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THE BUNRAKU PUPPET THEATRE FROM 1945 TO 1964: CHANGES IN
ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

City University of New York

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THE BUNRAKU PUPPET THEATRE FROM 1945 TO 1964:
CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATION AND ORGANIZATION

by

JULIANNE BOYD

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City
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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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NOTE ON JAPANESE NAMES AND TERMS

Japanese names are given in Japanese style with the family name first and the given name second. All Japanese titles and terms are translated the first time they appear but not subsequently.

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INTRODUCTION

Historical Background

Bunraku, the classical puppet theatre of Japan, is a three hundred year old art form which is still in existence. Bunraku can trace its beginnings to 1684 when a chanter named Takemoto Gidayū (1651-1714) founded the Takemoto-za,¹ a puppet theatre in the Dōtombori section of Osaka. A year later Gidayū was joined by a playwright from Kyoto named Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724); together they introduced many innovations which are the basis of Bunraku today.

One of Chikamatsu's major contributions was the sewamono, or domestic play. In 1703 he wrote Sonezaki shinjū (The Love Suicides at Sonezaki). This was Chikamatsu's first attempt at depicting ordinary people and contemporary events on the stage.² The main characters in the play are a soy shop clerk and a courtesan who eventually commit a double suicide; this actual event had occurred only a month before the play was written. Sonezaki shinjū is one of the most popular plays ever performed in the puppet theatre; it still exists in Bunraku's repertoire and has been the most successful play performed in foreign tours.

The Takemoto-za also made major changes in the physical production of the puppet theatre. In 1715 the chanter and shamisen player were moved from upstage to stage left in order to make room for the growing importance of scenery. In 1734 larger puppets, about one-half human size, were introduced as well as three puppeteers (instead of one) manipulating each main puppet.³ This allowed for more detailed and sophisticated movements of the puppets; it also created a more realistic canvas against which the new plays with ordinary people and human emotions could be placed.

Before the Takemoto-za, the puppet theatre plays were mainly a series of spectacular effects performed by superhuman heroes; Gidayū and Chikamatsu raised the level of the art form while concurrently making it entertainment for the common people. The first half of the eighteenth century was "the golden age of the puppet theatre," and its popularity even surpassed Kabuki at the time.⁴ Bunraku held onto its popularity through the 1750's mainly through the efforts of Takeda Izumo (1691-1756), the playwright who succeeded Takemoto Gidayū as manager of the Takemoto-za in 1705. Takeda, along with Miyoshi Shōraku and Namiki Sōsuke, wrote a number of Bunraku classics, most notably Kanadehon chūshingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers) in 1748. But after Takeda died, Bunraku's popularity began to

dwindle; by 1783, when the last great Bunraku playwright, Chikamatsu Monji, died, Bunraku's era of prosperity came to a close.⁵

It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century that the puppet theatre was rejuvenated. Actually, this upward swing had begun many years before, at the end of the eighteenth century, when a puppeteer named Uemura Bunrakuken (1750-1810) arrived in Osaka from Awaji Island and began his own theatre. Bunrakuken was an expert not only in puppetry, but also in the art of chanting and shamisen playing. He began training performers, and when he died, his descendants continued the tradition. By the 1860's a large number of talented performers had developed a loyal following. A new theatre was built in Osaka in 1872 and named after the puppeteer Bunrakuken---the Bunraku-za. Since then, the classical puppet theatre of Japan and the troupe of performers in Osaka have become synonymous with the term "Bunraku."⁶

Bunrakuken's descendants continued to manage the Bunraku-za, but by the early 1900's, the theatre, while still artistically successful, was being poorly managed by Uemura Taizō, a fourth generation descendant of Uemura Bunrakuken. Unable to keep Bunraku solvent, Taizō sold it to the Shōchiku Company, the largest theatrical management concern in Japan.

The Shōchiku Company, headed by the twin

brothers Ōtani Takejirō (1877-1969) and Shirai Matsuojiō (1877-1951), managed Bunraku from 1909 until 1963. Shōchiku was never able to raise Bunraku to its former level of popularity, but it did try to preserve it and keep it alive during a very difficult fifty-four years. During this period Japan was a country in the midst of a great transition, changing from feudalistic society to a modern militaristic state, eventually culminating in World War II. After Japan's disastrous defeat in the war, another great transition occurred---this time one that would lead Japan into a long period of prosperity, and eventually, to becoming a gigantic world power. However, when General Douglas MacArthur and the American Armed Forces introduced democracy to Japan, it was a shock that was felt in all walks of life. The working forces were told of their rights and labor unions were formed. These labor unions even reached Bunraku, the classical puppet theatre. The subject of this dissertation encompasses the reaction of the Bunraku performers to labor unions and, to a larger extent, the advent of Westernization; it also examines how Bunraku was split into two groups, and, after many years, was unified into one organization again, and finally, how Bunraku survived and became stronger than it had been since the nineteenth century.

Research Procedure

This dissertation is concerned mainly with the years 1945 to 1964, that is, from the end of World War II up to one year after the establishment of the Bunraku Kyōkai, the non-profit organization which took over management of Bunraku from the Shōchiku Company. By 1964 the Bunraku Kyōkai had stabilized Bunraku and taken a firm hold of its management.

Little has been written in English about postwar Bunraku. Discussion ranges from three to five pages in the half dozen books written specifically on Bunraku to one to three paragraphs in books on classical Japanese or Asian theatre. After reading all of the accounts of postwar Bunraku in English, research was begun on postwar Japan and specifically General Douglas MacArthur's plans for instituting labor unions. This was followed by two trips to Japan, where a large volume of material was found on postwar Bunraku. A few books were invaluable research aids and served as the basis of the research. Bunraku seisūiki (The Rise and Fall of Bunraku) (1964) by Utsumi Shigetaro devotes five of its eleven chapters to postwar Bunraku. Not only does it give a good factual account of this period, but it also gives Utsumi's thoughts on how Bunraku can remain a viable art form. Bunraku: Kiritake Monjūrō edited by Ando Tsuruō, Kaneko Hiroshi and Nakanishi Keijirō is another excellent resource book. This book is a biography of the leading

puppeteer of the Mitsuwakai, the pro-union group which broke away from Shōchiku after the war. Written in diary form, with copious entries every month, this book gives a clear description of the failures as well as the successes of Mitsuwakai from its inception to its last performances.

Excellent books on twentieth century Bunraku with shorter accounts on the postwar period are found in Ōsaka no geijutsu (The Arts of Bunraku) (1973) by Yoshinaga Takao and Bunraku no mikata (A Way of Looking at Bunraku) (1965) by Mori Shinroku. Theatre magazines such as Makuai (Intermission) and Engekikai (Theatre World) were helpful with shorter monthly articles by a wide variety of theatre critics and scholars. These articles consisted of reviews of performances, interviews with Bunraku artists, and general comments on the state of Bunraku.

A large portion of the research is from primary sources. Unpublished records and accounts from Mitsuwakai, the Shōchiku Company, and the Bunraku Kyōkai were invaluable in gaining a true understanding of the events as they happened. Interviews with ten Bunraku performers (including two National Living Treasures), Bunraku scholars, and leading figures in Shōchiku and the Bunraku Kyōkai were arranged by Yoshinaga Takao, noted Bunraku historian, who himself gave countless hours in discussions of postwar Bunraku.

The end result of this research is a nineteen year account of one of the most turbulent periods in Bunraku's history. Although this study begins in 1945, Chapter I presents salient information on the period preceeding World War II, which directly affects postwar Bunraku. Chapter II begins immediately after the war and traces the events leading to Bunraku's division into two separate groups, the independent group, Mitsuwakai, and the Shōchiku-managed group, Chinamikai. Chapters III and IV deal respectively with the first five years (1950-1955) of each of these groups. By 1955 Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai were beginning to perform together; how this evolved and eventually took hold is the subject of Chapter V, while Chapter VI closes in on the last two years of Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai, and ends with their merger. The final chapter discusses the first year of the Bunraku Kyōkai.

Postwar Bunraku was a victim of its times. As with all historical theatre studies, it cannot be examined in a vacuum. Postwar events and ideas threw the conservative backbone of Bunraku into convulsions. Strangely enough, the plays, the performers' techniques, and the overall art form were not affected by this upheaval; the outward structure---management, finances, and control---would never be the same again.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

¹"za" is a Japanese suffix which means "theatre." All Japanese theatrical terms are given here in a simple translation. A more detailed explanation of terms can be found in Samuel L. Leiter, ed., Kabuki Encyclopedia: An English Language Adaptation of Kabuki Jiten (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1979) and Barbara Adachi, Backstage at Bunraku (New York: Weatherhill, 1985).

²Chikamatsu already was a successful playwright having written the jidaimono (historical plays), including Yotsu soga (The Soga Successors) and Shusse Kagekiyo (Kagekiyo Victorious).

³The less important puppets (tsume) such as maids, clerks, or guards were (and still are) manipulated by one puppeteer.

⁴Donald Keene, Bunraku: The Art of the Japanese Puppet Theatre, (Tokyo: Kodansha International, Ltd., 1965), p.38.

⁵Ibid., p.39.

⁶Other Japanese terms used for the puppet theatre include ningyō jōruri (literally doll ballad drama), ningyō shibai (doll play), and ayatsuri shibai (doll handling play).

CHAPTER I

THE SHŌCHIKU COMPANY AND BUNRAKU:

1909-1945

1909-1929

Although Bunraku was close to bankruptcy when the Shōchiku Company took over in 1909, its artistic level was extremely high. Many of the old masters who had been active during the great resurgence of Bunraku popularity in the 1880's were still performing and attracting a small but devoted audience. But within fifteen years most of these great masters had passed away. In 1910 the puppeteer Monjūrō I died, followed two years later by the chanters Settsu Daishō (Koshijidayū II) and Ōsumidayū III. In 1924 the great shamisen player Naniwa Genaya (Toyosuke VI) died, and a day later the chanter Koshijidayū III passed away. When Bunraku lost these masters, it unfortunately also lost the faithful audience devoted to these performers.¹ Although younger performers such as Yoshida Bungorō, Toyotake Koutsubodayū, Kiritake Monjūrō II, and Nozawa Kizaemon already had established fine reputations, they had not yet developed their own

followings.

Another reason for the drop in audience attendance was caused by the new industrial period in Japan. More and more people, especially the adult male segment, were taking jobs in newly established factories where positions depended upon regimented work schedules. Consequently, fewer people were available to attend Bunraku performances, which generally began at ten o'clock in the morning and lasted well into the evening.

Then, in 1926, fire destroyed the Goryō Bunraku-za in Osaka, the home of Bunraku since 1884. This catastrophe, along with the audience decline, left the small coterie of Bunraku lovers, as well as the performers themselves, skeptical about Bunraku's future. But Shōchiku rented the Benten-za at Dōtombori in Osaka and continued performances there. Performances were also held in the provinces and in Tokyo as well. These measures helped to some extent in getting the general public interested once again in Bunraku.

1930-1945

By January 1930 when the new theatre, the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za, opened, Bunraku's future was momentarily reassured by the renewed emphasis on militarism in Japanese Society. A new breed of

ultra-nationalists and militarists had come to the forefront; their anti-liberal and anti-democratic beliefs soon took the form of totalitarianism.² Edwin Reischauer explains how the nationalists and militarists were able to gain power so quickly and so wholeheartedly:

Naturally the nationalistic and authoritarian reaction could not have occurred in Japan had it not been for certain fundamental qualities of the Japanese as fashioned over the centuries. Their smoldering nationalism needed little fanning to break forth again into full flame. Hundreds of years of rule by men of the sword had made the people ready to accept claims of the militarists to leadership. Centuries of docile obedience to authoritarian rule had left most Japanese almost indifferent to the reimposition of authoritarian patterns.³

The militarists aligned themselves with Japan's past glories, with both its military and artistic successes. They advocated a return to all things purely Japanese, including the traditional art forms. Bunraku was no exception. The opening program at the new Bunraku-za had a highly successful run of three hundred days. By this time Shōchiku had changed daily performance hours. The programs began at three o'clock and usually ended around eleven. This allowed the working population to see at least the latter half of the program.

It seems as if a rebirth of the "golden age of Bunraku" had finally occurred, but by the end of 1931

this new popularity came to a sudden halt. The militarists, hoping to gain precious raw materials unavailable in Japan and perhaps hoping to impress the general public with their military prowess as well, embarked on their first attempt at colonial expansion---the invasion of Manchuria. In order to gain popular support, the militarists strongly encouraged two types of plays for performance. First, they favored classical plays with themes of loyalty and self-sacrifice, and second, they favored new plays with military themes, such as Bakudan sanjushi (Three Heroes, Glorious Human Bullets) performed in April 1932. The main attraction for the audience was watching puppet soldiers in army uniforms move around the stage and realistically smoke cigarettes.⁴ The latter type of plays, hastily conceived and written, were novel but had little or no artistic value. They did not appeal to real Bunraku lovers. In his book Bunraku no mikata (A Way of Looking at Bunraku), Mori Shinroku writes that these new plays "were naturally nothing more than a disgraceful act."⁵ The Bunraku audience once again dwindled.

Japan was also in the midst of a depression; jobs were scarce and people could no longer afford the luxury of theatre. The situation placed an increased financial burden on Shōchiku, and once more Shōchiku, as well as the Bunraku performers and the small number

of dedicated Bunraku fans, feared for its future. They brought this problem to the attention of the Imperial Diet, and in January 1933, a bill was passed calling for the preservation and subsidization of Bunraku. This bill brought the puppet theatre national notice and designated it an indispensable art form. The amount of subsidy is unknown, but Bunraku was still suffering financially in May 1935 when additional government support in the amount of three thousand yen (the average performer's salary was ten yen a day) was allocated to it.⁶

Internal problems of a different nature also existed in Bunraku in the 1930's. The first one of major concern, which divided the performers into two groups, occurred when monshita Takemoto Tsudayū II died and left the coveted monshita position unfilled.⁷ Both Tsudayū IV and Toyotake Koutsubodayū (later called Yamashirō no Shōjō) desired the title. Factions quickly formed supporting each man, resulting in a great deal of disharmony among the performers.⁸ Eventually Tsudayū IV was selected; this choice was accepted by all of the performers, but discordant feelings remained.

Meanwhile, in 1933 Shōchiku changed Bunraku's schedule from one to two performances a day, each lasting approximately three and one-half hours. Though this change was initiated in order to interest a

greater number of spectators, the move seemed to have the opposite effect. Producing a three and one-half hour performance instead of the usual seven hour performance necessitated the selection of only the most popular or dramatic acts of plays for presentation; consequently, much of the younger audience unfamiliar with the entire plays did not fully understand Bunraku. They stopped attending performances because Bunraku became an art that "required a background knowledge in order to appreciate it."⁹ The performers themselves had to adjust to this new system. The shortened play version eliminated much important dramatic information and necessary transitions. The performers had to acquire the technique of defining characters and situations in abbreviated form at the risk of losing some of the original beauty and clarity of the plays.¹⁰

Audience attendance became so poor that, in 1935, Shōchiku decided to send monshita Tsudayū IV, the famous puppeteer Bungorō, and ten other master performers to Manchuria to perform for the Emperor's army. This served the twofold purpose of emphasizing Bunraku's close tie with the national welfare and coincided with the militarists' beliefs that the people should return to those arts which were purely Japanese. Some of the younger performers who remained in Japan were disgruntled because they no longer were able to make a living from the infrequent performances. Under

Shōchiku, Bunraku performers were paid by the performance; they did not have a fixed salary per month or year. Their salary was contingent on the number of performances given; fewer performances meant less income.

In February 1936 sixteen young performers withdrew from Shōchiku and formed the Shingi-za. Because the leaders of this group will appear later in this account among the most important members of the dissident postwar union group, their names should be noted here. They were the chanters Toyotake Tsubamedayū (later called Toyotake Tsunadayū), Takemoto Nambudayū, Takemoto Komatsudayū (later called Koshijidayū), Takemoto Shichigosandayū, and the shamisen players Nozawa Katsuhei (later called Nozawa Kizaemon), Takezawa Danjirō (later called Takezawa Yashichi), and Nozawa Katsuyoshi (later called Nozawa Katsutarō). This troupe consisted of only chanters and shamisen players and their performances, which were done in the provinces, were given in the form of sujōruri. This is the production of a play or act of a play with chanting and shamisen playing without the use of puppets.¹¹ Later the Shingi-za used the puppets from Otome Bunraku (Girls' Bunraku) and it was very popular.¹²

When the master performers eventually returned from Manchuria, Shōchiku wanted the younger performers

to rejoin the Bunraku troupe for there was now an obvious void in the ranks. But the Shingi-za performers were enjoying their popularity and were not willing to return. In 1938 Shōchiku managed to lure back the chanter Tsubamedayū and his partner Danjirō with the promise of new titles. In March 1938 Tsubamedayū became Takemoto Oridayū IV and in May 1938 Danjirō became Takezawa Danroku VII. The Shingi-za continued another year, but with two of its main performers gone, and with the people's attention more on Japan's prolonged war efforts in China than on Bunraku, it became increasingly difficult to sustain itself in the provinces. The Shingi-za gave its last performance in April 1939 and was once again absorbed into Shōchiku's Bunraku company.

The Shingi-za was important in the development of Bunraku in the twentieth century for two reasons. First, "the pursuit of training of these people was so serious that they rapidly advanced in technique and developed strong spiritual unity."¹³ These performers found a camaraderie not available in the structured ranks of Shōchiku's Bunraku. The fact that they were able to perform roles that were otherwise reserved for older masters in Bunraku allowed them a certain freedom of choice and growth in roles not ordinarily available to them. Second, as mentioned before, the Shingi-za was the original seed of discontent which manifested

itself once again in the form of the postwar group.

From August 1937 until March 1945 the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za was intermittently turned into a "news theatre" by the military authorities. Although Bunraku performed there whenever possible, their schedule grew sporadic as they began to give more performances at other theatres and in the provinces.

The War Years: 1941-1945

By 1941, other problems befell Bunraku. Within an eighteen month period five chanters died. The most significant losses were Takemoto Tosadayū VI in April 1941 and, five weeks later, monshita Takemoto Tsudayū IV. These deaths dealt a strong blow to the excellent caliber of the Bunraku chanters for these men had masterful yet varied styles. Tosadayū was known for his elegant and beautiful voice while Tsudayū's forte was his simple and forceful narration.¹⁴ However, when Koutsubodayū became the monshita in January 1942 his strongly intellectual and elegant techniques dominated the style of Bunraku chanters until his death in 1959.¹⁵ Koutsubodayū studied the complete texts in depth and understood them as few other chanters ever had; indeed, some chanters had never read the entire texts of the plays they performed because they usually performed only certain scenes from a play. While Koutsubodayū added nuances to his interpretation that

were new and refreshing, the overall dramatic quality with its great surges of human emotion sometimes suffered, and it is this quality which was and still is popular with the audience.¹⁶ The critics, though, were fond of Koutsubodayū's innovative and masterful approach, and it became the general trend for young aspiring chanters, few of whom had the intellectual capabilities or sensitivities of Koutsubodayū.

