BUNRAKU

The Japanese Puppet Theatre

Fashion & Design

Diploma 1985

"Bunraku is a form of storytelling recited to a musical accompaniment , and embodied by puppets on stage".

Donald Keene.(1)

INTRODUCTION

four classical performing arts survive in Japan today : the court dances known as Bunraku ; the Nō theatre; Bunraku the puppet theatre and Kabuki. Each of them has achieved its own individual type of beauty. In the court culture of the Nara and Heian periods, (eighth to twelfth century) Bunraku could be described as elegant and stately. In the chivalry of the Muromachi period ,(fourteenth to sixteenth century) Nō is remote, subtle and faintly mysterious. These two types of beauty in Japanese are known as yūga and yūgen,;they also represent the generally accepted aesthetic ideals of the ages in which they evolved.

The beauty of both Bunraku and Kabuki however is too complex and comprises too many different elements to be so easily summarized. Bunraku and Kabuki were the two theatrical forms developed in the Tokugawa (or Edo) period (1600-1868).They grew side by side and each exerted a considerable influence on the others development. They projected a lively picture of the spirit of the age and of the public and private problems of the society of the time. The townsfolk who had gained in wealth, power and influence in the long period of peace sustained during that time, wanted to see their life-style, their points of view expressed in the new arts of the theatre.

Soceity was strictly divided into four classes : samurai, peasantry, craftsmen and traders. In the course of the Edo period, with the transition to a monitary economy, the traders who were at the bottom of the bottom of the social ladder, were growing substantially in wealth and influence, while the samurai and the peasantry were getting poorer. This new bourgeoisie of traders and craftsmen - created for itself a new theatre in the theater arts of Bunraku and Kabuki.

Bunraku and Kabuki were an integral part of the lives

of the ordinary people during the 'premodern' Edo period. They were dependant on the patronage of the masses and were forced to pander to their likes and dislikes in order to maintain their own economic independance, with the result that they contain undeniable elements of banality and vulgarity. However, those who were responsible for creating the drama refused to let it degenerate into a purely popular form appealing to the lowest common denominator in public taste, but used finely developed techniques to create a high degree of formal beauty. Their ideals of beauty have much in common. These ideals are difficult to define verbally; one could say that Bunraku and Kabuki sought to give expression through all the varied aesthetic forms at their command, to the joys and sorrows of the common people living in a feudal soceity. In a sense the beauty of the Bunraku puppet theatre is aesthetically more 'pure' than that of Kabuki;on the other hand it lacks the vivid sense of humanity and vitality that only flesh - and - blood actors can convey to an audience.

The puppet theatre is by its very nature, artificial and indirect compared with Kabuki, which relied for much of its effect on stylised human movement , posture and speech. However, in the course of development of both arts, Kabuki became quite dependant on Bunraku, adapting popular puppet plays for the Kabuki repetory. This affected production , acting, and even such things as stage machinery. As a result there was a period when puppets overshadowed actors and the puppet theatre was more popular than Kabuki. However, both arts use highly skilled techniques with colour, glamour and excitement without parallel in the theatre world today.

The popular Japanese woodblock prints had close links with the Kabuki theatre, and several of the most achieved artists worked almost exclusively at actor prints. The prints were a highly

developed art form, expressely intended to give pleasure to ordinary men and women. It is likely that many of the prints were commissioned or subsidized by the actors or theatre managers for advertisement. Most often we are shown the actor during a performance caught at a critical moment of the play. These actor prints belong primarily to the ukiyoe style of woodlbock prints, which began during the mid seventeenth century. The term ukiyoe means 'pictures of the floating world', which refers to the frivilous urban scene in Japan's great cities, Kyoto, Osaka and Edo. This genre theme also included prints of geishas and townscape scenery.

However, to date in my research I have discovered little if no reference to the depiction of Bunraku as a subject matter for woodblock prints, unlike its sister art, Kabuki. To find more authoratative information on this subject, I approached Jan Chapman, far eastern Curator at the Chester Beatty library in Dublin. The Japanese print collection brought there by Sir Alfred Chester Beatty, is one of the most comprehensive in the world and represents the entire story of woodblock prints from the seventeenth town to the early twentieth century. Jan Chapman agreed that Bunraku was not as popular a subject matter for depiction in woodblock printing as Kabuki proves to be. This, however is not to say that Bunraku is any less of a theatrical art than Kabuki because of this. My own interpretation would be that Kabuki prints appealed to an audience that could relate more to their favourite actor, rather than to a puppet character. Just as audiences in the west would collect information and photographs of a favourite movie star.

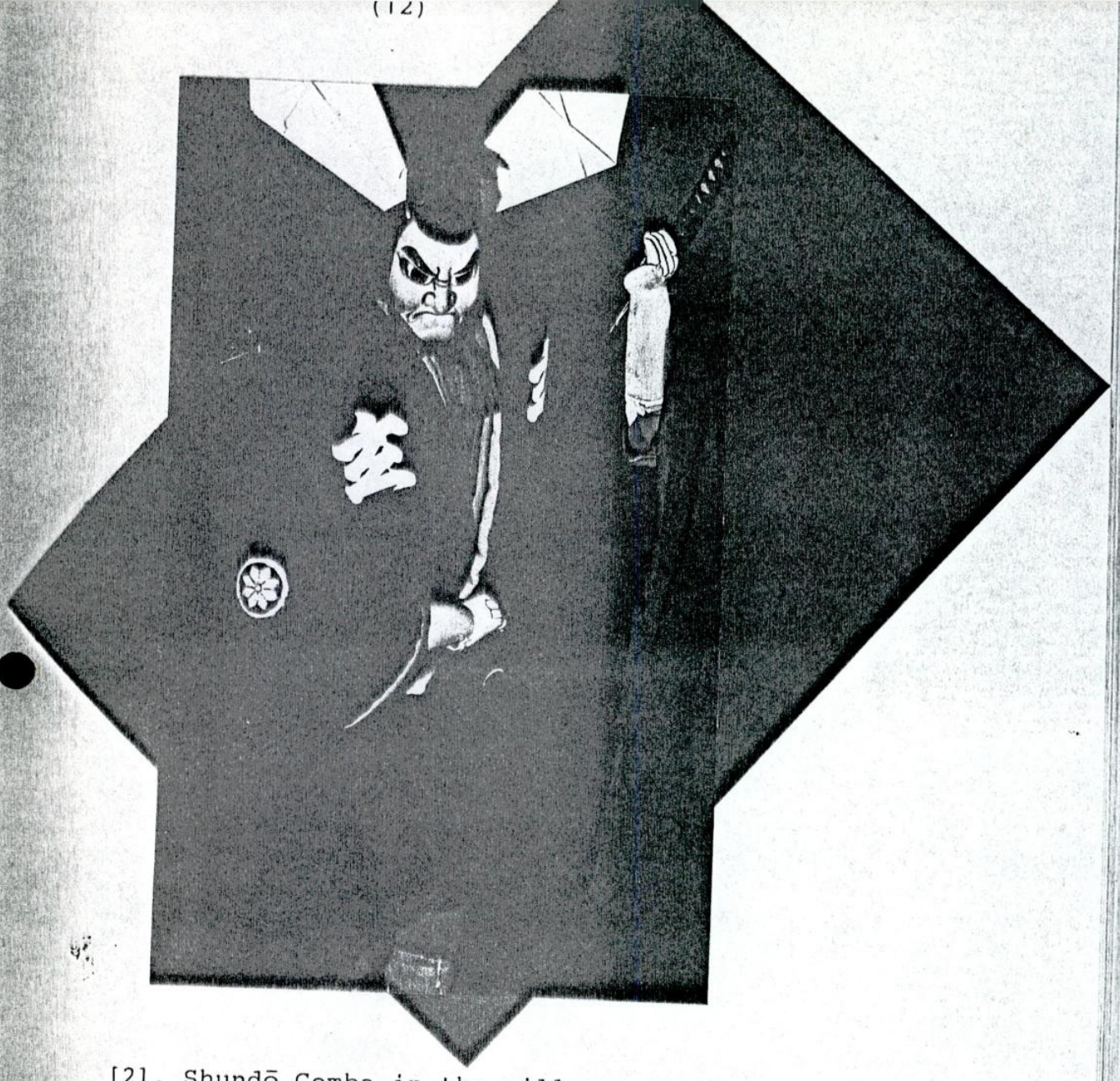
I found one reference to Bunraku at the exhibition on Surimono prints currently showing at the Chester Beatty Gallery. It was in the form of a theatre program designed especially for a puppet play. Most of the Surimono prints are very rare; unlike

Ukiyoe prints they were not produced on a grand scale for public pleasure, but were commissioned privately on a limited editions basis. These commissions were issued by individuals or groups for congratulatory occassions, festivals, or to commemorate special event in the Kabuki world;for example, a change in name for an actor, which usually meant a rise in ranks of a theatre company.

