundred years between 1350 and 1450. These two, whose names figure as the greatest in the history of Noh, were belong to the first rank irrespective of whether they are writers, actors or the musicians. After the death of the Shogen Yoshimitsu the next Shogun Yoshimochi was not very interested in Sarugaku and particularly in Zeami. He preferred and supported Dengaku in general and helped Zoami the Dengaku actor. This situation put Noh in to condition of decline. The eighth Shogun Yoshimas’s time was the second peak of culture in the Muromachi period and the Shogun was so much in favor to Onami. This time Zen Philosophy was widely implemented to the art and ink painting and Noh become more formalized and stylized in its presentation.

2.3.5 The Edo Period (1600-1868)

Tokugawa kingdom now called Tokyo had a strict cast system prevalent where Samurai was the upper cast and hinin the untouchables. The samurai chose to watch the Noh theatre since they respected the order and tradition above all else. Noh
became a ceremonial entertainment for the samurai and lost its large public audience (Sekine, 1985). The Sogunate made up a structure for preserving Noh as a traditional art. During this reign four troupes namely, Komparu, Hosho, Kanze and Kongo were prevalent; however the rise of a new school Kita was unexpected in the world of Noh where everything was so traditional. Five of this Noh troupes started taking responsibility for all the performing arts in the shogunate ceremonies. Conversely this came up with a catch of stricter training and perfection of performance. As a result Noh transformed into a powerful art form which represent more spiritual and internal energy. This made Noh an elite art of the Samurai community.

In the end of the Edo period more chanting books and kyogen plays were published. This made Noh popular to again among the common people. In general, Noh performances reflected the policy of the Shogunate where changes were not encouraged neither in the style nor acting nor content of the plays. In the end of the Edo period the form became more structured and all movements were fixed and stylized. Noh became slower than before and pauses came to have greater importance in acting.
2.3.6 The Modern Period (19-21 Century)

When the Meiji era (1868-1912) came the people destroyed the caste system. All the customs were banned and Noh faced the most difficult time in its history. Noh lost all its patrons such that many of the actors gave up their profession. Several schools of supporting actors and musicians also disappeared from the scenario. Gradually the government began to use the traditional form to attract the foreigners. This started to work out and slowly lots of foreign funds came to protect the long live tradition of Noh. The then new financial groups and household agencies started to give new breath to the Noh and Kyogen which came to be known as Nogaku. It made new audience and performers under one roof called Shiba-Nogaku-Do. This is the starting of the indoor Noh stage where several great actors appeared and Noh was studied and researched. This made Noh to flourish among people of all ages and walks of life (Council, 2004).  

During Japan’s defeat at the end of the Second World War Noh’s support structure was lost or radically changed and Noh once again entered the phase of dangerous time. Through the devoted efforts of each generation of Noh actors who performed newly written Noh and Kyogen plays and toured all over the country, Noh started displaying unprecedented prosperity ever noticed in its history. Owing to its frequent performances abroad it is today gaining high acclaim all over the world.
Noh were successfully transformed from its aboriginal form to a classical form over a period of six centuries through a great amount of cultural and social change. Although there were brief periods in the late fifteenth and nineteenth centuries where its popularity and patronage declined significantly Noh maintained an unbroken performance tradition. Several factors have added to it including the strong passion of Japanese culture towards the old forms (whether aesthetic, political or economic). Instead of being discarded with the emergence of new forms they proceed in their own ways while new forms develop on parallel tracks. As is true in most of the Japanese arts, once Noh was perfected, Noh performers felt it should be preserved rather than developed into newer forms. Other performers created new theatres such as the puppet theatre, Kabuki and various modern forms, which continue to exist alongside Noh. During its early development Noh has influenced by many other art forms such as dance and drama. Although these later arts drew on the Noh structures, techniques and texts, Noh maintained its uniqueness due course. Ultimately Noh reflect a way of life and social structure very remote from that of present-day Japan.

2.4 REPERTOIRE OF NOH PLAYS

When we go back to the history there are more than two thousand years since Noh plays were written It is found that majority of the plays were written during the
time of Tokugawa period (1603-1868) though many of the plays have never been performed on the stage. Nearly two hundred and forty plays performing today were written in the fifteenth century making up the present day repertoire for schools. Popular among them were written by Kannami, (1333-1384), Zeami, (1363-1443), Zenchiku (1405-1468), Motomasa (?-1432), and Kojiro (1434-1516).

2.4.1 The Structure of the Noh Play

Most of the plays in Noh theatre share a common structure. As the play begins, a monk playing the role of what is called Waki enters. He does not wear a mask in any of the play. Waki arrives at a place while on a pilgrimage over various historical places in Japan. The place reminds the monk of some noble man or woman, possibly an outcast who is connected to the place. Following the introduction the scene is set and the main character mae-Shite, enters wearing a mask more often. The term mae-Shite is used for this main character during the first half of the plot. The Waki then asks the mae-Shite about the history of the place and persons associated with it. Initially Shite claims or pretends not to know much but gradually a fairly detailed story emerges. Finally the Shite admits that he is actually the ghost of a person celebrated in the legend of that place. The disguised person Shite then leaves the stage whose exit is termed as nakaiti. This marks the end of the first half of the
play. However this does not mark an interval for the audience. The Waki continues to remain on stage and begins a conversation with the ai (a kyogen actor without a mask who has been waiting at the hashigakari (a bridge that connects the stage and the dressing room and also functions as the extension of the stage). This conversation consists of the Waki repeating the questions asked earlier by mae-Shite, and the ai repeating the mae-Shite’s answers. This however is in witty and simpler words. Then the Waki tells the ai about the person whom he had just then met and parted from. The ai explains that this must have been the ghost who haunts the place in disguise. After suggesting to the monk to pray for the ghost the ai disappears. The Waki puts this suggestion to practice. But while he is praying he enters into a dream-like state (mgun). The ghost appears again this time not in the world as such but as part of the Waki’s dream. He wears a different costume from the one worn in the first scene. In this new guise he is called the ato–Shite or main character of the second half of the plot. The ato- Shite speaks of his obsession with the past and the agony he endures in the present and asks for the monk to pray for his release. The Waki continues to pray until the ghost, set free by the prayers, expresses his joy by performing a dance. At the conclusion of the dance the ato- Shite disappears.

