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What Are the Impacts of Buddhism on the
Japanese Performance Style of Noh
Theatre?

Rebecca Hubery

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MA by Research (Music, Humanities and Media)

The University of Huddersfield

December 2019

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Abstract

This thesis aims to examine the links between Noh theatre and Japanese Buddhism. There will be a chronological exploration of the notable periods in Japanese history leading up to the Kamakura and Muromachi period, when Noh theatre was established. Each chapter, representing a new era, will discuss religious and cultural developments. This thesis will examine the impacts of China on Japanese culture, in terms of religion and performance styles. Each chapter will address developments in the field of theatre and performance and establish cultural connections between religion and performance; most specifically, Buddhism and Noh. Textual Analysis and Critical Realism have been employed as methodologies to establish a base subject knowledge and to build a critically established speculative arc that forms the connections of the structure.

1.1 Introduction

The performance styles of Japan and religion have always been tightly linked. There are many retellings of the Japanese myths that tell of the birth of performance in Japan but very few that delve into their long and complex connections to performance, especially when comparing the style of Noh theatre to Buddhism. Noh theatre, which is referred to as *nō* in some instances, is one of the most famous performance styles to have been developed in Japan. As a performance style, it amalgamates song, dance and character acting seamlessly with every action a performer makes. The actors will be accompanied by a chorus of musicians playing mostly percussive instruments with a small selection of flutes or pipes. This chorus will chant in order to develop the narrative of a piece, while the actors will dance on the stage and chant or sing their lines. The dance style of Noh can be considered restrained as there is a large focus on subtle movements such as hand gestures and foot positioning, these slight movements become even more vital a tool for the actors when the Noh performer will often be wearing a mask over the whole face. Noh uses detailed costumes and masks to represent a character archetype that is portrayed by the actor and these costumes are expected to be familiar to the audience. While Noh plays will regularly centre around Buddhist themes or will concern Buddhist characters, often telling a Buddhist parable, this is not what makes Noh a performance style that is derived from Buddhism and Buddhist culture. This thesis will cover the Japanese eras from the Jōmon to the Kamakura and Muromachi (please see 7.1: Appendix) and will examine the religious and cultural developments of the periods to explore how they are linked. Previous research has been conducted into the varied Japanese performing arts, and while Noh is a widely covered subject in this field, most examinations into the performance style will analyse loose connections between the religious culture of Japan and the performance style, especially in the context of Buddhism. Firstly, there is a regular gap in understanding as to what Buddhism was in Japan leading up to the development of Noh when examining this subject from a theatre and performance background. Secondly, while sources that approach the subject from a cultural history background express how the culture of the period is affected by Buddhism, there is little focus on Noh performance specifically.

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the religious and cultural context in which Noh was able to develop; Noh would not exist without the performance styles that came before it. There will be examinations into the establishment of these performance styles and into how

they connect with the styles that follow them, up to Noh. What cultural context surrounds these style and are they important in the development of performance in Japan? To begin with, religion will be the main cultural factor that affects the development of performance, however, as the periods progress, other cultural elements will also be explored, mainly through literature. It is also important to note that the influence of foreign countries on Japan will be explored as many important cultural phenomena have been introduced via a foreign culture. China specifically can be seen as an origin for many of the artistic techniques and cultural developments that took place throughout the periods of Japanese cultural history discussed in this thesis. Though more aspects have been added to the exploration, religion still remains a vital point of discussion in this thesis as it plays a large role in the philosophical and technical development of Noh.

1.2 Literature Review

The exploration of Japanese culture and, more specifically, Japanese performance styles has been a project that has encompassed an undergraduate dissertation and this thesis, as well as smaller research projects. Previous research has explored religious developments in Japan from ancient periods to modern and examined how these have impacted the developing culture and performance styles. The smaller projects have largely centred around gaining a developed understanding of ancient religions and cultures in Japan, with the main focus on the Kamakura and Muromachi (1185 – 1568) periods, which can be called the Ashikaga period, the period of civil war. The undergraduate dissertation focused on modern performance styles from the twentieth century and their influences, which also included a stronger exploration of more traditional styles and religions. This thesis' focus is on Noh and its links to Buddhism. From the smaller projects to this thesis, there is a strong link between the religious beliefs in Japan and the performance styles. Although there are times when the link can be tenuous, such as that with religion and Kabuki, it remains a common theme in any discussion about Japanese culture. The main evidence of this is the two most important sources when it comes to understanding ancient Japanese culture and history: the *Kojiki* (712 C.E) and the *Nihon shoki* (720 C.E). These two ancient sources give us a detailed understanding, while possibly not completely accurate, of Japanese history and culture up to the time they are written. From the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* we can discover what the contemporary Japanese people understood of their own history and culture which most modern sources then compare to modern archaeological and anthropological evidence. This is a technique strongly used by Addiss et al., a key source for this thesis and a form of Textual Analysis which will be explored in more detail in the following section of this thesis.

Addiss et al. consistently refer to the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* to explore a variety of topics, but they are mainly used as sources of religious mythology, largely related to Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan. Both sources use tales to explore the integration of religion and everyday life, politics and culture with tales varying from the relation of the emperor with the *kami*, the god-like spirits worshipped in Shinto, to the development of performance which will be discussed more, further in this chapter. Although the *Nihon shoki*, and the *Kojiki* are our best historical sources on early Japanese life and allow a strong view of the sociological settings of the time, their historical accuracy can easily be called into question. Both books were commissioned by the government of the Nara period, that had just moved to Nara and

was controlled by the emperor. Migration grew around this period leading to a need for a national identity to sell to foreign parties, hence the commissioning of books like the *Nihon shoki* and the *Kojiki*. While it is reasonable to assume that the context of these works are not fully accurate, they do display the national image they wished to portray and possibly enact. The importance of the *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* raise a recurring issue with these studies: the reliance on translations. Borgen and Ury discuss the merits and problems that have arisen with their own translation projects as well as older translations such as Basil Hall Chamberlain's translation of the *Kojiki* (1882) in the article *Readable Japanese Mythology: Selections from Nihon shoki and Kojiki* (1990). Borgen and Ury argue that, as teachers, the older translations of the books, while accurate, can be somewhat off-putting to those unfamiliar with the culture, and that the only accessible versions available in this context are the few excerpts that can be found in anthology books and other such sources. The aim of their translation project is to create a more accessible interpretation that more accurately portrays the books. This can really be seen through the in depth explanation of differences in the translations, arguing that rather than a cohesive style between the books, they worked towards a true representation of the voice of each author. It is important to note that Borgen and Ury's description is largely subjective, creating an intangible metric for readers when analysing the credibility of a translated source, however the importance of the above description for this thesis is not as an advisory text but more an example of the difficulty of separating the voice of the original author and the voice of the translator.

The separation of the voice of the author and the voice of the translator is a vital point of understanding for this chapter as primary sources such as Kenkō's *Essays in Idleness* rely on a translator's impartiality to create an accurate depiction of the original author's work. Meredith McKinney, the translator of *Essays in Idleness* and *Hōjōki*, tries to combat this by giving several chapters on the translation and the literature she is translating to allow us to understand the context of both the literature and the translation. This allows us to understand McKinney's dedication to the authenticity of the translation as well as showing us themes in the literature that were most important for McKinney in order for the reader to critically explore the possible contrast of author's voice and translator's voice as we know McKinney's main aims and understandings. Most translations of primary sources give the reader at least one chapter to discuss the context and aims for the translation. Smaller translations that appear as part of larger arguments will very rarely contain such discussion, causing problems with the credibility of the translation as they could be easily manipulated to serve an

argument as non-speakers would struggle to know the truth. Inouye's *Evanescence and Form: An Introduction to Japanese Culture* suffers from this problem as a large portion of the work is discussing Japanese literature that is translated to English, more than likely by Inouye, however, this is not confirmed. The lack of confirmation of the translator makes it impossible to examine the translated pieces through the lens of translator's intent, therefore Inouye's work will be used without the examination of the translated texts, solely as an analysis of the theories and techniques described then justified by the translations.

While translated texts must be examined with caution, it would be equally unwise to attempt a thesis such as this without an examination of works by people of the culture being explored. This thesis examines translated texts as a whole, analysing large sections as an examination of the original author's perspective, as well as gaining more insight into the content without a thorough focus. This technique is intended to gain an understanding of the original text as a whole, which alongside analysis by the translators will allow for a comprehension of themes and intention. Where a more thorough focus is needed for a text, for example when analysing the use of a specific word used, the original text will be noted and the section of text will be analysed from its original language. These techniques for examining translated works are regularly used by Addiss et al. as they will quote large sections of translated text then analyse the whole, or examine a smaller section which they take the time to dissect in its original language. Addiss et al. tend to give explanations for translations and will regularly use the translations of others to ensure there is less possibility that the translation used is biased to support their argument. This contrasts strongly with Inouye's technique of translating texts then analysing this translation in great detail. While Inouye's technique illustrates the arguments well, it is difficult to transform them critically, therefore translations from Inouye will not be used, but his work may be analysed alongside other translations and academics.

The influence of China is another strong theme throughout this thesis that requires exploration, especially in the context of the developing theatrical styles. Most scholars recognise the impact of China and the mainland of Asia as a whole on Japan, a large number, such as Addiss et al. (2006, p. 33) and Amstutz (1997, p. 10), argue that the Japanese government during the Heian period (794-1192) idolised the Chinese style of government and adopted the culture in order to emulate it. Inouye takes this argument further by expressing that the introduction and appropriation of Buddhism and other religions from China was "part of a larger attempt by members of Japan's elite to embrace the advanced civilization of Sui and Tang China in order to bolster their own power and prestige" (2008, p. 18). Due to this, it

is important to understand what the Japanese would have received from the mainland. Although a large number of sources discuss the religions of the time, such as Buddhism and Shinto, they give very little insight into what these religions are to the general public and how the religions developed over time. Addiss et al. give some indication of shifting styles of Buddhism in Japan, leading us to examine Amstutz' work on Amida Buddhism, also known as Pure Land. Although Amstutz' work lacks references, his work is extremely detailed with a clear understanding of the field, which is supported by the regular reviews Amstutz publishes on the work of others. This work is one of the few that examines in detail what Buddhism was to the Japanese people, how it shifted, the politics surrounding it and how the Buddhist beliefs were practiced throughout Japan. The validity of Amstutz' arguments can also be supported by studies into Chinese religion, such as that by Fowler and Fowler, which illustrates similar timelines of development, but with quite a lot more controversy. By examining the intersection of Chinese and Japanese Buddhist practices, we can see how quickly Buddhism amalgamated into Japanese society, and can, therefore, begin to examine the integration of Buddhism into Japanese artistic practices.

The understanding of Buddhism seems vital in determining the cause behind developments in Japanese culture around the Heian period as it clearly became such a strong influence within the aristocracy, with the building of multiple temples and the establishment of monasteries. The money, of course, seems to be in Buddhism, so it stands to reason that adopting a more Buddhist style would be beneficial to artists, including performers, who wish to remain in favour of the court. Could this be a large reason behind shifts away from art centring largely around Shinto beliefs, moving from the Shinto ritual dances and song to create a more coherent style that echoed the Chinese and could allow for exploration of other, more complex, themes? It, therefore, is important to bridge the gap between the religious beliefs and practices and the artistic and cultural developments of the time, especially in terms of theatre. Other artistic styles, such as literature, explored by Inouye, are heavily contextualised in terms of religion and politics, however analysis of Noh from a theatrical perspective is largely disconnected from strong explorations into the religious and cultural context in which it is set, as will be explored further in the following section of this thesis.

1.3 Methodologies

This thesis aims to contextualise Noh performance and ascertain the origins of its development. The approach to this thesis has changed greatly from the preliminary research in order to fully explore this aim. Throughout the preliminary research, a thorough examination of Noh performance was of course necessary, by examining a variety of texts that approached the performance style from a multitude of perspectives. Early research into the field of Japanese cultural history and performance was approached from a performance centric standpoint, exploring researchers that specialised in theatre and performance. These sources presented a theatrical practice that was heavily influenced by the religions of Japan with little exploration of what the religion actually practiced. Arnott (1969: 40), Sekine (1985: 21) and Bowers (1952: 4) address a Shinto myth that is often referenced by Zeami, an illustrious Noh performer and practitioner from the 14th century. This tale is recorded in the *Kojiki* and can be seen as the origin of performance in Japan, which will be further explored in a chapter examining Shinto (2.2). The myth in these sources was largely left without analysis, as proof of the ties between Japanese performance and Shinto. From this, it seems sensible to assume that Japanese performance only held ties to Shinto. By examining texts that approached Japanese performance as a part of a whole culture, we are shown the importance of Buddhism during the period of major development for Noh (1185 – 1568). Before this time, Buddhism was almost solely practiced by the aristocrats, where artistic styles flourished, however, it is with the rise of the warrior class of the Samurai in 12th century that we see Buddhist literature really take hold. Buddhist monks began to write observational essays regarding the contemporary culture and practices of Japan, making way for two of the most famous Japanese novels: the *Hōjōki* by Kamo no Chōmei and *Essays in Idleness* by Yoshida Kenkō. Addiss et al. explore several literary and artistic techniques that are used throughout these novels, and many other literary works of the time, that “reveal with eloquence new religious and aesthetic attitudes, often closely tied together” (2006, p. 83). While Addiss et al. begin a more than 50 page chapter with this statement, the exploration of the attitudes tends to lack a connection back to the religious, creating tenuous links between Buddhism and the themes behind artistic developments of the period. An undergraduate dissertation that examined post World War II performance in Japan centred around an examination of modern Japanese performance practitioners who were trained in modern Noh theatre styles: most notably Tadashi Suzuki and Yoshi Oida. Works by both practitioners

created an understanding of the amalgamation of previous approaches to Noh, raising many questions regarding previous research into Noh performance. The sources that approached Noh from a theatrical background skimmed the surface of the cultural context of the performance styles, the most in depth explanations of religious influence on Noh coming from modern Japanese practitioners such as Yoshi Oida. Other theatrical practitioners, such as Tadashi Suzuki, fail to explicitly link the performative techniques to their religious influence, leading to the question: was the performance ever really influenced by the religion? The sources that approached this period of Japanese culture from a religious or cultural background repeated a connection to Buddhism, without often explaining what Buddhist practices they were referring to. Addiss et al., while being detailed and thorough, explicitly states the Buddhist philosophies and practices and exploring them in a general context, however fails to fully explore how these can be found in the theatrical styles, often leaving a theatrical practitioner requiring more information. By previously having an understanding of these separate fields of study, examining modern Japanese performance illustrated how these cultures intertwined to create these performance styles in ways that were omitted in the sources above. The modern analysis within the undergraduate dissertation solidified connecting themes that then became clear when examining the original style. This thesis will give a clear background of aspects of Japanese cultural history that is often referred to when examining Noh theatre and explore these to create a solid understanding to support these links. A stronger focus on Buddhism was taken as sources from a theatre and performance background largely gloss over this influence, even more so than that of Shinto, and cultural sources give lacking explanation of what Buddhism was in the context they are analysing. A chronological structure seemed the most concise approach to this thesis as many techniques and philosophies are developments of their predecessors. This structure also allowed for an examination of practices that developed simultaneously but impacted the culture of Japan differently.