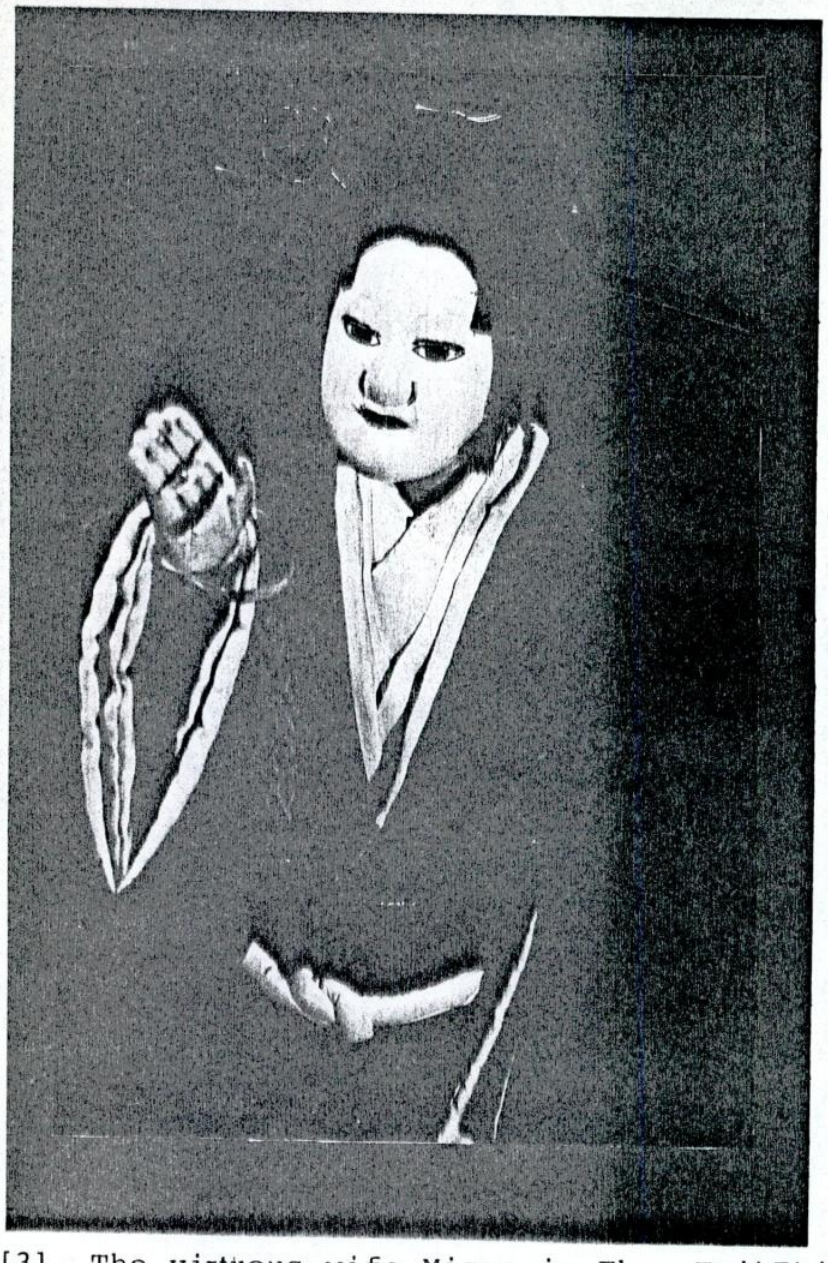
In the following thesis I have covered the art of Bunraku puppet theatre from its inception in the sixteenth century through to the present day performances by the Osaka based Bunraku troupe. I have delved into each section of Bunraku from the narrators and players and puppet operators, to what happens back stage before a typical performance. Each performer and craftsman seems to function as an artform in itself, but when they appear on stage, they unite in spellbinding co-ordination.

HISTORY

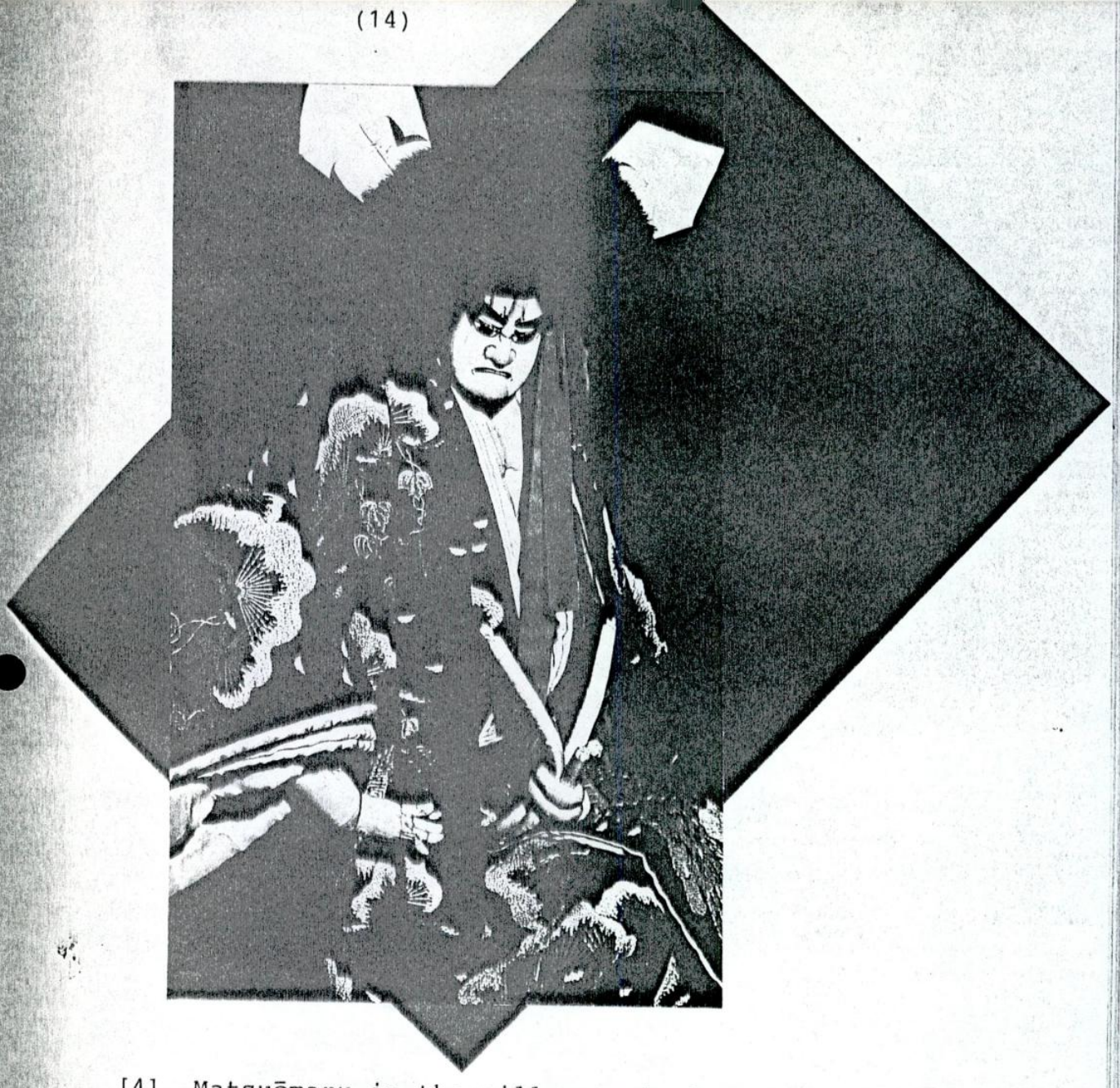
[1]. The high - ranking courtesan Yūgiri in Yūgiri Awa no Naruto.(Keisei head).



[2]. Shundō Gemba in the village school scene from Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami. (Kintoki head).

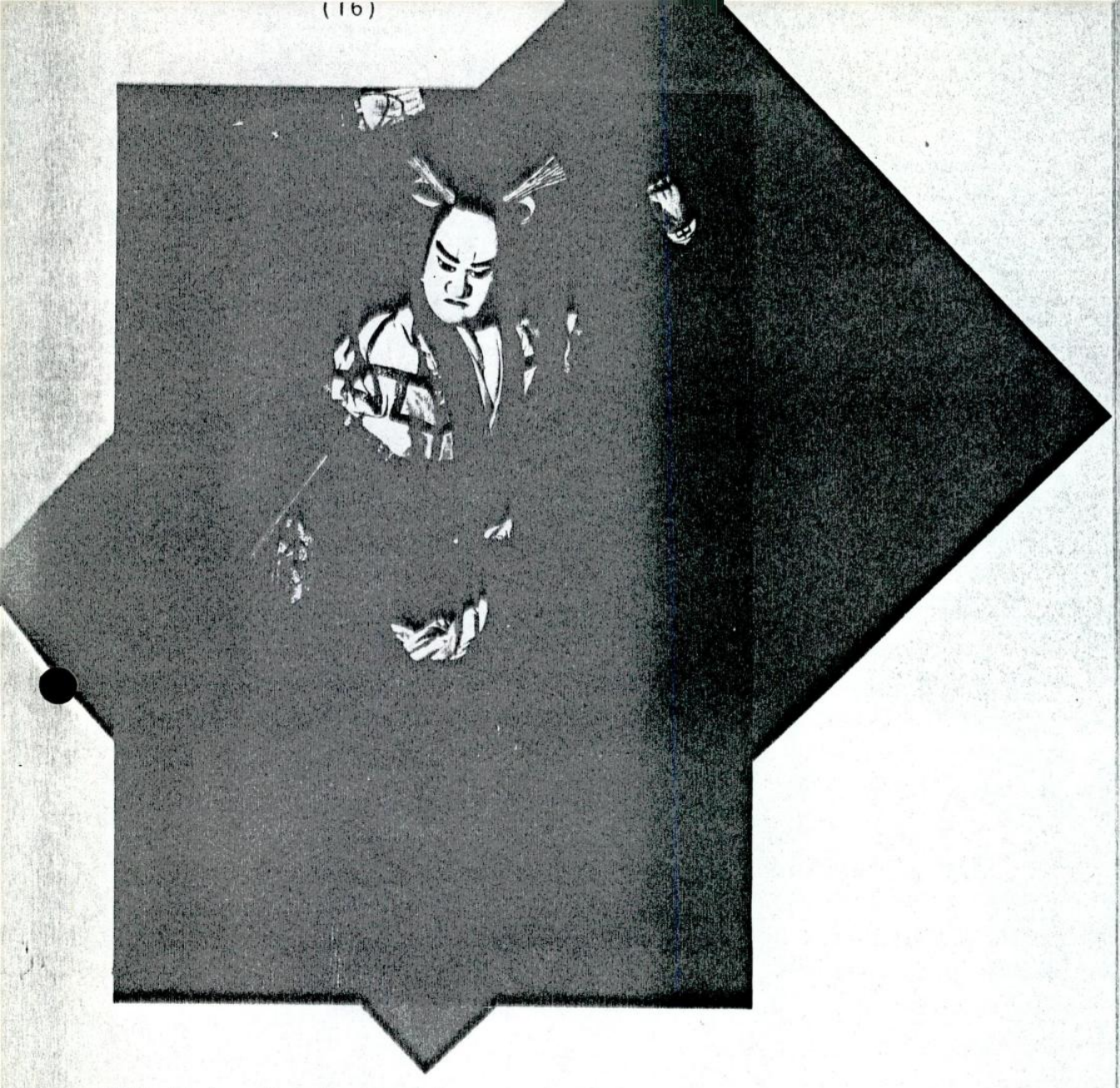


[3]. The virtuous wife Misao in Ehon Taikōki. (Fukeoyama head).