A Noh play is a drama in which the Shite’s ghost, upon entering the dream world of the Waki, is also able to enter the subconscious of each member of the
They share the confession of his obsession with mortal life and his agony in the after-life and his request for prayers for his recovery are addressed to them too.

His liberation is symbolized by his exit from the stage. The plays in the Noh repertoire are ranked according to difficulty, and an actor must have the permission of the head of the school to perform certain plays. This permission is granted when the head of the school deems the actor skilled and experienced enough to perform the role. The particular plays which serve as the landmark of development vary somewhat from school to school, but the four plays which most often serve this function are Shakkyo, Midare, Okina, and Dojoji. Actor Tsumura Reijiro of the Kan-Ze school claims that for a Noh actor this play (Dojoji) presents the single most important barrier to be overcome in order to be accepted as a fully qualified member of his profession. The critical evaluation of this first performance is of such importance that it can dominate the course of his entire professional life (Schechner & Appel, 1990).

Based on the subject treatment and the main characters—such as god, men, women, lunatics, or demons— the Noh plays are classified into five groups. Although the time of its early implementation is unclear, during the Muromachi period Zeami modified the concepts of Jo, Ha, Kyu, a fundamental principle of an organic movement which is derived from the central Bugaku principle. He decided and arranged the performance in to five segments that is Jo-represents one introductory
movement, *Ha-* represents three developments and *Kyu* represents a final sequence.

The play *Okina* is an exemption in that; it stands alone more as a ritual than a performance for entertainment. In the Edo period all performances started with the *Okina* and then were followed by each play from all five categories. The duration of the performance is from morning and continues through the day that begins right in the morning.

### 2.5 CLASSIFICATION OF NOH PLAYS

Noh plays are classified into five groups that is Kami-Mono (god plays), Shura-Mono (warrior plays), Kazura-Mono (women play), MonoGurui – Mono (madness plays), Kiri Noh (Demon Plays).

#### 2.5.1 First Group: God Plays (Kami-Mono)

The first category plays are called *Waki* (side) Noh, *Kami* (god) Noh or Shinji (Shinto ritual) Noh. The main character *Shite* usually represents the god in this plays. God appears in the human world for moment and praises the peace and wealth of the world with blessing. Sekine (1985) is of the opinion that generally the plots of plays in this category plays are usually simple stories based on well known myths. Such plays render a mood of celebration and joy. Consequently, they are not dramatic
and they serve to cater to a religious function since their performances express a search for peace by means of the performance. The *Shite* character gives blessing to the *Waki* and the audience. Sometimes the *Shite* will be the spirit of a tree or flower which is the religious substitute to the god or goddess. According to Konparu (1983) the *Kami* (god) in Japan, has no specific form and is always considered as being manifestation of logos. Typically *kami* has existence only in thought and language but in Noh they are portrayed with concrete images. This shows that the introductory plays mostly concentrate on harmony of joy and blessing. The religious association the portrayal of the icon and the aesthetic qualities of such kinds of plays usually involves the creation of an auspicious atmosphere.

### 2.5.2 Second Group: Warrior Plays (Shura-Mono)

The second category plays are called *Shura* – Noh or *Shura-mono*. *Shura* was a war-loving evil god in Brahmanism and the protector of religion in Buddhism (Sekine, 1985). Generally the *Shite* will be the ghost of a famous warrior from the Heike (*Taira*) or Genji (*Minamoto*) family. The topic of *Shura* Noh plays are all about the Samurai warriors who died in the battle and whose souls are involved in revenge. The agony of this warrior in hell and the recovery from it are the main elements in the theme of the plays. A majority of the plays are tragedies (*make-shura*) and written
based on the tragic fall of the Heike families. Heike-Monogatari (The tale of the Heike) forms the base story for these plays. The main aim of this category of plays is not to show the battle but to show the after effects of the battle and a wandering soul whose body is dead. Konparu (2005) believes that in this sort of plays, time and space are transcended as life is viewed from the perspective of death. The first part Shite speaks of something that happened in the past and the second part enact that tale in the present world in the form of effective dramatic concentration. Often such plays end up with the departure of the Shite after Waki prays for his soul with a rapid tempo.

The above mentioned paragraph highlights the fact that the warrior plays can create an atmosphere of bravery and vigor and also provide scope or inspiration for energetic physical action involving both depression and the glory of death.