In order to do this, a base of Textual Analysis has been used to initially establish an understanding of the subject. This methodology is a tried and tested method of historiographic research which allows a researcher to explore a variety of documentation in multiple ways. Textual analysis “is a methodology [...] for those researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live” (McKee, 2003, p. 8) and, therefore, is a favoured methodology for use in cultural, social and historic research. The text

referred to in the name Textual Analysis does not just refer to literary sources, but encompasses anything we are able to take meaning from, such as documents, art, clothing, etc. (McKee, 2003, p. 10). Although this technique does allow for a varied source pool, the close analysis of the text tends to lead a researcher to an assumption of the text's credibility. As well as this, Textual Analysis does not necessarily encourage thought into cultural differences between the author and the present reader. Especially in theses such as this, where there is not only a geographical cultural difference between researcher and subject matter, but also a historical one, it is vital to accept the significant disadvantage the researcher has when approaching texts. Due to this, it is important that a researcher in this sort of circumstance admits to this disadvantage and acknowledges areas of speculation, to ensure a more holistic understanding of the subject matter. McKee argues that "A *post-structuralist* approach [is necessary]: all these cultures do indeed make sense of the world differently: and it is impossible to say that one is right and the others are wrong. In a sense, people from different cultures experience reality differently" (2003, p. 14, emphasis in original).

To encourage a more critical approach to the texts, this thesis also implements practices of Critical Realism, henceforth known as CR. This methodology posits that assumption should be taken away and replaced with a belief "that ontology (i.e. what is real, the nature of reality) is not reducible to epistemology (i.e. our knowledge of reality)" (Fletcher, 2016, p. 182). This core of CR echoes McKee's arguments against Textual Analysis and allows more of an exploration into the problems that arise from research that solely employs Textual Analysis. CR uses a three step approach to text, starting with an identification of what is termed as 'demi-regularities' (Fletcher, 2016, p. 184). This process is a way of identifying patterns and correlations in data, or, in the case of this thesis, texts. Fletcher describes a detailed computer programme that sorts incoming data into pre-determined categories that are set by the researcher and, to avoid bias when establishing categories, Fletcher adapts the categories throughout the sorting process. While this system does demonstrate a use for CR and the process of identifying 'demi-regularities' this process falls somewhat flat when not looking at quantifiable data, as is the case with this thesis. To apply this technique described by Fletcher to non-quantitative data would require the researcher to remove a large amount of context to place the data in a single category, leading back to the issues that were originally found in this subject matter. This thesis adapted this technique, into a more layered approach as it allowed a single data point to be analysed under many categories at once, for example a literary tool under the lens of contemporary Buddhism, historic Buddhism and the performing

arts. Of course, this process took a lot longer to identify demi-regularities, yet it allowed a more holistic view of the potential “reality” of the data. As Murdock argues, “empiricism reduces texts, actions and beliefs to numbers, the interpretive approach insists on safeguarding their complexity and singularity” (Murdock, 1997, p. 181), however, a multi-layered approach reduced the simplification of the text and encouraged more investigation into the text’s “complexity and singularity”. The second step to CR is that of abduction. Abduction can be described as a process of “inference or thought operation” (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 205) which allows for an engagement with current theories but expects an understanding that the theories addressed are fallible and must be examined through a critical lens, addressing a large issue that arises with the use of textual analysis. This technique has been used to criticise theories and suggest possible solutions. The final stage of CR is ‘retroduction’ which is a process in which the researcher establishes the necessary parameters for theories to be accurate. This stage is purely speculative and encourages the researcher to evaluate a variety of aspects to create a plausible reality within their subject area (Belfrage & Hauf, 2016, pp. 254-255). Retroduction has been implemented on several occasions throughout this thesis; a path will be laid out to establish the demi-regularities for the reader, then either abduction or retroduction, as well as both on occasions, will be applied to establish speculation.

2. Pre-Nara Period

2.1 Shamanism

This chapter covers a period of ancient Japanese history that spans over 20,000 years from c. 15,000 BCE – 710 CE. From 710 CE onwards, we begin to see the development of written language in Japan, finding works such as the *Kojiki* and *Nihon shoki* which mark the into written records of Japan. As the periods that this chapter covers lack written Japanese records, we must examine other articles of Japanese history to extrapolate information. Due to this, a lot of the emphasis of examination in the discussion on Shamanism is put onto a textual analysis, as described in the previous chapter, of pottery, as well as a key Chinese written record. The exploration of Shamanism is vital in understanding the beginnings of performance in Japan, even with a lack of cultural sources, as we can clearly begin to see the early exploration and context for performance culture, many techniques of which are a staple of even modern Japanese performance. When we begin to examine Shinto some excerpts can be taken from the *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki* as they explore mythology in Shintoism. With the development of Shintoism, however, we begin to see the strength of Japan's ability to create practices that continue into the modern era as the fundamentals of the religion are lasting. Through Shintoism, we can clearly see records of performance and specific theatrical techniques as part of religious practice that were largely begun through Shamanism. An exploration of developing foreign culture is also vital throughout this period of Japanese history as we begin to see the emigration of continental culture into Japan. Not only is this a large reason behind a key source for the discussion on Shamanism in Japan, but also is where we find the introduction of Buddhism to Japan. This exploration of foreign cultural development is vital as it is where we see non-Japanese performative techniques that begin to amalgamate into Japanese culture throughout the Nara period and, through this, the earliest example of the willingness and ease of which foreign culture is accepted into Japan.

Throughout the Jōmon period (c. 15,000 – c. 200 BCE), civilisations in Japan took root and began to establish small communities that focused on agriculture. A unique style of pottery was also established during this period, which “show[s] a fascination with the natural material of the clay rather than the development of glazes” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 9), in fact, the chorded style of the pots gave the period its name. The pottery techniques developed so that the lips of the pots mimicked waves or flames but, as Addiss et al. argue, the pots

favoured bold individuality over strict conformity in techniques as showcased by pots they display in their first few plates. During the Yayoi period (c. 200 BCE – c. 250 CE), provinces began to develop alongside more complex agricultural techniques and the distinct pots evolved to depict scenes or even figures. The reliance on nature and the fear of its whims lead to an explosion of Shamanism in the Yayoi period in Japan: leaders of provinces would take on the role of Shaman to communicate with the spirits of nature. These Shamanic practices are explored by the *Wei Zhi* (*Record of Wei* or *Gishi Wajin-den* in Japanese) which is one of three books known as The Record of the Three Kingdoms (Wei, Shu Han and Wu dynasties) that catalogue Chinese society between 221 and 265 CE (Kidder, 2007, p. 1). *Wei Zhi*, more than the other two records, discusses Japan during the late Yayoi period, referring to the Japanese people as *Wa*, a term that is largely agreed to have been a sweeping insult for people who lived East of China. The *Wei Zhi* is also the first mention of Himiko, the Shaman-Queen of Yamatai, who can, to a certain extent, be credited with the establishment of the Japanese imperial family and their traditions and practices. Kidder describes a variety of roles involved in Japanese Shamanism during the Yayoi period, however the Shaman, the ruler of the province according to Kidder, held the most important role as they would enter an ‘autohypnotised’ state in which it was believed they would commune and be influenced by spirits, either spirits of nature or the deceased, to determine the community’s future (Kidder, 2007, p. 127).

Early Shamanistic practises show our first links between religion and performance in Japan; pottery made during the Yayoi period and even some pottery dated to the middle of the Jōmon period show images of people who appear to be dancing and wearing outfits with puffy sleeves, a uniform or costume that is believed to represent the Shaman (Kidder, 2007, p. 128). Addiss et al. argue that the movement from textured external clay patterns on pottery to a smoother and standardised form shows an important development towards a more aesthetic focus that will remain throughout Japanese culture (2006, p. 10). Kidder believes that these pots depict trances induced in the Shaman to allow them to interpret the words of the spirits. Bronze bells have been found at archaeological digs, some of which even depict dancing figures that seem to be in states of ecstasy and wearing similar clothing to that in the pottery (Kidder, 2007, p. 127). Although music as a way to induce trances is well documented, Kidder also states that other methods were used such as taking drugs, starvation and extended meditation. The *Wei Zhi* does detail music being used in these scenarios giving at least some credence to a belief that these practises were taking part in Japan during that

late Yayoi period, yet the best evidence comes in the form of collections of *Haniwa*. The clay mouldings of figures, called *Haniwa*, developed during the Yayoi period tell a much clearer tale of the Shamanic practises of early Japanese civilisation and their relationship to the development of performance in Japan. *Haniwa* have been found in a variety of places, some of which have no connection to Shamans, and some found in known sites of importance to rulers of provinces and Shaman, and even in tombs and burial sites, which grew in popularity during the Tumulus period where *Haniwa* were regularly placed above the ground of these tombs (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 10). Although their locations show us some indication of their importance to the civilisations they belong to, especially to the more upper-classes of society, their true significance lies in what they depict. A clear example of this is given by Addiss et al. and their Plate 9 (2006, p. 10) depicts cylindrical clay figures with prominent noses and large holes for eyes and a mouth which seems to be rounded in a chant as their arms gesticulate. The pottery shown by Kidder (2007, p. 128) also shows an emphasis on the movement of arms as a form of dance, interestingly all keeping the feet still if not completely removing them from the figure. Given this, it seems reasonable to speculate that this form of dance that seems to be being demonstrated largely focussed on the movement of arms and the body, over legs and feet. Many *Haniwa* have also been found depicting figures using a variety of instruments such as drums, zither type instruments and a variety of ‘jingle-bells’ worn on belts, necklaces or on the actual clothing. The use of ‘jingle-bells’ actually attached to the figures can lead to the assumption that dancing was a common occurrence as movement would make the bells ring, this is also an aspect of many outfits specific for dancers, such as Belly dancers or Morris dancers. Kidder describes an interesting mythology surrounding the use of stringed instruments in Shaman rituals, where a king used a *koto*, a 13 or 17 stringed instrument that is plucked using three fingers, to induce a trance within his interpreter to help to decide on battles that should be fought. Kidder tells of differing accounts that describe the consequences of the king’s belittlement of the message given to him through his interpreter, though both stories also detail how his wife, a warrior queen on a journey to battle at the time of this ritual, also received messages from the spirits instructing the same as the messages given to the interpreter. The truth of these stories is, of course, impossible to know, however, they clearly show the regular and common use of instruments to induce these trance-like states and the gravitas of these trances in this society. All of these elements of rituals will be transferred and developed in a performative style with the transition to Shinto, and many elements can be found in Japanese performance styles that thrive even today, including in Noh theatre.

2.2 Shinto

Many Shamanistic attributes can also be found in Shinto, the indigenous religion of Japan. It is unclear from the *Wei Zhi* if these two aspects of religion in early Japan were ever truly separate and Kidder argues that looking at the two terms separately has led to many misinterpretations (Kidder, 2007, p. 127) but both the *Wei Zhi* and Kidder describes how the more unsavoury aspects of Shamanism in Japan were perhaps filtered out to establish what would become Shinto as the generally socially approved religious and ‘magical’ practises. The unsavoury aspects were “violently suppressed” (Kidder, 2007, p. 129) and deemed Black Magic (*wu-gu/fuko*): categorised as “magic conducted in secret and therefore suspiciously subversive, magic intended to destroy individuals, and magic that excited people to behave foolishly and antisocially” (Kidder, 2007, pp. 129-130).

[Shinto] is first of all a system of ancestor worship. Shinto, which means literally "the ways of the gods," is the name given to the mythology and ancestor and nature worship. [...] The chief features of the faith are the worship of ancestors and the deification of emperors, heroes, and scholars. The adoration of personified forces of nature enters largely into it. According to Shinto doctrine, ancestors are not thought of as dead; they are believed to remain among those who loved them. Unseen they guard the home and watch over the welfare of descendants.