But the passing of these chanters was only the beginning of Bunraku's troubles, which were increasing proportionately to Japan's involvement in the war. After 1941, when Japan's war efforts were concentrated on the United States and the Pacific front, normality in Japanese life ceased. Nearly fifty of approximately one hundred Bunraku performers were drafted or called to duty in the factories.¹⁷ The Japanese government made no provisions to exempt artists from military service, although in 1933 the government had designated Bunraku as an art form to be subsidized and more importantly, preserved; therefore, the form's entire future depended upon the transmission of techniques from one generation to the next. Many of the young, excellent performers who were looked upon as the hope for Bunraku's future, such as the present Takemoto Tsudayū (now a National Living Treasure) and the puppeteer Yoshida Tamao (also a National Living Treasure), marched in the front lines during the war.

By March 1944 war measures became increasingly severe. In the "Decisive Battle Emergency Order" issued that month, all of the major theatres in the large cities were closed, except the Bunraku-za, which obtained special permission to remain open if performances were kept at a two and one half hour limit. Performances with less than half of the Bunraku performers available were occasionally given, but attendance was poor. There were fewer than thirty people in the audience at times.¹⁸ "As the war became intensified and air raid alarms were heard more and more often, both the performers and the audiences became restless during performances. There was no doubt that it was impossible to keep the theatre going any longer."¹⁹

But the Bunraku performers did not give up. Kiritake Monjūrō, already a powerful force among the puppeteers, organized some young performers and went to the factories to entertain the workers. This was done in between wartime duties. Monjūrō, for instance, shoveled dirt in the labor service corps. The only compensation these performers received was "precious onions and food given to them as tokens of appreciation."²⁰

Finally, in March 1945 the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za was burned down by a bombing assault on the city of Osaka. A large number of irreplaceable puppet heads,

costumes, and other valuable items, such as Koutsubodayū's personal library of yukahon (scripts that chanters use in recitation) and countless other archives, were lost in the fire. At the time of the Osaka fire, Bunraku was performing at the Shōchiku theatre in Kobe. The puppet heads, costumes and other valuable items needed for their performances were saved there; however, two days later, their fortune soon turned to misfortune when the Shōchiku theatre in Kobe was hit by an air raid and the rest of Bunraku's precious possessions were destroyed. There had been no attempt to transfer any Bunraku heads or costumes to a safe place, as had been done with some Nō masks and costumes. As a result, approximately three hundred puppet heads were lost.

Within a period of four years, Bunraku had lost some of its most renowned chanters, its home, the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za, and a large number of priceless puppet heads and costumes. The few Bunraku performers still in the Osaka area were exhausted from simultaneously performing military duty and trying to keep their art form alive. But most importantly, Japan was clearly losing the war, and the national morale was sinking quickly. Bunraku seemed to be falling apart; something had to be done to keep this three hundred year-old art form from slipping into oblivion.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

¹Okada Minoru, "Bunraku-za no saiko-to sono shōrai" (Rebuilding the Bunraku-za and Its Future), Makuai (Intermission), August 1946, p. 6.

²Edwin O. Reischauer, Japan Past and Present (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 162.

³Ibid., p. 161.

⁴Donald Keene, Bunraku: The Art of the Japanese Puppet Theatre (Tokyo: Kodansha International, Ltd.), p. 40.

⁵Mori Shinroku, Bunraku no mikata (A Way of Looking at Bunraku), (Tokyo: Sojisha Publishing Co., 1965), p. 255.

⁶Yoshinaga Takao, Ōsaka no geijutsu (The Arts of Osaka), eds. Yamaguchi Koichi and Takahashi Shinzō, (Japan [sic]: Mainichi Hōsō, 1973), p. 258.

⁷The monshita is the head of the Bunraku troupe of performers. This position, traditionally held by a chanter, is the main liason between the performers and management. In 1963 this position was abolished when the Bunraku Kyōkai took over the management of Bunraku.

⁸Yoshinaga, p. 258.

⁹Mori, p. 253.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Jōruri (ballad drama) is an art widely practiced by amateurs (both men and women) who often pay little attention to the puppets in order to concentrate on the skills of the narrator and the shamisen player.

¹²Yoshinaga, p. 259.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ōnishi Shigetaka and Yoshinaga Takao, Bunraku-za (The Bunraku Theatre), (Tokyo: Kodansha International, Ltd., 1959), p. 37.

¹⁵Yoshinaga, Ōsaka no geijutsu, p. 262.

¹⁶Mori, p. 277.

¹⁷Yoshinaga, Ōsaka no geijutsu, p. 262.

¹⁸Ōnishi and Yoshinaga, Bunraku-za, p. 37.

¹⁹Ōnishi Shigetaka, Bunraku ningyō no enshutsu (Bunraku Stage Production) (Maekatashi City, Japan: Organization for Publishing the Writings of Ōnishi Shigetaka, 1974), p. 352.

²⁰Ōnishi and Yoshinaga, Bunraku-za, p. 37.

CHAPTER II

THE POSTWAR YEARS: 1945-1950

Comeback Performance

The ravages of war left Bunraku in a dismal state but instead of sinking into a pit of despair, Shōchiku and the Bunraku performers gathered what little energy they had left and, together with the people of Osaka, planned a comeback performance. Kiritake Monzō, one of the leading puppeteers, borrowed as many puppet heads from private collections as he could find, most notably from a Dr. Matsutani in Awaji and from a Mr. Todo in Hyakumendo. The performers returned to war-torn Osaka from various places in the country where they had taken refuge during the bombing and where food was slightly more abundant.

The comeback performance was held at the Asahi Hall in Osaka on July 11, 1945, five weeks before the end of the war. The effects of the war on the performers were clearly visible in their appearances and in their performing skills. Some of them were so weak from malnutrition that they could barely perform. "The narrators could not project their

voices, and the puppeteers did not even have the strength to move the puppets."¹ Professor Yoshinaga Takao, noted Bunraku scholar and personal friend of many performers, has revealed that Yoshida Eiza, one of the top two puppeteers of the time, was so ravaged by malnutrition that "when Eiza came for the performance at Asahi Hall, he could not walk, so I carried him on my back."² Eiza died of malnutrition four months later in December 1945.

The performance at Asahi Hall was a tremendous success. The people of Osaka rallied behind the puppet theatre and its indomitable will to survive. The microcosmic view of feudal life which Bunraku offered was a refreshing change from the destroyed city that surrounded them; it allowed their thoughts to wander back to the eighteenth century and see Japan at the height of her glory. Audience support was so enthusiastic that performances continued every month through December. Of the five burned down theatres in Osaka, Shōchiku decided to rebuild the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za first. Mr. Ōtani Takejirō, president of Shōchiku, neglected his own house which had been "half burnt down, and in spite of the inconvenience in his daily life, put all of his energy into gathering materials for building the Bunraku-za. They hurried the construction day and night."³

Censorship

On February 1, 1946 Bunraku held its first performance in the rebuilt Yotsubashi Bunraku-za, ten months after it had been destroyed by air raids. By this time, Occupation censorship had been in effect six months, causing Bunraku's repertoire to be somewhat limited. Theatre censorship was part of the Civil Censorship Detachment, a unit a General Headquarters Censorship, which controlled all public media. Ideas pertaining to revenge, human sacrifice, or seppuku were prohibited from all forms of public communication. From 1945 to 1947 the theatre censor was Earle Ernst and from 1947 until censorship ended in 1948 the position was held by Faubion Bowers.

The task of the censorship office was to prohibit the expression of any ideas which might contribute to rekindling the extreme sense of loyalty and duty which had led to Japan's militarism and eventual downfall.⁴ The occupation authorities believed that a public display of these ideas would act as an unhealthy stimulant on the Japanese audiences. All plays had to be approved by the theatre censor and his staff.⁵ Such all time favorites as Kanadehon Chūshingura (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers), Kanjinchō (The Subscription List), Terakoya (The Village School), and Kumagai jinya (Kumagai's Camp)

were banned immediately after the war.

Because of the great haste with which the censorship was put into effect, the method in which plays were censored was poorly conceived. First, a group of translators summarized the plays in English and then Ernst and his staff banned any plays with undesirable plots or themes.⁶ There were no Japanese theatre experts in the Civil Censorship Detachment. Some of the men were Japanese language experts who had no knowledge of the theatre whatsoever; others, like Ernst, had training and experience in the American theatre, "but no one at first engaged in these activities had ever seen a performance of a Japanese play before the conclusion of the war."⁷ Consequently, a play was judged by the only criterion the censor and his staff knew, that of Western theatre. Thinking that the Japanese placed the same importance on plot and theme as Westerners, the theatre censor forbade any play with offensive actions or themes, not realizing that the average Japanese knew the plots and themes of these plays since childhood and paid little attention to the unfolding of events or thematic treatment of these events. The Japanese audience went to the theatre to see the spectacle and the skill of the individual performers. They spent little time, if any, discussing the merits of the plots or analyzing the theme.⁸

The Civil Censorship detachment was concerned especially with Kabuki and its influence on the audience because, during the war, the militarists had attempted to infuse Kabuki with propaganda. But the militarists attempt was unsuccessful for the same reason censorship of classical Japanese plays was unnecessary; the Kabuki audience did not go to the theatre for instruction, but for pleasure. "In short, the ideological influence of the Kabuki upon the Japanese was about that of the average Hollywood musical upon its audience."⁹

Kabuki suffered from censorship to a far greater extent than Bunraku did for a number of reasons. First, the censors feared that some propagandistic content continued to reside in the plays; second, numerous Kabuki troupes in existence reached a far greater audience than the single Bunraku troupe; third, the center of Kabuki activity was in Tokyo, inviting closer scrutiny by the censors, whose main office was also in Tokyo. Bunraku played solely in Osaka for almost two years after the war. The trip by train from Tokyo to Osaka was a long one and not often undertaken by the censors. Bunraku's first performance outside of Osaka was in nearby Kyoto at the Minami-za in July 1947, and it was not until September 1947, two years after the Occupation began, that Bunraku performed in Tokyo at the National Arts Festival. Fourth, the

forbidden plays seemed more dangerous to public morals when performed by human beings than by puppets. For all these reasons, censorship was more lax with Bunraku than with Kabuki.¹⁰ Actually, other than Chūshingura, no attempt appears to have been made to censor Bunraku plays. Shōchiku, however, noting the harsh treatment being given to Kabuki, voluntarily refrained from producing those plays already proscribed in Kabuki.¹¹

Ernst returned to the United States in 1947 and Bowers became the second censor. By this time, both men were aware of the negligible value of censorship; indeed, a considerable easing of the censorship dictum had already taken place when Bowers assumed office.¹² One by one, plays were returned to the repertoire with Chūshingura being the last one to be admitted into the repertoire at the end of 1948, when censorship officially ended.

Although the censorship of Bunraku was not as strictly enforced as in other arts and media, it did have a definite effect on the postwar repertoire. Censorship of an old favorite like Chūshingura and the voluntary withdrawal from production of other popular plays meant a serious loss of audiences and a consequent drop in revenue.

Bunraku Honors

Two important postwar events in Bunraku did much to stimulate audience interest again. In March 1947 monshita Toyotake Koutsubodayū was given the name Toyotake Yamashirō no Shōjō by Prince Chichibu of the Imperial family. A name bestowed by the Imperial family is the highest which one can attain, and Yamashirō no Shōjō was only the twelfth performer in history to receive such an honor. In celebration of his new name, and those of two other Bunraku performers (Yamashirō's disciple Oridayū became Takemoto Tsunadayū and Oridayū's partner Danrobu became Takezawa Yashichi), the most successful performances since the reopening of the Bunraku-za were held in March 1947. Yamashirō no Shōjō narrated Kumagai jinya, a piece originally censored by the Occupation Forces in 1945.¹³

The second event to rally the people in Osaka behind Bunraku was the Emperor's presence at a Bunraku performance in June 1947. This was the first time the Emperor had ever attended a performance at the Bunraku-za, and his appearance greatly buoyed the spirits of the performers and the audience. The performance included the Shigenoi kowakare (Shigenoi's Departure From Her Son) scene from Koi nyōbō somewake tazuna (The Beloved Wife and the Two Colored Reins), and the michiyuki (travel dance) scene of Yoshitsune sembon

zakura (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees).

An Ōsaka Mainichi newspaper article, quoted in the book Bunraku: Kiritake Monjūrō, gives an account of this historical performance:

In the michiyuki scene of Sembon zakura the casting of Monjūrō as Shizuka-Gozen and Tamasuke as Tadanobu is the best we can imagine in today's Bunraku. There is one especially thrilling moment in the play. This is a scene in which Shizuka throws her fan backward over her head without looking and Tadanobu catches it by his right hand. The distance between Shizuka and Tadanobu is about sixteen feet and there is an average of five misses in twenty performances.

Monjūrō and Tamasuke practiced this particular technique a countless number of times before the Imperial Visit. On the day, the determined Monjūrō stopped to pray at the Sumiyoshi shrine on his way to the theatre. In spite of it, [during the performance] it seemed as if Tadanobu would drop the golden fan thrown by Shizuka in a parabolic orbit, but a moment later he barely caught it and the Emperor¹⁴ joined the audience in applause.

After the performance, leading Bunraku artists and officials had the honor of meeting the Emperor personally. This was a privilege which before the war would have been impossible. "This event promoted a friendly feeling between the people of Osaka and the Imperial family through a performing art, and added peaceful and warm thoughts to the people's minds, which were apt to be cold in postwar days."¹⁵

Advent of Labor Unions

But even these two extraordinary events could not sustain Bunraku as a financially successful art

form. Japanese society was experiencing its period of greatest change. Traditional arts were being ignored as relics of the past as the Japanese turned their thoughts to Western culture and became immersed in adapting part of this culture into their own. Young people could no longer relate to the feudal attitudes present in the Bunraku plays; they saw themselves as looking forward, not backward. As the audience decreased in size so did the salaries of the performers. As previously mentioned, the performers did not have monthly or yearly contracts but were paid by the individual performance. The loss of income caused much internal unrest; it soon became apparent that the performers' livelihoods were at stake. Performers began taking sides for or against Shōchiku; eventually a labor union was introduced in an attempt to discuss and hopefully change the existing payment system. Bunraku's labor union problem soon mushroomed into an enormous internal crisis and eventually caused the performers to split into two groups.

To understand the labor union problem fully, it is necessary to examine the general labor situation that existed in Japan immediately after the war and its growth in the ensuing five years.

In October 1945, two months after the war's end, General Douglas MacArthur told Prime Minister Shidehara Kijurō that one of the most important reforms necessary

in Japan was the "encouragement of the unionization of labor as a means of eliminating exploitation."¹⁶ The Japanese worker rarely had had a say in any of his working conditions. In fact, until the end of the war, labor unions had been discouraged strongly by the militarists in power. Although in the 1920's and 30's a small number of communists and socialists had tried to establish labor unions in Japan, they had been repressed quickly by the militarists who had jailed the leaders and had drafted the less powerful figures into the army.

Before and during the war, the militarists had relied strongly on the Japanese people's belief in the tennō (Emperor) system to rule the country with an iron hand. In the tennō system, "the people existed solely for the state, or the emperor."¹⁷ Employees had looked upon their employers with paternal respect and loyalty; all were working with complete devotion for the ultimate father figure, or god, the Emperor.

But on New Year's Day, 1946 the Emperor renounced his divinity and gave way to a whole new social and political system. No longer did the worker have to feel unloyal or disrespectful for questioning his superior or the system under which he worked. A great feeling of disillusionment and discontent pervaded postwar Japan. Food and materials were scarce, and inflation soared tremendously. The yen

fell to less than a hundredth of its prewar value,¹⁸ and the black market ran rampant throughout Japan. Enmeshed in these dismal postwar conditions, the Japanese people soon embraced General MacArthur as their redeemer and democracy and unionization as the answer to their problems.

Soon labor unions blossomed throughout Japan. Since all the conservatives had taken government positions during the war and had therefore been purged, the leadership of these unions fell, ironically, to the newly released communists and socialists who had tried to establish the unions before the war. Because of their prison internment during the war, they were also, in 1945, the only men with labor experience possessing "clean" records.¹⁹ Consequently, from the beginning the labor unions were controlled, for the most part, by communists and socialists whose economic beliefs were based on political ideology.

As the labor unions grew more forceful so did the voices of the people; strikes and strike threats began to appear. In May 1946 at least a million people participated in a demonstration in Tokyo in order to call attention to the serious food shortage. More strikes continued to flare up. Finally, a large general strike of 2,500,000 workers (two-thirds of organized labor at that time) was planned for January 31, 1947. It was finally halted at the eleventh hour

by General MacArthur, who had seen his plans for unionization turn into an uncontrollable monster. He forbade general strikes and removed the communist labor leaders. By 1950, the impact of unions had lessened considerably after mushrooming for nearly four years.²⁰

Bunraku and Labor Unions

In 1945 the Bunraku performers, being more conservative than the general worker, continued working under the same conditions they had before the war, with Shōchiku paying them per performance. At first, they seemed to be oblivious to the rising powers of the labor unions. For almost two years puppet theatre performers waited patiently for a resurgence of activity, accepting the infrequent and erratic salary paid to them. By the summer of 1947, though, morale was deteriorating quickly, and the performers were involved in a struggle for daily survival. In September 1947 the performers united together and asked Shōchiku to reevaluate their pay system and to help subsidize their living expenses, for not only were the artists paid per performance, but they also did not receive sick pay or retirement benefits. Shōchiku refused their request, contending that the Bunraku performers were not actually employees of the company because they were not paid on a fixed basis. An argument ensued in which the performers responded that,

although there was no fixed salary, they not only considered themselves employees of Shōchiku now but also had considered themselves employees ever since Shōchiku took control of the Bunraku-za in 1909.²¹

This dispute caught the attention of a Major Barclay, Chief of the Labor Relations Department of the Occupation Forces. "Major Barclay told the members of the Bunraku Theatre that formation of a union would enable them to negotiate and protect their rights as working men, stated in the Labor Standards Act and other connected laws set up by the Japanese government. Therefore, he advised that they should form a union immediately."²²

This was already the thinking of a number of Bunraku performers who had been influenced by members of the Osaka branch of the Japanese Cinematic and Theatrical Workers Union. Unfortunately, the union members were communists and their influence extended politically as well; in fact, some of the young puppeteers had already joined the Communist party. The puppeteers are regarded as the most poorly educated of the three groups of Bunraku performers. Because of their poor working conditions, they were easy pawns for anyone who promised to help them. They joined the Communist party because of their poverty, not because of any ideological beliefs. "The leftists of the Japanese Cinematic and Theatrical Workers Union

influenced them strongly; the simple minded Bunraku people became belligerent. All of a sudden, those who were in the lowest class of the feudalistic system took a leading part, and made a dash without listening to the words of their senior performers."²³

But Bunraku's situation with Shōchiku was at a deadlock. The majority of performers felt a union would help where their individual pleas to Shōchiku had failed. Consequently, by-laws and demands were discussed and decided on, and in May 1948 the Bunraku-za chapter of the Osaka Branch of the Japanese Cinematic and Theatrical Workers Union was formed with seventy-seven members. Kiritake Monjūrō was elected chairman, Takemoto Tsunadayū, vice-chairman, and Kiritake Manzaburō, chief secretary. Five of the greatest and most venerated performers did not join the union. Yamashirō no Shōjō, Yoshida Bungorō, Tsuruzawa Seiroku, Nozawa Matsunosuke and Takemoto Hamadayū (the present Tsudayū) felt that Bunraku artists should place themselves above financial gain and think of preserving the art of the puppet theatre instead of tearing it apart with feuds.²⁴ These men were conservatives and rejected any connection with communism.