2.5.3 Third Group: Women Play (Kazura-Mono)

Kazura in Japanese literally means wig. Generally the Shite in these plays has to wear wig to portray women characters. The main sources for the women plays are the Genji-monogathari (Tale of Genji) and the Ise –Monogathari (Tale of Ise). Music in these plays are more melodious than in any other group and the movements are more gentle and minimal. As Konparu (1983)7 said these plays draw the viewer into the elegant evocative and mysterious state of grace (Yugen). Usage of the most
elaborate and wonderful masks and attractive costumes it can really fascinate the audience through its performance. Women Noh is having the most important position in the Noh world among the five groups in the repertoire. According to Sekine, (1985) love in these plays is revealed as a great effort and struggle for the heroine. With the influence of Buddhism, Zeami and other authors the character of the heroine is torn between passion and sinful suffering which makes love more painful and sad. Most of the plays in this group have the structure of Mugen-Noh, in which there is an intermission which divides the play into two halves. It is obvious that when a woman character is the central part of the play it gives special emphasis on creating a graceful atmosphere. Apparently this type of play makes the most representative use of song and dance; the very basis of the art of Noh. As it shows, the seed of this category is filled with grace to provide a proper theatrical effect on the stage.

2.5.4 Fourth Group: Madness Plays (Monogurui–Mono)

The fourth group of plays known as madness plays or lunatic pieces is most dynamic and dramatic. These plays also have a great variety of themes. The Shite will be distressed on emotional or psychosomatic basis. As Konparu (1983) remarks that, the apparent madness of exorcism and shamanistic religious rites were part of the original form of Sarugaku. Transformed in the form of passion to god this category of
Noh was named madness. Many of the fourth category plays show the realistic or imitative acting style. Further this includes a variety of genres like entertainment, love or jealousy, with a dramatic emotional piece set in the present.

It shows that many of the plays in this category make an immediate harmony with the audience since the action required no explanation. The element of madness is theatrically so effective that any play in this classification is enjoyable beyond doubt.

2.5.5 Fifth Group: Demon Plays (Kiri-Noh)

This category has a more dynamic plot than any other group in Noh. These plays are performed fantastically and vigorously. The action of the play is much faster compared to other plays and sometimes the actors even do acrobatic performances on stage. Zeami suggests actors to do this category play with lots of energy and vigor so that it can surprise the audience. The Shite portrays Non-human, Demon, Evil spirit, Animal or an Imaginary character with human heart. It seems that the Demon plays show quality of delicacy within strength.

The above mentioned groups show that classification of plays started since the time of Zeami and it was a custom to take one play from each group and perform in the above order. It is also reveals the effect and importance of Jo, Ha, Kyu in the structuring of the performance. Further it reveals that the classification of the Noh
plays was determined not only by the subject matter but also by the role of the *Shite* or protagonist. It should be noted however, that these classifications were applied to an existing collection of plays. Although rarely performed in the original five movement format, performance today still follows the same general arrangement.

### 2.6 THE STAGE OF NOH THEATRE (NOH BUTAI)

Years of research and innovations of the Noh artists ended up with the most scientific and transparent form of a performance space called Noh butai. According to Kishibe (1974) one has to know the style of the stage to identify the specific nature of Noh. Noh butai (Noh stage) is a term that incorporates with the main stage, bridge and mirror room (see Fig 2.1). The stage is a square area with a blend of three spaces called hone butai- the main stage, Waki-za -the side stage and ato-za -the rear stage. Noh stages today are built in accordance with a code established in the Edo period called the Tokugawa Government Noh Stage Design Standards. With specified dimensions of each part, as well as the structure, construction method, materials, ornamentation and other details (Konparu, 1983). The stage is an empty space that gave more possibility to the performer and heightens the symbolic nature of the space. The entire performance area is elevated 136 cm from the audience level and is viewed from two sides.
2.6.1 The Main Stage (Hon butai)

Hon butai or the main performance area is about three hundred and twenty square feet of three-dimensional solid space with four pillars and a roof. There are cross beams about twelve feet from the stage floor and the ridgepole is about twenty-one feet from the floor. The stage floor is about three feet higher than the ground level. This foremost performance space is divided into three main areas Jo, Ha, and Kyu representing rear stage middle and front. Each area is further divided into three parts forming right, left and center stage from an actor’s angle. The first division Jo-za is upstage right where the main entry and exit happens. The next area is called Daisho-mae the upstage centre. The drummers usually sit just behind this.
The third area, Fue-ze-mae the upstage left is where the flutists are seated. The second partition of the stage represents the Ha (breaking, development) region also having three divisions that is Wakisho known as Waki front on the centre right, Shonaka-the centre stage and the centre left known as Jiutai-mae in front of the orchestra area. The division of the third area is on the down stage that represents the Kyu (active, climatic) region. On the down stage right corner is what is known as Sumi that has a pillar named sighting pillar (Mistuke basira). Shosaki is down stage centre which is the foremost part of the stage and Waki-za-mae downstage left is in front of the place where Waki the second character is seated.

The above references provide a clear picture of the main stage in the Noh theatre architecture. It is clear that the division of the Noh stage depends upon several factors. The stage itself contributes classical composition of the play since it is fixed on the basis of actions and activities of the characters on the stage. Learning about the nine divisions of the main stage is very important for a Noh actor since most of the authors’ use these units while specifying all the movement and action in the choreography. The major part of the performance takes place in this main stage which is based on the Jo-Ha-Kyu-Philosophy.
2.6.2 The Side Stage (Waki-Za)

The side stage is a performance place developed by the end of the sixteenth century as part of the formation of the Noh. This place is designed as the extension of the left side of the main stage. There are two performance positions on the stage. One is made for Waki and the other for Jiutai (chorus). Waki’s seat is at down stage on the border line of the main and side stage and the Jiutai sits on the up stage of this particular locale. Total area of Waki-za is nearly about four feet from the left side of the main stage with a railing on two sides. The roof of the main stage covers the side and the floorboards that run vertically.