(Kitasawa, 1915, p. 479, formatting in original)

Kitasawa’s description gives us a simple glimpse at the beliefs of Shinto. As a priest and a teacher of Shinto practices, Kitasawa is uniquely able to discuss the intricacies of the belief system in a way that other sources do not. Very few other sources link Shintoism with the worship of ancestors and a sort of hero worship as described by Kitasawa, however this aspect can easily be seen in the regular occurrences of familial shrines in houses throughout Japan (The Agency for Cultural Affairs, 1972, pp. 42 - 43). Kitasawa’s description also gives a good insight into what is actually worshipped in Shinto, a point that is generally rather vaguely described. Most sources describe Shinto as a religion that worships deities called *kami*; sometimes referred to as gods, but more often they are known as spirits that tend to attach themselves to nature, such as forests, rivers and mountains, or as Kitasawa describes them, “personified forces of nature” (1915, p. 479). The term *kami* was used by Kidder to refer to what have been called ‘spirits’ in the previous chapter, the distinction seemed

necessary as *kami* is so distinctly attached to Shinto, however it is important to note that this separation is not necessarily historically accurate. The emphasis of ancestor worship and the “deification” (Kitasawa, 1915, p. 479) of human figures referenced shows a possible deeper level of complexity to the *kami* that is only loosely referred to in conversations on Shamanism. It seems reasonable to assume that *kami* could also be seen as humanlike given that humans can be worshipped on the same level as them. One myth of Shinto holds that the two original *kami*, Izanami and Izanagi, sometimes referred to as husband and wife, sometimes brother and sister, created the islands of Japan, the main *kami* and the humans that inhabited the islands (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 1). Similar to the *Book of Genesis*, this story slightly elevates the *kami* as magical creatures with unfathomable powers but also contradicts that by insinuating that humans and *kami* came from the same source and also inhabit the same space. It is arguable given this logic that all objects, creatures and even less tangible aspects of life are driven by the same forces putting all life on an equal level of importance and openness to these forces, and therefore the deification of humans is not necessarily a transition after death somewhat insinuated by Kitasawa, but that there is no need for a deification at all because, alive or dead, all aspects of the world are the same. However, if that were truly the case then what would be the purpose of *kami* worship? The *kami* are regularly summoned to events by the use of bells, chanting or stomping, a tradition that highlights the beginning of the development of theatre and performance in Japan and its deep-rooted ties to religion.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs argues that the role of the *kami* in day-to-day life depends on their supposed ability to elicit happiness in a human’s life, meaning that specific *kami* are worshipped for specific occasions or needs and regularly are invoked by the use of a specific item, such as a mirror for the calling of Amaterasu-Ōmikami, sometimes thought of as the head of the *kami* but is known as the Sun Goddess (1972, p. 39). It is important to note that although we can speculate on the early importance of the *kami*, their distinction as creatures that needed explanation only began with the increase of tourism and the realisation of different religions. The *Kojiki* and the *Nihon shoki* were the first Japanese descriptions of Shinto in written form, although there are some references to named *kami* in the *Wei Zhi* showing that a development of *kami* had started during the Yayoi period, making it difficult to get an accurate understanding of when the belief system truly began in Japan.

The worship of *kami* was extremely popular with the public who worked in agriculture or relied on the land for their livelihoods, which in the pre-Nara eras was the majority of the population of Japan. Those that didn't work with the land were either nobility, working for nobility or religious practitioners. This entanglement of Shinto and agriculture led to many festivals that centred around important timings for people who worked with the land, such as harvest festivals. As many of these festivals have remained in Japanese culture through regional *matsuri* celebrated at shrines throughout Japan, such as the *Sanja Matsuri* in Tokyo, we can see that the festivals used music and dance to invoke the blessings of the *kami*. In many ways, this style of dance and music is very reminiscent of those described and thought to have been performed by Shaman trying to elicit messages from spirits previously mentioned. Dancers tend to move their feet limitedly, favouring expressive arm movements, or if there is movement of the feet it is either a shuffling motion or contrastingly a powerful stomping. The music of these festivals tends to heavily focus on drums, flutes, bells and traditional Japanese string instruments, again similar to those thought to be used in Shamanism.

The use of performance, through music and dance, to attract the attention of the *kami* is clearly highlighted in what is thought to be the story that describes the birth of performance in Japan which establishes a basic motivation behind the contemporary performances. Found originally in the *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki*, this myth tells of the *kami*, Amaterasu, the sun goddess, who trapped herself in a cave in response to the actions of her brother (Addiss et al., 2006, pp. 16-18). Sources repeating this myth forego an explanation of the antics of the brother of Amaterasu, where the *Kojiki* describes a competition between Amaterasu and her brother who began a path of destruction, following the competition, that left Amaterasu horrified (Chamberlain, 2005, pp. 61-62). The world was plunged into darkness when Amaterasu isolated herself in the cave. The other *kami* all congregated outside the cave, each trying to lure out Amaterasu to bring light back to the world. The Goddess Uzume adorned her head with a crown made of branches from a nearby tree, painted earth onto her face and began to stomp her feet. Chanting loudly, Uzume moved, continuing her stomping, hoping her peculiar actions would draw out Amaterasu. The gathered *kami* laughed at Uzume's absurd actions and Amaterasu, intrigued by the strange noises and laughing, peeked outside of the cave. At this point the retellings of the myth tend to differ, some saying that Amaterasu returned to the land of her own volition, others claiming she was tied up and forced to remain. The *Kojiki*, describes it as somewhere in between, as if her retreating path was cut off

and she decided to stay due to her brother's expulsion (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 65). The *Kojiki* also goes into a lot of detail concerning the *kami* that were commissioned to create objects that were hung from the trees or presented at the gathering to lure out Amaterasu, however it clearly shows how it was the performance of Uzume and the elicited laughter of the gathered *kami* that drew Amaterasu's attention originally, not the material objects (Chamberlain, 2005, p. 64). This aspect is why this myth is retold in sources discussing the influences on Japanese culture and performance; the myth clearly highlights the importance of performance as a form to gain the attention of the *kami*, and, in gaining their attention, potentially persuading them to grant you the boons you are praying for. This style of performance that focuses on dance and song can regularly be known as *Kagura*, which was only really recorded to be performed in Shinto rituals. Although they were later used in celebratory rituals to entertain during important days in the Shinto calendar, the performance techniques of *Kagura* were originally used in funeral rites with Addiss et al. quoting a segment from the *Wei Zhi* which describes eight days and nights of "wailing and singing" (2006, p. 20) before a purification ritual. This aspect of the funeral rites seems antithetic to the idea of performance as a happy practice in general, so it seems more likely that the performance of "wailing and singing" during the rites was to call the attention of the *kami* to the deceased. It is also important to remember the connections in Shinto between the *kami* and the people of Japan, and the belief in ancestor *kami*. The performance practices in funeral rites could also be a form of calling the, now, ancestor *kami*'s attention to their funeral and to the respect they are being shown therefore, hopefully, gaining the ancestor *kami*'s favour.

Another performance myth that can be found in the *Kojiki*, again develops from the actions of the *kami*. Inoura and Kawatake refer to this myth and the performance style that developed from it *The Kagura of Luck of the Sea and Luck of the Mountain* (1981, p. 20) whereas the former myth and developing style is called *The Kagura of the Heavenly Cave* (1981, p. 19). Although Inoura and Kawatake claim that this myth has less religious connection than the previous myth (1981, p. 21), it still concerns the actions of two *kami*. The myth tells of two *kami* brothers; the younger brother is annoyed with the older and so uses his power over the ocean to torment the older brother. The older brother then calls to the younger: "Please aid me. If you save my life, my descendants for the next eighty generations shall not leave your precincts but shall become mimes in your service [*wazaoki no tami*]." (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 18, formatting in original). The older brother then continues after covering his face and body in "red earth" (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 18) and wearing only a loincloth, "Thus I defile my

body and make myself thy mime [*wazaoki-hito*] forever” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 18). The passage from Addiss et al. describes how the older brother then begins to mimic his drowning actions through a slow process as if the water were rising. This myth creates an interesting contrasting aspect to early performance styles in Japan, and perhaps more of what Inoura and Kawatake were referring to by describing this myth as less religious. The use of mimicry (*wazaogi*) in Shinto and other earlier Shamanistic rituals isn’t present in records, thus making this style less religious than what becomes known as *Kagura*. Perhaps the most interesting part of this myth, however, is actually the idea that the myth implies that mimicry is common-place enough for it to need no explanation. The translation from Addiss et al. has the brother clearly stating that he will become a mimic several times before he actually begins his mimicking actions, giving the impression that the younger brother knows what the older means by mimicry and that this already has the social connotation of being lowly due to it being used to bargain between the brothers (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 18). Whereas with the myth of the heavenly cave, the performance of Uzume is described in such a way that it seems more peculiar, her actions being described in detail, such as her preparation of a costume, to give a clear image of what is happening for the reader and perhaps also implying that the other *kami* are paying such close attention to her actions that they are picking up on all of these peculiarities.

Kagura, as the performance style that supposedly developed from the myth of the heavenly cave is now widely studied and explored through practice and theory, with regular modern productions still being performed that attempt to accurately replicate what the original ritualistic performances would have been like. *Kagura* is so deeply tied to its Shinto and Shamanistic roots that even though the original trance process aspect of the *Kagura* performance was eradicated during the Meiji period due to the “persecution [...] of native practices” (Averbuch, 1998, p. 294) that were seen as primitive and unseemly, similar to the persecution of some Shamanistic practices described earlier in this section, the modern performances of *Kagura* will contain a choreographed section that is supposed to imitate a trance-like process. The style of *Kagura* from the myth of Umi-sachi and Yama-sachi, the names of the two brothers given by Inoura and Kawatake, is far less discussed and explored. The reasoning for regularly including the Japanese terms in the translation used by Addiss et al., such as *wazaoki no tami* and *wazaoki-hi*, is because the later term given, *wazaogi*, translated by Inoura and Kawatake to mean “imitative gesture” developed to be the term used to refer to actors (Inoura and Kawatake, 1981, p. 19) and is a style of acting that goes on to be

used in Noh performance. The use of *wazaogi* to refer to an actor shows a clear link between the developments of performance in Japan and the *Kagura* of Umi-sachi and Yama-sachi, a rather upsetting link being the implied and explicit degradation of a person when they become a mimic or an actor. The records of mimicry show that it is used more as a way to explore archetypes rather than to create impersonations as mimicry was used in more Western performance styles, such as Ancient Greek.

2.3 Cultural Immigration

Some of the most vital cultural developments in Japan took place during the late pre-Nara period, from the Tumulus to the Hakuho periods, and came from the continent of Asia. The introduced culture that will be most discussed and observed in this thesis will be Buddhism. Buddhism, a world religion developed in 6th - 5th Century BCE India, focuses on the salvation of individuals from the cycle of reincarnation through enlightenment which is largely achieved through meditation. Two main sects were developed; Theravada Buddhism that practices simple rituals as described in *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (2016), and Mahāyāna Buddhism that explores more elaborate rituals and has a stronger focus on icon worship. Mahāyāna Buddhism will be the sect explored most thoroughly in this thesis as this style was the most prominent in countries east of India, moving through Nepal, China, Korea and finally to Japan (The Agency for Cultural Affairs, 1972, p. 49).

Mahayana Buddhism has largely been practised throughout East Asia and has been the most prominent sect of Buddhism to move to the West. There are many fundamental beliefs of Buddhism that remain in Mahāyāna: the practice of meditation as a form of enlightenment, the reading of the sutras and, of course, the concept of nirvana. Mahāyāna tends towards a thorough exploration of thousands of sutras, where other sects focus on a smaller number, which allows Mahāyāna to have developed more interpretations of the Dharma. The largest difference of Mahāyāna to other sects of Buddhism that originated from India is the belief and worship of Bodhisattvas, those who postponed their own salvation in order to aid others on their paths to nirvana and in doing so were elevated to an even higher level of enlightenment. Although Mahāyāna promotes the worship of Bodhisattvas, it also encourages those practicing to emulate the ways of the Bodhisattva: “Mahāyāna texts will treat a series of ‘perfections’ (pāramitā) mastered by the bodhisattva. The common list is six- the perfections of giving, morality, patience, effort, meditative concentration, and finally wisdom” (Williams et al., 2000, pp. 133-134). Some descriptions of Mahāyāna argue that the process of enlightenment is very different as the path is not just nirvana. Williams et al. describe a three tiered system, the lowest tier being those who hold onto worldly attachments such as material possessions and use such things as their goals:

Those of the middle type are motivated by the wish for freedom from all suffering and rebirth, in other words the freedom that is nirvana, enlightenment.

[...] But those superior people whose motivation is the very highest take as their goal freedom from suffering for all, that is, perfect Buddhahood, motivated by the wish to attain the greatest possibility to benefit others.

(Williams et al., 2000, pp. 101-102)

It is also thought that, given the above, those that practice Mahāyāna attain a different, higher, nirvana. Williams et al. argue that this description of Mahāyāna show that it is not different from other sects of Buddhism due to rules and doctrines, but because of its motivation; this means that it can be very common to find Mahāyāna and non-Mahāyāna monks in the same monastery.

The *Nihon shoki* discusses the alleged arrival of Buddhism in Japan and dates it as 552 CE, although modern scholars tend to prefer 538 CE. The *Nihon shoki* describes how the king of Paekche, a territory in Korea, sent an envoy to the emperor gifting Japan with statues, other artistic pieces and religious sutras and artefacts, as well as a written endorsement of the values of Buddhist practices (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 21). Matsuo gives a lengthier description of this account from the *Nihon shoki*, saying that monks were also sent and further exploring the following movement of nuns and monks who either came from the continent or moved from Japan to Paekche to develop their knowledge and understanding of the new religion (Matsuo, 2014, p. 16). Buddhism remained largely practiced only by the nobility that were directly associated with the imperial family and it would be several centuries before Buddhism became open to the lay public. The *Nihon shoki* also describes a ‘father of Japanese Buddhism’: Prince Shōtoku (574-622 CE), the nephew of the emperor acted as a diplomat and adviser. The prince’s most famous achievement is the construction of Hōryūji temple (607 CE) in Nara, where the imperial court would be held in a century. Some argue that Prince Shōtoku aimed to unite the country under a government controlled by the emperor and to raise the cultural prestige of Japan through the implementation of Buddhism, as Korea and China had done before Japan (The Agency for Cultural Affairs, 1972, p. 54). Hōryūji temple was dedicated to the practices and studies of Buddhism and is the oldest Buddhist structure to be found in Japan, with many collections of artwork dedicated to its alleged architect. The Agency for Cultural Affairs argues that Prince Shōtoku also studied Buddhism himself by examining the sutras, however, his approach to Buddhism was arguably backwards as Shōtoku attempted to interpret the sutras to adapt to his way of life, rather than accepting a fundamental of Buddhism that is to detach oneself from worldly attachment. Carr

calls the accuracy of the descriptions of Prince Shōtoku in the *Nihon shoki* into question, arguing that there is a hyperbolic tilt to the tales with more attention paid to his death than those of actual emperors and empresses (Carr, 2012, p. 4). Carr goes on to discuss that there is some argument over the actual existence of Prince Shōtoku, attributing the main spreading of the argument to Ōyama Seiichi and the publication of *The Birth of "Prince Shōtoku"* (*"Shōtoku Taishi" no tanjō*), 1999 (Carr, 2012, p. 5). Of course, it is not possible to completely know the truth of Prince Shōtoku, however the context of the stories surrounding him clearly detail the path of Buddhism into Japan: a religion that was venerated by the aristocracy that only became accessible to the lay public through the gradual shifting in societal structures.