[4]. Matsuōmaru in the village school scene from Sugawara Denju Tenarai Kagami. (Bunshichi head).

[5]. The would - be poisoner Yashio in Meiboku Sendai Hagi. (Yashio head).



[6]. Tadanobu in Yoshitsune Sembonzakura.

(Genta head).

The History of Bunraku.

Puppet shows have existed since time immemmorial in almost all countries of the world. In most of their forms the puppet is manipulated either directly by hand (guignols) ,or by strings and wires (marionettes) while in some , shadows of puppets are used. The plots often cater to juvenile audiences as we know from the familiar spectacle of Punch and Judy banging logs over each other's head in the exaggerated vigour possible in a theatre which need not take human weaknesses into consideration.

The Japanese puppet show known as Bunraku, is the one theatre of dolls for which literary masterpieces have been especially composed. Its techniques have been much improved since its inception in the sixteenth century, but unlike similar shows in the west, it was never, even at its crudest, considered considered a theatre primarily for the young and foolish. Each puppet is operated by three men which requires a superior degree of skill and manipulation with elaborate forms of expression and superb artistry.

Bunraku, the familiar name of the Japanese puppet theatre today, is a term dating back no further than the early nineteenth century. The art of puppetry however has been known in Japan for over a thousand years. Puppet plays (like sacred dances at Shinto Shrines today) were probably offered to the Gods by rich patrons in the hope of inducing them to grant additional prosperity. Because these performances were presented for the Gods, human witnesses were unnecessary. But, as the puppets came to attract spectators, an embryonic puppet theatre was created, and eventually we may suppose, the pleasure of these spectators as well as that of the Gods, was taken into consideration by the puppeteers. The simple movement of a stick puppet operated by a medium intoning ancient legends are, of course, a far cry from the sophisticated art of Bunraku. But even in its most primitive

form we can detect one peculiar feature of the japanese puppet theatre : the medium makes no attempt to conceal the fact that it is manipulating the puppets. So unlike puppet or marionette performances in other countries, the Japanese art did not normally require the illusion that the puppets were moving and speaking of their own accord.

As Donald Keene has suggested in his book 'The Art of Japanese Puppet Theatre', the early history of Japanese puppetry might be interpreted entirely in terms of spontaneous native development, with a continental influence gradually creeping in at a later stage. With the creation of texts written especially for the puppets,(and not merely adapted for puppet performances from some other medium) it is possible to speak of a puppet theatre in the sense of the modern Bunraku. The puppets of course give Bunraku its most distinctive feature, but the texts were to develop this theatre into a truly artistic medium and to distinguish Bunraku from puppet and marionette entertainments elsewhere in the world.

Bunraku is basically a narrative art.Of the three elements in Bunraku text, puppets and musical accompaniment , are clearly the most important. Thus Bunraku fundementally differs from Kabuki, (its sister art) where, even when a Bunraku text is performed, the actor is the centre of interest and the text, hardly more than a vehicle. As the person closest to the text, the chanter Tayu ranks above the Samisen players and puppet operators. The chanter declaims the story altering his voice in the dialogue to suggest the tones of a warrior, a woman or a child; and at times in poetical passages rising from speech to song; he is neither an actor nor a singer but a storyteller. The celebrated chanters have enjoyed great popularity; audiences

ght in the extraordinary range of expression which crosses
r faces, and in the tears which fall from their eyes in
ic scenes. It is said to take a chanter eight years to
aster the art of weeping, whether as a girl dissappointed in
or as a fierce warrior moved to tears by overpowering
f. The Bunraku plays are written especially for a narrator,
a third party, rather than for actors as one can tell from
additional phrases as "thus he spoke" or "he said with a
le". The comments are natural in a narrative but would be
ecessary in a theatre of actors.

It has been noted that Bunraku is a modern term. The
er term for the art was Jōruri, the name of a heroine of a
teenth century romance, usually called "The Tale in Twelve
odes of Jōruri" (Jōruri- Junidan Soshi). The text was
ited to the accompaniment of a musical instrument (resembling
mandolin) called the Biwa, which provided a kind of musical
ment on the narrated passages and was not an accompaniment
the narrators voice in the manner of the Samisen of later
rs. The narrators delivery was rhythmical and sometimes rose
musical expression; for emphasis he beat time with a fan.
techniques of musical and dramatic narration developed, the
iet notes of the biwa were replaced by the loud twangs,whines
d percussive sounds of the newly perfected Samisen. This
strument was introduced to Japan from the Ryukyu islands before
70; it is a three stringed instrument originally covered with
akeskin, now covered with a more durable catskin, which
oduces a clearer harded tone. When the expressive capacities of
Samisen were improved, accompanists found that its sharp,
ost percussive notes were ideally suited to guiding the
rrator in his delivery and the operators in manoeuvering the
ppets.

Once the three elements of Bunraku had at last been
ed, the combinations seemed inevitable. Despite its humble
ins and its continued dependance on a virtually illiterate
ic, in the countryside as well as in the cities, Bunraku
ired by borrowing from Nō drama, a literary importance which
ki, always more dependant on the skill and personality of the
t actors than on the text, would never possess. Bunraku,
Kabuki, had its inception in Kyoto, but developed during the
y seventeenth century most conspicuously in Edo. It might
ver have remained predominantly an Edo theatrical art had it
been for the disastrous great fire of Edo in 1657, which
ed more than 100,000 people and destroyed most of the city.
result of the fire the leading chanters ,despairing of
ng a living in the ruined city, moved to the Osaka and Kyoto
; from this time onwards Bunraku ceased to be of great
rtance to Edo, where Kabuki instead was to reign supreme.
e the late seventeenth century Bunraku has been associated
cially with the city of Osaka, where under the patronage of
Osaka audiences, the art developed rapidly.

The Golden Age of Bunraku.

celebrated chanter Takemotσ Gidayū (1651-1714) established Takemoto theatre in 1684 on the Dōtombori, a street of atres, resturants and other places of entertainment in ka. He worked with Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1725), the atest of the Jōruri playwrights. He also wrote for Kabuki: roximately half of the plays in the Kabuki repertory were ginaly written for the puppet theatre. Their key success was bably "The Love Suicides at Sonezaki" (Sonezaki Shinjū) in 3. It was an important success in financial terms; it also termined Chikamatsu, who had been dividing his energies tween Bunraku and Kabuki, to devote himself exclusively to the iting of Jōruri texts for Gidayū. The success of "The Love icides at Sonezaki", which describes a young merchant of soy uce who commits suicide with the prostitute he loves, led to e series of tragedies on which Chikamatsu's reputation as a amatist is largely based.

These plays inspired by actual happenings known to the dience, differed enormously from the traditional Jōruri which lighted in describing the fantastic deeds of the ancient roes. Long before we created urban tragedy in the west, hikamatsu was writing contemporary tragedies about the fate of he ordinary men, giving them stature by means of the beauty of is language and the stylization possible in a theatre of uppets. These domestic tragedies did not cause Chikamatsu to bandon the composition of historical plays filled with displays f heroics. The domestic plays, being too short to constitute a ull day at the theatre, could be performed only as part of a rogramme usually at the end of a long historical play. Most orks of the heyday of Jōruri combined the excitement and xtravagance of the historical plays with the pathos and umanity of the domestic tragedies. Chikamatsu's high reputation

:amatist has given him the title of "The Shakespeare of

A constant progression in the direction of realism may
:ed through the history Jōruri.Not only did the texts,
ılarly Chikamatsu's domestic plays, depict the lives of
people more faithfully than earlier works, but the puppets
:hniques employed in manipulating them were constantly
improved with the aim of achieving greater resemblance to
behaviour. In the 1690's the puppets were provided with
onal arms. By 1727, the same year that it became possible
n and shut the eyes and mouths of the puppets,the puppets'
s could be manipulated; and in 1733 the fingers were further
'ed to permit the first joints to move independantly. These
'ements owed much to the rivalry persisting between the
)to Theatre (Gidayū's) and the Toyotake theatre (built nearby
)3). Each tried to attract customers by displaying some
ty, the other as yet did not possess.

Two years later in 1705, the performance of another
by Chikamatsu, "The Mirror of Craftsmen of the Emperor
" marked the beginning of the tradition that Bunraku
tors be fully visible. On this occassion also, the chanters
had hitherto remained concealed in the wings) appeared
'e the audience on a platform at the side of the stage. The
:ion in 1734 of puppets operated by three men enabled Bunraku
:tain subtleties of performance unrivalled by any other
lar company in the world. However it involved the conspicous
ence of three men around each puppet, a challenge to dramatic
sion too great perhaps for non - Japanese audiences to
pt. A multifold combination of opposites characterizes
aku and accounts for much of its greatness.

The puppet theatre in the period from the death of amatsu in 1725 to the 1780's enjoyed its greatest popularity, ly surpassing that of the Kabuki, probably the only instance heatrical history where puppets have been preferred to rs for such a long period. The supremacy of Bunraku was un - uted in Osaka. In Edo, where Edo remained more popular, actors felt obliged to borrow Jōruri texts and even details erformances from the puppets.

The most famous eighteenth century were written by three more collaborators, each contributing an act or two in his cial vein of excellence. Some plays when performed in their irety, last about eleven hours, but more commonly one or two s are performed on a given occassion. Donald Keene discovered his research, that it is relatively rare for any of the famous hteenth century plays to be presented except in extracts, ging from a single scene to an act or two. Because these rks were originally composed as a series of scenes, no great olence is done to the text if only one episode is presented, ile the same would hardly be true of a more highly organized ay. The sleepwalking scene from Shakespeare's Macbeth would t make much sense to an audience unfamiliar with the rest of e p y.