2.6.3 The Rear Stage (Ato-Za)

The Ato-za is an extension of about nine feet back from the upstage or Jo region of the main stage. This place is covered with a thatched roof shed that is an extension of the back of the main roof. The place occupied by the flutist and the drummers known as hayashi-za is the main performance position on the rear stage. The second performance location, upstage right corner of the rear stage is designed for the kyoken-attendant-of the Shite called Kyoken-za. Occasionally, the kyoken of the instrumentalist may sit just behind the Shite Kyoken.
2.6.4 The Bridge (Hashi-Gakari)

Hashi-gakari is the second part and a unique feature of the Noh butai. The meaning of hashi is bridge and gakari is suspension. This pathway among the main stage and the mirror room is open on both ends with railings on both sides. Its peaked thatched roof is separate from main stage roof and ceiling that is refined with beautiful roof beams. Hashi gakari with 42 to 77 feet length and 4.97 to 6.96 feet width is divided in to three parts based on the Jo Ha Kyu principle. The first division represents Jo known as mask board where the actor challenges the existence of the mask located next to the mirror room curtain. Ha place is known as the music board where the actor starts to move based on the rhythm of the instrumental music located on the centre part of the bridge. Finally, at the fan board, the actor grabs the attention of the audience to the holding of the fan in their hands. This is the Kyu place located next to the main stage and the upstage part of this area called Kyogen-za is the place for the ai-kyogen. The bridge is generally in an angle of 100 to 105 degrees from the main stage even though there are slight variations based on the width and length of the bridge. According to Konparu (1983) hashi-gakari (suspension bridge) means something aerial. Thus, the emphasis is more on the time-transcending journeys between this world and the other world of ghosts and spirits than on the general daily routine of the real human beings. To symbolize the natural background of the journey
there are three young pine trees set on the pebble mote in front of the bridge. The pines of the Noh stage function as visual landmarks for acting and are used in choreographic instructions. It is also important that the curtain and flute player should be in a straight line so that they could see the entrance and exit of the actor which help in timing the length of the music piece.

The mirror room is an extension of the dressing room and perhaps also an extension of the bridge but the curtain the separation and makes this place separate. There is a full-sized mirror in this room where the costumed Shite sits in front and gets into the masks and concentrates on becoming one with the image in the mirror. There is place for musician to sit and tune their instruments where the real invisible performance of the Noh will start. After the tuning up the instrumental players proceed along the far side of the bridge and take their places on stage when it is time for the Shite to enter. Shite’s performance starts behind the raised curtain similarly and continues even after the curtain is lowered. He continues his stately pace in character until he comes to a stop at a certain spot (Konparu, 1983). Noh begin and end in the mirror room reflecting very important and special places in the Noh theatre. This is the place where the actual beginning and ending of the performance happened. This is the place where the actor transforms as his character. This is also a preparation place for both musicians and actors. There is a curtained door near the entrance to the
bridge from the mirror room. This door is called *makuguchi*, which is framed by two pillars called *makuguchi-bashira*. There is a huge curtain *age-maku/kir* hung from the top between the two pillars used for the beginning and ending of the Noh. Usually the colors of the curtains are purple, white, red, yellow, and green from left to right. Two lover sides of the curtains are attached with the bamboo pole and the seated assistants use to rise and lower the curtain based on the command of the actor.

### 2.6.6 Audience Place (Kensho)

The literal meaning of *kensho* is the seeing place as translated in the literal sense. The audience space is divided into four units based on the angle of the seat. The first one called Shomen is the area directly in front of the stage and the next is the area facing the side known as Wakishomen. The third one Naka-shomen is the wedge in between the shomen and Waki-shomen or middle front and finally the Ji-ura is the place behind the chorus, which is rarely used for seating today. Over the years there has been a change from tiers of tatami-matted platforms to rows of modern theater seats that can ideally accommodate 350 to 500 audiences. However some traditional Noh theaters still maintain the old style. A wide area of rack with pebbles that separate the audience and the performers is named *Shirasu*. The gap between the *shirasu* and the main stage is formally bridged by a set of three or four step ladder
(kizahashi). Nowadays there is no function for this stairs except it is the mark of the center of the stage.

### 2.6.7 The Dressing Rooms

The dressing rooms in the Noh theatre are plain rooms with flooring by tatami-mats. Dressing rooms is connected with the mirror rooms by a sliding door. Generally there are separate rooms for Shite, Waki, instrumentalists, and kyogen players with the exception of some buildings where the performers share the rooms.

### 2.6.8 The Pillars in the Noh Stage

There are four pillars that provide border to the main stage. Every pillar is connected with some purpose and perception than just a support to the roof or ornamentation on the stage. As it gives a three dimensional quality of the performance to the audience it works as a visual landmark to the performers.