The developments of the Nara period, such as the building of the capital and the emulation of the Chinese government, are a strong demonstration of the need for Japan to develop in a similar cultural manner to China. These developments will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis, however it is important to discuss the movement of culture from China and Korea to Japan in the pre-Nara periods as it paves a smooth path for future cultural exchanges, such as the theatrical styles that served as entertainment to the aristocracy of the Nara and Heian periods. Although, as discussed, Buddhism was introduced to Japan through China and Korea, it is possible to argue that this is not the most impactful cultural development of the pre-Nara period to come from the mainland of Asia. Although spoken language had been established in Japan, a written language had not fully taken hold. As tourism from the mainland grew, more Japanese aristocrats learnt Chinese to be able to speak with tourists and develop an understanding of the foreign culture. Through this, the Japanese also learnt to write in Chinese. Chinese writing styles were adopted in a form of what is now the Kanji alphabet which is a pictorial language system used to express commonly used words or phrases, all of which is discussed in great detail by Taylor and Taylor who examine the intricate play between the Chinese and Japanese languages, as well as Korean (Taylor and Taylor, 1995, pp. 279 - 314). Although this allowed for a more universal understanding of writing for the Japanese, it worked best when using a more Chinese style of language, rather than the language that was already developed in Japan. Another alphabet, which would become what is the basic alphabet of Japan, Hiragana, developed, largely orchestrated by women who wrote to each other using a more simplistic alphabet that derived from the original Kanji and allowed for a better phonetic expression. This development in a modern context shows a loose link between the Chinese and Japanese languages through the Kanji

alphabet and a variety of words and phrases, similarly to how a variety of English words and phrases can be found in Mediterranean languages showing a loose historical tie in their developments. The impact of the Chinese language on the Japanese language is undeniable, and the Japanese language would be nothing like it is now without the adoption of Chinese writing systems. The importance of this phenomenon for this thesis, however, lies in the pattern of integrating Chinese established practices into Japanese culture. Initially the foreign practice is largely the same as in its original culture, then is adopted and broken apart to develop existing indigenous practices through experimentation. The aristocrats of Japan did not go on to only speak Chinese, although this was the case for a period, the Chinese language and literary practices were then explored through the existing Japanese spoken language which shifted into a writing practice that is now the main alphabet of Japan.

Prince Shōtoku also adopted a theatrical style from the Chinese as a form of entertainment for the nobles of Japan. The Chinese theatrical style known in Japan as *Gigaku*, a style of performance, mostly involving dancing, that was used in China and then Korea to accompany Buddhist celebrations, was originally introduced to Japan by a relative of the Chinese King of the Wu people, known in Japanese as *Kure*, in 550 CE. Chih-tung, or Chisō, the relative of the King, came to Japan with books on Buddhism and statues of the Buddha as well as “Gigaku masks, instruments, and costumes, [...] [t]he dance itself, however, was not included” (Inoura and Kawatake, 1981, p. 24). Both Inoura and Kawatake, and Jenyns argue that the full introduction of *Gigaku* to Japan was in 612 CE by Mimashi, a dancer of Paekche in Korea, the province of Korea where the Buddhist material of 538 CE was delivered from (Inoura and Kawatake, 1981, p. 24); (Jenyns, 1955, p. 52). Although the full introduction of *Gigaku* to Japan tends to be argued as coming from Paekche, the links to its origins in Wu are found in the names of aspects of *Gigaku* given in Japanese such *Kuregaku* (Wu music) and *kure no tsuzumi* (Wu drum).

Prince Shōtoku, then regent, with a view to disseminating Buddhism, invited [Mimashi] to live at Sakurai near Nara and teach *Gigaku* to Japanese boys. He ordered that one set each of the props Mimashi had brought be preserved at Tachibana-dera, Uzumasa-dera, and Tennōji temples. The masks brought over by Chisō are not extant today, but those brought by Mimashi still exist at Hōryūji temple, serving as actual proof to support the evidence of the introduction of *Gigaku* to Japan.

(Inoura and Kawatake, 1981, p. 24)

Jenyns describes a myriad of *Gigaku* masks that were preserved in Buddhist temples and later were moved to national museums. Although Jenyns' writing concerns the quality and location of the masks in 1955, the most important note to be made from this is their preservation throughout all of the wars and cultural purges that have taken place in Japan since the 6th Century CE. Perhaps Prince Shōtoku's encouragement of the preservation of these masks and other relics of the performance style *Gigaku* is to thank for this. Inoura and Kawatake go on to describe that *Gigaku* was quickly adopted to be used in Japanese society as a form of entertainment at Buddhist gatherings to celebrate the newly developed Buddhist holiday calendar, similarly to how it was used in China and Korea, and also echoing the use of *Kagura* in Shinto rituals. The masks used in *Gigaku* are arguably the first use of masks in performance in Japan. Although Inoura and Kawatake describe a style of *Kagura* that can be masked they specify that: "[t]he masked type of *Kagura* was generally more archaic and more ritualistic in nature; the masked *Kagura*, more modern and more dramatic" (1981, p. 22). *Kagura* usually was usually performed with paint over the face and body if any face coverings were used, as described in both the myth of the heavenly cave and the myth of Umi-sachi and Yama-sachi. Masks, however, will become used more prominently from the Nara period on, and more specifically become a focal point of Noh performance.

This chapter's main aim is to highlight the early connection between performance and religion in Japan, performance in Japan began as a form of connection to Shamanistic deities, a practice which continued on into the development of Shinto as a separate and defined religion. With the introduction of non-Japanese cultures, we begin to see the separation between Japanese performance styles being practiced more as Shinto rituals and celebrations, where Chinese styles became aristocratic past times that go on to be heavily embedded in Buddhist practices, again showing the early use of performance as religious practice. Of course, there is always an argument for the exploration of the performativity of any religious practice, however in Japan it is more the performance techniques that hold through time. While it is undeniable that these styles developed as religious practice, there is no way to know if they continued to be used outside of religious practice for a similar intention, that is to call the attention of spirits or the *kami*. This last point is largely what is omitted from performance sources that examine Noh theatre as they spend little time examining the motivation behind performance as a religious practice. By understanding the motivation behind the practice of this religious performance in its earliest forms, it seems rather clear that these styles were so deeply engrained in the religions and the Japanese culture as a whole

that the styles became familiar and everyday due to their regularity and continuous practice. Through this, it is possible that the styles became the typical performance techniques in Japanese culture, completely losing their religious intentions. Of course, it is difficult to examine the religious beliefs of early performance practitioners in Japan, however it seems vital to note that perhaps the intentions of these performers were not necessarily religious. This line of thought is what leads to the importance of Buddhism in the development of performance in Japan. While we can see in the exploration of foreign culture that new performance techniques were used as Buddhist celebrations in the early acceptance of Buddhism as well as other techniques being adopted as an appreciation for Chinese culture, these styles only further serve as development of performance technique in Japan. The large reason that Noh performance stands apart from the preceding styles of performance in Japan is the dramaturgy that fuels it, which is where we find the most Buddhist influence.

3. Nara Period

3.1 Foreign Cultural Development in Japan

This chapter examines the cultural development in a less than a century period in Japan, from 710 – 784 CE, splitting the period into what developed from foreign culture and what developed from native culture. As this is such a short period of time, this chapter does not examine monumental cultural developments, but more examines how seeds that been planted in the previous periods begin to blossom. The main aim of this chapter is to demonstrate the ease of amalgamation in foreign and native cultures that is overtly clear in the Nara period. In fact, this chapter begins by exploring the foreign culture of this period as the native culture is developed largely from this. The Nara period is the period of explosion for Buddhism in Japan, as well as where we see the best examples of the aristocracy of Japan wishing to emulate specifically Chinese practices, causing clear points of cultural appropriation by the Japanese where in other periods it is far more integrated and subtle. Although this chapter explores the booming foreign culture, it also explores the lasting strength of native culture running alongside the foreign.

Buddhism during the Nara period remained solely practised by the imperial family and those of extremely high social standing. Many artistic developments of the Nara period are linked to a developing Buddhist culture in Japan, such as the previously discussed *Gigaku* which continued to grow in popularity during the Nara period. Given this, it is understandable that the majority of the money of the Nara period went toward Buddhist projects. The large issue with the monetary focus on Buddhist developments is that the general populace of Japan had no understanding of Buddhism, perhaps even a large majority being completely unaware of its existence. To understand Buddhism, the Japanese aristocrats had to learn to speak, read and write at the very least Chinese, if not also Korean and possibly Indian. The lay public of Japan would have had no access to resources to learn these languages in any capacity without the aid of aristocrats and the aristocrats had no plans of disseminating this knowledge to the general public. The lower classes of Japan led a completely separate life to the higher classes, with a strong focus on Shinto and artistic expression through religious dances and songs. Although mimicry was a known possible aspect of performance, as discussed previously, it is not recorded that mimicry was practised at all in the Nara period. In fact, acting is notably

avoided throughout the Nara period, firstly as it wasn't used during Shinto rituals typically, and secondly as it was viewed as lowly, so was phased out of aristocratic performances. Given this, it seems there would be little merit in discussing the Nara period in the context of the developing theatrical styles of Japan, however it is in the Nara period, a period of less than a century, that we see the foundations of what will become typical Japanese art throughout the Heian period and on.

Through the developing architecture of the Nara period, we see the beginnings of Japan's adoption of Buddhism and its assimilation with more native and lay beliefs and practices, as well as the best examples of the obscene funding that was specifically given to Buddhist projects. A large number of temples were commissioned, such as the Tōdaiji temple. Built in Nara, like the Hōryūji temple built by Prince Shōtoku, it is much larger than Hōryūji temple and was built over a century later. Tōdaiji temple was originally built to house a bronze statue representing Vairocana Buddha and measures at fifteen metres high. This great statue of a Buddha, a trend known as Daibutsu, was one of many statues and other artistic works dedicated to Buddha or to other Bodhisattva, though the one in the Big Buddha Hall, Daibutsuden, of Tōdaiji Temple is one of the largest created in Japan. As Addiss et al. state, “[t]he coming of Buddhism brought the need for religious icons” (2006, p. 25), and with the growing tourism from the continent, the majority of these icons were originally based on Korean or Chinese designs.

For example, the sculptor Tori Busshi, whose grandfather had emigrated from China to Japan in 522, created for Hōryūji a gilt bronze triad of the historical Buddha flanked by two bodhisattvas, with an inscription in the back dated to 623.

(Addiss et al., 2006, p. 25)

This pattern is also echoed at Tōdaiji Temple, although on a much larger and grander scale, as the Buddha statue is also flanked by two bodhisattvas. The importance of the Bodhisattvas in these sculptures could arguably be related to long-held Shinto beliefs in ancestor worship; the belief that a regular person could be elevated to the same level as a deity like the Buddha or the *kami*, though it is more likely that the original commission wanted to emulate the Buddhist temples of other countries. The integration of Buddhism into the native life of the

Japanese higher classes in the pre-Nara period is the first step in a long journey where religion and art combine to create formative culture.

Buddhism was not the only foreign culture integrated into Japanese culture through architecture in the Nara period. Many Chinese architectural practices were taken on in Japan, beginning with the capital city of Nara, for which the period is named. Nara was originally designed to emulate the design of the Chinese capital of the period, Xi'an or Chi'an, being set out in a grid pattern with the palace placed at the north of the city (Visit Nara, accessed 28/08/2019). Matsuo posits that the Chinese style of city development went further than the capital of Nara and the basic grid layout for the streets. While Matsuo's examples of cities were not built until the Heian period on, the Nara period cements the technique in Japanese culture. Matsuo discusses the importance of understanding the development of Japanese towns arguing that "[a]n important factor in the planning of pre-modern Japanese towns, was that it should 'befit the four gods'" (2014, p. 72). This is a distinctly Chinese philosophy that comes from *yin* and *yang* practises and refers to a way to geographically and topographically distinguish an area that would be appropriate to build a town upon according to the "tutelary deities of the four directions" (Matsuo, 2014, p. 72).

These deities are: a blue dragon [...] in the east, a white tiger [...] in the west, a red sparrow [...] in the south, and in the north a 'dark warrior' [...], which is usually depicted as a sort of turtle with a snake wound around it. In more concrete terms, this means that the location has a stream flowing to the east, a main road to the west, a swamp or the sea directly south, and mountains to its back in the north.

(Matsuo, 2014, p. 72)

This interweaving of Chinese philosophies, especially those of *yin* and *yang* become extremely prominent with the development of performance that is Noh. It is important to note that these philosophies took root in a completely different field of practice to performance, however this stage of Japanese development highlights their early intergration into Japanese culture and theory. Contemporary use of the practices of *yin* and *yang* were conscious, as a way to pay homage to Chinese society, but these early uses then pave the way for a more learned and embodied understanding of the philosophy which fuels many artistic practices in the following periods, the most obvious of which can be found in Noh. While *yin* and *yang* philosophies are extremely complex, this thesis will only examine *yin* and *yang* through a

very basic and surface understanding. *Yin* and *yang* come from Taoist beliefs, along with the “deities of the four directions” (Matsuo, 2014, p. 72) discussed above, yet the importance of the philosophy lies more in its philosophical practices that were carried over into Japan (Wang, 2012, p. 2). Wang describes the philosophy of dichotomies to encompass both opposing aspects of the world, but also aspects that rely upon the other for definition or even existence (2012, p. 3), such as the example that is given of a tree; when broken down into the roots of the tree and the branches and leaves, we see that these two sections are separate yet both rely on the other for survival. *Yin* and *yang* as a philosophy can be found in Noh practices, which will be discussed more detail further into this thesis, however the importance of *yin* and *yang* in this context is a strong example of how a previously religious philosophy is easily amalgamated into Japanese culture away from its original religious context, a technique that will become extremely prominent in the following periods and will lead to many of the developments towards Noh theatre.