The demands of the newly formed union included retirement benefits, sick pay, a guaranteed minimum wage, and joint management council for planning the shows. The last demand was one of the grievances of

the younger performers who felt Shōchiku selected plays without the consent of the performers and then unfairly assigned roles by seniority rather than by ability.²⁵

A series of negotiations began in July 1948 and ended unsuccessfully three months later. Shōchiku would not yield to any union demands. By October the hostilities between the two groups had become so severe that negotiations were discontinued. However Shōchiku's resistance to negotiation was not as cold hearted as it appeared to be. Shōchiku was, after all, a profit making organization and it was losing money on puppet play performances. It did not want to sign a contract guaranteeing each performer a set salary without some promise of increased revenue. Ōtani Takejirō, President of Shōchiku, had a deep love for Bunraku and felt his organization had sacrificed much to keep it alive after the war. Bunraku did not qualify for governmental subsidy at this time because it was run by a profit making organization, despite the fact that it was reaping no profit and that the future of this three hundred year-old art form was in danger.

When the bargaining broke off in October, the performances that were being held in Osaka at the Naka-za were immediately discontinued. Yamashirō no Shōjō, Tsuruzawa Seiroku and Yoshida Bungorō took leaves of absence. The union members refused to perform without a contract with the result that all

future performances were cancelled. At the same time, some performers reevaluated their positions and left the union, reducing the union to fifty-three of its original seventy-seven members.

Many factors influenced the performers' decision to withdraw from the union. First, many of them had joined the union wishing only to improve their financial status; they were not fully aware of the political beliefs of some of the younger members. After Shōchiku openly called some of the union members communists during negotiations, the more conservative members preferred not to be associated with the rising unpopularity of leftist ideas.²⁶ The final decision to withdraw from the union was made when it became evident that no increase in salary would evolve from negotiations. Second, the performers wanted to work, to practice their art, and thought that their chances were better with Shōchiku and its financial backing, however limited it appeared to be at the time. Both the union and non-union members agreed on the necessity of increased salary benefits, but disagreed on the method by which these benefits should be obtained.

In November 1948, one month after negotiations failed, the union formed an independent troupe, the Kumiaiha (the union group), and went on tour. It was immediately confronted with an unexpected problem in the provinces. Many loyal Bunraku followers were

conservative; they did not want to patronize a group they felt was sympathetic to communist ideas. The audience was so small that the traditional New Year's Performance (of 1949) had to be canceled.²⁷

The non-union members, sponsored by Shōchiku and headed by Yamashirō no Shōjō, soon formed their own group and on December 25, 1948 officially named it the Chinamikai (the "associated group") with a membership of thirty. They too were unable to give a New Year's Performance, partly because of their small membership and partly because of the lack of time available to prepare a program; however, they did perform later in January at the Matsuzaka Hall in Osaka.

In order to increase membership in the Chinamikai, the master artists of this group wrote letters to their disciples in Kumiaiha and asked them to join them in Chinamikai. Tsunadayū spoke of this situation with Ōnishi Shigetaka in Bunraku ningyō no enshutsu (Bunraku Stage Production):

As a matter of fact, when our masters sent us letters suggesting the formation of the Chinamikai in order to reconstruct Bunraku with the aim of pursuing artistry first, we, as a union, decided to ignore the suggestion after due discussion. Datedayū, Tsubamedayū and I visited our master, explained the situation and asked him to wait until we solved our union problems. I have been concerned about my words asking him to wait.²⁸

As will be seen later, the allegiance and veneration that the disciples had for their masters,

with whom they had lived and served since childhood, created emotional turmoil for many performers and eventually contributed heavily to the loss of union members.

In January 1949 Yoshida Bungorō and Yamashirō no Shōjō were elected to the prestigious Geijutsuin (Arts Academy). Mr. Shirai, president of the Osaka Matsuzakaya, attempted to bring the two groups together for a February performance in honor of Bungorō and Yamashirō no Shōjō. Both groups wished to honor these two great artists, especially Tsunadayū, whose master was Yamashirō no Shōjō, and Kiritake Monjūrō, chairman of the Kumiaiha, whose master was Bungorō; however, by this time the union members strongly believed in their course of action and were not willing to change their position. Further negotiations were held with Shōchiku, who by this time also wanted to end this prolonged problem. A temporary agreement of a guaranteed minimum salary was decided on with the condition that further negotiations would be held in March. The February performance, in which both groups participated, took place without any discord at the Minami-za in Kyoto. In March additional performances in honor of Bungorō and Yamashirō no Shōjō were held at the Bunraku-za in Osaka. All members of the Chinamikai participated, but only a few union members were able to perform in it because of a previous commitment to a

tour of the provinces.

Tsunadayū, vice chairman of the union, and his partner Yashichi, although not performing, were left in Osaka to negotiate a permanent contract. The conditions were right for a compromise, and both groups thought it was only a matter of time before a settlement would be made. Then, to the union's great surprise, Tsunadayū and Yashichi, along with two other union members, defected to Chinamikai. The union group immediately became enraged and lost all faith in Shōchiku's good will to negotiate. Many union members remembered a similar incident eleven years before when Tsunadayū and Yashichi (then Tsubamedayū and Danjirō respectively) defected from the Shingi-za with the promise of new titles from Shōchiku.

Tsunadayū gave his reasons for returning to Shōchiku in an August 1949 interview with Ōnishi Shigetaka:

"I expressed my desire to perform in the March show which was given in honor of my master, but I was not allowed to play. I was in a difficult position, standing between my master and the union. I did not join the group on the road either and could do nothing but stay at home and say that I was ill. Some members who did not go on the road joined the show at the Yotsubashi, but I do not understand why only I was not allowed to play. This is one of the reasons why I decided to withdraw from the union. Moreover, I made three mistakes in Terakoya during the February show, and since it is my favorite, I thought I should examine what I had done.

I could not help going back to my master once it became clear that the union members and

non-union members could not join together again. We acquire our artistry of Bunraku directly under the guidance of our masters, and indirectly by our predecessors' support."²⁹

Even after the unfortunate incident of Tsunadayū's and Yashichi's defection, many influential people in political and intellectual circles worked arduously to persuade the two groups that the future of Bunraku depended on a united company. On May 26, 1949 the groups held a joint meeting at the Osaka office of Shōchiku and announced the abolition of the separate groups and the formation of a new union with eighty-four members. This new group would be under the management of Shōchiku but also would be considered a branch of the Japanese Cinematic and Theatrical Workers Union.

Collective bargaining began with the union's demand that all Bunraku performers become company employees with fixed salaries, but after two meetings on June 1 and 10, negotiations collapsed. Because the members of Chinamikai had joined the union as a compromise measure, they immediately withdrew from the union when negotiations failed.

Yamashirō no Shōjō and Yoshida Bungorō again became leaders of the Chinamikai group, which included such noteworthy performers as Takemoto Aioidayū, Takemoto Tsunadayū, Takemoto Tsudayū, Tsuruzawa Kanjirō (later Kanji), Tsuruzawa Seiroku, Nozawa Matsunosuke,

Takezawa Yashichi, Yoshida Eiza, Kiritake Kamematsū, and Yoshida Tamao. Chinamikai had about forty members at this time, half of its normal size. They remained under Shōchiku, performing mainly at the Bunraku-za in Osaka but also giving performances in Tokyo and Kyoto. Because of the limited budget and waning audience appeal, the performance schedule was not as full as the artists would have preferred, but they were able to continue concentrating on their art and perfecting their skills while Shōchiku managed the financial aspects of their performances.

However, before the year was over, a major problem arose that shocked the Bunraku world and ended one of the great partnerships of this century. In October 1949, after a performance at the Teikoku Geikijō (Imperial Theatre), Yamashirō no Shōjō's partner of twenty-seven years, Tsuruzawa Seiroku IV, visited Yamashirō in his dressing room. He told Yamashirō that he would like to terminate their partnership for personal and artistic reasons and take a leave of absence. At this time Yamashirō was the most highly venerated performer in Bunraku and the monshita of Chinamikai. It was unheard of for a partner of lesser rank to end a partnership with his superior. It was a great surprise to Shōchiku as well as the general public, who were well aware of the system of homage normally paid to such a highly regarded artist.

Because Yamashirō and Seiroku had a personal following, this meant an even greater loss of popularity for Bunraku.

Yamashirō was completely shocked by Seiroku's decision, especially since Seiroku had never expressed any dissatisfaction. Seiroku claimed that Yamashirō had insulted him several times and he could no longer endure their partnership. According to Seiroku, one of the greatest insults occurred in March 1947 when Yamashirō received his new name from Prince Chichibu. Yamashirō asked his disciple Matsushimadayū to deliver a gift of cord money³⁰ to Seiroku in appreciation for their continued partnership. "He [Yamashirō] could have well satisfied his partner by saying that the honorable name could not have been attained except for his shamisen. On the contrary, of all things he chose to have his pupil [instead of personal acknowledgement] deliver only a small amount of money to Seiroku."³¹

Seiroku IV was also greatly angered when Yamashirō, asked to compare the previous holder of the Seiroku name with himself, opined that Seiroku III had greater ability.

It was difficult finding a replacement for Seiroku. At first, Takezawa Yashichi played for Yamashirō, and by February 1952, Tsuruzawa Fujizō became his permanent partner.

Soon after the break with Chinamikai the union

members withdrew from the Japanese Cinematic and Theatrical Workers branch and formed their own union, again named Kumiaiha. This move freed the forty or so performers from any association with politics. The new chairman was Kiritake Monjūrō, the vice chairman was Toyotake Rodayū (later Wakadayū) and the treasurer was Nozawa Kizaemon. It included such well known performers as Takemoto Enjirō, Tsuruzawa Ichiroemon, and Nozawa Katsutarō as committeemen.

Because of the strong hold Shochiku had over the Japanese theatre world, either by ownership or influence, initially the Kumiaiha was not able to obtain a theatre for performances, although they did perform at the Matsuzakaya Hall in Osaka in September 1949. Basically, the Kumiaiha toured the provinces, performing whenever and wherever they could find space and an audience. Their problems are recorded in the book Bunraku: Kiritake Monjūrō:

But as they had been locked out of the theatres both in the cities and in the local towns, they had to search for the potential audience among organizations, business companies, and schools. They even did not mind traveling to remote rural areas to perform. This had a great significance in introducing the art of Bunraku to the local people. However, their business record was a miserable one; during the first nine months, from June to March of the following year, they had only fifty-six performing days.³³

In the beginning the Kumiaiha had several obstacles to overcome. First, although they disavowed

having any political ideas, they were still considered a leftist organization by most of the general public; they had broken away from the more traditional Shōchiku organization and the conservative nature of this classical art form. Second, even if there had not been any association with communism, acceptance of a splinter group by the Japanese people is difficult to obtain. Despite the great strides made by the labor unions, the Japanese still considered allegiance to one's superiors very important. Third, they had no large organization supporting them. The performers themselves, along with the help of a few friends, had to make all the arrangements for the performances. Much time was spent in traveling in the provinces and setting up for performances, as well as making initial booking engagements. Although these duties, which were democratically carried out by all of the performers, took away precious time from individual and group rehearsals, they eventually led to the Kumiaiha's acceptance by the general public. The people soon became aware of the group's enthusiasm and hard work and forgot about their earlier political ideas.

By November 1949 a patron of the Kumiaiha, Koto Matsu, arranged a meeting between members of the Kumiaiha and Mr. Iwase, president of the Mitsukoshi Department Store chain in Tokyo. Iwase agreed to give the Kumiaiha a temporary contract to perform at the

Mitsukoshi Theatre, located in one of the firm's downtown stores. A set of performances were arranged for December. This was a real breakthrough for the Kumiaiha, especially since Monjūrō received the Ministry of Education Award for his role of Masaoka in Meiboku sendai hagi (The Disputed Succession). Once again, the performers had to assist and carry out duties other than those related to their individual artistic skills. An excerpt from Bunraku: Kiritake Monjūrō states:

The unionists received very favorable reactions from the audience, for they worked as ticket collectors or as ushers until just before the opening of the performance. Even during the performance, those who were not needed on stage attended the audience with care.

Also, they helped each other on the stage. For example, the shortage of puppet manipulators was covered by the shamisen players and chanters who manipulated the unimportant parts³⁴ of a puppet, such as a left hand or the legs.

The members of the Kumiaiha did not have money for hotel rooms so they lived in the dressing rooms during performances.³⁵ This kind of camaraderie and participation in all phases of performance soon brought the group closely together. The seniority system was given little consideration; instead they carried out their belief that all performers were equal and all had a voice in the decisions of the group.³⁶

Iwase continued his support of the Kumiaiha and scheduled regular performances at the Mitsukoshi

Department Store in Osaka as well as in Tokyo. In August 1959, while the Kumiaiha was performing at the Mitsukoshi Department Store in Osaka, the unionists decided to rename their group the Mitsuwakai, partly in appreciation of the Mitsukoshi Department Store's support but also because Bunraku is a union of three (mitsu) arts: puppetry, chanting, and shamisen playing.

By 1950 the two groups were completely separate and distinct. Both groups were comprised of strong-willed, masterful artists who would consider no compromise in their respective positions.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter II

¹Utsumi Shigetarō, Bunraku seisuiki (The Rise and Fall of Bunraku), (Tokyo: Shindo-Kushosha, 1964), p. 114.

²Interview with Takao Yoshinaga, Osaka, Japan, 20 July 1972.

³Hibi Shigejirō, Bunraku-za Shōchiku keiei gojūnen ryakushi (A Brief History of the Bunraku-za Under the Shōchiku Management), comp., The Shōchiku Company, (n.p., n.d.), p. 8. (Printed pamphlet.)

⁴Earle Ernst, The Kabuki Theatre (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956; 2nd ed., Honolulu: The University of Hawaii, 1974, p. 259.

⁵Ibid., p. 258.

⁶Interview with Faubion Bowers, New York City, 22 January 1976.

⁷Ernst, p. 259.

⁸Ibid., p. 267.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰The source for this entire paragraph is Ernst, p. 266.

¹¹Interview with Bowers.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Kumagai jinya is actually Act II of Ichinotani futaba gunki (The Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani).

¹⁴Ando Tsuruō, Kaneko Hirōshi and Nakanishi Keijirō, eds., Bunraku: Kiritake Monjūrō, (Japan [sic]: Kyūryūdō Co., Ltd., 1967) pp. 271-272.

- ¹⁵Hibi, p. 9.
- ¹⁶Russell Brines, MacArthur's Japan (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1948), p. 167.
- ¹⁷Ibid., p. 182.
- ¹⁸Edwin O. Reischauer, Japan Past and Present (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1964), p. 162.
- ¹⁹Brines, p. 168.
- ²⁰Solomom Levine, "Japan's Labor Problems and Labor Movement," in Postwar Japan: 1945 to the Present, eds. Jon Livingston, Joe Moore and Felicia Oldfather (New York: Random House, 1973), p. 181.
- ²¹"Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai seiritsu" (Establishment of the Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai), Nakanishi Keijirō Papers, Waseda Theatre Library, Tokyo, Japan, p. 1. (Printed pamphlet.)
- ²²Ibid.
- ²³Utsumi, p. 115.
- ²⁴Donald Keene, Bunraku: The Art of the Japanese Puppet Theatre (Tokyo: Kodansha International, Ltd.), p. 50.
- ²⁵"Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai seiritsu," p. 2.
- ²⁶Ibid.
- ²⁷Utsumi, p. 115.
- ²⁸Ōnishi Shigetaka, Bunraku ningyō no enshutsu (Bunraku Stage Production), (Maekatashi City, Japan: Organization for Publishing the Writings of Ōnishi Shigetaka, 1974), p. 366.
- ²⁹Ibid., pp. 366-367.
- ³⁰Money to cover "wear and tear" expenses of shamisen strings (cords).
- ³¹"Tsuruzawa Seiroku Bids Farewell to Yamashirō no Shōjō: A Ripple in the Classical Art Bunraku," Tōkyō Mainichi Shimbun, October 4, 1949, cited in Engekikai (Theatre World), November 1949, p. 5.
- ³²Ibid.

³³Ando Tsuruō, et al, Monjūrō, p. 281.

³⁴Ibid., pp. 282-283.

³⁵Ibid., p. 283.

³⁶Ujimi Mikiko, "Jūsei Yuka Toyotake Wakadayū Nempu" (A Chronological Record of the Performances of Toyotake Wakadayū X), cited in Chikamatsu Ronshū (Chikamatsu Collection), (n.p., January 1949) p. 66.

CHAPTER III

CHINAMIKAI: 1950-1955

Introduction

Both Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai had many obstacles to overcome, but Mitsuwakai's hurdles, for the most part, were anticipated and the performers became used to dealing with new problems every day. However, Shōchiku, which was hoping for a calm period after the previous three years, was beset with a series of unexpected circumstances that demanded more of their attention than ever before.