However with the death of some of the finest narrators, laywrights and puppeteers, Bunraku went into decline. The last cade of the eighteenth century saw the closing of the Takemoto nd Toyatake theatres, the two pillars of Bunraku whose mpetition had fostered so much progress. Only small theatres cattered in various parts of Osaka preserved the original texts nd traditions.

On Awaji, an island off Shikoka, puppetry had remained popular local theatre. One of its puppeteers, Bunraku -

Uenura, arrived in Osaka and established a Jōruri school in
9. By 1805 he had organized a troupe of puppeteers who
formed in shrine precincts. As interest in puppetry revived ,
mall theatre was built in 1842 for his puppet plays. In 1872 a
pet theatre was officially named the Bunraku-za for the first
e. Since then this form of traditional Japanese puppetry
been synonymous with Ningyo Jōruri.

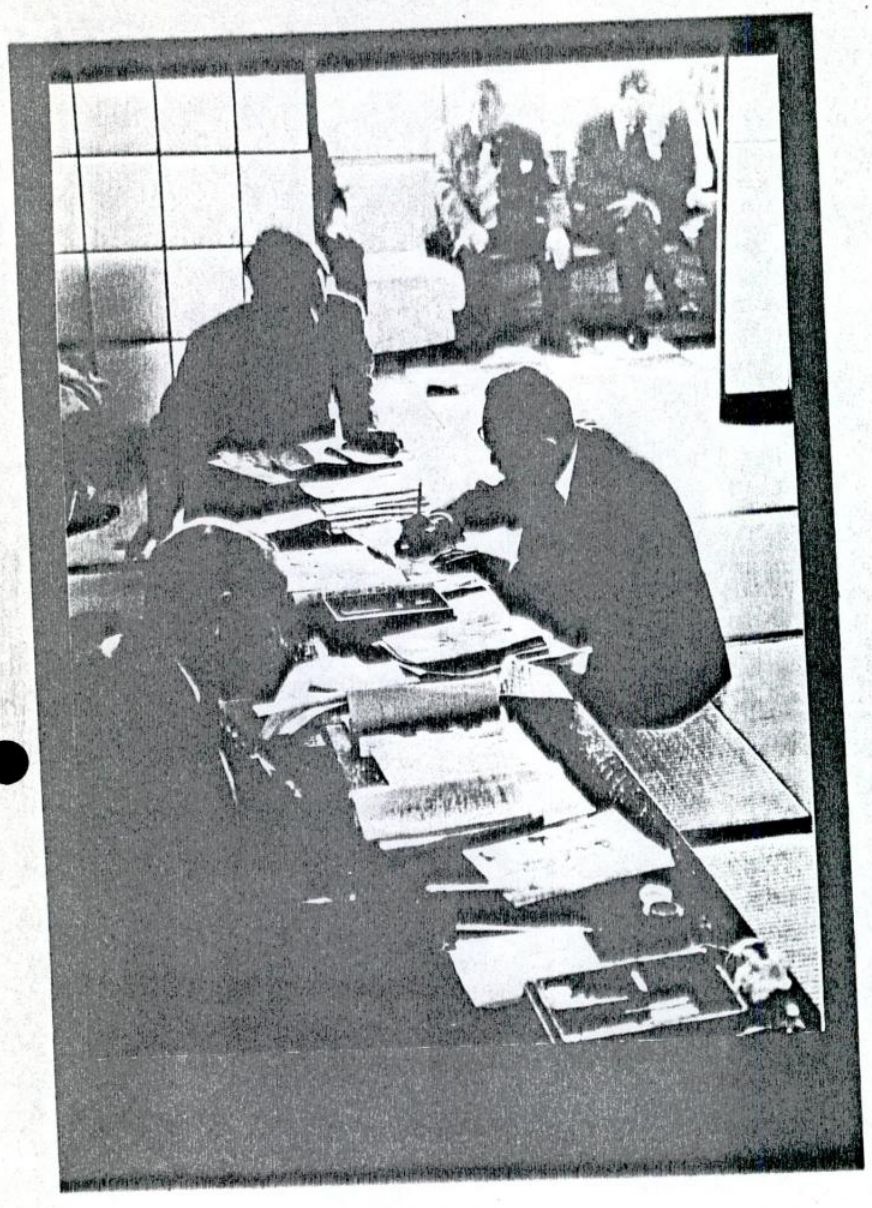
The Meiji period (1868-1912) marked the second development
Bunraku as a popular theatre form, almost a century after the
se of its initial 'golden age'. Working as a strictly
ciplined repetory company, puppeteers, narrators and
sicians, raised Bunraku to a high artistic level and were
ely acclaimed.Because of managerial problems however, the
raku-za was taken over by the Shochiku Theatrical Company in
09. A disastrous fire in 1926 destroyed the Bunraku theatre
gether with most of the valuable old puppet heads, treasures
ich could never be replaced. Re-establishing Bunraku
tailed serious financial problems for the owners, and not until
e end of 1929 was a new theatre made available. Hardly had
e company settled into theatre than, in 1931, the Manchurian
r began.

During the war years 1941-45, Bunraku enjoyed a
mporary resurgence of activity due to governmental encouragement
'pure' Japanese art, but this period came to an abortive end
th the bombing of Osaka and the burning of the Bunraku theatre
1945, thus completing the destruction of such treasured
d properties as had survived the fire of 1926.

Once the war had ended, Bunraku performances re-
menced in 1946.The company moved in 1956 to a new luxurious
eatre in the Dōtombori, its traditional site;and in 1963 was

under the management of the newly formed Bunraku Association
u Kyōkai). This is an organization which superseded the
u Company in the management of Bunraku , and transferred
on of the theatre to a non - profitable organization.
ıcluded the performers and representatives of the government
Japanese Broadcasting Corporation.

TEXT AND NARRATORS



[7]. Preparations for a production with all all the members of the company present. The scene painters also take part in the discussion.

[8]. Narrator: Beauty of tone and clarity of ennunciation, are two of the qualities narrators develop. This narrator is a member of the present Osaka based puppet troupe.

The Text and the Narrators.

Long before the end of the sixteenth century when the original tale of Princess Jōruri was first shaped into the text of a puppet drama, the Nō theatre had achieved a high degree of literary distinction. The texts of the Nō plays, dating mainly from the early fifteenth century were carefully preserved in beautiful inscribed books and were studied by the nobility. Commoners had relatively little oppertunity to witness performances of Nō by master actors, but the stories of the plays and the major passages in the texts were widely known.

Considering the respect that Nō commanded, it is not surprising that it should have influenced the art of Bunraku. But fundementally, the two arts are so different, that one can contrast the poetic understatement and powers of suggestion of Nō , with the bright colouring and sometimes wordy rhetoric of the Jōruri texts. According to Thomas Immoos in his book 'Japanese Theatre', Nō was like the monochrome landscapes or the tea ceremony, guided in its manner of expression by Zen Buddhism, and in the attempt to express ultimate reality, tended to ignore or neglect literal truth. The symbolic unspoken beauty of the Nō plays was strengthened by the absence of scenery except for the pine painted on the back stage wall, by the use of props which are no more than elaborate outlines of real objects and by the musical accompaniment. This serves to punctuate the silence and order it, rather than to please by its melodies. In Bunraku, on the other hand, thoughts and emotions are not only outwardly expressed, but pushed to the limits of exaggeration. The Nō actor indicates that he is weeping by touching his sleeve to his forehead, but the Bunraku chanter may deliver instead a five minute crescendo of sobs and gasps. The Nō actor conciously attempts to remove human mannerisms from his movements. On the other hand the puppet

operator desires above all that the non - human figure in his hands will display unmistakeable human gestures. The Jōruri text therefore must assist the puppet operator by providing intensely'human'situations. A Jōruri play must be filled with exaggerated movement and vitality if life is to be imparted to the wooden puppets.

The main basis of support for the Jōruri came from the commoners, including the illiterate farmers who flocked to village performances when the troupes went on tour. Donald Keene suggests that originally the lower classes may have attended Jōruri rather than Kabuki because the tickets were cheaper. But from the first , despite the imperial patronage it enjoyed, Bunraku was considered a humbler variety of entertainment than Kabuki which maintained glamourous connections with the gay quarters. Audiences, whether plebian or aristocratic responded eagerly to Jōruri; they were the first full-length dramas performed in Japan.

A Nō programme consisted of separate one - act plays divided by comical sketches, but a Jōruri programme was usually devoted to one play which related a single continous story. Jōruri presentations, unlike Nō made increasing use of settings, props and stage machinery. The musical accompaniment unlike the austere, staccato drums of Nō was lively and sometimes erotic, and the combination of declaimed passages (in which the chanter realistically imitated the voices of the characters) and sung passages of greater lyrical beauty, provided an enjoyable variety, keeping the narration, even of long monologues, from becoming tedious. The early Jōruri plays attempted to encapture audiences with their stories rather than to suggest the symbolic world of Nō. The result brought a truly theatrical quality to the Japanese drama.

In Kabuki theatre where the actors always remained the centre of attention, the playwrights wrote his texts to fit the special talents of a particular actor, who felt free to alter the text in any way he chose. Even the famous playwright Chikamatsu had to yield to this convention. It has been suggested by Donald Keene, that he turned from Kabuki to Bunraku because of the liberties the Kabuki actors took with his texts. In Bunraku , on the other hand, the chanters are bound to the text which they have before them throughout the performance, although they know every word by heart. They could not make radical departures even if they so chose, without considerable advance preparation, since the movements of the puppets and the Samisen accompaniment must correspond exactly to the text. If the chanters improvised like Kabuki actors, the effect would be disastrous.

The chanters have always been considered the intellectuals and even the gentlemen of Bunraku. The composition of the texts was so closely related to the chanters that for the period of Jōruri before Chikamatsu the texts were known not by the names of the playwrights, but of the chanters, and even today the authors' names are often ommited from the playbills. A beautiful voice is of course a great asset to a chanter, but even if his voice is weak or rough, he may still reach the heights of his profession by the effectiveness of his interpretation and recitation of the texts. He need not possess an actor's looks but he must be equipped with the stamina to throw himself into as long as a full hours impassioned solo delivery.* In the past, chanters were normally the sons of other chanters,

*See plate no. 8,page 30.

