

# “Women Prohibited: *Nyonin kinzei* in Nō”

YOKOTA-MURAKAMI Gerry

Osaka University

There are several famous standard Nō plays (*genkōkyoku*) that touch indirectly on the problem of the exclusion of women from Buddhist temple precincts, including the first-category deity play *Chikubushima* and the fourth-category demon play *Dōjōji*.

In this paper I will introduce two lesser known nonstandard Nō plays (*bangaikyoku*) that centrally feature, as the main action of the play, women who deliberately seek to cross the barriers erected to exclude them from the Shingon temple precincts on Mount Kōya: *Karukaya* and *Tadatsu no Saemon*.

Both of these plays were current in Zeami's time. *Karukaya* appears to have been at least partially composed by the dengaku actor Kiami (roughly contemporary with Zeami's father Kan'ami). There is extant a copy of *Tadatsu no Saemon* in Zeami's hand, and stylistic evidence also suggests that Zeami not only made the copy but himself composed the play. Both plays have recently been revived on the Nō stage: *Karukaya* in 1986, and *Tadatsu no Saemon* in 1988.

In my analysis, I will focus on several comparative issues figuratively suggested by the depiction of boundaries and their transgression in these two plays.

One area to be explored is the issue of canonization. What does the fact that these two plays were excluded from the Nō repertoire for centuries, and recently revived, tell us about the formation of that canon and its boundaries? These plays provide important evidence for the project of analyzing trends in selection and inclusion because of their unusual sources and unusual role divisions as well as their more standard topoi, types, and allusions.

Another issue to be considered is the degree of fluidity of the boundaries of gender and identity as they are depicted in the plays. It is interesting to study *Karukaya* and *Tadatsu no Saemon* as a pair because they depict two different approaches to the same barrier, alternative endings to stories with a similar beginning. In *Karukaya*, the main character is a conventional wife who ultimately takes a passive, self-sacrificing approach to her husband's decision to abandon her and their son in order to enter the priesthood. *Tadatsu no Saemon* appears to have been composed as a variation on *Karukaya*. Its main character, a wet nurse, takes a more aggressive approach in seeking out the father who abandoned the daughter in her charge: cross-dressing and forced entry — with the daughter as her comrade. And when their identity is exposed, the wet nurse explicitly and radically interrogates the dichotomies of male and female, form and content, in self-defense.