First, between 1950-52 the two great masters in Chinamikai, Yamashirō no Shōjō and Yoshida Bungorō, had to take leaves of absence because of illness. In 1950 Yamashirō no Shōjō was seventy-three years old and Bungorō was eighty-one; despite frail health, both men had performed regularly up until this time. Three other consummate performers, the shamisen player, Matsunosuke, and the chanters Takemoto Osumidayū and Takemoto Hinadayū, also fell ill and had to take leaves of absence during this period. Each leave lasted from one to six months and severely handicapped an already skeletal troupe. Each one of these five performers, at

the height of his popularity, had a steady following who did not readily transfer their allegiance to another performer.

Second, the number of regular Bunraku supporters before the split had been small, but now that audience had to be shared with Mitsuwakai. Fortunately, at the beginning of the split, Mitsuwakai seldom played in Osaka, which Chinamikai considered their home base, although it did perform occasionally in nearby Kyoto and regularly in Tokyo. But by 1950, Mitsuwakai was performing at the Mitsukoshi Department Store in Osaka and suddenly the small group of avid Bunraku supporters had a very real choice.

Bunraku-kai

By 1951 Shōchiku was well aware that they had to do something to revitalize the sagging Chinamikai. By then Chinamikai was producing a deficit of 400,000 yen (\$1,250)¹ with each set of performances (twenty days, two programs a day) held at the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za. They also had to pay 10 per cent sales tax on all ticket sales to the city of Osaka. They decided to go to the general public and enlist their aid, either as private or corporate sponsors.

In April 1951 Shōchiku established the Bunraku-kai, an organization founded to protect and

subsidize Chinamikai. Its officers and board of directors were made up of wealthy, influential people and had chapters in Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. Kitazawa Keijirō, President of the Daimaru Department Store chain, became president of the Bunraku-kai, and Saeki Isamu, President of Kintetsu Steel Company, became vice-president. Six other well-known business and community leaders became directors: the Governor of Osaka Prefecture and the President of Osaka University were members of the advisory board.

These men not only made their own financial contributions, but also encouraged other wealthy, influential people to do likewise. Companies could also join for 5,000 yen (\$16.70) a year. The public was impressed when so many outstanding community leaders and prestigious companies came to Chinamikai's aid. Individual memberships were made available at 2,400 yen (\$8.00) a year and entitled each member to seven or eight invitational performances.² The Bunraku-kai became a very popular organization, especially in Osaka, the home of Bunraku.

Capitalizing on the success of Bunraku-kai, in August 1951 Shōchiku decided to transfer its management of Chinamikai to the Osaka chapter of the Bunraku-kai. This proved to be effective public relations because it made the general public who had become members feel that they were actively contributing to Bunraku and its

future. In reality, Shōchiku maintained control; the Bunraku-kai officers were merely figureheads and had no say in artistic decisions. Their sole purpose was fund raising.

Artistic Problems

As commercial producers, Shōchiku, with the formation of the Bunraku-kai, did a masterful job in raising money and persuading the general public once again to sit up and take notice of Bunraku. As artistic producers, they were less successful, partly because Mitsuwakai was difficult competition. Mitsuwakai offered the public exciting and enthusiastic performances. Monjūrō, Sumidayū, and Wakadayū were well known for their lively and somewhat showy performances. Mitsuwakai was a more eclectic group of artists where a single approach to Bunraku did not prevail. And the younger audience especially enjoyed rooting for the underdog, the self-made organization.

Chinamikai, on the other hand, was more conservative in nature and operated by the largest commercial producer in Japan. Shōchiku spent little time on the artists' day to day problems and maintained a rather formal relationship with all the Chinamikai performers. If a problem arose, Shōchiku would contact the monshita (Yamashirō no Shōjō) and then, either he or someone he designated would handle the situation.

Artistically, the chanters' and shamisen players' interpretations were dominated by Yamashirō no Shōjō's beautifully intellectual approach to art. But Yamashirō no Shōjō was also a sickly man and was unable to actively rally Chinamikai behind him the way the young Monjūrō could do with Mitsuwakai. A few men like Bungorō were thought to be more adventuresome, even too showy at times, but Bungorō was considered the exception rather than the rule. By the 1950's he was also too old and sickly to become a dominant influence in Chinamikai. Shōchiku did not seem to be able to help Chinamikai discover a special spirit of its own; Chinamikai's strength lay in its masterful individual performers who were dedicated to preserving the traditional beauty of their art form.

In a review of the two groups in the February 1954 issue of Makuai, the critic Numa Sōu writes:

In Mitsuwakai there is a certain feeling which is radiated from the performers to us, and yet it does not mean that Mitsuwakai has better performers. I do not think that it is the superiority of one group over another which controls whether a performance can excite an audience or not. Mitsuwakai's inner strength lies in the fact that the members are dependent upon their own power for their livelihood. The Yotsubashi group [Chinamikai] should get rid of their easy attitude of being dependent upon unclear management (we cannot tell whether their management is in the hands of Shōchiku or Bunraku-kai).

Shōchiku succeeded in confusing the critics as to the real management concern running Chinamikai, but they were not able to cast off the air of dependency and complacency the critics felt pervaded Chinamikai.

The basic tenor of Chinamikai did not change, as can be seen in a review of the two groups one and a half years later by the critic Utsumi Shigetarō:

Mitsuwakai tries to succeed by themselves. They have an explosive tension and passion, whether good or bad, as they try hard to gain the sympathy of the audience. On the other hand, Chinamikai has an attitude of easiness, being dependent upon the big names of classical art, the Intangible Cultural Properties. That attitude gives us the impression that they are in a green house or in tepid lukewarm water.

Shōchiku was also criticized for its refusal to make changes in two of its artistic policies which the critics felt were detrimental to the well being and growth of Bunraku. The first policy dealt with the custom of doing a set of twenty performances per month with two different programs a day. Since few of these performances were well attended, the critics suggested that Shōchiku cut down the number of performances and limit the schedule to one three hour program a day. This would allow the performers to concentrate their efforts on one performance a day and give each artist more time to practice and teach his disciples. Psychologically it would also benefit the artists by assuring them of better attended performances. From

the beginning, Mitsuwakai had adopted a six day performance schedule with one performance per day with successful results.

Several critics also thought that Shōchiku's policy of performing mostly midori kyōgen (popular acts of longer plays) was sinking Bunraku farther into oblivion. They felt that the only way to attract students was by performing tōshi kyōgen (full length plays) on a regular basis. Midori kyōgen were confusing to young people who no longer knew entire plays as their parents and grandparents had in the past. In the December 1952 issue of Makuai, Shionoya Yoshihiko writes:

'Midori' performances every month in which they do a bit of this work and a bit of that work is only spurring on Bunraku to its death. In addition, the audience which is satisfied with only famous works like Sakaya [The Wine Dealer] or Terakoya [The Village School] encourage the money making policy of Shōchiku. It is the essence of Bunraku to do plays from the beginning to the end.

In March 1953 Shōchiku finally did the tōshi kyōgen of Sugawara denju tenarai (The Secrets of Sugawara's Calligraphy) and the theatre was filled to capacity. It is unclear whether the audience came to the performance out of genuine interest in tōshi kyōgen or out of curiosity to see if they could endure a marathon event; nevertheless, it was popular and indicated Shōchiku should examine the possibilities of future tōshi kyōgen productions. To the dismay of the

critics, Shōchiku chose not to analyze its success with a tōshi kyōgen. Instead they decided to concentrate on another plan that they had begun in 1951 and now were involved in completely.

New Plays

When Bunraku was divided into two groups, the audience was split also. Shōchiku, realizing that the success of Chinamikai depended, to a large extent, in attracting a new audience, decided to try and interest the young people who had turned away from classical art forms. To this end, they began introducing into Bunraku's repertoire new plays with modern themes. Although new plays had been produced in the 1930's, they had been propaganda vehicles for the militarists in power and were never considered serious works of art. After the war, between 1947-50, Shōchiku produced five new shosagoto (dance pieces) and wished to expand their efforts by introducing serious drama in a modern vein.

They began by producing two new plays in 1951, followed by one new play per year in 1952, 1953, and 1954, in addition to six new shosagoto between 1951 and 1955. In 1956 Shōchiku produced the first two "new" plays using Western puppets: adaptations of Hamlet and Madame Butterfly. None of these new dramatic plays was successful. There are many reasons attributed to

their failure; generally, the same problems existed for each production, and it was Shōchiku's lack of understanding of these fundamental problems that caused repeated failure.

The greatest problem was that no staging procedure existed for new productions. Bunraku never had a "director" in the Western sense. Since the regular repertoire is passed down from one performer to another, it is the master's responsibility to make sure his disciple performs properly. If a play has not been produced in a number of years, someone who remembers the play, such as an older venerated performer or scholar, makes suggestions to the performers. Shōchiku used the same procedure for the new modern plays in which a performer, scholar, or even the composer of the piece helped unify the three arts into a cohesive production in a few rehearsals.⁶

The shosagoto were period pieces where known kata (traditional business) could be used in the conventional sense, but the new dramatic plays placed a tremendous burden on most of the performers, who were unaccustomed to creating their own roles from conception. Generally, the shamisen player and chanter met first and learned their roles. After they felt comfortable with their roles, the puppets were added in the last few rehearsals. The puppeteers had the most difficult task since no kata existed for modern

characters. Suddenly, they were asked to create new roles when they had spent their entire lives perpetuating roles that were hundreds of years old.

It was also impossible for the puppeteers to master their new roles in a few rehearsals. There was no time for the shamisen players, chanters, and puppeteers to work together to create a unified whole. In an interview in December 1953, a group of young performers commented on the preparation time allowed for new plays. The puppeteer Bunjaku said: "Appearing on the stage itself during performance becomes a practice."⁷ In an interview with the master puppeteer Yoshida Eiza, he spoke of his specific problems in creating the role of Madame Butterfly in an adaptation of the opera done by Bunraku in 1956.

Madame Butterfly is a new play in which foreigners appear so we cannot use the old puppets. New heads were made, and this is the first time in the history of Bunraku that heads of foreign puppets were used. I, as manipulator of Madame Butterfly, studied books of the opera and listened to stories about past performances [of the opera]. But I have never seen the opera itself; I was utterly bewildered.

In this role, our old technique is not applicable Madame Butterfly has to wear a Western dress. I cannot manipulate her in a very feminine way as I would a regular Bunraku puppet since her character is rather modern and vigorous We are taking great pains to produce fashionable effects suitable to the material as we observe the limitations of Bunraku.

As to the general movements of the puppets, consultations were given by the directors, but they were nothing but major points. We must devise the rest of the details ourselves. But

we are only groping in the dark For instance, the way of narrating this play is different from the regular jōruri so that sometimes we cannot move the puppets together with the words of the chanter as we usually do; we are at a loss because the way to manipulate the puppets and the breath work are totally different.

Economic problems were also a factor in the failure of the new plays. Shōchiku did not invest enough money in these productions to make them artistically successful from a technical point of view. Shōchiku had undertaken this project when its revenue from Bunraku was already at a minimum; however, the new plays required new costumes and sets, and in some cases, new puppet heads. In the regular classical repertoire, these costs were negligible, except for repairs or replacing a worn costume. Shōchiku did not fully realize the cost of mounting an entirely new puppet production.

In January 1952 Yoshinaga Takao, one of Bunraku's great scholars and most ardent admirers, wrote about the poorly designed scenery as well as other problems with the new play Tsuchiya Chikara (The Story of Tsuchiya Chikara).

There was no change of scenery between the Mukojima House scene and the Mansion of Tsuchiya Chikara scene. The lack of budget does not constitute any excuse. I feel sorry for Toyosuke who played [the shamisen] because the play was badly written Even if they arrange and say beautiful words, they cannot capture the hearts of young people since they write with outmoded conservative thinking using a poor writing style which is far below the writers of the past After having seen the poor new play Tsuchiya Chikara and having listened to Aiodayū narrate it, I really felt that Bunraku might as well be discarded by the public.¹⁰

Nine months later, in October 1952, the scenery still needed improvement. Yoshinaga comments in his review of Ryūsei (A Falling Star): "Looking at the milky way of the backdrop, I felt as if I was watching the stage of a high school play."¹¹

Other critics agreed with Yoshinaga about the poor productions of the modern plays. In April 1953 Ōnoko Tokio wrote in a review of Shuzenji monogatari (A Story of Shuzenji Temple):

The puppet manipulations of Tamasuke, Tamagorō, and Tamao are simply commonplace. Come to think of it, it seems that the manipulators, narrators and shamisen players do not have enough creative energy and passions. Unless they get rid of such an attitude, a performance of a new play is nothing but a waste of efforts in Bunraku.¹²

Part of this lackadaisical attitude stemmed from the fact that the performers generally did not enjoy working on the new plays. There were exceptions. For instance, if a shamisen player composed a piece,

obviously he wanted to see it done, or, if a chanter or puppeteer got a particularly exciting role, he was also pleased. But, on the whole, performers felt imposed upon to learn new roles when they could be spending more time on the classical plays that were the core of Bunraku.

There was also some resentment toward Shōchiku for assigning roles, especially in new plays, without consulting performers. Many artists did not like doing new plays, but they had no choice unless they were among a handful of top performers. Some of the younger performers felt that Yamashirō no Shōjō, as the monshita, should have conveyed their feelings about new plays and role assignments to Ōtani Takejirō, but Yamashirō never broached the subject.¹³ Shōchiku was far more concerned with finding new popularity for Bunraku than with artists' happiness.

The audiences did not like the new plays either. Even when the audience laughed at some of the puppets with blue eyes and Western clothes, Shōchiku remained intransigent in their support of new plays.

Beginning with the opening of the new theatre in 1956, Shōchiku instituted a policy of introducing one new play per set of performances. Shōchiku introduced a total of thirty-two new plays from 1951 to 1962. All were failures. Only Madame Butterfly was ever repeated. Shōchiku had far better luck with their

series of Chikamatsu revivals begun in 1952.

Chikamatsu Revivals

Chikamatsu Monzaemon had written more than 120 plays especially for Bunraku. They had been the most popular plays of their day and had contributed significantly to Bunraku's heyday in the early eighteenth century. By the twentieth century many of these plays were no longer performed. Some of the plays had been dropped from the puppet theatre's repertoire by the end of the eighteenth century. Either the plays were of topical interest and lost their audience appeal after awhile or they could not adapt to the three puppeteer manipulation that had come into fashion in 1734 after Chikamatsu's death. Still other plays had been dropped inadvertently from the repertoire in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to make way for new plays. And some were not performed because the most popular performer or manager of the day did not like them. After a number of years no one could remember the music or the puppet movements since neither had been written down. Shōchiku had a few extant scripts which were no longer performed, and instead of trying to duplicate the movement and music from a hundred or so years ago, they gave the scripts

to noted shamisen players or composers that had written the shamisen music for the new plays and asked them to create appropriate music. The scripts and music were then given to the puppeteers to create kata for the characters. These tasks were easier than working on new plays since the artists could use the existing Chikamatsu plays already in their repertoire as models, as well as other eighteenth century plays by different playwrights. The audience as well as the performers were enthusiastic about these revivals since they were in the same tradition as the rest of Bunraku's repertoire, yet offered the audience new characters and situations. Financially, these plays were more profitable for Shōchiku since many of the existing puppet heads, sets, and costumes could be easily adapted to these plays. Most important of all, it was a significant contribution in revitalizing Bunraku within its existing framework.

Shōchiku presented four Chikamatsu revivals between 1952-1955 and three more between 1956-1959. The most popular one, Sonezaki shinjū, was Chikamatsu's first domestic tragedy. It was a huge success when it was revived in 1955 and is now an integral part of Bunraku's repertoire. Moreover, it has proven to be

the most popular Bunraku play with foreign audiences, and with the exception of the 1962 tour to Seattle and Vancouver, Sonezaki shinjū has been included in every foreign tour the Bunraku troupe has made to date.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter III

¹In 1951, 320 yen equaled U.S. \$1.00.

²"Kitazawa Keijirō shi taidan" (Interview with Kitazawa Keijirō), conducted by Miyake Shutarō, Makuai (Intermission), January 1953, p. 66.

³Numa Sōu, "Atae enu kandō" (No Emotion Is Given), Makuai, February 1954, p. 82.

⁴Utsumi Shigetarō, "Futatsu no Bunraku" (The Two Bunrakus), Makuai, September 1955, p. 88.

⁵Shionoya Yoshihiko, "Bunraku no mondai" (Bunraku's Problems), Makuai, October 1955, p. 82.

⁶Yoshinaga Takao, "Ōkiku natta ningyō to shinsaku no mondai" (The Problem with the Puppets Becoming Larger and the New Works), Makuai, September 1956, p. 84.

⁷"Bunraku wakate zadankai" (Conversation with the Young Performers of Bunraku), chaired by Hiraki Itsuo, Makuai, December 1953, p. 57.

⁸Breath work is the highest form of ensemble playing in Bunraku. It occurs when the chanter, the shamisen player, and the puppeteer take the same pause at exactly the same moment. This synchronization, usually at a heightened moment, conveys a total blending of the three arts of Bunraku.

⁹Yoshida Eiza, "Bunraku ka saretā Ocho-fujin" (Madame Butterfly Staged in Bunraku), Makuai, April 1956, p. 61.

¹⁰Yoshinaga Takao, "Jūnigatsu no Bunraku-za" (The Bunraku-za in December), Makuai, January 1952, p. 109.

¹¹Yoshinaga Takao, "Jūgatsu no Bunraku-za" (The Bunraku-za in October), Makuai, November 1952, p. 78.

¹²Ōnoko, Tokio, "Sangatsu no Yotsubashi
Bunraku-za" (The Yotsubashi Bunraku-za in March),
Makuai, April 1953, p. 24.

¹³"Bunraku wakate zadankai," p. 58.

CHAPTER IV

MITSUWAKAI, 1950-55: THE FORMATIVE YEARS

Introduction

Mitsuwakai's manifesto began, "along with the rebirth of Japan as a democratic and peace-loving nation we, who have the same ideals, declare our emancipation from the ancient feudal customs of the Bunraku world and form a democratic group, the Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai."¹ In accordance with democratic procedure, Mitsuwakai's bylaws defined the rights and responsibilities of its members.² The organization consisted of a Chairman (Kiritake Monjūrō), a Vice-Chairman (Toyotake Wakadayū), a Treasurer (Nozawa Kizaemon), an Auditor and six committee members elected by the entire membership. This governing body made the laws with the approval of the general membership, which was the final decision making body of the organization.

Their constitution was revolutionary in the Bunraku world since Shōchiku had previously made all decisions concerning performance and salary for the performers. The only artists ever consulted about Shōchiku's decisions were the monshita and one or two other venerated performers.