As mentioned previously, the development of written language and literary culture in the aristocracy of Japan created an even greater gap between the cultures of the aristocracy and the cultures of the lay public. Many non-Japanese Buddhist works of literature were translated with the development of the Japanese language. A major work of this kind is the, arguably most famous, sutra, the Lotus Sutra, which was largely imported in Chinese then translated into a more understandable format for Japanese natives. This process regularly took place with many different sutras, the translated and original versions being kept by specific temples and the monasteries that would develop from them over the centuries. The discrepancies in the translations of the sutras would lead to interpretational differences within the different temples and monasteries but largely the basis of Japanese Buddhism continued to be focussed on the four truths of Buddhism and the worship of Bodhisattvas from Mahāyāna Buddhism. The majority of original Japanese literature was commissioned or at least inspired by Buddhist sources with an early mixture of art forms being represented in the great temple of Yakushiji in Nara, built in 753: “[T]he footsteps of the Buddha were carved into the stone [...] and on a companion stone, twenty-one sacred Buddhist poems were engraved.” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 26). Addiss et al. go on to demonstrate two of the poems engraved in stone at Yakushiji Temple:

The good men of old
Must have seen with their own eyes
Him whose holy prints,

Themselves beyond our seeing,
We now carve upon the rock,
 We now carve upon the fine stone.

 May the ringing
Of the stone whereon we fashion
 The holy footprints
Reach heaven, and earth itself resound -
For the sake of father and mother,
For the sake of all people.

(Selected from Cranston, *A Waka Anthology*, pp. 767 – 772; *Bussoku sekika*, pp. 240-244. Editing and layout in Addiss et al., 2006, p. 26)

From the given translations, we can clearly see the references to the Buddha and the reverence towards him. Of course, we must understand that these poems and carvings are part of a dedicated Buddhist temple so the reverence and a lot of the syntax used can be expected in such a context and may not fully represent popular opinion. An important note on the context of these poems, however, is the line: “For the sake of all people”. Although this could be a conscious choice of the translator, and not so much a choice of the original author, this line demonstrates an adoption of one of the previously discussed beliefs of Mahāyāna Buddhism, that, at the very least, nirvana should be attainable to all. The fervent addressing of Buddhism can be seen in future literary practices, which will be further examined in chapter 5.2 of this thesis, however the use of a poem in this situation is telling to the relevance of poetic styles and their uses in the period. Poems were not only prevalent enough that there were twenty-one relevant to the situation of the statue, but also poems were used as a method to practice Buddhism, or at least to honour its practices, history and mythology.

One of the most vital aspects of this translation is the poeticism used by the original author. This style of writing is also echoed in the majority of literature written in the Nara period, even in books like the *Nihon shoki* and *Kojiki*, the chapters often contain songs and poems, with a lot of the general phrasing of the text being quite poetic. Of course, the tendency towards this style of literature becomes extremely obvious in the Heian period with more development into literature, however, for the Nara period, literature and the styles chosen are completely new and inherited from the Asian mainland. The use of poetic written language

lends itself to a somewhat more dramatic and lofty impression of the contexts, which is perhaps the reason for using such language. These early uses of poeticism really pave the way for the flowery and symbolic poetry that Japan is so well known for. Brownlee discusses the *Kojiki* in his examination of politics in Japanese literature, arguing that there is a strong possibility that the author copied Chinese literature, however clarifying that it is a somewhat muddy area due to a lack of resources that were used by the author of the *Kojiki* to examine now (1991, pp. 9-11). Brownlee cites several sections of text from the *Kojiki* that completely replicate segments of Chinese literature, as well as the author claiming these, in some cases, to be the words of the Emperor. Although, as Brownlee discusses, we cannot critically examine the extent to which the author of the *Kojiki* plagiarised Chinese work, the undeniable resemblance presented by Brownlee cannot be ignored. Perhaps there was no intentional plagiarism, but if this is the case then we must accept that the developing Japanese written language was so similar to the Chinese that they would gravitate towards the same phrases. The tendency towards poeticism in the early stages of development for Japanese written language is so important because it creates the foundation of the symbolic language of Japan which then develops further in parallel with the written language itself, making the use of symbolism a natural expression of the Japanese language.

3.2 Native Cultural Developments

The imperial family, although they were quick to adopt Buddhism when it was introduced, continued to have strong ties to Shinto. It is believed that the imperial family were descended from the sun goddess Amaterasu, often referred to in full as Amaterasu-Ōmikami, and who is also often known as the 'head' of the *kami* pantheon. This view of Amaterasu as the most powerful *kami* is a largely non-Japanese interpretation of the *Kojiki* and the stories that it tells, such as the myth of the holy cave discussed previously. The *Kojiki* and many other Japanese sources refer to Amaterasu as a powerful goddess. The Agency for Cultural Affairs regularly argue that the power of a specific *kami* came from their possible impact on a person's life so this could be a strong reason behind the belief of Amaterasu's power. Another possibility is the connection of the sun; although all civilisations revere the sun in their own ways, the Japanese placed specific importance on the sun, creating a unique relationship that stems from more than just the sun's light and life giving properties. As mentioned in the discussion on Shamanism, the *Wei Zhi* referred to the Japanese people as the *Wa*, a largely derogatory term, which the Japanese tried to push aside in favour of their own term *Nippon*, usually translated to the land of the sunrise (Kidder, 2007, p. 8), with variations such as *Nihon* or *Nipon*. By giving themselves this name, the Japanese firstly show an interesting fixation on their geographical location which means that the sun rises over the Japanese islands before the mainland of China, therefore they feel this is a noteworthy distinction to China that is glorious enough to be named after. Of course, while this connection to the sun could be the source of Amaterasu's supposed power, it can also be argued that it is a logical conclusion that since Amaterasu is the ancestor of the imperial family, she must therefore be the head of the pantheon of Shinto.

The imperial family's links with Shinto were always celebrated and never hidden. As discussed by Addiss et al., even with the move to Nara and the establishment of the government, the imperial family remained involved in Shinto. Addiss et al. describe an arrangement with the Grand Shrine of Ise, dedicated to Amaterasu, which the imperial family would rebuild the shrine every twenty years which has been fulfilled except during times of war (2006, p. 12). In relation to the Great Shrine of Ise, Addiss et al. note that important women of the imperial family were also sent to the Great Shrine to become priestesses dedicated to the worship of Amaterasu, referencing the famous eleventh-century novel *The Tale of Genji* (*Genji monogatari*) in which a love interest of the main character, Genji, has to leave for the Grand Shrine of Ise with her daughter who has been chosen as the newest

priestess. Although Buddhism had become the state religion by the time *The Tale of Genji* was written, this scene shows the continuous dedication of the imperial family to Shinto. The imperial family's continued involvement with Shinto presents us with a possible reason as to the encouraged assimilation of Buddhism into native Japanese practices, where in China and other Buddhist countries, we can see a long history of religious persecution. This attitude would understandably trickle down the classes and, when Buddhism was more spread into the general public, would encourage a variety of amalgamations between Buddhist and native practices.

As in the last section, a clear example of this is in Buddhist temples, and in the sculptures that were commissioned for them. As discussed previously, many temples built in the Nara period were adorned with sculptures dedicated to the Buddha and the Bodhisattva. These works clearly show a dedication to the growing religion as well as a detailed understanding of similar foreign works. Traditional Japanese pottery is one of the oldest artistic styles of Japan, as mentioned in the *Shamanism* section of this thesis, and is evidenced with pottery and figurines from as early as 10,000 BCE, during the Jōmon period, which “show a fascination with the natural material of the clay rather than the development of glazes” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 9). Although the Bodhisattva depicted in the Nara period can hold a similar attention to detail as the classic pots of Japan in the clay work, it is clear that the sculptors of this period were influenced by non-traditional Japanese styles. A strong example of this foreign influence is shown in Tanaka's exploration of a sculptor from the Nara period, Kimimaro. The first image shows Kimimaro's depiction of Buddha at the Sangatsū-do Temple in Nara, which features a standing figure with eight arms in varying positions and an intricately carved aura. The depiction of the Buddha with multiple hands is interestingly reminiscent of images of the Hindu deity Shiva, who is often depicted with multiple arms, usually four. The aura that sits behind the Buddha is also very similar to figurines of Shiva that depict a halo of flames surrounding the deity, Kimimaro's aura uses spindles sprouting from the centre of the figure's back with intricate, stylised flames creating a detailed pattern through the spindles. The Bodhisattva that join this sculpture are far more naturalistic; the detail on these figures lays in the heavily emphasised folds of the robes and delicate accessories, such as ropes or buttons. Tanaka's exploration into Kimimaro's sculptures echoes Kojima's opinion: “I can only wonder how long specialists will continue to confine themselves to praising the statues' vigor, inspirational spirit, and clear, elegant grace – i.e., their idealistic naturalism.” (Tanaka, 1996, p. 190 from Kojima, 1938, pp. 253-57). Of course, it seems completely reasonable to

wish for a multi-faceted appreciation of the works, however it is important to understand that what Kojima and Tanaka wish to move past is largely what marks these sculptures with the stamp of their nationality.

Although a large majority of the developing art of the Nara period was centred around Buddhism, in the Nara period, we can begin to see the separation of performance from religion and this being encouraged through its use as courtly entertainment. *Gigaku* began to take hold as the entertainment used during Buddhist festivals, further cementing the already established link between performance and religion in Japan. Inoura and Kawatake refer to this imperial style of performance as *Mikagura* (1981, p. 21), others have termed it as *Gagaku*, to refer to the music, and *Bugaku*, to refer to the dance. The possible reason behind this difference in terminology is time: *The Traditional Theater of Japan* by Inoura and Kawatake was written thirty years before sources such as Addiss et al. and Sakata and Kurasaka. Addiss et al. quote several original Japanese sources using the terms *Gagaku* and *Bugaku* to refer to courtly performers and the styles they were learning. This style of performance uses music and dance, similar to *Kagura*, but is a lot more structured. Performers were often well versed in many different types of music and dance, knowing dozens of songs that were largely developed in China and Korea, as well as having a lot of experience with the traditional folk style of *Kagura*. These performances were used largely as entertainment and the performers would showcase a range of their portfolio at the courts, and would go on to be wildly popular during the courts of the Heian period.

While this chapter only lightly covers performance styles of the period, the value of the exploration of this period is to understand the depth of amalgamation of cultures. Of course, this period is important for an understanding of developing Buddhist practices and beliefs in Japan, however it is the way in which Japanese artists use these separate cultures that can really be found in Noh performance. This period illustrates an emerging practice in Japanese culture in which one could choose to practice a myriad of cultures and was largely encouraged to experience a wide variety of them. By examining first the foreign cultural developments of the period, then the native it is much clearer to see how native practices were used to explore foreign beliefs and philosophies, such as native pottery techniques being used to explore Buddhism, and how foreign practices were used to explore Japanese beliefs, such as Chinese language being used for recording Japanese religion and myths.

4. Heian Period

4.1 Buddhism

The Heian period, spanning nearly four centuries, is a time of great political stability for Japan, allowing for an astonishing growth in culture. The Nara and Heian periods blend rather smoothly together, the most notable shift being the movement of the capital from Nara to what is now known as Kyoto. The city of Nara was originally built to mimic the Chinese grid design that was used for cities built during the T'ang Dynasty (617 – 907), the new capital of the Heian period was also built using this grid pattern showing a willingness of the new government to hold to the ways of the past (Visit Nara, accessed 28/08/2019). The T'ang dynasty collapsed one hundred years into the Heian period, and with it fell the strong cultural exchanges that had taken place between Japan and China over the past four centuries (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 33). With the collapse of the T'ang dynasty and the lack of influence from China, as well as the cultural stability, more authentic Japanese culture and philosophies begin to blossom. Chinese philosophies were still a common topic of exploration in developing artistic practices, however the Heian period shows how these philosophies were viewed critically and analysed with far less bias for the Chinese than can be seen in the Nara period. This chapter will be the first to explore Buddhism on its own. The Nara period's surface exploration into Buddhism paved the way for a thriving culture and in the Heian period we begin to see the religion being shared with the non-aristocracy, leading to shifting beliefs and practices. The Heian period also sees the beginning of literary styles that, while heavily influenced by Chinese techniques, develop their own syntax of sorts. The theatrical developments of the Heian period are vital when exploring Noh theatre, as we can here see the building blocks of Noh begin to form.

Moving the capital from Nara to Kyoto meant an abandonment of the temples constructed throughout Nara and the established religious base that regularly performed rituals for the well-being of the state (Deal and Ruppert, 2015, p. 73). This geographical move opened the door to shifts in philosophical and theological practices in the Japanese Buddhist community, shifts that may not have occurred without the transportation of the Buddhist core of Japan. The move of the capital from Nara, and the establishment of a new base for Buddhist practices, also didn't entirely eradicate Buddhism in Nara as, in the late Nara period, a monk named Kūkai returned from China and built “a complex of Buddhist monasteries in the

mountains south of Nara. This complex, usually referred to as Kōyasan, or Mount Kōya, became both inspiration for and repository of great works of [...] Buddhist art in general” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 62). In the late Nara and early Heian periods, we can see the beginning of the separations of Japanese monasteries that led to the founding of schools with the permission of the government, and a slightly hostile atmosphere that centred around theological debates to win political favour for the different schools. The different philosophies and practices of the schools will not be explored in this chapter, however it is important to note that the strict separations of schools is also a large aspect of the development of performance and theatre in Japan throughout history. In fact, this strict separation of schools in religion and performance seems to be the main reason behind the stagnation of practices. Modern performers that have trained in the Japanese performance styles regularly describe their shock at training with new performance schools and finding a completely different approach to text or techniques. This phenomenon is discussed by Pellecchia through the term *keiko*: ‘thinking about the old’ (2017, p. 39). Pellecchia argues that this term shows “the importance of tradition, rather than creative self-expression” when examined through the lens of performer training (2017, p. 39). The strong teacher-student bond only exaggerates this phenomenon, further cemented by a student only learning from one teacher (Pellecchia, 2017, p. 39).