Shite bashira is the pillar which gives the central position to particular Shite performance while the second one Mituke bashira literary means sighting or eye-fixing pillar that helps an actor to determine his own position on the stage, particularly, while acting with his mask on. The third pillar is near to the position of Waki character is known as Waki bashira and Fue bashira while the fourth one is
located on the upstage left just near the flutist. Apart from the four main pillars there are pillars called Kirido guchi at the back of the stage. Kuogen pillar is near to the Kyogen seat, the upstage right corner of the rear stage where the bridge joins just behind that Koken pillar, is closest to the Koken’s seat. This shows that even the name of the pillar is based on the function or location of it. The stage floors are fully cleaned and polished like a mirror which helps the actor to make his movement fairly smooth and graceful; moreover, the reflection of the figure of the actor generates fantasy images on the stage. Fixing big hidden pots under the stages in several spots to reverberate the stamping of the actors feet is one of the uniqueness of the Noh stage design. There are four to six pots under the main stage, two to three beneath the rear stage and three under the bridge.

Rather more than a simple platform for the performance the Noh stage is an architectural space that creates drama with the indefinable participation of the audience. The design in Noh butai is more connected to the needs of the performers to create the character of Noh acting. The structure of the Noh stage is different from the idea of proscenium theatres and may be very close to the new avant-garde experimental theatres like the thrust and intimate performance studios or stages without curtain or theatre with stage and seating at the same level.
2.7 THE MUSIC OF NOH THEATRE

The music of Noh performs live on stage to create a harmony of energy and creative liberty for the performance. Music is the most important part in Noh performance as it creates the atmosphere and mood of the performance. The five elements in Noh music consists of Utai the solo singing by actors and chorus in unison and an ensemble of four instruments named Fue, Kotsuzumi, Otsuzumi, and Taiko. In addition there are sounds like the rhythmic stamping created by Shite actor on the stage and the set of bells used by the Kyogen actor.

2.7.1 The Vocal Music (Utai)

The vocal music of Noh chanted or spoken named Utai is a kind of poem or song. Although the construction of the drama varies according to the plot it is based upon a stereotyped form. This consists of sections placed in a certain order. Each section of singing consists of stereotyped melodic units. The melodic line is one that mainly conveys the words and their meanings to the audience (Kishibe, 1974). Thus the progression of Noh drama is exclusively connected with Utai that consists of non-rhythmic prose, (always delivered by an actor) either in non-meterical chanted verse or metrical chanted verse. The chorus sits in two rows; front and back, in a place called Jiutai-za and do the dynamic chanting known as Jiutai. During Jiutai the chorus
members describe the events, surroundings and recite the emotions of the character like some narrator. In principle, all Utai consists of phrase units (ku) of twelve syllables, a hemistich of seven syllables followed by a hemistich of five syllables. This form arose from the long tradition of Japanese poetry and also appears in children’s songs and folk songs. The physiological advantage may be as great as the literary precedent: sung in a standard melody and at a standard tempo, a unit of twelve syllables can usually be managed comfortably in one breath (Konparu, 1983).

Although the timing and the appropriate tone of the chorus members is controlled by the leader of the chorus named Jiashira they never try to bring a harmony in their chanting. Therefore each member chants in his individual voice. It is important to have an idea of the tone system of the melody and the vocalization of the Utai. Yowa-gin (gentle or melodic mode) and Tsuyo-gin (the stronger or dynamic mode) the two styles in vocalization of Utai give more specific impression on the Noh music and chanting in particular.

2.7.2 Melodic Mode Chant (Yowa-Gin)

Literal meaning of this mode of chanting is weak singing which also was known as soft singing (Ju-gin). This type of singing is used to express the complexity and sorrow depicted in the play. It has a recognizable melody with fixed pitches.
There are base pitches with a perfect fourth apart namely Ge (low) Chu (middle) Jo (high) and kuri (upper). However, standard pitch of singing depends upon the nature of the play the role and performer.

2.7.3 Dynamic Mode Chant (Tsuyo-Gin)

This strong mode of chant which is also known as go-gin is used for passages expressing excitement, bravery, or solemnity. The effect of this strong singing is very different from the melodic chanting. Rather than melodic rise and fall it is a kind of abstract melody with certain levels of intensity. A greatly refined musical technique is required to master this style of Utai and bring its beauty and power to life.

2.7.4 Intoned Speech (Kotaba)

*Kotaba* are a prose passage which is in contrast to the verse sung in either melodic or dynamic mode. For example, it is such as the *Waki’s* speech of self-introduction delivered in a non-rhythmical way. These speech passages are not distinguished by modes and are given only by an individual actor, never by the chorus.

It is evident from the above discussions that Noh required a natural voice in its chanting that produce a diaphragmatic breathing, reverberating through the chest
and head, and resonating within the oral cavity so that it sounds as though intense and swallowed. There are different categories of voice production in Noh that is classified in a traditional way based on the subjective and emotional criteria; however, it gives no concrete indication of pitch or physiological descriptions.

2.7.5 Instrumental Music (Hayashi)

The instrumental music of Noh jointly called hayashi or Noh-bayashi is composed of four musical instruments. As Kishibe (1974) remarks, that the instrumental ensemble of the Noh called Shi-byoshi generates a strong impression in creating a perfect atmosphere for each scene. The specific style of the ensemble structure in rhythm, call by drummers, and the refined style of elasticity contribute to this impression in actual performance. The refinement of the timber on each instrument is emphasized. The specialist who plays each instrument will be from different families or schools who have inherited sophisticated skills and style of performance.