The democratic process worked well for Mitsuwakai, which rightly chose the motto "to endure hardship" as its guiding dictum. They traveled throughout the country from one local performance to another, and just as they had won the sympathy of the Tokyo audience with their hard work and determination to succeed in earning their own living, they soon won the same approval and respect in the provinces, where, in some instances, Bunraku had never been seen before. In 1950 Mitsuwakai spent 73 days touring; in 1951, 124 days; in 1952, 94 days; in 1953, 72 days, and in 1954, 91 days.³ There was no guarantee of the number of performances in any given year; this caused salaries and finances available for production expenses to vacillate each year.

The Tōkyō Shimbun wrote an in-depth article on the Mitsuwakai in November 1953 and recorded some of Mitsuwakai's touring procedure and the reasons they gained audience acceptance:

To look at their management, we can see their economical use of time and money; their leaders ride in third class coach to go to local areas though they used to ride in second class. They walk if a destination is close, and take a bus if it is far. They share room and board. They do not have only a few men in charge of carrying the eighteen pieces of luggage for the performances; for example, all of the members unload and carry the luggage in the station so that they finish the work in only three minutes. Moreover, they pay a higher proportionate amount of salary to those who are low in rank than to those who are high in rank, and they pay everyone for every

performance, even if they cannot appear in the performance. They try not to cause any trouble to the agents in the touring places, preparing for any situations which might occur.

Information concerning salary is generally unavailable in Japan as it would appear indiscreet for a man to discuss such a personal matter; however, the following statistics were given in a printed pamphlet entitled "Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai Seiritsu" (Establishment of the Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai), and includes salaries for all Mitsuwakai performers in 1951 and 1952:

1) Average Salary

Year	Average Salary Per Person	Average Salary Per Person Per Day
1951	72,289.00 Yen	469.41 Yen
1952	83,365.00 Yen	711.70 Yen

2) One Day's Salary According to Rank

Rank	A Class	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1951	1,000 Yen	850	700	630	560	490	350	250
1952	1,200 Yen	1,000	900	800	700	600	500	400

The preceding performers' salaries include not only local performances but also semi-annual performances given in both Tokyo and Osaka and sponsored by the Mitsukoshi Department Store. These performances, more dependable than the provincial tours, were enthusiastically received and did much to help Mitsuwakai gain critical as well as governmental notice, and eventually governmental support.

Artistic Policy

In a review of their 1950 performances at the Mitsukoshi Department Store in Tokyo, Yoshinaga Takao wrote that the theatre was filled to capacity. He comments:

The reasons for the success at Mitsukoshi were: the short engagement of one week of performances and one program per day, an appeal to young women because of the location (that is to say, inside the department store), the fact that the union group sold tickets desperately, and Mitsukoshi's willingness to call upon various important customers. Above all, the name Mitsukoshi was the most influential factor in making the performances successful.⁶

Mitsuwakai's belief that a filled house with fewer performances was better than nearly an empty house with a wide choice of performances worked to their advantage. First, the performers spent a great deal of time traveling and this took a toll on their health; in 1953 Monjūrō collapsed while on tour because of Mitsuwakai's heavy traveling schedule. They were constantly trying to maintain the artistic level and energy of their performances and the best way seemed to be fewer performances. Second, when the house was filled to capacity, the audience felt as if they were watching a popular company perform. The audience nurtured Mitsuwakai's eagerness to please, and vice-versa.

Mitsuwakai also carefully selected the plays they included in their programs. From the beginning,

Mitsuwakai found the shosagoto (dance pieces) and the classical plays not commonly performed to be the greatest audience pleasers so they continued presenting these specialties. Unlike Chinamikai, they did little experimenting with new plays; in fact, they performed only six new pieces in fifteen years (two plays and four shosagoto).

One of their new plays, Uriko-hime to Amanjaku (Princess Uriko and Amanjaku), based on an old folk tale and written by the Japanese playwright Kinoshita Junji and composed by Nozawa Kizaemon, had more success than any other new play presented by Chinamikai or Mitsuwakai. It is the only new play still in Bunraku's repertoire today. Because the play is based on a familiar myth and is set in bygone times, it seems to fit nicely into the type of stories the Bunraku audiences expect.

Bunraku Classroom For Students

Another area in which Mitsuwakai gained public attention was in their teaching seminars utilizing young performers. They began an active and very successful program in June 1954 at the Mitsukoshi in Tokyo, followed by a similar program in Osaka in August 1954.

These seminars, more often called the Bunraku Classroom For Students, were originated in order to

introduce Bunraku to junior and senior high school students. Mitsuwakai hoped to interest those people who would be the supporters of Bunraku in the future and therefore get them to recognize the importance of the continuation of this classical art form.⁷ The Bunraku Classroom was sponsored jointly by the newspaper, the Yomiuri Shimbun, the Mitsukoshi Department Store, and the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Properties.

The program took place two hours before a regularly scheduled performance and usually included a brief general lecture on Bunraku. This was followed by a demonstration on how the puppets were manipulated and brief performances by individual chanters and shamisen players. The program concluded with two short acts of plays.

The Bunraku Classroom for Students was Mitsuwakai's attempt to build a young audience. While no study has been done to determine the lasting effectiveness of this program, it was instrumental in introducing Bunraku to a new generation of young people, and it is still being used today. As previously mentioned, Chinamikai also attempted to build a young audience by introducing new plays with modern themes; but this approach totally confused the new audience because, first, they were not watching the classical art form but a hybrid, and second, what they

saw was not successfully executed. Mitsuwakai disseminated information from within the existing structure of the puppet theatre. The lessons young people learned were pure Bunraku, not watered down attempts for popular appeal.

Mitsuwakai Performers

Much of Mitsuwakai's success can be traced to the strong leadership of the organization. Even during difficult times, "the political ability of Monjūrō, the sense of justice of Kizaemon, and the leadership of Wakadayū did much to unite Mitsuwakai."⁸ These men had fought hard to bring about a change in the political structure of Bunraku under the Shōchiku management, and when they found it was impossible, decided to do it their own way. At the beginning, their overzealous nature and their ties to Communism offended many people, but as they reorganized their thinking, they realized they had to work harder and perform better if they were to be accepted by the public. Ultimately their goal was to be able to make a good living as classical artists and still govern themselves.

Other Mitsuwakai performers were instrumental in maintaining the high artistic level of their group, and like Chinamikai, retirement sometimes quickly changed their available performers. However, Mitsuwakai had fewer performers to choose from for replacements

because, as will be shown, Chinamikai (and Shōchiku) did everything in its power to win back important performers.

The first important change in Mitsuwakai's roster came in 1951 when Takemoto Sumidayū, the monshita of Mitsuwakai, retired from his position (although he continued to perform occasionally until his full retirement in 1958). In contrast to Yamashirō no Shōjō of Chinamikai, Sumidayū was famous for his light and free interpretations; his strength lay in his ability to establish a mood rather than an exacting analysis of each word and phrase.⁹

Sumidayū chose Toyotake Wakadayū as the new monshita. Wakadayū was a great leader and respected artist. He was known for his powerful and stirring voice, and although quite different in delivery from Sumidayū, took Sumidayū's partner, Tsuruzawa Tsunazō, as his shamisen player when he became the monshita in 1951. Tsunazō was one of the greatest shamisen players of the time, and this partnership developed into a strong and successful union. Moreover, it greatly displeased Shōchiku because they had hoped Tsunazō would become Yamashirō's partner after Sumidayū's retirement as the monshita. Two years earlier, in 1949, Shōchiku had tried to persuade Tsunazō to become Yamashirō's partner when Seiroku ended his relationship with Yamashirō, but Tsunazō, used to performing with

Sumidayū, knew the proposed relationship would never succeed. He spoke of the differences between Yamashirō and himself: "I am an airplane while he is a palanquin bearer with straw sandals on. Both of us will be laughed at if I've flown to Osaka and he is still in Hakone, carrying a palanquin."¹⁰

Shōchiku was more successful winning other performers back to Chinamikai. In April 1950 Seiroku Kanjirō and Tsuruzawa Kankō, two Mitsuwakai performers, returned to Chinamikai. In 1951, two shamisen players (Seijirō Tsuruzawa and Kinshi Nozawa), one chanter (Takemoto Koshinadayū), and one puppeteer (Kiritake Montarō) switched allegiance to Chinamikai. At least a half dozen other performers left Mitsuwakai for Chinamikai between 1949 and 1962, leaving Mitsuwakai with a small nucleus of dedicated and committed performers.

Besides the chanter, Tsunadayū, who left Mitsuwakai in 1949, the other great loss suffered was the chanter Takemoto Datedayū in 1954. Nozawa Kizaemon, one of the two great shamisen players in Mitsuwakai (the other being Tsuruzawa Tsunazō), had spent many years training Datedayū, who had become a full-fledged chanter reciting important roles less than a year before his defection. The loss of Datedayū was even more painful than Tsunadayū's, since the latter had left to be reunited with his master (Yamashirō).

Datedayū, on the other hand, severed his relationship with his master when he changed to Chinamikai. This lack of loyalty to a master is a devastating blow to anyone in Japanese society, but it is even more unusual and shocking in a Japanese classical art form.

Shōchiku had lured Datedayū with the promise of a new title, Tosadayū, which he did not receive until 1957. Other factors were important in luring performers back to Shōchiku. Mitsuwakai's living and working conditions were more difficult to endure than Chinamikai's. The performers also had to spend a great deal of time doing tasks other than performing and this displeased some of the members. Returning to Shōchiku meant performing mostly in Osaka, with occasional trips to Tokyo and Kyoto or the provinces, but always returning to the home base of Bunraku-za. Even though the performing days were fewer with Shōchiku (and as Chinamikai continued, they became fewer and fewer each year as the audience continued to dwindle), and consequently, the pay was less, the performers had more time to devote to their art and their students.

Shōchiku also readily made itself available for loans; in fact, some performers originally had wanted to go to Mitsuwakai, but could not because they were in debt to Shōchiku. The life styles of some of the more successful performers was not commensurate with their salaries. Many had large followings and liked to live

ostentatiously to impress their devoted fans. "When they [the performers] needed money, Shōchiku lent it to them. Shōchiku tied their freedom to debt."¹¹

For example, Yamashirō himself borrowed a tremendous amount of money to build a house, and when he had to buy books for Bunraku, he did not have any money; therefore, he had to ask Shōchiku for a loan, which he got immediately. The puppeteer Yoshida Tamasuke wanted to divorce his wife when he fell in love with another woman; he went to Shōchiku to borrow money to pay off his wife, and Shōchiku lent him the money.¹²

Yamashirō was not one of the performers who ever seemed to entertain the possibility of joining a union group, but he was one of the great leaders of Bunraku and younger performers followed his example of borrowing money. Once they were indebted to Shōchiku, it was difficult to extricate themselves from debt, for each year they performed less and less, and consequently, made less and less money.

Shōchiku thought that as more and more performers left Mitsuwakai and returned to Chinamikai, Mitsuwakai would soon collapse. This scheme eventually backfired. While the loss of performers was at first very demoralizing to Mitsuwakai, it eventually gave them more strength and determination to survive and drew the remaining performers closer together.¹³

FOOTNOTES

Chapter IV

¹"Mōryō to sengen: Bunraku Mitsuwakai" (Bylaws and Regulations of the Mitsuwakai), Nakanishi Keijirō Papers, Waseda Theatre Library, Tokyo, Japan, p. 1. (Printed Pamphlet.)

²See Appendix 1 for the By-Laws.

³Ando Tsuruō, Kaneko Hiroshi, and Nakanishi Keijirō, eds. Bunraku: Kiritake Monjūrō (Japan [sic]: Kyūrūjudō Co., Ltd., 1967) pp. 290-295 passim.

⁴"Kusetsu gonen nao hagemu Mitsuwakai" (Five Years of Hardship: Mitsuwakai Still Endeavors), Tōkyō Shimbun, December 1953, reprinted in Ando Tsuruō, et al, Monjūrō, p. 295.

⁵"Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai seiritsu" (Establishment of the Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai), Nakanishi Keijirō Papers, Waseda Theatre Library, Tokyo, Japan, p. 1. (Printed Pamphlet.)

⁶Yoshinaga, Takao, "Jūgatsu no Bunraku" (Bunraku In October) Makuai, December 1950, p. 76.

⁷Ando Tsuruō, et al, Monjūrō, p. 304.

⁸Onishi Shigetaka and Yoshinaga Takao, Bunraku-za (The Bunraku Theatre), (Tokyo: Kodansha International, Ltd., 1959), p. 39.

⁹Mori Shinroku, Bunraku no mikata (A Way of Looking at Bunraku), (Tokyo: Sojisha Publishing Co., 1965), p. 278.

¹⁰Ujima Mikiko, "Jūsei yuka Toyotake Wakadayū nempu" (A Chronological Record of the Performances of Toyotake Wakadayū X), in Chikamatsu ronshū (Chikamatsu Collection), (n.p., January 1949), p. 63.

¹¹Interview with Yoshinaga Takao, Osaka, Japan, 27 July 1972.

¹²The two examples in this paragraph are also from the Yoshinaga Interview 27 July 1972.

¹³Utsumi Shigetarō, Bunraku seisuiki (The Rise and Fall of Bunraku), (Tokyo: Shindo Kushosha, 1964), p. 116.

CHAPTER V

MITSUWAKAI AND CHINAMIKAI

1955-1959

Joint Honors

By 1953 the war had been over for eight years. The turmoil of everyday life had abated, society in general was stabilized, and the paths of both Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai were clearly set. Although Mitsuwakai had won over a small but steady audience, they were able to remain solvent only if they accepted every engagement they were offered. They generally performed 85-95 days a year. Their enthusiasm and camaraderie did much to carry them through lean times and hectic traveling schedules, but a number of Bunraku devotees were concerned that this group could not continue at its present level of overwork and maintain their art.

Chinamikai, on the other hand, averaged 60 performances a year, and was anything but overworked. Their seemingly unenthusiastic performances did much to cause their small audience to dwindle even more. Shōchiku remained faithful to Chinamikai, even as it continually lost money, but their decision to finance

new plays worried even the most faithful of Bunraku supporters.

Certain questions were being asked by those who cared about the future of Bunraku. How much longer could the members of Mitsuwakai travel around the countryside? And how much longer could Shōchiku shoulder the debt of Chinamikai? A group of intellectuals who saw that both groups needed help decided to take action. They brought these problems to the Ministry of Education, and in May 1953, the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Properties (under the Ministry of Education) met with officials from Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City to work out some form of immediate subsidy.

But even before the subsidy issue could be addressed, they had to determine whether Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai were equal and viable artistic organizations. The decision to give both groups the same stature was a great boost to Mitsuwakai, which had never been officially "recognized" before.

The joint committee then decided funds could best be used in order to assure the proper training of Bunraku successors. "The purpose of the [joint committee's] project was to give a subsidy of 1.5 million yen in total (split equally between Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai) with the three organizations bearing 500,000 yen each, in order to meet part of the

study expense of those who would shoulder Bunraku in the future."¹ This training program lasted five years and then the subsidy was increased to 800,000 yen for each organization and renewed for another five years. Funds were given to both those studying Bunraku and to those masters teaching new students.

In January 1954 Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai were given additional government support when they were declared tax-exempt organizations. Up until this time, there was a 10 per cent government tax on ticket sales. This action, along with the subsidized training program, brought national attention to an art form often forgotten by the public. Audiences momentarily took notice of Bunraku again and both groups began enjoying full houses.

Early Joint Performances

In November 1954 the Ministry of Education, encouraged by the public's response, once again combined efforts with the Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City to sponsor joint performances of the two groups in the Annual Arts Festival (Geijutsu-sai). Both groups performed once in Tokyo and once in Osaka.

The arrangements made for this first joint performance were difficult and tenuous because neither group wanted to appear on the stage with the other. But the Ministry of Education, aided by some

influential friends, finally persuaded the groups to appear, even though the result was less than hoped for. Both groups agreed to a sūjōruri program (only chanters and shamisen players) in which they alternated programs. Only a few chanters and shamisen players performed from each group, clearly showing the reluctance of most of the artists to perform. Actually, the puppeteers were more than reluctant; they openly opposed the joint performance and refused to perform; consequently, the sujōruri program was devised.

This joint performance, as in later ones, always took the form of competition. It was not designed as a competitive event but the audiences and critics were quick to compare the groups. Despite the strenuous efforts of the sponsors, the show was not successful. Mori Shinroku lists some of the reasons it failed in Tokyo:

...stormy weather on the day of performance; deciding on the date of the presentation took so long that it left little time for doing advertising and attracting audiences efficiently; puppeteers did not participate. Fundamentally, however, the significance of a joint performance in the history of Bunraku was less attractive to the general public than anticipated by those who were concerned and by Bunraku scholars.

Although the joint performance did not attract the public as originally hoped, this first effort was looked upon as a step in the right direction. Even

though Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai did not appear in the same play together, both groups shared the same program, and perhaps more importantly, the same backstage area and the same theatre.

Two months later, in January 1955, the Committee for Protection of Cultural Properties established "a system of designating important intangible cultural properties in order to push forward a plan to protect those who are valuable historically and artistically and the keepers of great cultural skill."³ The holders of this title became known as "National Living Treasures," for when they died, their talent could not be replaced. In February 1955 four Bunraku performers were designated National Living Treasures: Toyotake Yamashirō no Shōjō, Takemoto Tsunadayū and Tsuruzawa Seiroku of Chinamikai and Takemoto Sumidayū of Mitsuwakai. One month later, both Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai were awarded equivalent honors when they were designated "Important Intangible Properties."

Plans were begun to commemorate these honors in the form of a joint performance, but before it could take place, NHK (Japan Broadcasting Network) in Osaka asked both groups to perform in honor of their thirtieth anniversary. This time the puppeteers joined in and paved the way for the "National Living Treasure" joint performance to be held later in the year.