Pellecchia goes on to discuss that this emphasis on tradition is additionally exaggerated by the strong teacher-student relationship that is encouraged in training as a student will only learn from one teacher at a time and will be taught one-on-one.

This description of Japanese performance practices echoes descriptions of monastic Buddhist practices. Matsuo dedicates at least 62 pages of his book to discussing the strict and well documented intricacies of Japanese monastic Buddhist practices stemming from the late pre-Nara period into the Kamakura period. During Matsuo’s exploration of a monk named Ryōgen (912 – 985), there is a lengthy and detailed description of the process that the monks went through when Ryōgen’s master died in order to find the young monk a new teacher. The separation of performing arts schools in Japan is not necessarily correlated to the separation of Buddhist monasteries, however it seems reasonable to assume there may have been some links, especially given the considerable favour and power given to Buddhist monasteries which continued into the Heian period.

As Buddhism grew in Japan, it became widespread enough to slowly trickle down to the general populace, as did many other cultural phenomena that had remained solely part of the culture of the upper classes. Through the Heian period, as more people gravitated towards Buddhism, the different schools that had been opened in Nara, both the period and prefecture, needed to establish their doctrines. Also at this time, schools of 'new Buddhism' began to pop up such as the Tendai's school of Buddhism. Saichō (767-822), who is also known as Dengyō Daishi, is often credited as being the one to bring Tendai thought to Japan, the impact of which is arguably far more than any other school of Buddhism derived from Mahāyāna, developed in Japan. Saichō spent a lot of his monastic studies in Japan reading the works of the Chinese Buddhist school Tantai, developed by Zhiyi (538-597), Chigi in Japanese, which taught of the value of meditation as a form of contemplation and believed that the Lotus Sutra was the one true vehicle to reach Buddhahood (Deal and Ruppert, 2015, p. 77). Saichō resided at the monasteries at Mt. Hiei just North of Kyoto, before the capital had been moved to Kyoto. When the capital was moved, the monasteries of Mt. Hiei became the centre for Buddhist responsibility for the state, Saichō soon being selected as one of ten monks to lead these state rituals. Saichō travelled in 804 CE to the Tiantai mountain in China, where the monastery for the Tantai school was established. Saichō studied there for a year before returning with literature to propagate the growing Tendai philosophies in Japan. The growing popularity of Tendai thought and the power Saichō had in the new court of Kyoto caught the attention of monks in Nara, who caused the establishment of a Japanese Tendai school to stall until after the death of Saichō (The Agency for Cultural Affairs, 1972, p. 56). As The Agency goes on to discuss, Mt. Hiei became the centre for the Tendai school, even before its official establishment, and would become the centre for Pure Land, Zen and Nichiren Buddhism, the three main schools of Buddhism in the Kamakura period and on. The Tendai school biggest impact on Japan, however, is somewhat on the schools that took inspiration from it, but is largely the practice of meditation and the study of meditation in multiple forms. The art of meditation and the contemplative culture it encouraged completely shaped the cultural developments of the entire Heian period, and created a foundation in Japanese culture that is still present today.

4.2 Literature

Literature in the Heian period blossomed due to courtly life that allowed for strong literary educations and a lot of down-time. Schalow argues that another factor of the flourishing literature of the Heian period is the placement of courtiers as leaders in provinces outside of the capital (2006, p. 2). This led to courtiers being away from the court of Heian, possibly for several years, however in these courtiers we can find some of the most prominent writers of the Heian period possible owing to the “tendency for people on the margins to develop a critical perspective and analytical consciousness toward centers of power” (Schalow, 2006, pp. 2-3). Adding to this the encouragement to practise Buddhism and the newly emerging contemplative philosophies of Tendai, we can see the perfect cultural blend to allow for the literary boom of the Heian period.

The best example of this is the famous novel *The Tale of Genji*, *Genji monogatari* in Japanese, written by Murasaki Shikibu in the early 10th century. Shikibu was a courtier during the Heian period where works of fiction were considered more lowly than other literary works, mimicking the Chinese belief, however she addresses this belief through dialogue with her characters (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 44). This was a regular tool that Shikibu used to explore the Heian culture and perhaps one of the main reasons as to the popularity of this novel. *The Tale of Genji* tells the story of a male courtier and his adventures in court life. It was not a fantastical, far-fetched tale but a lengthy exploration of the intricacies of the life of a courtier, which the majority of the audience for the novel were, and was told safely through the lens of fiction to make sure no rumours or scandals were started. Shikibu even states as such through Genji’s speech to a princess who was enjoying fictional romance stories, explored in Addiss et al. (2006, p. 44). Genji originally berates the princess, citing the falsities of fiction to be outrageous, then gradually voices his train of thought as he dissects his assumptions of the author’s motivations. Shikibu, through this detailed exploration of the philosophy and ethics behind fictional literature, shows us the conversations that she has perhaps already had or at least wishes to have, and what she may say in response. Not only did this novel, so widely well received, create a more accepting environment for fictional work, but it also showed the power of narrative through fictional characters. This is a vital turning point, especially for the theatre and performance of Japan. Although, as mentioned before, mimicry had been used as a style of acting, the idea of fictional characterisation quickly took hold; where mimicry tended to exaggerate real life events to comedy, fictional

characterisation allowed performers to highlight real life events and cast commentary without causing offence to specific people.

Before *The Tale of Genji*, another literary style was developed that melded the Nara period with the developing Heian culture. Many styles of poetry were developed during the Heian period, and a new aspect of language, that of symbology, developed further alongside them. Addiss et al. show another section of *The Tale of Genji* (2006, pp. 42-43) in which the Empress gathers her ladies and tests them on their knowledge of poems by reciting the beginning of a poem and then asking them to continue it. The women are unable to do this and the Empress chastises them. In the translation used by Addiss et al., the moral of the segment does not seem to be to shame the ladies of the empress but rather to describe an event that was probably quite commonplace for female courtiers who, as described by Shikibu, were supposed to be well-versed and studied poetry. This approach to poetry shown by Shikibu shows an interesting dissonance that will develop into a running theme throughout Japanese art; that of the rigid control and study of artistic expression. By needing artistic forms, such as poetry and performance, to be studied in detail, the forms need to be condensed into aspects that can be categorised and learnt, not as tools to be used in a variety of forms, but as rules that must be followed to the letter. We have seen this already with performers of *Gagaku* and *Bugaku* who required intense training in a variety of dances and songs before they would be fit to perform, the same can be said of poetry and other literary forms.

As described above, this strict regulation of artistic forms created a new language of symbology that connects every aspect of Japanese culture from the Heian period on, from Buddhism to performance and theatre. Take, for example, one of the most iconic symbols of Japan: the cherry blossom, or *sakura* in Japanese. To this day, there are cherry blossom viewing parties and ceremonies that celebrate the blooming of the cherry blossoms. This seems like a simple but beautiful past-time, yet this tradition stems from a far deeper and complex symbolic language that less celebrates the blossoming of the cherry tree and more celebrates their blossoming and then destruction as they quickly fall to the ground to be blown away. The cherry blossom represents the concept of *aware* or *mono no aware*. During the Heian period this concept developed with a tinge of joy shown in the translation of this term as “the ah-ness of things” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 86). However, what this phrase really represents is the awareness of the transience of life or evanescence; the cherry blossoms bloom and within a few days they are destroyed (Inouye, 2008, p. 1). When Addiss et al.

express that *mono no aware* was a concept tinged with joy during the Heian period, they are largely talking about an optimistic take on a philosophy that addresses a somewhat depressing but nevertheless present aspect of life. Rather than mourning the loss of the blossoms and being reminded of one's own transience, the people of the Heian period would see a cherry blossom and know to cherish its extraordinary beauty, made even more beautiful by the knowledge that it will soon be gone. Buddhism as a religion can lean towards a melancholic world-view due to the philosophy of separation from the material world, however this developing focus on the material world creates an interesting juxtaposition. *Mono no aware* develops from the Tendai practices described in the previous section, and channels this Buddhist awareness of evanescence and the transience of life into a contemplative appreciation of the material world. Most sources describe this phenomenon as Buddhist (Inouye, 2008, p. 17), however, perhaps it is more that Buddhist philosophies fuelled contemplative thought and the ideas of *mono no aware* and the varied language of symbology it created come directly from Buddhism even if the result is somewhat dissonant to them. The language of symbology only grows in importance from its original beginnings in the pre-Nara period, gaining traction throughout the Heian era and blossoming into a variety of arts in the following period, most important of which are the growing theatrical traditions.

4.3 Theatre and Performance

Gagaku transformed from being known as a foreign art to a Japanese art due to multiple Japanese practitioners establishing more of a Japanese foothold in the traditions, writing songs and creating dances that echoed *Kagura*. The first half of the 10th century proved a good period for purely the musical development owing to Emperor Murakami (reigned 946-967). As a result of these imperially encouraged developments, *Bugaku*, and performance art in general, gained a more refined status, to such an extent that dance even became a popular pastime for aristocrats (Inoura and Kawatake, 1981, p. 33). Owing to this development, we begin to see not only new perspectives on previously established styles of performance but also new styles of performance developed in the Heian period. The *Gagaku* style fell under the previously discussed familial regulation at the beginning of the 11th century:

[I]t was officially decided that the Koma family should represent the “Left” group (T’ang music and Japanese music and dance) and the Ôno family the “Right” group (Koguryô, P’ohai [a country in Manchuria, now part of North-East China], and Japanese music and dances) in order that the two families should compete for better refinement.

(Inoura and Kawatake, 1981, p. 33)

This is the first explicitly stated record of familial traditions ruling performance schools, however, as stated before, it is a practice that continues in Japanese performing arts to this day and would become even more prevalent in the developing and varied performance styles. This structure is especially encouraged when, following the suggestion of Fujiwara no Yorimichi, the chief advisor to the contemporary emperor, *Bugaku* became officially the property of the court aristocracy. Through these developments in *Bugaku* we can see a shift in the performing arts and a possibility of power and fame through performance. As well as this, we can see an opening for lower class styles of performing arts to be integrated into the courtly styles of *Gagaku*, through the emperor’s specification of both families to have knowledge on Japanese music and dance, and the Great *Dengaku* of 1096 is the perfect introduction. *Dengaku* is a unique style of performance from Japan in that it is now one of the few styles that is almost non-existent in the Japanese theatrical repertoire, possibly owing to its largely lower class development (Lazarus, 2018, p. 2). The phrase is usually translated as “field music” and is thought to have been developed to encourage work in the rice-fields (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 112). The style was brought to the metropolitan areas by troupes of

performers that created showcases of dances, music and acting. Not only is this our first example of a lower society driven performance but also our first example of dialogue driven acting. In 1096 a host of performers took to the streets of Kyoto: stilt dancers, drum players, and rice-picker and harvesting women danced day and night as well as other aspects of performance that strikingly echo those of *Kagura* (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 113). It is largely thought that this performance was done as an act of “transgression” by the lower classes against the strict class segregation in Japan (Lazarus, 2018, p. 3), however, this seemed to backfire as the entire population of Kyoto was gripped by the incredible performance and took to emulating their styles in any way they knew how: by donning inappropriate clothing, performing dances and songs they had learnt through *Gagaku* and painting their faces and bodies. *Dengaku* was so popular with the courtiers of Kyoto that the holder of the title of doctor of literature, Ôe no Masafusa, was commissioned to write the *Account of the Dengaku in Kyoto* (*Rakuyô Dengaku Ki* in Japanese). Although the emulation of the *Dengaku* performers by the nobles seems to imply that they understood the spirit of rebellious protest intended by the *Dengaku* performers, the nobles do not seem to have understood the perhaps intended reasoning behind it (Lazarus, 2018, p. 4).

Many *Dengaku* troupes from this point gained favour with the courtiers and it was elevated from a lower class performance style to a style enjoyed by the nobles of Japan, although not with the same respect given to *Gagaku* and *Bugaku* performers. Although *Dengaku* performers were beginning to experience some of the same possibilities for power and fame as the other courtly performance styles, the performers’s dreams were twisted when a governmental change took place, intended to, and succeeding in, curbing the growing power of the Fujiwara family and effecting all styles of performance enjoyed by courtiers:

The emperor Horikawa (reigned 1086-1107) subjected the music and dance of *Gagaku* to strict criticism, so that the musicians, according to the judgement passed on them, had either their merits or their defects intensified, and on the whole the free, vigorous quality was lost. No longer did the nobles dance as a pastime. The musical families treasured their secret theories and methods, and this gradually led to the decline of *Bugaku* in general.

(Inoura and Kawatake, 1981, p. 33)

Although Inoura and Kawatake quickly move on from this section to discuss the more positive developments in the performing arts with the growing military class, this short period

of intense change seems to be pivotal in the study of Japanese performing arts. All of these quick changes to the stability and structure of *Bugaku* encourage an environment of segregation and mistrust between the families of the performing arts which continues to be exacerbated, as discussed previously.

In the Heian period, we see the first descriptions of a style of theatre called *Sarugaku*. The style seems to have developed from Chinese dance and music, however is approached in a comedic style rather than the almost emotionless approach to *Gagaku* (Sakata and Kurasaka, 2011, p. 185). The Chinese use of jesters and comedic performance is best depicted by Sima Qian (145-90 BCE). Qian describes a jester who “[t]hrough fun and laughter [...] often mocked and criticized his superiors” (Fei, 2002, p. 19) and gained power and respect from the prime minister, Sun Shuao, he served. When the prime minister was on his death bed, he informed his son that if the son should fall on hard times, he should find the jester and tell him that he is the prime minister’s son. After the death of the prime minister, the son did fall into poverty and so sought the aid of the jester:

He promptly put on the robe and hat, such as Sun Shuao used to wear, and started mimicking the way the late prime minister gestured and talked. He was so like Sun Shuao that the king of Chu and his courtiers could not tell the difference. [...] King Zhuang was so surprised that he thought Sun Shuao had come back to life, and he wanted to reappoint him prime minister.