2.7.6 Flute (Fue)

The only wind instrument in the hayashi is the flute called Nohkan. It is a unique instrument that is made of bamboo (not a single piece but a pipe constructed of
eight or twelve strips of narrowly split bamboo) with seven finger holes. *Nohkan* is special in not following a particular pitch or tonal scale thus each of them has holes located in different positions and the strips are dissimilar in length (See Fig 2.2). *Nohkan* collaborates in performance with Utai but its melody is different in line from that of the chanting. Generally there are two ways in which the instrument is played. The first one with a matching rhythm called *Awasebuki*, and the second one *Ashiraibuki* the unmatched companion that is incompatible in rhythm with drums and chorus. The *Ashiraibuki* is used to decorate the melody of the vocal music and express the state of mind or emotion of the main character to create a particular atmosphere.

*Figure: 2.2 The Noh Flute*

### 2.7.7 Small Shoulder Drum (Kotsuzumi)

This is a small two headed hand drum with animal skin positioned on both ends of a hollow wooden hourglass shaped body (See Fig 2.3). This is held in place by an orange colored cord (*shirabe*) laced through holes with a rim on its head.
Kotsuzumi is played by grasping the tuning cords shirabe with the left hand at the same time holding the drum up at the right shoulder and striking on the skin with right hand. The player controls the pitch and tune by manipulating the tension exerted on the cords with the left hand as well as manipulating the fingers on the right hand to strike the drum. For making the best tune and sound the skin should not be too dry. Therefore the player keeps breathing or putting saliva-wetted paper to the back skin or breathe on the front skin to keep it moist. The player continuously pays attention to the condition of the instrument.

2.7.8 The Large Hip Drum (Otsuzumi)

This is the drum that is also known as Okawa or large skin, which makes a sharper, higher sound and does not have variable pitch (See Fig 2.4). The cord of the large drum is tight so that the sound is determined by the strength of the strike or the player holds the drum skin after he strikes it. For about an hour before the performance, its cowhide skin is roasted in charcoal fire on both sides to make it dry and tight as possible while fixing them firmly on the body. The drummer grabs the cords with his left hand, rests the drum on his left thigh, and sounds it with his right hand. In this position, this large hand drum creates a contrasting sound along with a small hand drum that resonates in a well-balanced manner.
2.7.9 Drum (Taiko)

This drum, considerably larger than the other two drums that has a fixed pitch like Otsuzumi and is put on the floor with a stand and beaten with two drumsticks (See Fig 2.5). There are two types of techniques that the drummer uses here to play this instrument. One is to strike gently holding the sticks against the skin so that it can prevent the drum from resonating while the other way is to bounce the stick with different strengths to make strong, medium and gentle sound. The usage of the two drumsticks helps the player to create complicated rhythms that are often use to portray superhuman characters-such as god, Oni (demon) and spirits to add attraction to the Noh drama.

Instead of accompanying the dance or Utai the hayashi kata (instrumentalists) structure the music of Noh on an equal footing with Shite and Jiutai. Noh-bayashi not only leads to the development of the play during a concert with its
vocal music but also creates a dynamic rhythm which is as pure instrumental music. This in turn gives artistic life to the dance of the performer. The highlight of the Noh music lies in the most sophisticated combination of fitted and free rhythm between the vocal and the instrumental harmony (Kishibe, 1974). With the most economic use of instruments, Noh achieve one of the deepest and highest expressions possible in theatre. As a result, it is very different from the background music or accompaniment and occupies a particularly significant place in Noh.

Figure 2.5 Taiko

2.8 THE NOH COSTUMES

The costumes used in the Noh are called robes. According to Konparu (1983) it is outstanding in its texture, colour and form. Its weave, embroidery and patterns are indeed of great historical and cultural interest. Costume, like other elements of Noh is a system in which components are combined in accordance with certain rules. Shozoku, the inclusive term of the costume worn by Noh actors is roughly divided into four categories. Kitsukerui is a kimono like undergarment, Uwagirui, the outer
robe, *Hakamarui* a long stiffed divided skirt resembling baggy trousers, and *Obirui*-the ribbon.

### 2.8.1 Kitsukerui (Under Robe)

Generally there are three kinds of under robes which provide the shape for the costume.

- *Surihaku* (foil appliqué) is a small sleeved robe of pale white color with appliqué of gold or silver foil, which represents a woman’s skin. Generally, the gold foil on fabric with red indicates a young woman, while silver foil without red for middle aged or older women and in special case there are also robes with a stylized fish scale pattern in gold or silver.

- *Noshime* (striped) is a usual under robe that is commonly used for aged male characters, soldiers and common villagers with small sleeved robe in plain striped or checked fabric.

- *Nuihaku* is also used as under robe which is the same as that used for the aged male, soldiers and common villagers.

### 2.8.2 Uwagirui (Outer Robe)

There are twelve kinds of outer robes in the Noh costumes that vary according to characters types.
• Karaori, (Chinese weave) a representative of Noh costume is a small-sleeved robe of lush brocade, woven in Chinese style, one of the comparable intricacies. Karaori with red colour is used for the young woman and without red used for middle aged or old women characters.

• Nuihaku (embroidery, foil) is a small sleeved robe with gold or silver foil appliqué and embroidery on a satin weave base. The effect of these shimmering, gorgeous robes beautifies the Karaori and is used for both male and female roles.