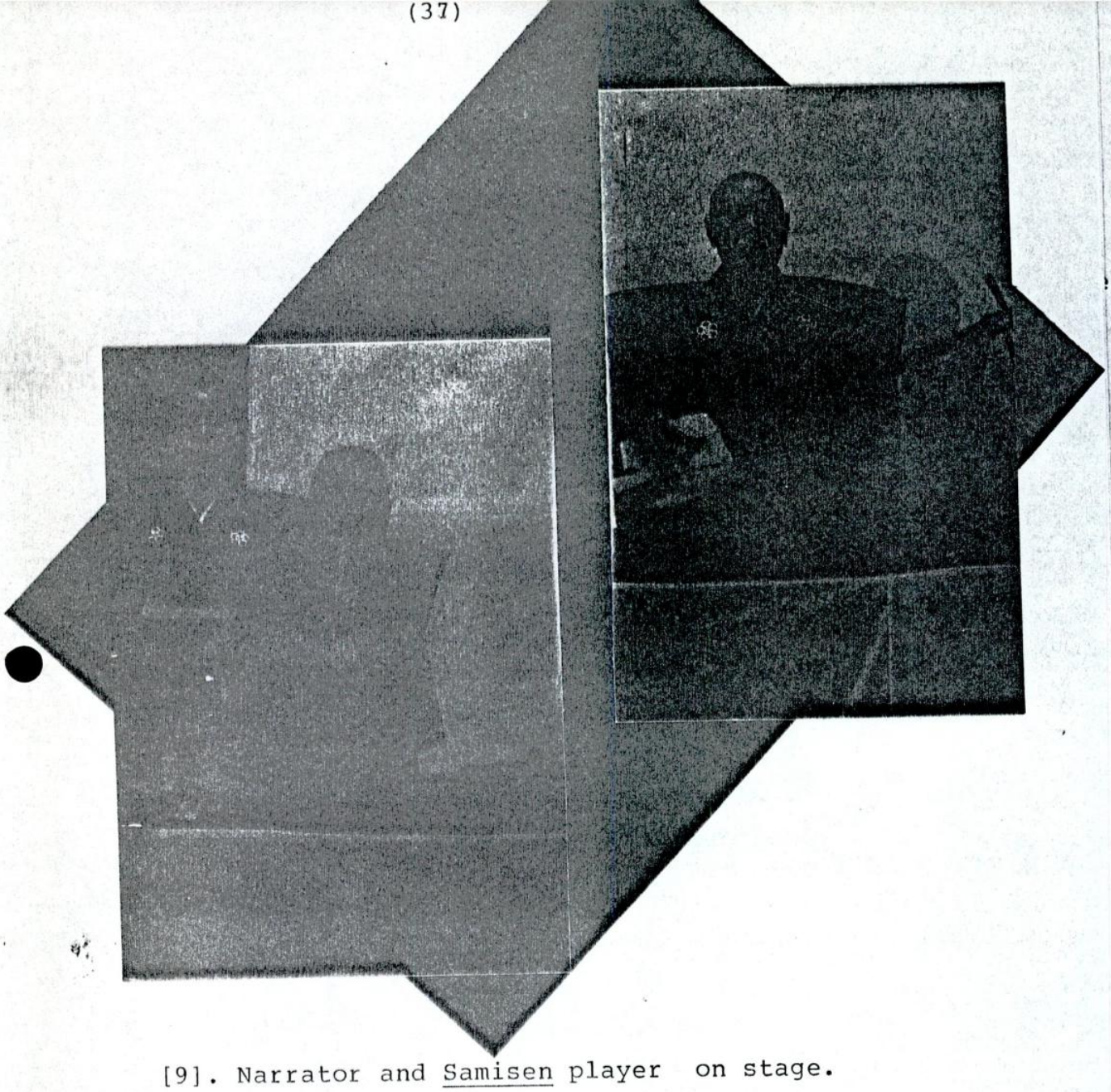
and men who attempted to enter the profession from the outside were looked upon with suspicion and even contempt.

While performing. the narrator, Tayu,is situated to the left of the main stage, on an auxiliary stage, yuka, with a revolving circular dias *. He is attired in formal Japanese dress of the Edo period, seated in formal position with legs tucked underneath him and with his hands on his thighs as he starts his recitation. The tayu sets the scene, describes the emotions of the characters, delivers the narrative and recites all the dialogue. Only in special scenes are there several tayu, each taking one rôle or speaking in chorus. The tayu is the storyteller, the reciter and the lyrical chanter.

> "In Bunraku, the most important thing is the text - the plot, the store line, the play-wrights' words - these are the core of Bunraku and everyone involved must bend every effort toward creating a performance in accordance with the text. The tayu's art lies in bringing out what is behind the lines and in the hearts of the characters".(2)

*See plate no. 9;page37.

SAMISEN AND PLAYERS



[9]. Narrator and Samisen player on stage. They are members of the present Osaka based puppet troupe. The narrator has the text layed out in front of him, and the Samisen player is playing the accompanying music on the Samisen instrument.

The Samisen and the Players.

The Samisen is by far the most popular musical instrument*, in the smallest of its three common sizes. It is an indispensable element in Geisha entertainments, the old fashioned boating party or the folk festival.It serves also as an accompaniment for a large variety of ballads ranging from brief love stories to painfully narrated monologues about the chivalrous gamblers of a century ago. In the Kabuki theatre it provides the basic melodic background for the nagauta and other types of narrative singing. The largest types of Samisens, considerably heavier than the nagauta vareity and played with a plectrum almost twice as big, are employed exclusively in Jōruri performances, where strong and incisive notes rather than melodious or poetic tones are required.

Whatever the size of the Samisen, or the manner of playing, it is primarily an accompaniment to the voice and not a solo instrument. It is tuned to no fixed basic pitch but can be modulated at will to blend with the voice of the singer. The Samisen consists of three main elements: the body, the neck and the handle. The materials used to make each part have been tested and improved over the centuries and are now carefully ranked in order of desireability. For the body of the instrument, chinese quince is preferred, followed by mulberry wood; cherrywood is considered a poor substitute. The neck and handle are preferably of kōki wood, followed by red sandlewood, then by oak or cherrywood. The tuning pegs in the handle are of black sandlewood or ivory. The kinds of skin used to cover the box, the materials for the three strings, the bridge, the plectrum, and all other parts of the Samisen have been studied with infinite care, and proportions and shape of of the instrument have been subjected to many changes. Such attention to improving the Samisen, an instrument associated with the world of pleasure rather than with the noble Confucian art of music, suggests its peculiar appeal to the Japanese, as well as an awareness

*see plate no. 9, page 37

of successive generations of musicians making precisely the kind of sounds they desired.

The interpretation of the text is usually determined by the chanter, then conveyed to the Samisen player, who becomes the conductor of the performance. The chanter cannot sing until he hears the approiate notes, nor can the puppet operators move onto the stage. The players responsibility is heavy and the training for his share of a Bunraku performance is accordingly strict. Lessons begin early for the child who shows a vocation for the Samisen. By the time he is seven or eight he may have already demonstrated his proficiency sufficiently to be enrolled as a pupil of an established Bunraku player.

The composition of the music for a puppet play has generally been left to the Samisen players. The most demanding part of the task is is the composition of the solo passages, which give the player his brief moment of glory. He shares the yuka platform with the tayu, sitting to the tayu's left on a large floor cushion. The player plucks the strings, holding the plectrum in his right hand, fingering the strings along the entire length of the neck with his left hand. To achieve percussive sounds, he strikes the skinhead of the instrument in one stroke. This low gutteral snap is a characteristic sound of Bunraku. Samisen notes include twangs, snaps, scales and chords. It has three basic tunings, characterized in general terms as solemn, gay or melancholic. The player changes the tuning and volume of his Samisen often during the performance by adjusting the strings at the tuning pegs and by changing the bridge at the base of the instrument.

The notes of the Samisen precede or conclude action by the puppets, provide musical decoraion for the tayu's words, accentuate and guide movement on stage, and increase or ease tension. The music serves to create atmosphere, underline emotion,

and direct the tempo for the entire performance; it does not compete with the voice but adds punctuation and italics. When there is a silence in the narrative, the Samisen provides a musical bridge for the continuing action of the puppets. A single note approriately struck is as important in sustaining emotion or emphasizing mood as a long melodic phrase or a rhythmic crescendo.

> "In Bunraku a musician cannot play alone and the relationship between the tayu and the Samisen player is very important, very delicate. It takes time for the right balance to be achieved, this fragile connection between the two is vital. Without it the words and music just do not come together to give the desired effect, the flavour both seek". (3)

Off - Stage Musicians.