(Fei, 2002, pp. 19-20)

At this, the jester claimed to need to speak to his wife to decide on the offer. After three days the jester returned still dressed as Sun Shuao and gave his answer:

My wife cautioned me not to take the job because it’s not worth it to be prime minister of Chu. Take Sun Shuao, the former prime minister of Chu, for example. His dedication, loyalty, and honesty helped the king of Chu to reign the land as its supreme ruler. But now, after his death, his son doesn’t own an inch of land, and he is so poor that he has to carry firewood himself to cook his food. It’s better to commit suicide than to be like Sun Shuao.

(Fei, 2002, p. 20)

The king thanks the jester, summons the son and immediately gives him land and servants. “From this we learn that acting can affect state affairs” finishes the story (Fei, 2002, p. 20),

and through this story we can see an interesting perspective into an ancient performance tradition of Japan. The story uses the term “mimic” which, in Japanese, was the term transferred to actors over time, however, in Japanese mythology the mimic was implied to be lowly and degraded. In this story we are introduced to a completely antithetical opinion of mimics, and actors, and this story shows a fundamental approach to Chinese comedic performance. Perhaps the push for *Sarugaku* was a protest in a similar sense to *Dengaku*, aiming to encourage a more open and accepting culture within the aristocracy towards performers; the acceptance of acting in Chinese performance styles may have encouraged a change in view of the performance technique as much of the performance in Japan at the time still draws heavily from Chinese influence.

This chapter demonstrates a period in Japanese culture that moved from learning into developing. In the Nara period we see a comfort to leave native practices as they were but to incorporate and learn foreign practices alongside them. The Heian period shows the same willingness to explore foreign culture whilst maintaining an appreciation for native culture but encourages a critical exploration of the cultures through a practice of the combination. This technique made way for a multitude of cultural and artistic developments, such as branches of Buddhism, novels and acting. The developing branches of Buddhism make way for Buddhist practices that encourage an exploration of philosophy and theory, which again encourages an exploration of artistic techniques through theory. The shifting acceptance of varied performance styles that had been previously discouraged by the aristocracy, opens the door to wider exploration and solidifies the basic building blocks of Noh performance. This analytical practice is a fuel for developing Noh practices and a large source of the dramaturgy of Noh that sets it apart from previous performance styles. The developing literary practices of the Heian period allow for analysis that is less based on religion and more on a secular exploration of philosophies which will become vital to the artistic cultures of Japan.

5. Kamakura and Muromachi period

5.1 Buddhism

Addiss et al. term the Kamakura and Muromachi periods (1185 – 1568) as *Samurai Japan*, owing to the centuries of civil war that gave rise to the warrior classes of Japan. The warrior class, although present in previous periods of Japanese history, were largely seen as servants. The Samurai were a large part of the warrior class, acting as soldiers in armies, their service vowed to a Daimyo, or provincial head, who pledged allegiance to the reigning Shōgun, the de facto head of state in lieu of the emperor; the combination of these three tiers and the many facets that accompany them will be referred to as the warrior class. The civil wars brought forth military led governments with the nobility and imperial family of Heian being relegated to little more than figureheads. Although the nobility were largely given no real power over the state under the Shōgun's rule, the warrior class on the whole greatly respected the Heian aristocracy's refinement and grace, choosing to emulate these traits through continuations of the arts and culture that defined the Heian courts. This wish of the warrior class to emulate the Heian court culture shows an interesting understanding on the part of the non-nobility of culture that was not freely shared with them. Of course, it is more than likely that servants of the aristocrats viewed the cultural practices of the Heian period and told tales of them between each other and to others who did not directly serve the nobility. If this were the case, then this culture, as in the Heian court culture, would more than likely be elevated to an elite status that connoted power and respect. It seems reasonable then that this connotation is actually what the warrior class wanted to emulate, rather than the refinement and grace. This chapter will examine aspects of Japanese culture in the same structure as the previous in order to show their points of origin clearly, as well as to highlight the differences in these aspects in this period.

Though the warrior class still practised Shinto and paid respects to the *kami*, as shown in records of Samurai going to war and praying to Hachiman, the *kami* associated with war (Turnbull, 2006, p. 7), they quickly took on Buddhism as well, latching onto the more modern developments of Pure Land (Amida Buddhism) and Tendai Buddhism. Amida Buddhism, also known as Pure Land Buddhism, was not solely developed in Japan, having taken a foothold in China. It was originally introduced in the Northern, non-Chinese, dynasty of T'an-Luan, or Tanluan, (476-542) and was then developed Tao-Ch'o, or Daocho, (562-

645) under the Northern Chou dynasty (Fowler and Fowler, 2008, p. 8). Amida Buddhism focuses heavily on the Mahāyāna belief of enlightenment being attainable for everyone. Amida, the Japanese name, is the Buddha who is foretold to meet the worshipper as they reach the 'Pure Land' after leaving this plane. The Pure Land was described as a karmic realm where people could move up the karmic levels at a faster pace (Amstutz, 1997, pp. 1-2). Similar to the original concepts of rebirth, a person could reach different karmic levels through specific actions and by performing those actions in this life, their path would start higher in the Pure Land. All of these actions revolved around dedicated prayer rituals to Amida Buddha, from simple acts such as repeating the name of Amida Buddha to creating art. A lot of these prayer rituals are very similar to Tendai prayer practices such as chanting and meditation and both schools engaged a wider audience than their contending schools (Amstutz, 1997, p. 6). The importance of Amida Buddhism does not lie in so much the power of its philosophies but that these philosophies were the first to truly reach out to capture the attention of the lay public of Japan. Shinran (1173-1262), a student of Pure Land Buddhism, was tired of the monastic life and the rigidity of religious expression it enforced. The simplicity of Pure Land Buddhism allowed Shinran to take to the streets to spread the word of Amida and allow the general public a way into Buddhism, which had only really been glimpsed before. The lay public of Japan were gradually taught meditation practices and chanting, as well as some literary skills to create their own interpretations of the scriptures:

Shinran's basic insight was that enlightenment had to happen by some process coming as it were from "outside" the ego. The term 'ekō' ["turning of merit"] contained two meanings: the spontaneous religious transformation he called absolute "yielding" or "entrusting" [...] toward the reality of the Amida Buddha, and the redefinition and revalorization of the concepts "Amida" or "Pure Land" and "entrusting" so that they meant perfect enlightenment and basic partial enlightenment respectively. The linkage between these two aspects of ekō was in the uncontrollability of the fundamental relaxation of "normal" human ego effort.

(Amstutz, 1997, p. 10)

This approach to Buddhism strengthened the foundations of Buddhism in Japan as a whole through its simplistic practices and theory, allowing an opening for the cultures of the two worlds of Japan to truly begin to merge.

Although Amida Buddhism brought in a culturally changing shift by allowing the general public a route into Buddhism, it was not the only school of Buddhism to shake up the Japanese culture during the periods of civil war. Zen Buddhism, a development of the Tendai school, grew to huge popularity during the periods of civil war. While Amida Buddhism opened the door to those with few opportunities, Zen Buddhism opened the doors for the disillusioned. Zen captured the hearts and minds of many through its nihilistic approach to Buddhism by focussing on a core idea of Buddhism; that life is an illusion, it was all simply the mind “moving” (Hoover, 1977, p. 16). While this does reflect the previously discussed philosophies of Buddhism that fuelled concepts like *mono no aware*, such a blunt approach to the idea was extremely unusual. The bluntness of Zen culture is constantly contradicted by its unfathomable depth; every philosophy has a simple surface but an undercurrent that expresses the entire point behind the religion. A good example of this phenomena is the argument that Zen is the religion of the ‘counter mind’. On the surface, this concept means “ignoring the intellect and heeding the instincts, the intuition” (Hoover, 1977, p. 13). On a far deeper level, the ‘counter mind’ is a rebellion against the natural human instinct to place oneself in this world; a rebellion against the ideas of self, of knowledge and of life. This practice was explored further through illogical riddles, *koan*, that were made “to discredit the logical, verbal side of the mind so that the intuitive perceptions of the right hemisphere, the counter mind, may define reality” (Hoover, 1977, p. 14). Here is where Zen had such a monumental impact on Japanese culture as Zen practices encouraged artistic expression as a form of religious ritual, adding a new layer to the language of symbology that was even more linked to religion. Although religious art, as in art dedicated to religious figures, was common and artistic practices took place with religious ceremonies, art wasn’t really seen as a form of ritual until this point. “[T]he fine arts [were seen as] creations of beauty but also devices whereby the Zen masters transmit otherwise inexpressible insights” (Hoover, 1977, p. 14) expressing through practice the Zen philosophy of the counter mind. Through this practical application of religion, we see the development of some of the most defining artistic forms of Japan, such as the rock gardens and calligraphy, and the theatrical tradition of Noh. Whilst wildly different artistic mediums, all of these forms utilise the developed language of symbology as expression.

5.2 Literature

Nowhere are the artistic developments fuelled by Zen Buddhism, and Buddhism in general, more obvious than in the literary form. Two of the most famous Japanese literary works, alongside *The Tale of Genji*, showcase these developments on many levels. Kenkō's *Essays in Idleness* and Chōmei's *Hōjōki* are usually heralded as two Buddhist treatises, or, at least, works that “reveal with eloquence new religious and aesthetic attitudes” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 83). The *Hōjōki* was written a century before *Essays in Idleness*, yet both works have a lot in common. Both authors had become reclusive monks, a trend that had developed in the civil war periods, in the later parts of their lives. Both works concern themselves with the philosophies of Buddhism and its practices. Both works give a clear image of the author's respect for Buddhism and Buddhists, being eager to belittle those who either don't agree or have not had the education needed to develop their religion. On the surface neither of these works really convey the fundamentals of Buddhism, however, similar to Zen, there are deeper aspects that could possibly justify the Buddhist label they are often given.

Kamo no Chōmei (c. 1155 – 1216) was a notable court poet and musician in Kyoto, where he lived for over thirty years. After many set-backs in life, Chōmei chose to build a ten-foot-square home in the mountains overlooking Kyoto. In this home he wrote several treatises, most notably being *Hōjōki* which can be translated to Record of a Ten-Foot-Square Hut. Reading through McKinney's translation of the *Hōjōki* it's easy to be surprised by the melancholy of the beginning, that continues through most of the work. Chōmei begins his work by retelling the many terrible events that have taken place in his lifetime; mentioning famines, droughts and an earthquake. Although Chōmei references higher death tolls in the events of the famine and drought, far more attention is paid to the earthquake and other events, usually non-natural, that directly affected Chōmei's life. So much of the work is dedicated to Chōmei's descriptions of his hardships that it seems almost like the purpose of the work was to detail all of his sufferings. Chōmei goes on to explain his want for a more simplistic life, to steer away from stress to live a life of peace. The description of his hut is extremely detailed considering the small size of the property and its purposeful lack of decorations: an image of Amida and another Bodhisattva, a scroll of the Lotus Sutra, a single poem anthology, a book containing musical treatises and a book on Buddhism. Chōmei's love of this new home he has built and the life that comes with it is very clear, although he does admit that the occasions when he is able to travel into the capital can make him jealous

of the lives that are lived there. Up to this point, it is reasonable to feel somewhat overwhelmed by the odd tone of Chōmei's work. As someone who has taken the tonsure, shaving the hair as a sign of dedicating their life to Buddhist beliefs and practices, it is unexpected that Chōmei would describe in such great detail his past experiences through life, and especially unusual to describe his current home and life with such fervour. Chōmei even describes his decision to take the tonsure, not as a dedication to Buddhism but as a way to turn his back on the world (loc. 496). Surely, to truly move away from earthly attachments, one must believe that the things that Chōmei describes in such detail and with clear emotional attachments are unimportant, irrelevant. In fact, this is the conclusion that Chōmei comes to in his moving final paragraphs:

Like the moon that hangs above the mountain rim, my life now tilts towards its close. Soon I will enter the darkness of the Three Paths. What point is there in mulling over past actions?

The Buddha's essential teaching is to relinquish all attachment. This fondness for my hut I now see must be error, and my attachment to a life of seclusion and peace is independent to rebirth. How could I waste my days like this, describing useless pleasures?

(Chōmei, translated by McKinney, 2013, loc. 581)

Chōmei's parting lines show a fascinating arc that beautifully correlates with the core beliefs of Buddhism: the emphasis shifting from the suffering and attachments of life to an understanding that even attachments to a more simplistic life are still attachments and should not have a place in the life he was trying to move towards. To have read through Chōmei's melancholic descriptions of a life lost and his current material preferences, and to reach this conclusion feels in every way analogous of the journey to enlightenment and representative of the counter mind philosophy of Zen Buddhism.

Kenkō's *Essays in Idleness*, on the other hand, has no such obvious redeeming arc. As a literary work, out of context, it largely is a treatise on etiquette and proper social behaviour, which in itself is interesting, but not necessarily Buddhist. However, the true beauty of *Essays in Idleness* rises when it is placed into the context of the developing Buddhist philosophies. Although this detail may not have been Kenkō's original intention, *Essays in Idleness* does serve as a shining example of the Zen practices and philosophies. On a basic

level, the work does discuss the various arts and their virtues, especially in a Buddhist context. On a deeper level, it is Kenkō's interactions with the natural world that we see the strongest links to Zen ideals:

Are we to look at cherry blossoms only in full bloom, the moon only when it is cloudless? To long for the moon while looking on the rain, to lower the blinds and be unaware of the passing spring – these are even more deeply moving. Branches about to blossom or gardens strewn with faded flowers are worthier of our admiration. Are poems written on such themes as “Going to view the cherry blossoms only to find they had scattered” or “On being prevented from visiting the blossoms” inferior to those on “Seeing the blossoms”? People commonly regret that the cherry blossoms scatter or that the moon sinks in the sky, and this is natural; but only an exceptionally insensitive man would say, “This branch and that branch have lost their blossoms. There is nothing worth seeing now.”