• Atsuita(thick board) is similar to the Karaori but with geometrical patterns and used as under or outer robe principally for male characters.

• Choken meaning long silk is a diaphanous broad sleeved unlined cloak that is used for dancing. It has a gold thread pattern woven with the ground of white, purple, scarlet, pale green or pale blue. This is mostly used for female characters but sometimes is worn by noblemen characters in warrior Noh.

• Maiginu (dancing robe) is nearly the same as Choken (dancing robe) but front and the back of the borders are seamed at the sides and there is no tie cord.

• Kai ginu (hunting robe) is a loose cloak with a round collar and threaded cuffs. Lined Kai ginu is worn by the god, demon, other spirits and the unlined graze by the court nobles and the god.
• Noshi (direct robe) is much similar to the unlined Kagi ginu and is worn by emperors and aristocrats.

• Happi (receiving the low) is made with the same fabric of Kariginu. In that the striped one is used for the nobles of Taira clan with the right sleeve slipped off the shoulder, rolled up and inserted vertically into the back. On the other hand lined one is used for the Minamato warriors and demons.

• Sobatsugi (follow next) is a sleeveless Happi, which is used for common warrior, attendants and Chinese characters.

• So (plain cover) is the everyday dress of an ordinary person in medieval Japan. It is a wide sleeved hemp robe with stencil dyed designs worn with matching trousers.

• Hitatare (direct cover) is wide sleeved common dress of a warrior consisting of a matching robe and trousers like the suō made of stiff lined silk. This is sometimes worn beneath the trousers to give them shape and sometimes the robe is worn without the trousers.

• Mizu goromo (water robe) is a short wide sleeved cloak of very thin silk that is categorized by weave and pattern as plain weave, striped and gauze weave. The brown, plain weave is frequently worn by the Waki as a traveling priest, gauze weave by female characters and the striped by male characters.
2.8.3 Hakamarui (Trousers)

The four kinds of trousers called Hakama is one of the unique designs that evolved from the traditional costume of Japan. There are variations in color, shape and texture based on the character types.

- **Okuchi (large mouth)** is the plain colored hakama with back of stiff weave and softer pleated front, having very large openings at the ankles that are used for a variety of both male and female roles. They are usually white but may also be colored in red, purple, light green, or brown decorated with a repeated crest pattern.

- **Hangir or Hangiri (half cut)** is similar in shape as okuchi with gold linings and large design patterns made to portray gods, demons and warriors.

- **Naga bakama (long hakama)** is the hakama with very long trailing pant legs, upon which the performer treads, which is usually in scarlet colour.

- **Sashinuki (laced)** is a soft baggy pantaloons laced with cuffs and tied above the ankles allowing the fabric to balloon and fall softly to the ground.
2.8.4 Kaburimono (Headgear)

There are different kinds of head gears and wigs that incorporate with Noh Costume.

- kashira is a large mane like headpieces of red, white or black worn by supernatural beings, deities and demons.

- Katsura (wig) is the type of wigs which include the woman’s wig Katrura usually tied at the back, the long wig (naga katsura), the long switch (naga kamoji), the acolyte wig (kasshiki katsur), disheveled tresses (midare bin), the old woman’s wig (uba katsur) and the old man’s hair (jo gami).

- Tare (flowing) is a wig similar to katsura but worn with the hair flowing with black colour for young male and female characters and white for old characters.

- Kammuri (crown) is the official headgear worn by nobles, shrine officials, gods, and Chinese characters as well as special crown indicating dragons and demons in kanawa.

- Boshi (hat) represents all kinds of hats and caps worn by monks and other characters.

- Eboshi (bird hat) is a lacquered hats has a high crested peak especially those worn by court nobles in ancient times.
• Zukin (kerchief) is hoods and cowls worn by members of clergy.

In addition to this, the musicians, chorus and stage assistants usually wear formal male attire that is black kimono with white family crest and Noh hankama. Traditional Japanese clothing is made of flat fabric without tucks or darts and fitted to the body by folding and tying without buttons or snaps. Plain narrow bands are used over the under layers of the robes and bands of special fabric which sometimes has embroidery on the outer layer (Konparu, 1983). This shows that shozoku is more than a suit. However, with the kahatsurui (wigs) and kaburimono (headgear) it expresses precisely the character of the role being played. Further, it represents several hundred years of Noh tradition as a commitment towards preserving Noh in its true spirit and form. By donning the costume the actor accepts this commitment and dedicates himself to become the character he plays. So it might be true to say that the purpose of wearing the costume is more to enable the actor to transform himself to the character than to enable the audience to recognize the assumed identity of the character.
Figure 2.6  Noh Headgears

Katusura

Kashira

Eboshi-Nashiuchi

Eboshi-Maeori

Eboshi-Samurai

Ui-Kammuri

Sui-Kammuri
2.9 NOH MASK AS THE ESSENTIAL PART OF ACTING.

In early religious rites it was believed that the mask itself was the god. So to cover oneself with the mask is equal to changing oneself into the form of god. Thus when mask was incorporated into dramas for transformation of appearance masked drama was created (Konparu, 1983). A remarkably important function of the Noh masks is to help the actor transform to be the character. In other words, putting on the mask called *Omote* enables the actor to achieve the depths of identification with his role. The Japanese tradition believes that the Noh mask is rather part of the actor’s body and when combined with particular costumes they together symbolize the character being played. According to Takahashi (2004) The Noh mask helps the *Shite* to reach deep concentration while doing the performance. He further believed that there exists another world inside the *Omote* and it is the gateway leading to the other world. This mutual exchange of identification of actor with character in the other world is the heart of the Noh performance. Without this the ultimate aim of performance which is compared with the blooming of a flower is impossible.