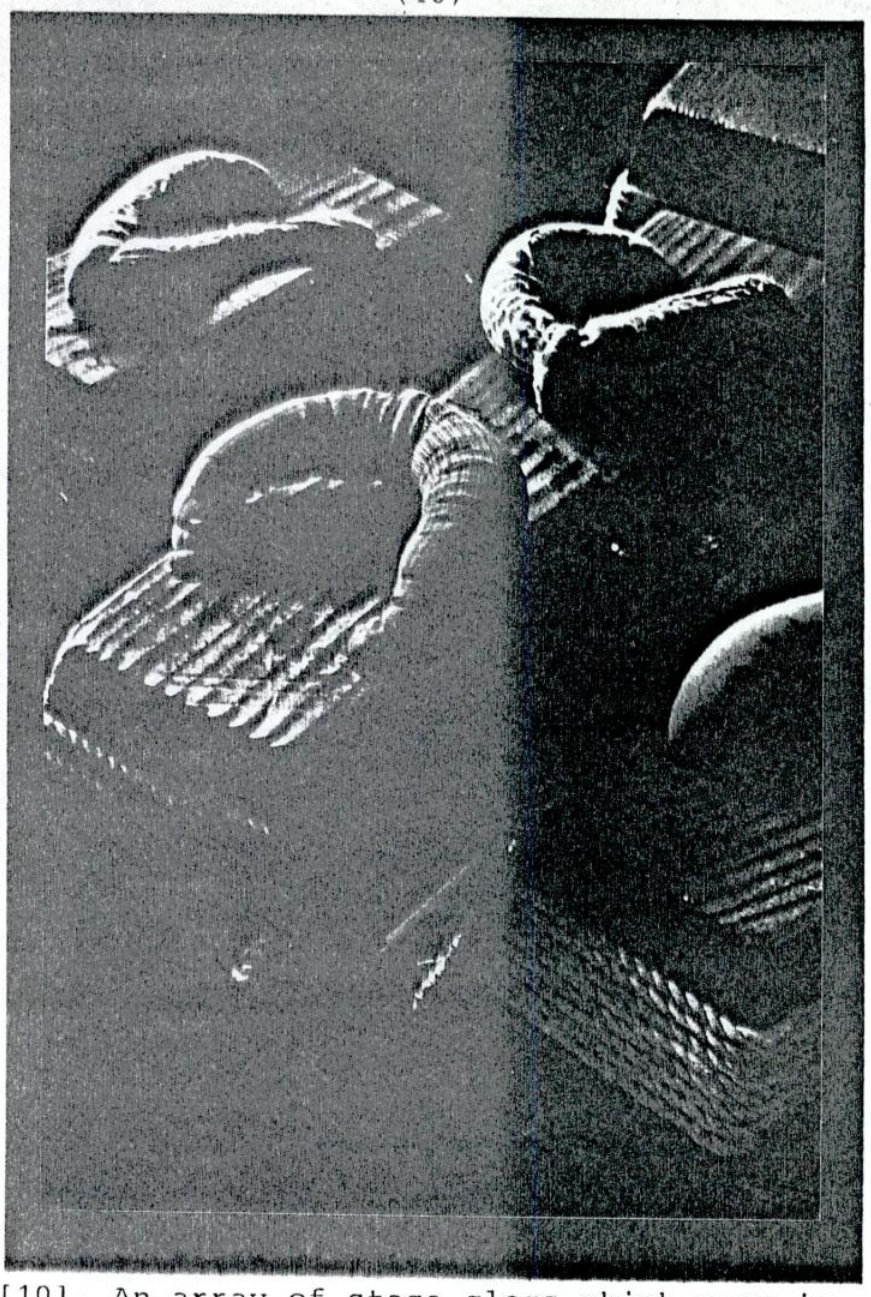
The Bunraku stage is thirty-six feet wide and twenty-four feet deep; it has two levels and other special features allowing the dolls to be manipulated with ease. The two stage entrances on right and left are curtained; high over the stage-right entrance is a small room, the gaze, in which work three men who produce off-stage musical effects.

The three men work in a very small area totalling six feet by six feet.

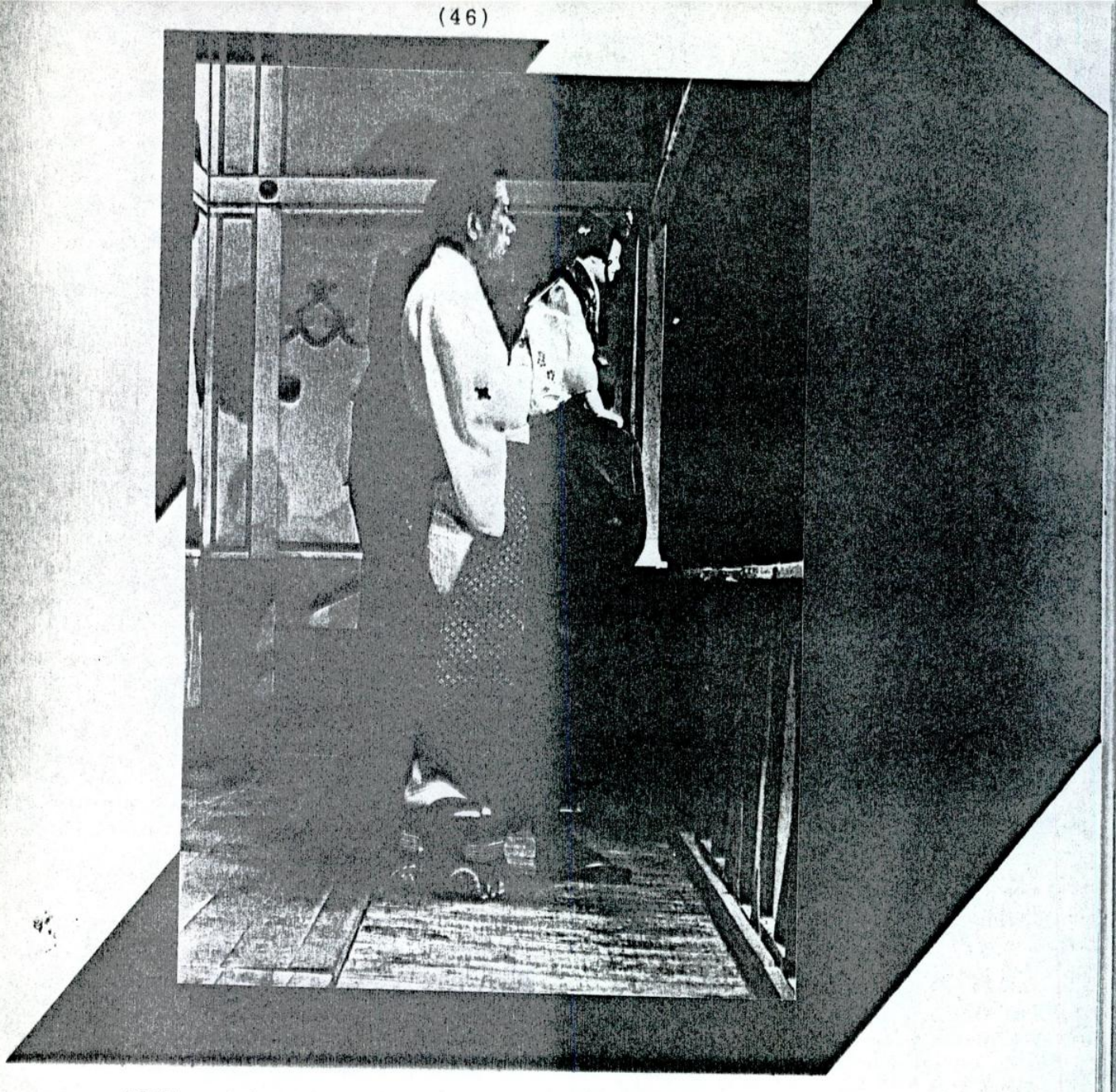
> " The dimly lit musical nest contains five drums, a large hanging bronze gong which occupies one corner of the room, two small brass gongs, a selection of eighteen wooden drumsticks paired like chopsticks, a large wooden mallet and several tiny metal ones, three long stemmed hand bells, a pair of clamshells and a large conch and two silk bags bristling with bamboo flutes". (4)

According to Barbara Adachi, balance is what counts. The puppeteers like the musical effects of the off-stage musicians to be precise, rather loud and timed perfectly with their movements. They must not challenge the narrator and not overpower the emotions he conveys. Similarly they must not interrupt the music of the Samisen player.