The NHK Anniversary Program took place at the Osaka Sankei Kaikan Hall in May 1955. Each group performed alternately. Chinamikai opened the show with Asagao banashi (A Story of Morning Glory) and yadoya (The Inn), and Mitsuwakai followed with Horikawa (The Evening Assault at Horikawa Mansion) and Kanjinchō (The Subscription List). The Ōsaka Shimbun reported:

There is a story behind the decision of the program; knowing that Bungorō would perform in Asagao banashi, Monjuro decided to play Benkei in Kanjinchō as he would be against his teacher if he should play a female part.⁴

Also reported in the same article was a touching tribute Monjūrō paid to Bungorō:

Monjūrō, who came late to the theatre since his performance was in the second part of the program, asked, "Where is Master?" as soon as he arrived at his dressing room. Knowing that his teacher Bungorō had already arrived in his dressing room, Monjūrō visited him immediately, even before he took off his shoes to relax, and greeted him. Bungorō was very pleased at this.⁵

Monjūrō's visit to Bungorō was taken as a good sign that much of the hostility had disappeared between members of the two groups. Officials hoped for a true joint performance with both groups appearing in the same scene for the National Living Treasure Joint Performance later that year, but, after much negotiation, the two groups performed alternately once again. These performances were held in October 1955 in

Osaka and in November 1955 in Tokyo. They were sponsored by the Committee for the Protection of Cultural Properties, Osaka Prefecture, and Osaka City, and although they performed alternately, each performance brought the two groups closer together.

The New Bunraku-za

In November 1955 Chinamikai held its last performance at the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za in Osaka. This theatre had served as Bunraku's home for twenty-five years, except for a short hiatus when it had been destroyed during the war and was rebuilt shortly thereafter.

The new theatre, the Dōtombori Bunraku-za, opened in January 1956. The January performances celebrated not only the completion of the new theatre but also Yoshida Bungorō's new name, Yoshida Namba-no-shō, given to him by the Imperial Family. This was only the fourth time in Bunraku's three hundred year history that a performer had received such an honor.

The new Bunraku-za was built in one of Osaka's busiest sections, on the same site as the Benten-za, the theatre where Bunraku began three hundred years before.⁶ The 980 seat theatre, designed by Isohachi Yoshida, was a great success. The sight lines and acoustics were described as "perfect."⁷ The stage,

much larger than the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za, measured sixty feet wide and sixty feet deep. It was equipped with a large seri-dashi (an elevated platform in the stage floor that could raise or lower scenery to the basement), three small seri-dashi, and a revolving yuka (the side platform where the narrator and shamisen player sit). The advanced lighting equipment was something unheard of in Bunraku, but the major innovation was a hanamichi, a stage device which had appeared in Kabuki for hundreds of years. Literally translated, hanamichi means "flower way," and it is used in Kabuki as a passageway or runway from the stage through the audience. Much controversy surrounded the building of Bunraku's hanamichi. The more conservative Bunraku scholars said the art form might as well be called "puppet Kabuki" and that a major change in stage devices (other than mechanization) would dilute the purity of the art form.⁸ After all, Bunraku had succeeded for three hundred years without one. But Ōtani Takejirō, President of Shōchiku, prevailed and adapted the hanamichi for Bunraku. It was constructed deep enough so that the feet of the puppeteers would be hidden while the feet of the puppets would move along the two rims of the hanamichi. If the theatre were rented to a Kabuki troupe or other acting company, a cover could be placed over the hanamichi so it could be used as it is in Kabuki.

The hanamichi was not meant to be used in every performance; it was to be used in scenes where spectacular entrances and exits would add excitement to a production, or in scenes where it would be advantageous to have the puppets and puppeteers closer to the audience, especially when complex puppet heads (with movable eyebrows, eyes and mouths) were used.

The hanamichi won almost instant public approval; the audience enjoyed seeing the puppets at close range, as well as the puppeteers, since some of the most famous ones were considered matinee idols.

There were some problems, however, in effectively using the hanamichi. Generally, some restaging had to be done, and since there was no "director" in Bunraku, the puppeteers and Shōchiku had to decide when and how it would be used to the best advantage---the result was "direction by committee." Another problem occurred with the shamisen music. In some instances, it was not long enough to cover a move down the hanamichi and back again so additional music had to be written. But adjustments were made, and today the hanamichi has become an accepted part of Bunraku.

One critic, Utsumi Shigetarō, sums up the general reaction to the new Bunraku-za:

Bunraku has become very beautiful and very modern. This seems to be the result of tremendous efforts and various dreams of

President Ōtani. I would like to express my respect towards the innovative mind of this old man. It is admirable that he basically kept to the original purpose of Bunraku. Now it is up to the people to come and use the theatre.

Ōtani and Shōchiku had been criticized previously for some of their policies concerning Bunraku, but even at a time when Chinamikai was losing money, Shōchiku went ahead and gave this classical art form a beautiful new theatre which combined the best of the traditional Bunraku theatre with a few of the most relevant and exciting stage devices available.

Although most of Ōtani's other artistic decisions were unsuccessful (especially his insistence on the viability of new plays), his love for Bunraku can never be doubted, and it is the Dōtombori Bunraku-za which will be remembered as his greatest achievement in the revitalization of this classical art form.

Later Joint Performances

In November 1956 another joint performance was held at the Mitsukoshi Theatre as part of the Annual Arts Festival (Geijutsu-sai). Two years previously, the first joint performance in the form of sujōruri was given at this festival and was considered a failure. However, two years and the intervening joint performances did much to change the performers' previous adamant positions. This time great progress

was made in negotiations---both groups agreed to appear on the stage at the same time. However, the puppeteers were still the least cooperative and a compromise had to be worked out. Both Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai agreed to perform the Yoshino River scene from Imoseyama onna teikin (An Example of Noble Womanhood).

This play has an unusual stage setting---two floors and two stages. The section on the left side of stage is "Imo-yama." In this part the narrators and shamisen players were from Chinamikai (Takemoto Tsunadayū with his partner Takezawa Yashichi and Datedayū with his partner Tsuruzawa Fujizō), and the puppeteers were from Mitsuwakai (led by Kiritake Monjūrō and Kiritake Monnosuke). On the right side of the stage is "Se-yama." The narrators and the shamisen players were from Mitsuwakai (Toyotake Wakadayū and his partner Tsuruzawa Tsunazō and Toyotake Tsubamedayū with his partner Nozawa Kizaemon) and the puppeteers from Chinamikai (led by Yoshida Tamasuke and Yoshida Tamao).

This performance was a great success, partly due to the enormous effort undertaken by both groups and partly due to the novel approach of this joint performance. As one critic wrote: "It was literally a performance by two groups competing with each other in confusion and the stage was absolutely magnificent."¹⁰

Buoyed by the success of Imoseyama, President Ōtani of Shochiku and Toyozawa Enjirō, Chief Director

of Mitsuwakai, discussed the question of a possible merger. They decided the first step was a true joint performance with both groups performing together in the same play on one stage. In September 1957 Shōchiku sponsored the "Great Joint Performance of Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai" performed in the official home of Bunraku. The production was the entire play Kanadehon chūshingura, and the performance was an overwhelming success.

From this point on, while both groups still performed separately (in January 1958, Mitsuwakai held a month of performances celebrating their tenth anniversary at the Mitsukoshi Theatre in Tokyo), joint performances were becoming more and more commonplace. There were three joint performances in 1958, the first one being the most significant since it was the first time Bungorō and Monjūrō played together on the same stage in twelve years. They performed together in Imoseyama (in March 1958), but in different roles than they had performed twelve years ago. Before the split Bungorō had played Hidetake (the mother) and Monjūrō had played Hinadori (her daughter), but this time Bungorō, ninety years old, chose to play the daughter to Monjūrō's mother. It was an emotional performance, not only in the symbolic role changes that naturally occur (both on the stage and in real life), but also Bunraku fans knew that, with these two great forces

united on the stage again, a true merger was now possible.

Waikaishi-kai

Governmental honors and joint performances were probably the two most important factors leading to the eventual reunion of Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai, but one other new organization, the Bunraku Waikaishi-kai (Young Performers Organization) played an important role in this merger.

To understand the development of the Waikaishi-kai, one must follow the events leading up to it. In December 1957 Tsunazawa Tsunazō, Mitsuwakai's most renowned shamisen player, suddenly died at the age of seventy-five. Nine months later, Takemoto Sumidayū, the first monshita of Mitsuwakai (he had given up the monshita position in 1951 to Wakadayū because of illness), officially retired from performing because of a degenerating illness and passed away four months later. Meanwhile, Yamashirō no Shōjō, the monshita of Chinamikai, was eighty-two years old and suffering from high blood pressure and other related illnesses. He decided to retire in January 1959, the same month Sumidayū passed away. By this time, Bungorō was 89 years old and performed infrequently. So, in little more than one year's time, Bunraku had lost the services of four of the greatest performers in its

history. These performers had transmitted their art to countless disciples for over three eras (Meiji, Taishō, and Shōwa).

In January 1959 a large joint performance was held at the Bunraku-za. It celebrated two special events. First, it honored Yamashirō no Shōjō and officially announced his retirement.¹⁰ It also marked Shōchiku's fifty years of management of Bunraku. The performances were emotional for they not only signified the end of an era for one of Bunraku's greatest chanters of the past three hundred years, but it also seemed as if they might signify the end of an era for Shōchiku as well. The public knew Shōchiku had been losing a great deal of money on Bunraku, and government officials and Bunraku scholars knew it was only a matter of time before Shōchiku would withdraw its support. The merger of these two groups under a subsidized organization seemed to be the solution that was being discussed with more frequency every day.

While management level officials were worrying about the financial aspects of Bunraku, the younger members of both Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai felt particularly saddened by the loss of three of their great masters, men who had helped maintain the high level of training and performances for so many years. They decided to join together to consciously attempt to maintain the art of Bunraku. About thirty of the

younger performers under forty years of age (from both Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai) merged to form the Waikaishi-kai. From January 1959 until April 1962, the Waikaishi-kai gave ten performances at the Bunraku-za. At each performance, all of the roles were played by these younger performers, giving them a chance to do parts usually reserved for older, more experienced artists. Eight master performers, led by Takemoto Monjidayū, volunteered their assistance and gave valuable instruction and advice to these performers.

The Waikaishi-kai was a valuable contribution to Bunraku. It helped the younger performers perfect skills in a performance situation and it brought these performers from Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai together to concentrate on an issue larger than each individual group. In a time of great financial and artistic concern, the Waikaishi-kai was enthusiastically and conscientiously attempting to find a new solution to one of Bunraku's greatest problems: the preservation of the art form itself.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter V

¹zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai (The Non-Profit Bunraku Foundation), Bunrakushi (History of Bunraku), (Osaka, Japan: Bunraku Kyokai, 1967), Part 1, p. 18.

²Mori Shinroku, Bunraku no mikata (A Way of Looking At Bunraku), (Tokyo: Sojisha Publishing Co., 1965), p. 263.

³Ibid.

⁴Osaka Shimbun, 26 May 1955 as quoted in Ando Tsuruō, Kanako Hirōshi, and Nakanishi Keijirō, eds. Bunraku: Kiritake Monjūrō (Japan [sic]: Kyūryūdō Co., Ltd., 1967) p. 304.

⁵Ibid.

⁶The Dōtombori Bunraku-za remained the home of Bunraku until 1983 when a National Theatre for Bunraku was built in Osaka, a few blocks from the Dōtombori Bunraku-za.

⁷Shirō Takagi, "Shin Bunraku-za no budai" (On the New Bunraku-za), Makuai, March 1956, p. 56.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Utsumi Shigetarō, Bunraku seisuki (The Rise and Fall of Bunraku), (Tokyo: Shindō-Kushosha, 1964), p. 117.

¹⁰Mori, p. 264.

¹¹For his final performance, Yamashirō chanted Ryōben Rōnin from Ryōben-suji no yurai (The Story of Ryōben).

CHAPTER VI

MITSUWAKAI AND CHINAMIKAI: 1960-62

The years 1960-62 saw Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai performing together almost on a regular basis at the Bunraku-za, although each group still performed separately. Mitsuwakai remained especially active and kept up their tours of the provinces. In 1960, in an attempt to alleviate some of Bunraku's debt, Shōchiku decided to place Bunraku under the aegis of the Kabuki-za, the Kabuki theatre in Tokyo which they also managed. Although the actual leadership remained the same (Ōtani Takejirō ran both organizations), Shōchiku tried to get the Kabuki-za, a more profitable theatrical organization, to absorb some of Bunraku's losses. However, in 1961-1962 Bunraku began experiencing the worst slump in fifty years of Shōchiku management. In some performances, there were only ten seats filled out of 980.¹ Chinamikai performed only sixty times the entire year. Even such honors as that of Kanji Tsuruzawa, Kizaemon Nozawa, and Wakadayū Toyotake being appointed National Living Treasures during this time did nothing to alleviate

their dire financial straits.

The final blow came in February 1962. While performing Koi musume mukashi hachijo (The Murder of a Woman in Love), Yoshida Namba-no-shō (Yoshida Bungorō) had a heart attack and died at the age of ninety-two. Although he was not an active participant the past few years, he had never officially retired and continued performing until his death. Bungorō was the last symbol of art for art's sake rather than art for livelihood. He stood for the great period of prewar Bunraku, and he was also the last tie to nineteenth century Bunraku when the theatre was filled from morning until night with dedicated Bunraku lovers.

All had changed now, and as the final chapter of an earlier period of Bunraku came to a close, it was obvious to all concerned that another was imminent. On March 16, 1962, one month after Bungorō died, the Asahi Shimbun reported:

A plan to separate Bunraku from Shōchiku and to start a foundation for the art is beginning to materialize. In order to discuss the matter further, Ōno Bamboku, the Vice-President of the Liberal Democratic Party, meets today with Mr. Iwata, the manager of the Tokyo Kabuki-za [Shōchiku] at the Hotel New Japan. This meeting is based on the appeal made to Ōno by Shōchiku Chairman, Ōtani Takejirō, who visited Ōno on the 13th. At that time, Ōtani asked the government to start a governmental subsidized foundation for Bunraku at the earliest possible date because Shōchiku was unable to maintain the art any longer due to continuous financial losses. Bunraku's income from performances is 50 million yen at present while its maintenance

expenditure is 100 yen million per year. Shōchiku, whose film income has also dropped recently, has found it quite impossible to maintain Bunraku.²

Although the Bunraku performers knew Shōchiku's departure was coming, the actual announcement was still a shock to everyone. Part of it no doubt had to do with the uncertainty of what lay ahead. The Chinamikai artists especially became concerned about their future. On March 17th, Ōno Bamboku met with Satō Yoshinori, the governor of Osaka Prefecture, and the following day he met with Nakai Mitsuji, the Mayor of Osaka City. He asked both of them to aid Bunraku by contributing 15 million yen each to the 50 million yen loss Bunraku incurred every year.³ At this point, Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City were each contributing 800,000 yen a year for the Bunraku training program initiated in 1953.

Ono had already spoken to the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Finance and hoped they would jointly contribute 10-20 million yen, but he also felt it was important for the people of Osaka to increase their support since Osaka had been Bunraku's home base since its beginning three hundred years ago. Ōno then met with Abe Shinnosuke, President of NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, the Japan Broadcasting System), based in Osaka. NHK had made significant contributions to Bunraku in the past, so Ōno asked them for their

continued support. Abe agreed that NHK would help in any way possible in rebuilding Bunraku.

Neither the government, Osaka Prefecture, Osaka City, or NHK would specify how much each would contribute; each had to discuss the amount of subsidy and the form of specific involvement within their own organization. While they were deciding on subsidy, Shōchiku spoke separately to the leading members of both Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai and told them that the new subsidized foundation was being organized only if the two groups reunited. A combined effort was needed if Bunraku was to continue at any significant level. Although no specific terms were mentioned, they both agreed in principle to a united Bunraku.

The movement to rebuild Bunraku was active and lively. Osaka City appointed their Social Education Committee to coordinate the City's plan of involvement, the government appointed the Cultural Properties Protection Commission, but Osaka Prefecture could not decide which section of their organization should be in charge (NHK was not involved in these early discussions). Osaka Prefecture delayed the start of the actual meetings for three months as they debated between their Social Education Section and their Public Information Section, Department of the Governor. The initial enthusiasm to reorganize ground quickly to a halt while everyone involved waited for Osaka

Prefecture to appoint their representative. Finally, in July they decided on the Social Education Section and meetings commenced.

Osaka City decided to call the new organization Zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai (The non-profit Bunraku Foundation). This name was formally adopted, but later it became known as the Bunraku Kyōkai. The representatives from these organizations began meeting regularly to lay the groundwork for this new management organization.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had received an invitation for Bunraku to perform at the Twenty-First Century World Exposition in Seattle in July 1962. So while governmental and local authorities were working out a plan to rebuild Bunraku, twenty-eight performers from both Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai left for a one month tour to the United States and Canada. This was the first time Bunraku ever appeared abroad. They appeared first in Seattle, then Vancouver, Los Angeles and Hawaii.⁴

Their trip was a huge success and did much to affirm to the Japanese the importance of Bunraku as a classical art form. This tour was the beginning of international acclaim for Bunraku; this kind of international attention would be repeated many times in the years to come. It was particularly significant in 1962 for it showed those who were working so hard at

home to preserve Bunraku that the rest of the world cared.

By late summer the government had agreed to give Bunraku an annual subsidy of 15 million yen. That figure was matched by the local authorities: Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City each gave 7.5 million yen, NHK then stepped forward and contributed an additional 7.5 million yen for a total of 37.5 million yen for one year's subsidy.⁵

Once the financial support was guaranteed, a search was begun to find a person who could lead this new organization and who could also act as a liason between the governmental and local groups. In September NHK suggested Sasaki Einosuke, a Kansai native (region comprising the Osaka-Kyoto area), who was also a renowned theatre scholar and a top-level executive at NHK in Osaka. He was approved by all concerned and took charge in October 1962.

Sasaki set up a temporary office at the NHK Dojima Studio in Osaka and began the task of coordinating and developing the Bunraku Kyōkai. But Osaka Prefecture and Osaka City continued holding meetings just as they had before (but without Sasaki or a representative from the government) and a lack of communication soon became evident. Sasaki decided to ask both local authorities to send one official each to work with him at the NHK Dōjima Studio on a regular

basis and to help him in his preparations; this seemed to take care of the local meetings.

The main problem that Sasaki and his team had to grapple with was artists' salaries and ranking. Mitsuwakai had been formed by artists who rejected Shochiku's system of paying performers. Salaries were still a very delicate subject and all waited to see what the new organization would do. The problem of ranking and how artists were selected to perform roles was also of primary concern, especially to Mitsuwakai, who now had their own system and who were very happy with it. In July both Shōchiku and Mitsuwakai had been asked to submit individual members' daily wages. Neither had complied, but instead had submitted the total amount of daily wages paid to its members. Whether Shōchiku and Mitsuwakai did not want the other group to know individual salaries, or whether they just did not want to speak of so personal a matter (as often occurs in Japanese society) is not clear. What is clear is that the committee setting up the Bunraku Kyokai had a difficult time figuring out the present base of individual wages.