Thus Noh masks have a far more intimate, mutual relationship with the actor than any other items used in Noh theatre. Noh actors use the word *Omote*, meaning ‘front’ or ‘faced’ rather than the common name used to refer to their masks. It is not simply due to the importance placed upon their care and handling but also the
recognition of the mask as a companion that provides an entrance into the world that the actor is attempting to create (Hisao, 1984).\textsuperscript{9} The Noh mask as we know it today was brought to its present level of perfection during the late fourteen and early fifteenth centuries. The name of the type of mask to be used in a play is specified in the chant book. Although in practice there is considerable variation depending on the performer’s interpretation of the role as well as the range of masks available (Konparu, 1983).

2.9.1 Types of Noh Masks

There are varieties of masks approximately one hundred and fifty types of them that are in use in Noh today. As there are masks which are similar included among these it is possible to group them into large divisions by their characteristics. Yashuo, (1984) Identifies six basic types of masks namely Okina,Kijin,Jo, Okato, Onna and Ryo.

- Okina(God) Okina, is the principal god mask of Noh and is used only in the play named Okina which was perfected in the early Kamakura period (early thirteenth century).
• Kijin (Demon) Kenji (Dimen-god) is the mask meant to depict the horrible features of a righteous demon that will dispel evil fiends which developed from the Buddhist statues.

• Jo (Old Man) mask also took shape pretty early and is used particularly for the character of a godly old man. Thus reflecting the general notion in ancient times that the elderly person is closest to gods and spirits.

• Okato (Man) originally created as the mask of male deities from the end of the Kamakura period and developed until the thirteenth century Nambokucho period. From Zeami’s period onwards this mask represented the noble man’s character.

• Onna (Woman) masks increased rapidly in number with the expansion of the repertoire of plays Zeami’s period. The standard, classic young woman mask represents the noble woman of Heian period. As (Hisao, 1984) believed the woman mask of Noh help to express extremely delicate emotions to a skillful actor on the stage.

• Ryo (Spirit) mask represents both divine spirits and vengeful ghosts.

Before each performance the leading actor in the Noh, the Shite, puts on his costume and wig facing a large mirror in the Noh theatre green room. After a brief period of silent contemplation the Shite lifts the mask and faces it as though in
greeting. He then places the mask over his face and moves onto the stage (Richie, 1984).

*Figure 2.7 Noh Masks*
As Hisao (1984) believes, Noh is an art that attempts to depict the joys and sorrows of human life. Thus the Noh mask must be capable of expressing the inner world of the human mind convincingly. For this purpose, it must have both a sense of
reality as a human face and a certain amount of abstraction as well. The donning of a mask is considered the most important element in evoking this phenomenon of possession. The Noh mask has the power not only to cover the face of the actor like an ordinary mask, but also to blend with the body. At the same time, it also has the power to act and react in opposition to the performer. Rather it is designed in such a way of harmony with all the other elements of presentation on the stage to draw out and excite the rich imaginative powers of the audience.

2.10 CONCLUSION

Throughout, the history of Noh shows how it has grown into a full-fledged traditional theatrical performance. By incorporating most of the performance practices Noh developed into a collective art with the synergy of each performer harmonized in a way that it could produce a peak artistic accomplishment that is known as coincidence and may even seem divine. The structure like division of the plays, its performance, space, costume, music, light and other aspects are all designed to enrich the performance to get to this particular artistic accomplishment. It is better to realize that Noh has been considered as being representative of the traditional performances and at the same time it takes into consideration the contemporary world too. Since the folk and monkey dance Noh has become one of the most celebrated
performing art forms in all most all foreign countries. Gathering and incorporating new trends and ideas while keeping the traditional values Noh has became one of the most sophisticated and classical performances practiced in the world. The above studies confirm that Noh have developed its own performance structure, circumstances and the abilities. All these again depend on the treatises of Zeami the main objective of which is to help the actor reach his ultimate aim on stage. Thus all external elements—such as stories, stage, costumes, music and masks help an actor to develop his internal elements and emotional journey. The external elements can be copied or adopted but the internal elements cannot be easily copied or imitated. It requires time for learning and understanding in order to make them come alive in each individual performer. It is only the actors training that can help an actor create and develop his internal elements in order to make the performance come alive, make them vibrant with his concentration, awareness and energy. Thus the most fundamental question one can ask is how the Noh performer trained and what is he supposed to do as a Noh performer.
Reference


Note:

1 See the article by Nomura Shiro, Teaching the Paradox of Noh, pp. 204-205 in, Noh and kyogen in the contemporary world
3 Sekine is describing the historical development of Noh from Sarugaku and Sangaku in his book ‘Ze-ami and his theories of Noh drama’(1985)
4 Ibid
5 Japan Arts Council’s website is provided some historical explanation about acting Kutiyattam and its external elements
7 Yougen is one of the most important concepts that described by Zeami and Zen Buddhist ideology which Komparu Kunio giving more description about this concept in his book The Noh theater principles and perspectives. Warren, Conn. [s.l.]: Floating World ; Antique Collectors’ Club [distributor].
8 Ibid