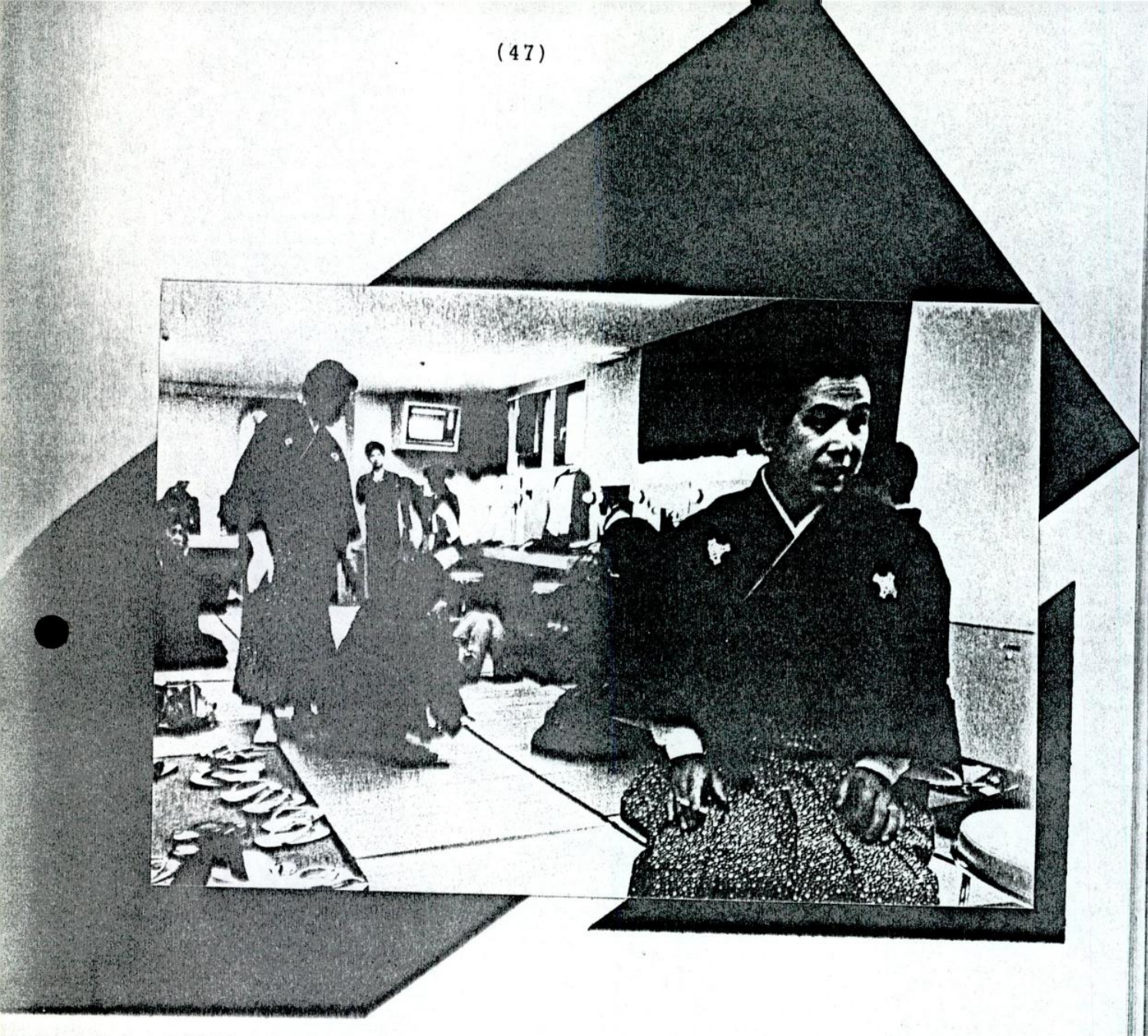
PUPPETS AND OPERATORS



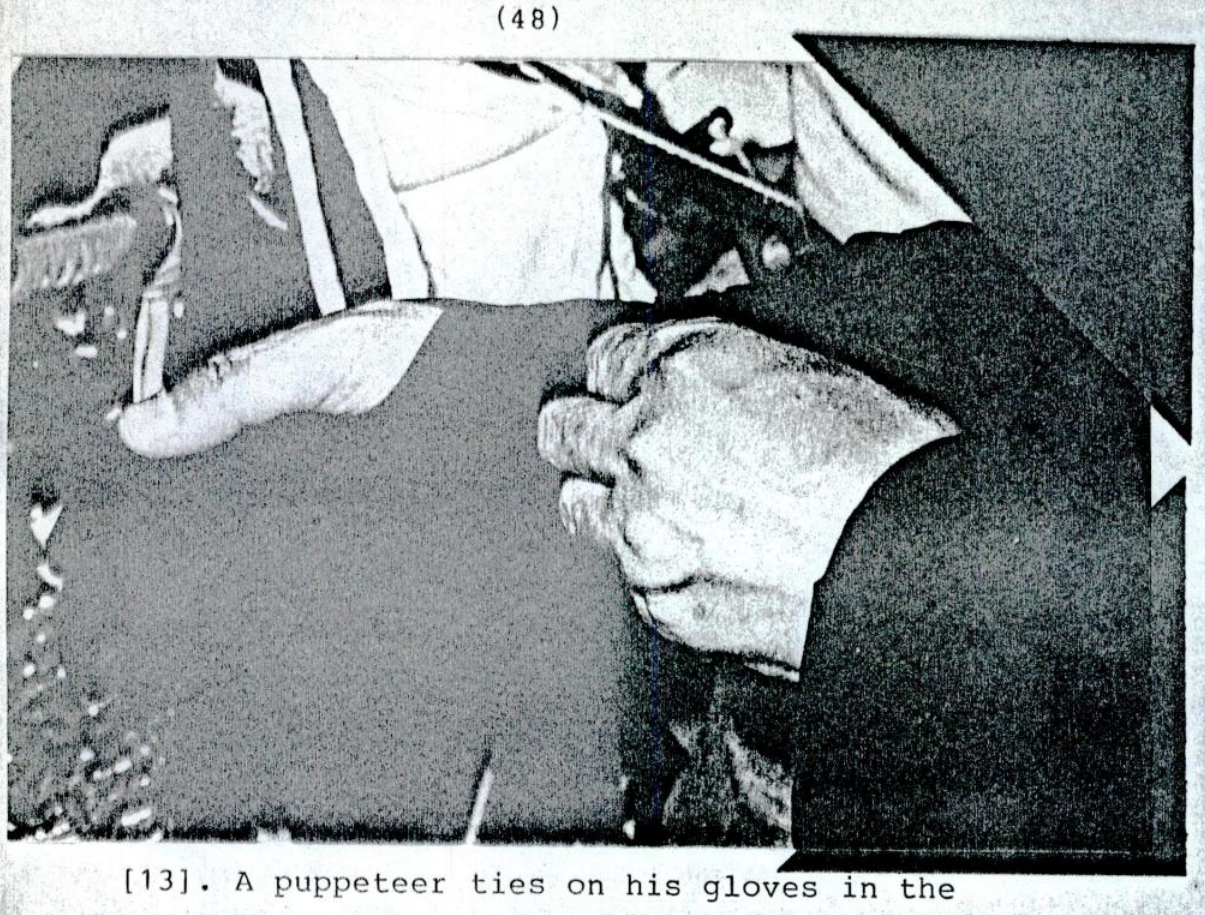
[10]. An array of stage clogs which vary in height according to the puppeteer and activity. The tallest heels are used for rôles on horseback; the soles are made by attaching straw sandals.



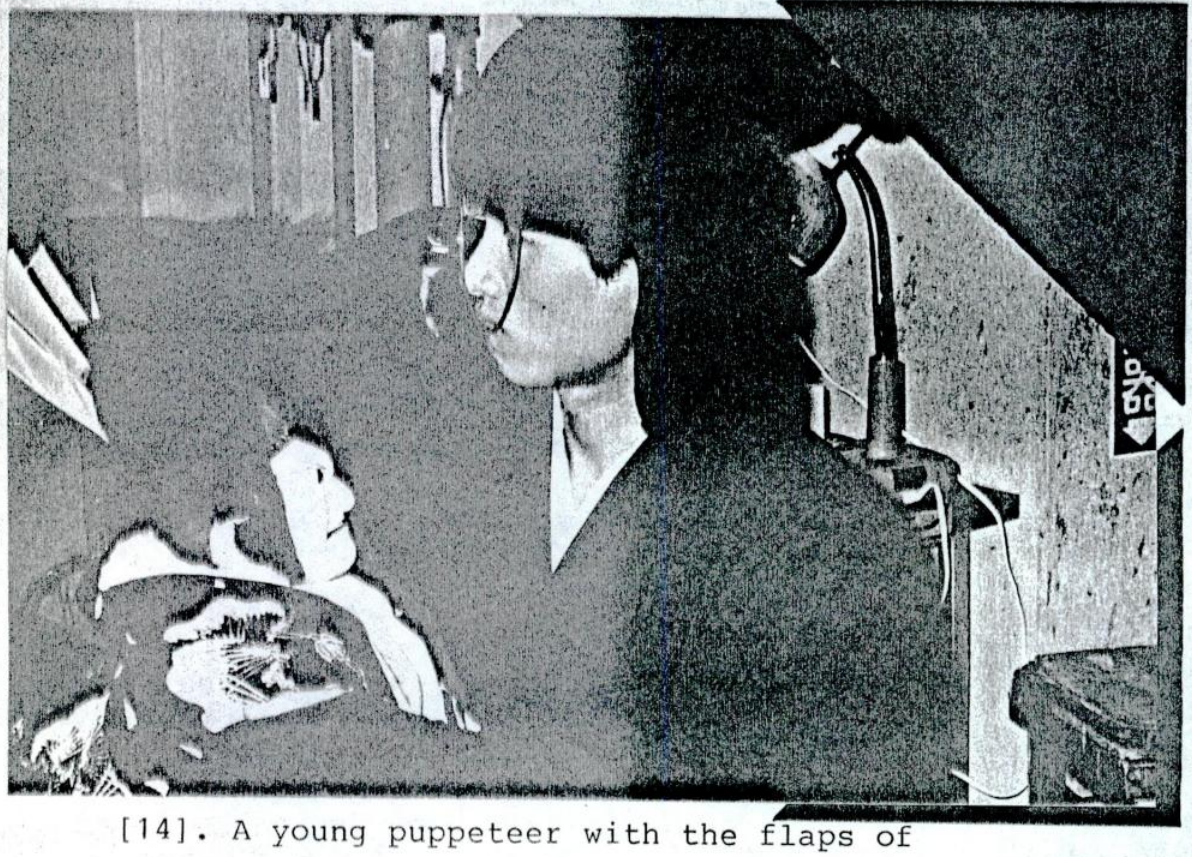
[11]. This view from the wings reveals the special partitions from the audience, the puppet appears to be at floor level.