Sasaki and his group decided first to set up a guideline for an artist's contract with Bunraku Kyōkai. If the basic contract passed everyone's approval, a more specific one would be drawn up listing actual salaries according to rank. The following was the

guideline for the artists' contract:

1) An artist must take part in main and local performances, rehearsals, and other activities held by the Bunraku Kyōkai; the latter pays the artist _____ yen per day in payment for his services.

2) The Bunraku Kyōkai guarantees performance fees for some days (about 80%) of annual main [Tokyo and Osaka] performance days and pays artist the money divided up by months regardless of his actual performance or not. Local performance fees are in addition to the guaranteed performance fees.

3) An artist who is absent from main shows for personal reasons will lose his right to demand the fee. If his absence is due to unavoidable reasons such as illness, he will be paid half the amount.

4) An artist must report to the Bunraku Kyokai when he participates in stage activities [such as Kabuki or Gion Corner] other than those related to the organization.

5) An artist has an obligation to obey and cooperate in regular and understudy assignments.

Both Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai accepted the terms of the new contract, paving the way to a true merger.

On December 4th, the leading members of Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai, along with representatives from the prefecture, the City, and NHK met with Sasaki at the NHK Dōjima Studio. A formal proposal was made and accepted by all present to unite the two groups. On December 14th a meeting was held at the Kokusai Hotel in Osaka and a Board of Directors for the Bunraku Kyōkai was selected. Sasaki was chosen its first Executive Director. Seven topics were discussed and decided as the specific concerns for Bunraku Kyōkai in

its first year. They were:

- 1) Training the Successors of the Art
- 2) Achieving Stability in the Artist's Life
- 3) Establishing a Regular Performance Schedule
(both in Tokyo and Osaka and in regional performances)
- 4) Collecting Bunraku Research Materials
- 5) Utilizing Schools to Disseminate the Art Form
- 6) Sending Bunraku Abroad⁷
- 7) Building a New Theatre

Because the establishment of the Bunraku Kyōkai took longer than originally anticipated, both Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai went ahead and presented their own New Year's performances, which also served as each group's farewell performances. In January 1963 Mitsuwakai held its final performance at the Mitsukoshi Theatre in Tokyo. At the same time, Chinamikai held its final performance at the Bunraku-za in Osaka.

On January 7, 1963 the Bunraku Kyōkai was formally established with plans to hold the first set of performances in April of that year. In mid-March the Bunraku-Kyōkai moved its offices to the fourth floor of the Bunraku-za, along with the puppet and costume shops (on the fourth and fifth floors). Their landlord was Shōchiku.

FOOTNOTES

Chapter VI

¹zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai (The Non-Profit Bunraku Foundation), Bunrakushi (History of Bunraku), (Osaka, Japan: Bunraku Kyōkai, 1967), Part 1, p. 5.

²Asahi Shimbun, 16 March 1962 as reported in zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai, Part 1, p. 1.

³zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai, Part 1, p. 26.

⁴The tour consisted of two programs. Program A was Ninin sambaso (The Dance for the Two Samboso), Shamisen kumikyoku (A Suite for Shamisen), the michiyuki scene from Yoshitsune sembon zakura (One Thousand Cherry Trees), and Tsubosaka reigenki (The Miricle at the Tsubosaka Temple). Program B consisted of Ninon kamuro (The Dance of the Two Kamuros), Date musume koi no hikanoko (The Love Story of the Beautiful Young Girl), Tsuri onna (Fishing for Wives), Dannoura kabuto gunki (The Battle of Dannoura), and the michiyuki scene from Imoseyama onna teikin (An Example of Noble Womanhood).

⁵The value of the yen in 1962 was still 320 yen to US \$1.00.

⁶zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai, Part 1, p. 58.

⁷zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai, Part 2. pp. 18-19.

CHAPTER VII

THE BUNRAKU KYŌKAI: THE FIRST YEAR

Developmental Stage

A wonderful conclusion to the history of Mitsuwakai and Chinamikai would be the establishment of the Bunraku Kyōkai and the performers joining together to work closely with the management and living happily ever after. But too many years of poverty and a basic distrust of management could not be erased easily. Rebuilding Bunraku meant rebuilding the performers' faith in a producing organization.

The first performances under the Kyōkai's management were scheduled for April 20-May 7, 1963 at the Bunraku-za in Osaka. On April 19 a celebration was held at the Bunraku-za in honor of the new organization. Present were Ōno Bamboku who had labored so hard to help form this subsidized foundation, Ōtani Takejirō (who had presented Bunraku Kyōkai with several puppet heads and costumes), several members of the Board of Directors, Sasaki Einosuke and his staff, and the Bunraku performers. It was a good beginning as all members, both Chinamikai and Mitsuwakai, mixed freely with the management.¹

The spirit of this union was broken abruptly the next day when some puppeteers, arriving early for the opening performance, found twenty-five puppet heads broken and four missing. The first part of the opening night program was quickly changed from Kotobuki gonin sambaso (The Dance of the Five Sambaso) and the Hanawatashi (Sadaka's Mansion) and Yama (Mountain) scenes from Imoseyama onna teikin to Ninin sambaso and the Koi nyōbō somewake tazuna (The Two-Colored Reins) scene from Shigenei kowakare. Additional puppet heads previously owned by Mitsuwakai were borrowed and other puppet heads were substituted.

An investigation showed that a disgruntled puppeteer, Yoshida Totarō (formerly from Chinamikai), had done the damage and taken the puppet heads the night before. Totarō had been suspended from Bunraku Kyōkai because he had failed to show up for rehearsals and had not done any of the puppet preparation for the performance; he had appeared instead on an NHK television program. Totarō was arrested and incarcerated, but the Kyōkai withdrew their charges and he was released.

Although the puppet heads were later repaired by the master puppet head maker Ōe Minnosuke from Awaji Island and the missing heads returned, this event put a damper on the opening festivities as it showed immediately that all of the artists were not behind the

Bunraku Kyōkai.

From the beginning the new management had an uphill battle. The artists expected all of their problems to be alleviated immediately. They had expected their salaries to rise astronomically; many had gotten used to a light work schedule and hoped to make more money for the same amount of work. They knew the Bunraku Kyōkai was receiving 37.5 million yen in subsidy and could not understand why they were not directly receiving more of it. They were working more than they had in the past several years; indeed, by the end of the first fiscal year (March 31, 1964) Bunraku had performed five times in Osaka and Tokyo for a total of 120 performances and had given an additional 120 performances in the provinces for a total of 240 performances. This compares to an average of 70 performances before the Bunraku Kyōkai. In the first half of the year under the Kyōkai, the performers doubled their previous salaries and by the end of the first fiscal year, their salaries had risen 78 per cent, as well as obtaining new sick benefits and separate payments for participating in Bunraku classroom programs and training (either as a teacher or as a disciple) programs.² In spite of all this progress, there were still those performers who thought the situation should have improved more dramatically.

The salary problem was minor compared to the

brouhaha that arose out of Kyōkai's policy regarding the assignment of roles. Previously, Shōchiku's Ōtani had chosen the plays and the performers and then had a company man obtain oral consent from the performers before the plays were announced to the public. Ōtani made all of the decisions, and since an artist did not get paid unless he performed, he rarely complained about the roles assigned to him.

Bunraku Kyōkai's policy was quite different. First, the plays were chosen by the Senmon Iin-kai (the Experts Committee), a group of Bunraku scholars and theatre people. Their decisions were turned over to Sasaki and his secretariat, and they in turn assigned the roles. Their decisions were announced to the performers in writing. No oral consent from the performers was obtained, which greatly upset the artists involved. They felt the Kyōkai dictated the assignments and all sense of communication between management and workers was severed. The Kyōkai soon changed its policy by first obtaining an oral agreement from the artists. The Kyōkai had moved too fast in changing an old policy before discussing it with some of the more venerated performers. The problem remained, though, since the performers now got paid whether they performed or not, more performers began complaining about their role assignments and even threatened not to perform. Eventually the complaining

subsided when the performers realized that if they did not accept the roles assigned, fewer roles in general would be offered to them, and at the end of the year their contracts would not be renewed.

Other problems took up much of Sasaki and the Secretariat's time. The four main subsidizers, the government, Osaka City, Osaka Prefecture, and NHK knew little about the workings of Bunraku, either artistically or financially. They were deeply concerned with their investment and, hence, the well-being of the Kyōkai. "Osaka Prefecture, especially, kept a rather nervous, watchful eye on the Kyōkai."⁴ They demanded all sorts of accounting data and charged the Kyōkai with inadequate clerical work. Indeed the personnel in the business section, having only recently been hired, were unfamiliar with Bunraku procedures, some of which were being formulated as problems arose. They were slow in getting organized, partly because they were responsible for so many different areas of "business." They executed the payroll for both the artists and the Kyōkai personnel, they ran the box office, arranged discounts for schools and other organizations, canvassed groups in opinion polls and organized all regional performances (120 the first year).

Osaka Prefecture thought that organizational aspects of the Kyōkai were too slow in taking shape so

they formed "The Four Parties Liason Committee" with representatives from all four subsidizing entities and asked the Kyōkai to report to them on a regular basis. But what started as a committee to help the Kyōkai become better organized soon became one of the worst problems Sasaki had to deal with in the first year as they demanded more and more time, gave all kinds of opinions on how the organization should be run and generally slowed down the workings of the Kyōkai. "They did not concentrate on just meddling in the ways of executing the budget, but went so far as to interfere in personnel matters and salaries of the secretariat. We have to say that they went too far."⁵ At a time when this new organization desperately needed to stand on its own two feet, to make its own mistakes, and learn from them, "The Four Parties Liason Committee" did much to impede progress.

First Year Summary

In its first year of existence the Bunraku Kyōkai was not the cure-all everyone had expected it to be. It could not eradicate the problems that had existed in the structure of Bunraku for over half a century. Teaching artists to have faith in a new organization and to remain open to new methods of management did not occur instantly; however, as the artists saw the Kyōkai attempt to bring a new order and

vitality to a previous lackluster management organization, they slowly turned their support to the Kyōkai.

By March 1964 progress was made in most of the seven areas the Kyokai had set as their primary goals, and one additional goal was added. The biggest achievements were an active performance schedule (240 performances) and raising the artists salaries by 78 per cent. These two accomplishments insured the performers of financial stability for the first time since prewar Bunraku. More time was also spent training successors, with an additional allowance for both teacher and student. In 1963 the total number of Bunraku performers was seventy-three. The average age of a performer was fifty, with twenty-three artists over the age of sixty. The search was begun to search for new applicants, and housing and living allowances were also being discussed at the end of the first year.

Little was done in collecting Bunraku research material or in making plans to send Bunraku abroad, but a successful program in getting students acquainted with Bunraku was instituted. Much attention was given to freshmen in high school since Sonezaki shinjū was a required reading assignment for them. One of Bunraku's greatest successes in recent years was Sonezaki shinjū; the Kyōkai thought it might be equally successful in introducing new people to the art form. The plot line

was much simpler than the historical dramas, and a love story would be appealing to the young audience. Special daytime programs were developed based on the earlier Bunraku Classrooms begun by Mitsuwakai. They began with a short history of Bunraku, followed by performers' demonstrations of the three aspects of Bunraku (music, chanting, puppets) and concluded with scenes from Sonezaki shinjū. The program was successful not only with the students but also with the teachers, many of whom had never seen Bunraku. In the first year 8,689 students from fifty schools came to see the special Bunraku performances.⁵

Little was done about making plans to build Bunraku its own theatre, but as the budget was examined at the end of the year, it became clear that the rental of the Bunraku-za from Shōchiku ate away almost half of Bunraku's subsidy. The Kyōkai paid 17 million yen (of the 37.5 million yen subsidy) to Shōchiku for the use of the Bunraku-za (15 million yen went to theatre rental and 2 million yen went for the rental of the fourth and fifth floors). Other problems existed with the rental other than the high price. Shōchiku would only rent the theatre for a minimum of twenty days although the Kyōkai wanted it for a ten to fifteen day period, and the only times of the year Shōchiku would make the theatre available were March, July and December, the latter two months being considered poor

times to bring in an audience.⁶

The Kyōkai completed their first year of existence with a 3,697,806 yen deficit. This figure, when added to a deficit of 1,786,894 yen brought forward from 1962 (the Kyōkai absorbed Shōchiku's debt when they took over), gave the Kyōkai a total deficit of 5,484,700 yen. The subsidizing organizations were surprised to find that Bunraku still could not stand on its own feet financially. They felt new leadership was needed so on March 1, 1964 Sasaki Einosuke was replaced by his assistant Namba Haruo.

Sasaki addressed the problem of a solvent Bunraku in his end of the year report. He wrote that it was naive to think that in one year a new organization could completely turn around a declining art form. A new priority should replace some of the others which had now been accomplished---a priority of mobilizing a new audience. He pointed out that each set of main performances left Bunraku 2 to 3 million yen in debt. The main performances depended solely on ticket sales (unlike the regional performances where fixed fees were set). Although there was an initial surge of interest in the opening set of performances in Osaka in April 1963, it did not last. When the excitement wore off, Bunraku went back to its same dismally small audience of older men and women.⁷

Sasaki further commented that student audiences

were a beginning, but it would take many years of courting students before they became an audience that could financially support Bunraku. In the meantime, other means must be found and this must be the main concern of the Bunraku Kyōkai. The artists also must be aware of their duty to excite the audience, to make Bunraku a living art form. "Every artist must be consciously aware that he is the true carrier of a classic art and try hard to refine his skill. If this happens, an excitement will fill the stage and the audience's involvement will be deepened. The charm of the stage is the interchange of souls between the artists and the audience. To satisfy the audience before anything else is the regular duty of the artist."⁸

FOOTNOTES

Chapter VII

¹Zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai (The Non-Profit Bunraku Foundation), Bunrakushi (History of Bunraku), (Osaka, Japan: Bunraku Kyōkai, 1967), Part 2, p. 15.

²Sasaki Einosuke, Bunraku Kyōkai no genjō (The Present State of the Bunraku Kyōkai), (Osaka: Japan: Bunraku Kyōkai, December 1963), p. 13. This is the source for all of the information in this paragraph.

³Zaidan-hōjin Bunraku Kyōkai, Part 2, p. 16.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Sasaki, p. 35.

⁶Ibid., pp. 41-42.

⁷Ibid., pp. 49-52.

⁸Ibid., p. 52.

POSTSCRIPT

Sasaki Einosuke's concern for the need to mobilize a new audience was indeed a large part of the problem that Bunraku faced in the early years of the Bunraku Kyōkai. Shōchiku had been confronted with the same problem since the end of World War II, but the lack of an audience was part of a larger problem; the 37.5 million yen subsidy just was not enough to rescue Bunraku from insolvency. Because the main performances (those in Osaka and Tokyo) depended solely on ticket sales, the large deficit continued as long as the audience remained small. It was a vicious circle that remained unbroken until 1966 when the National Theatre opened in Tokyo. A new period in Bunraku's long history began.

From 1966 on Bunraku held all of its Tokyo performances at the National Theatre and became its only resident company. The National Theatre was funded by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, which guaranteed any box office shortfall. The National Theatre began an aggressive program to woo a new audience. It started by giving free summer workshops to high school students and broadcasting some of Bunraku's most popular dramas

on television. An active audience development department worked closely with Bunraku as it began its search for a new audience.¹

In 1972 the National Theatre, with funding from the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, began a program called the Bunraku Kenshu-Katei (Training Course). This program, modeled after one begun two years earlier in Kabuki, took interested young men with no family connections or knowledge of Bunraku and began training them in the three arts of Bunraku. These young men began an intensive two year program in hopes that they would be able to help replenish the slowly diminishing number of Bunraku performers (see Appendix for list of first class). This program won widespread approval from all of the outstanding Bunraku performers and scholars, who became the teachers of these students.

The National Theatre's aggressive pursuit to revitalize Bunraku began paying off. In 1967 Bunraku played to 50 per cent capacity at the National Theatre (630 seats); by 1980 the audience had increased to 90 per cent capacity.² In 1983 a new National Theatre for Bunraku was completed in Osaka at Takatsu (a few blocks from the old theatre on Dōtombori) at the cost of 28.5 million yen. Its main theatre seated 800 and the building also housed an exhibition hall. Bunraku had once again found its own home in the city of its birth.

FOOTNOTES

POSTSCRIPT

¹Thomas R.H. Havens, The Artist and Patron In Postwar Japan (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), p. 67.

²Ibid., pp. 67-68.

CONCLUSION

After World War II the new democratic political system introduced by General Douglas MacArthur and his staff shook the foundation of Japanese society. The abrogation of the tennō system nullified most of the traditions and customs that the Japanese people had depended upon to give their lives meaning and order. In the microcosmic world of Bunraku, even more than with the general public, the shock of democracy tore away the fiber of this traditional art form. Here was an art whose every achievement spoke of the traditions and the history of the Japanese people and whose every artist was committed to a vision of the past.

The Westernization of Bunraku is basically a story about the artist's relationship with management. No changes were made artistically. Although new plays were introduced, they were rejected almost immediately and found no long-lasting support in Bunraku. However, more changes were made in the financial and managerial structure of Bunraku between 1945-1963 than in its entire three hundred year history.

Changes were inevitable in postwar Japan as it quickly began rebuilding and taking its place in the

forefront of twentieth-century nations. The surprising factor in the history of postwar Bunraku was its ability eventually to adjust to and absorb all of the modern changes while maintaining the traditional style of the art form.

When Bunraku broke into two groups and two distinctive managerial philosophies were firmly established, there were many who thought that the end of Bunraku was imminent. But, artistically, the deleterious effects were minimal as each group continued performing, both in the main cities and in the provinces. The competition between these two groups was even looked upon by many as an exciting growth experience, especially with the performers of the Mitsuwakai.

When the merger finally did take place, it was the financial structure of Bunraku that had to be overhauled completely. Fortunately, with the subsidy provided by national and local governments as well as NHK, and with strong new managerial leadership at its helm, Bunraku not only escaped extinction but also found a glorious new beginning three hundred years after its inception.

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX 1 Bylaws and Regulations of the
Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai
- APPENDIX 2 List of Revivals, New Plays, and
Shosagoto since World War II
- APPENDIX 3 The Prospectus for the Establishment
of the Bunraku Kyōkai
- APPENDIX 4 List of First Bunraku Trainees' Class

APPENDIX 1

BYLAWS AND REGULATIONS OF THE
BUNRAKU-ZA MITSUWAKAIMitsuwakai Manifesto

Along with the rebirth of Japan as a democratic and peace-loving nation we, who have the same ideals, declare our emancipation from the ancient feudal customs of the Bunraku world and form a democratic group, the Bunraku-za Mitsuwakai.