(Kenkō, translated by McKinney, 2013, loc 1699)

While Kenkō does not connect with the Buddhist belief of detachment in the same manner as Chōmei, the above segment reflects Zen ideals through the use of a literary tool called *Yūgen*. This is difficult concept to translate and express, similar to *mono no aware*, but it roughly translates as “mystery and depth” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 93) and expresses the knowledge of a reader that the author is saying more than is actually written. Addiss et al. quote another of Chōmei's works called *Mumyōshō* that includes a description of the phenomenon that may aid in understanding:

Since I do not understand it at all well myself, I am at a loss as to how to describe it in any satisfactory manner, but according to the views of those who have developed the skill necessary to penetrate its mysteries, the qualities deemed essential to the style are overtones that do not appear in the words alone and an atmosphere that is not visible in the configuration of the poem. When both conception and diction are full of charm, these other virtues will be present of themselves.

On an autumn evening, for example, there is no color in the sky nor any sound, yet although we cannot give any definite reason for it, we are somehow moved to tears. The average person lacking in sensibility finds nothing at all

impressive in such a sight – he admires only the cherry blossoms and the scarlet autumn leaves that he can see with his own eyes.

(Addiss et al., 2006, p. 93)

This concept seems to stem from Zen counter mind philosophies that encourage a more visceral and emotional reaction to a stimulus, enabling a non-literal understanding of works and developing even further on the language of symbology in Japan.

5.3 Theatre and Performance

The main theatrical development of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods is that of the Noh theatre, this theatrical style being the focus point of this thesis. In the introduction of this thesis, Noh was lightly explored through its physical techniques, such as restrained movements, chanting and costumes. This early, light, introduction to Noh's style showcased the façade of the performance style, the techniques of which can then clearly be seen throughout early Japanese performance practices as discussed in Chapter 2. The use of these techniques in Noh, while they can draw their roots from Shinto practices, does not necessarily correlate to a practice of Shinto by performers of Noh. On the contrary, the centuries of development in performance between the Pre-Nara period up to the development of Noh as its own style imply more that the performance techniques were cultural traditions as artists rather than religious statements. Of course, it cannot be known if the typical Noh performer was particularly religious, but there does appear to be a disconnect between the use of Noh's techniques and the theory behind their religious origins. The links between Shinto and Noh remain largely in techniques, however we begin to see the influence of Buddhism on Noh performance when we examine the theory and dramaturgy of Noh. There is little knowledge of the true establishment of the Noh tradition, but we do know of a leading figure in the development of Noh is Zeami Motokiyo. Zeami (1363 – 1443) is often credited as one of the most important influences on the Noh theatre due to his multiple treatises on the performance and writing of Noh, his dozens of Noh plays and his considerable performance skill. Zeami's father was proclaimed to be a fantastically talented performer in his own right, and, as is the tradition of performing families, passed on his great knowledge of performance to his son: "Zeami, who was chosen for patronage when still a boy by shogun Ashikaga Yosimitsu (1358 – 1408) himself, was given [...] a superior classical education, learning the Chinese classics, *waka* poetry, and other subjects considered to be the province of courtiers and aristocrats" (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 116). It is through Zeami's writing that we not only see a clear outline of the fundamentals of the performance style, and, from this understanding, how they still can be found in the modern training of performance artists in Japan.

One of the earliest aspects of Japanese performing arts that can be found in Zeami's writings on Noh theatre is his exploration into acting through archetypes as characters. In *The Spirit of Noh*, Zeami covers a variety of archetypes that can be played in a Noh performer's repertoire, and discusses how each character should be approached, from the type of actor to play the

character, to the type of costume needed. Although a somewhat vague aspect of the performance style, Zeami goes into incredible detail, arguing the viewpoint of the audience on several occasions, demonstrating an incredible self-awareness and level of critical thinking. Through Zeami's points on audience reaction we see an echo of the mimicry style of performance found in Shinto mythology as well as very early performance styles of China and Japan, discussed previously. Now that mimicking or acting had reached a point of social acceptance, where in previous periods it was demeaned, Zeami is mindful in his writings to adhere to the strict social hierarchy, arguing that specific high ranking characters can only be played by the most skilled performers or should be avoided altogether (2006, p. 59). Zeami regularly discusses the necessity to copy the actions of the type of characters from real life in performance, once again cementing the mimicry aspect of Noh, rather than a more impressionistic style of character acting. Through Zeami's exploration of character performance we see the evidence of the literary language of symbolism. The use of archetypal characters, as described by Zeami, requires an understood symbolic language to function, in order to convey vital character traits without the need for the audience to work for the knowledge. Zeami's suggestions of movement styles for specific characters, mask options and costume designs are limited but specific, as if the audience would clearly understand the meaning behind this artistic choice. A clear example of this is Zeami's suggestion of the outfit for playing a woman:

Whether performing an ordinary woman's dance, the *shirabyoshi* of a courtesan, or a madwoman's dance, you should hold either a fan or a spray of flowers in a delicate, feminine manner. Clothing like the *kinu* and *hakama* should be long enough to cover your feet; your hips and knees should be straight, and your body pliant. As for the carriage of your head, if you look upward it will be perceived as unsightly; if you look down, however, your posture will appear poor when seen from behind. If your head is held with strength, it will not be womanly. Be sure to wear sleeves long enough to conceal the tips of your fingers. A sash or something around the waist should be worn loosely.

(Zeami, 2006, p. 58)

Through this section, we see the importance of aesthetic viability in Noh performance. Zeami describes the aspects of what makes a good Noh performance as one that has “Skin, Flesh and Bone” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 121). Bone was used to refer to a natural talent of the performer, an intrinsic presence that caused people to want to watch them. Flesh refers to the developed skill of the performer through their training in the art of Noh as well as the other arts. Skin represented the purely aesthetic element of the performance. Zeami’s example of this uses the chant as a background: “[t]he beauty of the voice of the actor represents the Skin, the interest of the melody is the flesh, and the techniques of breathing employed represent the Bone” (Addiss et al., 2006, p. 120). Zeami’s breakdown of the aspects of performance has a similar thought behind them to Buddhist philosophies like *Yūgen* and the counter mind as they encourage the performer to think about the less tangible aspects of performance. Zeami tends to encourage a stronger appreciation for the Flesh and the Bone of the performance, not necessarily saying that the Skin is pointless, but more arguing that most performers will consider the Skin, and not so much the other areas. This approach to performance is most evident in Zeami’s treatise *The Spirit of Noh*. Zeami continuously references “the flower” (2006, p. 50) as first mentioned in his discussion on the stages of an actor’s development at particular ages. The flower is used over bone in *The Spirit of Noh* to refer to a similar concept as discussed above. Zeami regularly argues that while the flower is something that is largely intrinsic for an actor, it is vital to nourish it by the actor being conscious of their flaws and strengths and training with these in mind (2006, p. 73). The idea of the flower again shows Zeami’s strength in understanding the audience’s perspective but also shows his acceptance of a natural talent within some performers. The strength and importance of the flower lies not in Zeami’s acceptance of the *yūgen* and intangible, but more in Zeami’s insistence that the possession of the flower does not make an infallible performer or one who does not need to train. The interaction of *yūgen* with training can also be found in Zeami’s approach to restraint in performance, that is usually also found in other schools of Noh:

When a beginner studying the *nō* learns to gesture with his hands and to move his feet, he will first do as his teacher tells him and so will use all his energies to perform in the way in which he is instructed. Later, however, he will learn to move his arms to a lesser extent than his own emotions suggest, and he will be able to moderate his own intentions. [...] In terms of general stage deportment, no matter how slight a bodily action, if the motion is more

restrained than the emotion behind it, the emotion will become the Substance and the movements of the body its Function, thus moving the audience.

(Addiss et al., 2006, p. 121)

This supports Zeami's belief that practice and training are vital aspects of becoming a powerful performer. We see that the original training is important for the performer as it teaches them the techniques of performance, however through practice the performer develops an understanding of audience's perspective and the *yūgen* that can be developed through performance. It seems intuitive to gesture fully as a performer to highlight the strength of emotions, yet Zeami argues that this is better highlighted with restraint as the audience will appreciate the *yūgen* and will be moved more.

Although the theory behind the practice of Noh is more expanded than previous performance styles, this style of performance is markedly similar to *Kagura*, *Gagaku* and *Bugaku* with a strict necessity for a varied repertoire that involves chants or songs, accompanied by dances. The songs and dances tend to vary in structure to represent the emotional transitions of the play, and in their more intense stages, Noh draws influence from *Dengaku* and its more eccentric style. The acting aspects of Noh seem to be drawn from *Sarugaku*, however with a more serious implementation, rather than comedic. Noh performances were given structure through narrative, but there is also a second level of structure to Noh performances that comes from the *nohgaku* as a whole. *Nohgaku*, which can also be referred to as *sarugaku*, is the term given to a selection of performances that would run for several days that would be broken down into Noh performances and *kyūgen* which were *sarugaku*-like performances that tended to be comedic and light-hearted. This contrast of two extremes is explored in more detail by Zeami with a description of the importance of the concept of *yin* and *yang* (2006, p. 70). Some sources refer to *yin* and *yang* in a Japanese context as *in* and *yō* but note that the philosophies are the same as they teach "that change is the main factor in cosmic existence" (Serper, 2005-2006, p. 308). Zeami explains that a performer should constantly be aware of the audience and tone of performance that they are responding to most, for example if the audience are restless during more serious scenes, to which a performer must respond with an opposing extreme in order to gain the audience's favour. Zeami suggests that if an audience are distracted then the performer "will have to adjust by behaving more colorfully than he ordinarily would – by putting more strength into his voice, by making his steps slightly higher, [...] and by being more lively altogether" (2006, p. 69). Again, Zeami's exploration into *yin* and *yang* shows a different aspect of *yūgen* as a performer must

understand the audience's reactions in a largely intangible way; it is unlikely that in most scenarios an audience will express their responses openly, so this interpretation of the audience must occur largely through a visceral experience for the performer. This final technique of Noh performance not only shows the value of historic performance styles, but also how foreign concepts such as *yin* and *yang* amalgamate with developed foreign concepts, such as *yūgen* developing from Buddhism, to create an iconic part of Japanese culture that still remains in practice to this day.

6. Conclusion

Theatre and performance in Japan have been tightly linked with religion for centuries, beginning with Shamanistic rituals that involved dancing and chanting, used to induce trances to commune with *kami*. Shinto gave us a mythological context to performative practices as well as performances that were made to be viewed by audiences and as part of religious festivals. This tradition of using performance as part of festivals continued with *Gigaku* and Buddhism, during the Nara period, where the performance style was also adopted into aristocratic society. With the development of the Japanese language, we can begin to see a deepening of Buddhist philosophies in the Heian period that begin to be echoed in the literary arts of the Heian courts. As well as literary developments, the Heian period also gave us more styles of performance, such as *Dengaku* and *Sarugaku* that were adopted in different ways into the Heian culture, however both contributed greatly to the development of the performance style of Noh.

Noh is a very intricate and detailed theatrical style, the original performances of which will always be difficult to truly and accurately define due to temporal barriers. Fortunately, with the treatises of people like Zeami, we are able to gain some first-hand insight into the traditional world of the Noh performer. While it was a strict and rigid world due to the constant competition of other schools and performance troupes, those that were elected as patrons by the emperors were given a door into a life they would likely never have been able to experience and to further their art and their family's legacies. The original thought behind this thesis was to question the motives of Noh performers, to try to understand the cultural reasoning behind such a unique performance style. Through this research, it has been shown that the imperial intrigue in the theatre was limited and was only given to a select few individuals, a favour that could very easily switch between emperors. This clearly does not lend itself to a stable profession, no matter how many opportunities are bestowed upon those deemed worthy. Given this it is probable that troupes and schools were not formed as a simple way to earn money, power and fame.

So, this leads to the question: was the influence for such a religiously linked performance style the actual worship of the religion on the part of the performers? This thesis has not really been able to answer this question; however, it has wanted to give a clearer understanding of what those links actually consist of so that further examination is made

easier. The links between Japanese performance are well documented in the case of the myth of the heavenly cave, the myth of the two brothers is less discussed, but still readily available knowledge. The early performance styles consisted more of a concern on form and style rather than context, however, they did begin to move away from the multi-layered connections to religion and started to become purely entertainment at religious festivals. Through literature, we can easily track the growing Buddhist philosophies that began to spread into many aspects of Japanese life, and these literary developments, in turn, led to newer developments of Buddhist thought. This is most obvious in the concepts of *mono no aware* and later in *Yūgen*. As such existential concepts, it is vital to place them in the context of examples that were created by people that were living through these cultural changes, especially as an audience with several layers of disadvantages in access to this information. It is with Noh that we see the culmination of all of these facets that come together to create a fantastically unique style of theatre that has prevailed through centuries of war and cultural shifts. Noh combines the performance styles of Shinto with those that were used in Buddhist festivals and were originally developed in China. It is well versed in a variety of literary styles, some native and some foreign, to have a broader view of understanding of the language of symbology that had developed through the poetry of the late Nara and Heian periods. It draws on Buddhist philosophies through the school of Zen Buddhism and puts them into practice, the way they were intended. Noh was created due to the myriad of religious influence over the centuries, and would not have existed if weren't for the introduction of Buddhism to Japan.

7. Appendix

7.1 Historical Periods in Japan

Jōmon: c. 15,000 – c. 200 BCE

Yayoi: c. 200 BCE – c. 250 CE

Tumulus: 250 – 550

Asuka: late 6th to the first half of 7th century

Hakuhō: second half of 7th century to early 8th century

Nara: 710 – 784 (or 794)

Heian: 794 – 1185

Kamakura and Muromachi (Ashikaga): 1185 – 1568

Momoyama: 1568 – 1600

Edo (Tokugawa): 1600 – 1868

Meiji: 1868 - 1912

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