With a sound and clear understanding of the managerial side of our work, we shall pursue our cultural responsibility to further develop the heritage of the international art of Bunraku, which has been polished and brought to its completion by the founding father Gidayu from many contributing talented predecessors.

At the same time, we shall aim at the advancement of the artistic skill of each member and promote friendly relations among members based on the spirit of Prince Shotoku (the great leader of seventh century Japan), who said that the friendship (peace, harmony) among people was the most important thing. We shall also pledge to help each other, materially and spiritually, with a sublime spirit of sacrifice and voluntary service, and carry out this goal with the strength of our moral conscience.

General Rules

- Article 1. In an effort to realize the aims of the Manifesto, this organization shall seek to improve the welfare and the fulfillment of each member's life.
- Article 2. The organization is called the Bunraku-za Puppet Theatre, Mitsuwakai, and has its office at 13 Futatsuido-Chō, Minami-Ku, Osaka City.
- Article 3. The membership of the organization is composed of the ballad reciters, the shamisen musicians, and the puppet manipulators, who belong to the Chinami Puppetry Association (men's department) and are in agreement with the implementation of the manifesto. Also included are the stage set technicians and clerical employees who share the same ideas as the artists.
- Article 4. The members of this organization are the ballad reciters, the shamisen musicians, and the puppet manipulators who belong exclusively to this organization.
- Article 5. The organization shall have the following departments:
1. The general affairs department.
 2. The performing arts department.

The division of duties of the above departments are explained in detailed regulations.

Officers

- Article 6. The organization shall have the following officers:
- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| Chairman | 1 |
| Vice-Chairman | 2 |
| Treasurer | 1 |
| Auditor | 2 |
| Committee members | 6 |

- Article 7.
- a). The officers shall be elected from the members described in Article 4.
 - b). The non-members described in the latter part of Article 3 are eligible to vote but are not qualified to be elected as officers. Minors have neither the rights to vote nor the right to be elected as officers.
 - c). The election of the officers shall be done by casting a single name on a ballot without the signature of the voter and shall be decided accordingly in order from the top vote receiver. However, the election of the committee members shall be done by casting two names from each of the three performing branches.
 - d). In case of an even vote, the priority shall be given to a senior member, and a drawing shall be held for a tie vote of members of the same ages.

- Article 8.
- a). The chairman shall represent the organization and conduct the business of the organization according to the Rules.
 - b). The vice-chairman shall assist the chairman and in the event the chairman cannot fulfill his duties, the vice-chairman shall substitute for him.
 - c). The treasurer shall be in charge of the financial affairs and responsible for the supervision of the assets of the organization and shall maintain a clear account.
 - d). The treasurer shall give a financial report once in the first half of the year and the other in the second half of the year, and the report shall be approved by the general meeting. In the event of an unusual financial change, a special report shall be given.

- e). The committee members form a committee and elect among themselves a committee chairman and two committee vice-chairmen.
- f). The committee shall be responsible for making and changing detailed regulations and implementing the rules. Also, the committee shall seek the approvals at the general meeting of their decisions.
- g). The committee chairman needs the majority vote of more than two-thirds of committee members to pass a resolution in connection to the Article 8, section f. In the event of a deadlock situation, the committee chairman shall cast the final vote.
- h). In accordance with the above mentioned regulations, the committee shall designate the representatives of each performing branch. The representatives for each branch shall execute and implement the resolutions of the committee according to the rules and regulations of each branch.
- i). The organization can appoint the honorary consultants or the technical consultants.

Article 9. The term of the chairman and vice-chairman is two years and the term of the remaining officers is one year, but re-election is not prohibited.

General Meeting

Article 10. The general meeting is the highest decision making body of this organization. It shall be called by the chairman of the organization once a year or when the necessity arises. But a general meeting shall be called anytime the Committee or more than half of the membership requests it.

- Article 11. A quorum at the general meeting requires the attendance of more than half the membership. Substitutes are not accepted; however, a proxy vote is acceptable.
- Article 12. When the committee meeting cannot produce a resolution, the matter shall be decided at the general meeting.

Rights and Duties

- Article 13. In principle, the officers of the organization shall be non-paid volunteers.
- Article 14. The members shall have equitable rights and duties in all areas of this organization.
- Article 15. The members shall have access to and the right to ask for an explanation of the accounting books.
- Article 16. The members shall not bring disgrace on the reputation of the organization nor participate in the performances that are not in accordance with the spirit of Bunraku.
- Article 17. The members shall ask for an approval of the appropriate office when planning to participate in a show promoted by someone other than this organization. However, there is no permission necessary to participate in the amateur ballad reciters show.
- Article 18. When a request is submitted concerning Article 17, the committee shall judge swiftly whether it is pursuant to Article 16 and decide its approval or disapproval.
- Article 19. Those members who have shown extraordinary progress in their artistic skill or who have rendered distinguished service to the organization may be given a public commendation.
- Article 20. Those who defect or are dismissed from the membership must lose their rights to the assets of the organization.

Article 21. The alterations and abolitions of the Rules shall be decided by a general meeting resolution.

Article 22. The Rules shall be effective and implemented immediately after the decision of the general meeting.

Additional Rules

Article 23. The minutes of the committee proceedings shall be made and preserved by the committee.

Article 24. In Principle, alterations and abolitions of rules as well as the detailed regulations and rules for their implementation shall take place annually. However, the pursuit of the previous rules shall not be necessarily prohibited.

Article 25. The employees shall manage only matters that are requested by the organization.

APPENDIX 2

List of Revivals, New Plays, and Dances by the Bunraku
Puppet Theatre from 1945 to 1964

Revivals

<u>Year</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Repeated</u>	<u>Author(s)</u>
1952	Shinjū kansaneizutsu		Chikamatsu Monzaemon
1955	Shonezaki shinjū	X	Chikamatsu Monzaemon
	Nagamachi onna no harakiri		Chikamatsu Monzaemon
	Yari no gonza kasane katakira	X	Chikamatsu Monzaemon
1956	Hakata kojorō namimakura	X	Chikamatsu Monzaemon
1959	Yugiri awa no naruto		Chikamatsu Monzaemon
	Hijirimen uzuki no momiji		Chikamatsu Monzaemon
	Natsu matsuri naniwa kagami	X	Namiki Senryū, Miyoshi Shōraku and Takeda Izumo
1961	Koinyōbō somewake tazuna	X	Kanshi Yoshida and Miyoshi Shōraku
1964	Shinjū yaiba wa kori no tsuitachi		Chikamatsu Monzaemon

New Plays

Year	Title	Repeated
1951	Toribeyama shinjū Tsuchiya Chikara	
1952	Rashōmon	
1953	Shuzenji monogatari	
1954	Umekaoru kyosono omokage	
1956	Hatsutabi myotozaru Ocho-fujin Meijun Toyozawa Dampei Genji monogatari aoi matsuri Hamlet Yotsuya kaidan Tsuzureori nishijin monogatari Yokiyu konkon sugatano mizumi Urikohime to Amanjaku Myoto zenzai	X X X
1957	Shunkinsho Tsubakihime Kitsune to fuefuki Meiji tennō Ohan	
1958	Ishikawa goemon Noren Shimoda shigure	
1959	Shiroi ojizosan	
1960	Ōsaka hanjoki Rakuhoku no aki Inu	
1961	Kurenai yosofu shinobugusa Ninjō banashi karigane bunshichi Yushima Minowa shinjū Shimoyo no tanuki	
1962	Akechi samanosuke homare no norikiri Sasayaki no take	
1963	Maitake Asama no tonosama	
1964	Horeki chisuibanashi	

Dances

Year	Title	Repeated
1947	Hanafubuki Menuri	
1948	Setsubun	
1949	Ninin kamuro	X
1950	Zato	
1951	Shohan chikuei renri ho waza	
1952	Omokage genji monogatari Ryūsei	
1953	Michiyuki natane no midarezaki	
1954	Yuki to hana Ochiudo Kagamijishi	X
1956	Engi no mikado Shiki no kyoku Ryuko Hagoromo Tango no sekku Kojobashi homare no kagami	
1957	Omoide soga	
1958	Otoko onna dōjōji Fujimusume Hyo tan namazu Sagimusume	X
1959	Kyōdai ningyō Kume no sennin yoshino zakura	X
1960	Homare no bara kuni no ishizue Michiyuki shimoyo no sennichi	

APPENDIX 3

The Prospectus for the Establishment
of the Bunraku Kyokai

The Bunraku Puppet Theatre is a three hundred year-old cultural treasure, of which we, the Japanese people, feel proud.

The Bunraku management was handed over to Shirai Matsujirō and Ōtani Takejirō of the Shōchiku Company in 1909 from Uemura Bunrakuken. For the fifty years that Bunraku was under the Shōchiku management, it produced many master artists and established a new "golden age" of Bunraku. This is due to both Shirai's and Ōtani's excellent understanding of, and their deep enthusiasm toward, Bunraku. Their distinguished work in this field will be long remembered in Japanese theatrical history by later generations. However, the Bunraku management became weaker year after year because of the severe and rapid social changes and because of the shift in people's tastes in entertainment. Furthermore, the split between Bunraku performers in 1949 accelerated this depression. Even though they have been placed in a difficult situation, the performers of the Bunraku Puppet Theatre have endured. They did not compromise their artistry, and they have continued to try to

preserve the Bunraku tradition. Even so, there were many who fell away from Bunraku and changed their professions. And finally today there are some people who worry about the future of Bunraku. Bunraku seems destined for extinction if fundamental changes are not made.

Thus, in order to continue the great work of the past, we hereby establish the non-profit organization Bunraku Kyōkai, with the hope of attaining a revitalization of Bunraku.

In short, the Bunraku Kyōkai is organized on the premise of harmonious unity between former Chinamikai members and former Mitsuwakai members, both having artistic pride and the ability to forget past disagreements.

The Kyōkai, from the moment of its birth, will try to attain the following ideals:

1. Training the successors of the art
2. Stabilizing the artists' lives
3. Establishing a performance style
4. Collecting Bunraku research material
5. Utilizing school education
6. Organizing foreign tours
7. Building a new theatre

The Kyōkai's aim is to avoid past mistakes while benefiting from past successes, and to modernize and rationalize the management so that it corresponds with

the new era, and furthermore, to respond to the voices of the Japanese people concerned with the preservation and continuation of the classic entertainment as covered in the above seven points.

Project's Plans

(for the years 1963 and 1964)

I. Fostering and Training of Successors

In order to pass on the correct tradition of the Bunraku Puppet Theatre, we shall carry out the training according to the method described below:

A. Training meeting of successors

This meeting's main aim is to train all performers. Also we offer lectures by professionals in order to enrich performers' knowledge of general culture.

- 1.) The meeting will be held for three days every month after the regular performances. Lecture: 3 hours, and Training: 3 hours per day.
- 2.) The training plan will be organized by the Committee for Fostering Successors.

B. Trainee System (Institution For Trainees)

As for the policy of maintaining the [Bunraku] tradition, it is necessary to firmly establish a system in order to stabilize successors' living and foster successors. If there are any who wish to enter the Bunraku world, we consider them as Kyokai's trainees and we train them.

II. Performance Plan

A. Regular Performance

1.) Osaka Regular Performance

- a.) Theatre used for this performance is Bunraku-za
- b.) 100 days per year, 20 days per month
5 times a year
- c.) Three performances a day (11-14,
14.30-17.30, and 18-21)

2.) Tokyo Regular Performance

- a.) Theatres used for these performances are Tokyo Mitsukoshi and others
- b.) Approximately 30 days per year, three times a year
- c.) Twice a day

3.) Young People's Performances.

Performances by young people will be presented once or twice during the regular monthly performances. We shall make a system of rewarding those who excel in skill by means of selecting them through monthly committee meetings, journalists' club meetings, and votes by fans.

B. Tour of Provinces (Local Tour)

- 1.) We shall carry out local tours for 120 days a year.
- 2.) All performers will be divided into two groups, and one of them will present the regular monthly performances and the other will present local performances.
- 3.) The local tour areas are the following 8 blocks: Kinki (Osaka-Kyoto area mainly), Shikoku, Kyushu, Tohoku (Northern part of the main island of Japan), Hokkaido, Chubu (the middle mountain part of the main island of Japan), Kanto-Koshinetsu (Kanto and Yamanashi, Nagano, and Niigata Prefectures' area) and Tokyo and its vicinity. Bunraku Kyōkai will get in touch with The Organization for Protection of Cultural Treasures, prefectural or city government, and Central Broadcasting Station of NHK and organize the areas of local tour.

C. Moving Bunraku Class.

As a teaching material for audio-visual education, we will organize a "Moving Bunraku Class Group" and seek for a new Bunraku supporting stratum as well as deepen students' recognition of Bunraku.

D. Special Performance.

Performances in recital style will be given occasionally.

III. Investigation, Collection and Preservation of Materials

A. Record of directing

- 1.) Chanters-collection and preservation of maruhon (entire book for a reciter), gogyōhon (5 line book for a reciter), and yukahon (a reciter's book used on the stage)
- 2.) Shamisen-collection and preservation of red marks (shuso)
- 3.) Puppet-collection and preservation of tool record notes and picture sign-boards
- 4.) Stage-collection of movies, photos and so forth and recording of style

B. Record of Performances

Collection and preservation of programs concerning literary materials

C. Advertisement

- 1.) Carry out an exhibition room
- 2.) Publication of introductory books designed for students and others

Estimate of Performance's Charge for Local Presentation

Chanter		Variety	Commentary	Dance &	Parts &	2 Act Play	2 Act Play
Shamisen		Show etc.	& 1 Act Play	1 Act Play	Dance	& Dance	& 2 Dances
Puppet		30 min.	60 min.	90 min.	120 min.	150 min.	180 min.
Number		Y10,000					
2	2 4	Y24,000	Y36,000				
Total-(8)							
3	3 7	Y40,000	Y50,000	Y60,000			
Total-(13)							
4	4 12		Y70,000	Y80,000	Y90,000		
Total-(20)							
4	4 17			Y105,000	Y110,000	Y115,000	Y120,000
Total-(25)							
7	10 18				Y140,000	Y145,000	Y150,000
Total-(35)							

Note: The above list provides a general idea of charges for your convenience when you make up a budget for the occasion. We are also available for a special arrangement which fits your budget.

- (1) The performance of the Bunraku Puppet Theatre is all non-taxable.
- (2) Since there are about 70 performers, we can arrange some other programs according to your interests.
- (3) If the Bunraku Puppet Theatre is presented in its full scale, it will usually take 60 minutes, but 20-30 minutes for Keijimono (dance).
- (4) For better understanding for beginners, we can combine excerpts from three different plays, each consisting from 10 to 20 minutes.
- (5) For setting up the stage, 2-7 technicians will accompany the above number of performers.
- (6) We will arrange something different for the Moving Bunraku Class for school use.

List of Committee Members (April 1963)

<u>Position</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Reference</u>
Advisor	Abe Shinnosuke	
Advisor	Otani Takejirō	
Advisor	Ono Bamboku	
Chairman	Takahashi Seiichiro	Principal of the Art Academy of Japan
Chairman of the board of directors	Odawara Taizō	Head of the Chamber of Commerce and Industru of Osaka
Vice-Chairman of the board of directors	Saeki Isamu	President of Kinki Nippon Railroad Co.
Regular director (Chief secretary)	Sasaki Einosuke	Investigator (Inquiry) of Osaka Central Broadcasting station (NHK)
Regular director	Nakazuka Masanobu	Lawyer, Regular director of Chinami-kai
Regular director	Nakamura Yukichi	Member, Expert Committee for Cultural Treasures
director	Abe Kojirō	President of Tokyo Textile Co.
director	Iguchi Takejirō	President of Osaka Gas Co.
director	Ichiro Sadaichi	Chairman of Osaka Prefectural Assembly
director	Otagaki Shirō	President of Kansai Electric Power Co.
director	Kawatake Shigetoshi	Member, Expert Committee for Cultural Treasures
director	Kurimoto Junzo	Chairman of the board of Education, Osaka Prefecture
director	Kitazawa Keijirō	President of Daimaru Co.
director	Kubota Mantaro(dec.)	Member, Expert Committee for Cultural Treasures
director	Sato Yoshinori	Governor of Osaka Prefecture
director	Shimizu Kaichi	Chairman of Osaka City Assembly
director	Shimaura Seiji	Head, Osaka Central Broadcasting Station (NHK)
director	Tanaka Yoshio	Chairman, Board of Education, Osaka City.
director	Nakai Mitsuji	Mayor, Osaka City
director	Hirose Gen	President, Nippon Life Insurance Co.
director	Matsushita Konosuke	President, Matsushita Electric Co.
director	Mishina Akihide	Head, Osaka Municipal Museum
Supervisor	Kamada Shozo	Superintendent, Board of Education, Osaka Pref.
Supervisor	Nakao Masahira	Superintendent, Board of Education, Osaka City

APPENDIX 4

Bunraku's Trainees' Record - First Class (10 out of 11 Trainees graduated)

	<u>Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Choice</u>	<u>Birth Place</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Reference</u>
1.	Uehara Seiki	21	1. shamisen 2. chanter	Niigata Pref.	student Tokyo Foreign Languages College	father: brewer
2.	Katori Yuki Yoshi	23	shamisen	Tokyo	graduated from training school	father: salaried worker
3.	Sasaki Yukio	24	1. shamisen 2. puppeteer	Iwate	withdrawn from Toyo Univ.	father: farmer
4.	Suzuki Satoshi	21	chanter	Tokyo	student of Teikyō Univ.	father: salaried worker
5.	Takahashi Sadao	23	1. chanter 2. puppeteer	Chiba	high school graduate	elder brother: elec. constr. subcontractor
6.	Tsuboi Fumio	23	shamisen	Saitama	withdrawn from Tama Univ. of Fine Art.	father: contractor
7.	Nichikawa Fumio	26	chanter	Yamagushi	withdrawn from Meiji Univ.	father: salaried worker
8.	Hashimoto Katsuhirō	22	1. chanter 2. puppeteer	Kanagawa	withdrawn from training school	father: ship builder
9.	Funatsu Tomomichi	26	chanter	Gunma	graduated from Kokugaku-in Univ.	father: farmer
10.	Bosho Masamichi	16	shamisen	Hiroshima	high school student	father: writer
11.	Murakami Hideto*	19	shamisen	Hiroshima	student of Sophia Univ.	father: school administrator

* Note: dropped out of program.

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