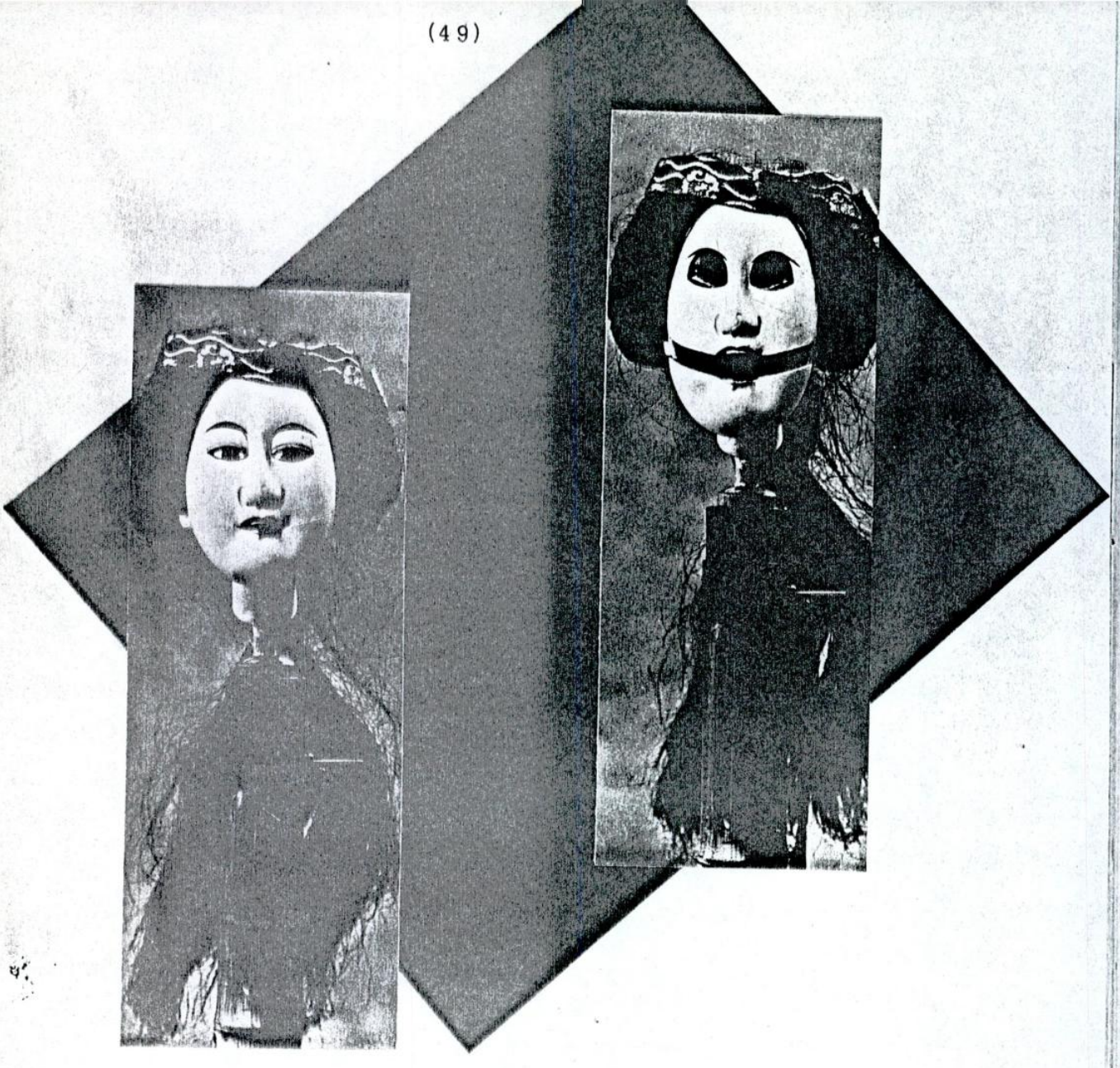
[12].The Osaka puppet troupe on tour,puppeteers, musicians, narrators and wig master share one large dressing room. Since members of the troupe are more comfortable on the floor than on chairs, matting is spread over carpeted floors.



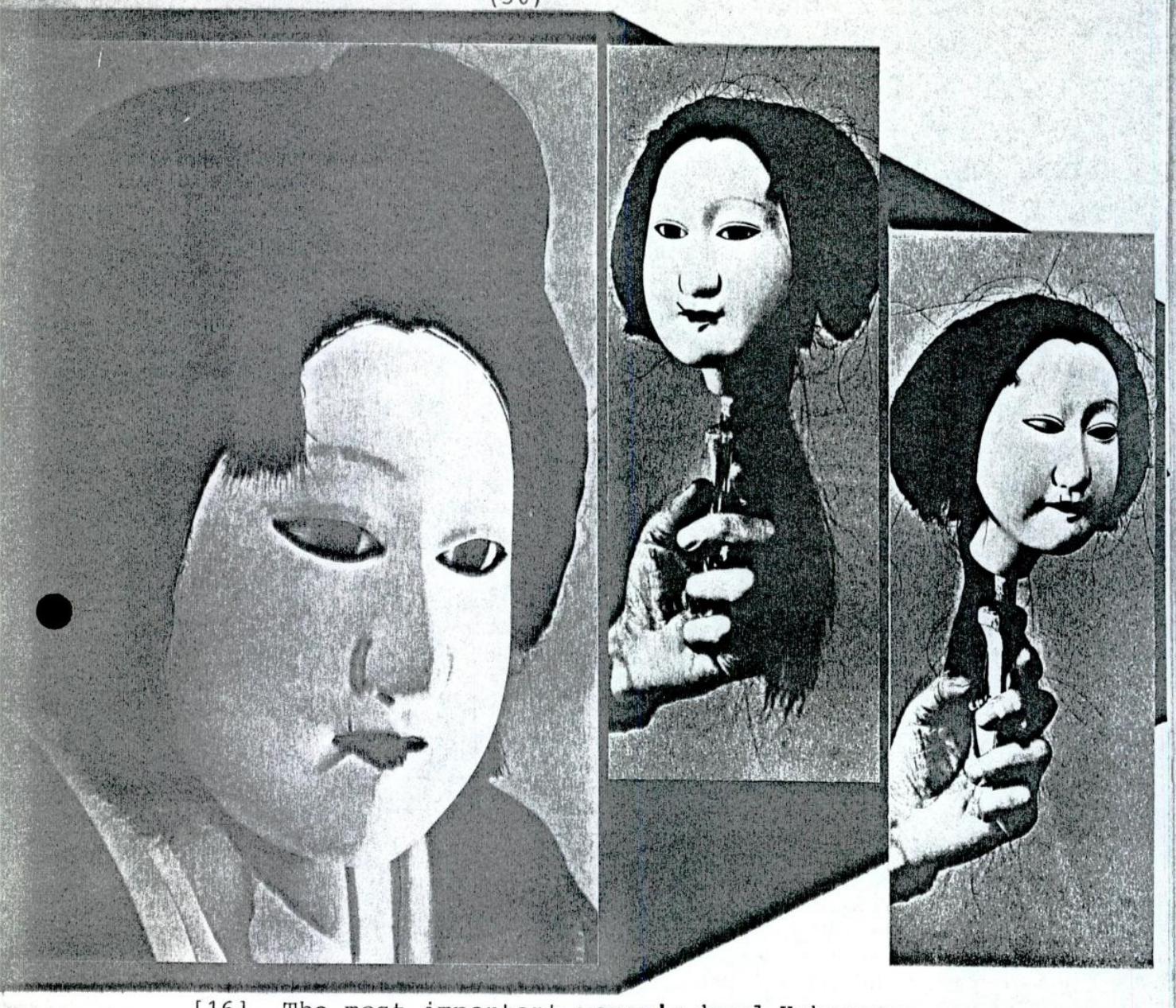
[13]. A puppeteer ties on his gloves in the wings just before going on stage.



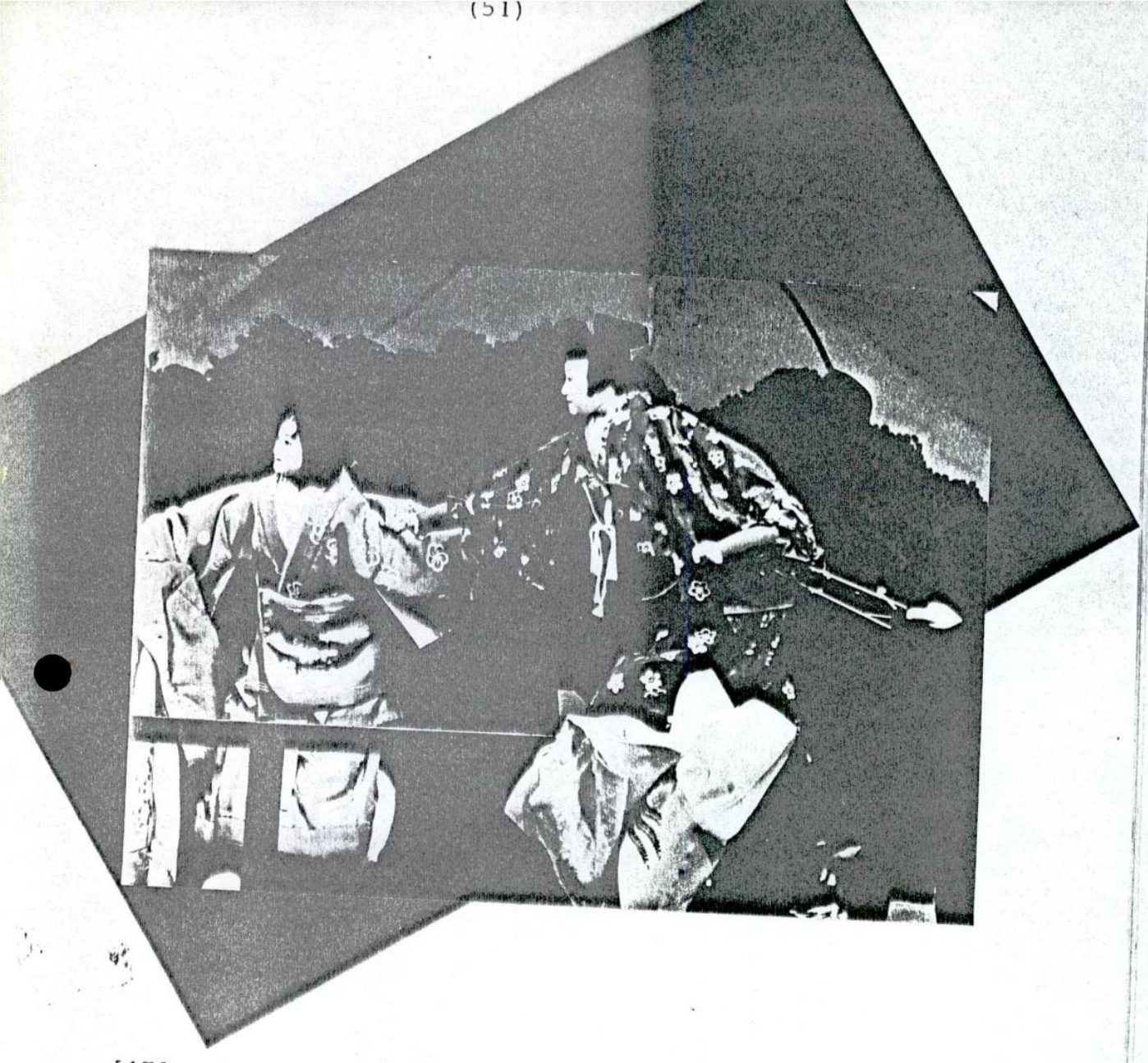
[14]. A young puppeteer with the flaps of his hood tossed back from his face protector, waits in the wings to hand the puppet to the chief puppeteer.



[15]. Gabu, created in 1802, represents a beautiful young girl. With a simple gesture the manipulator can turn her into a demon; her mouth suddenly opens to expose her teeth, her eyes grow red and take on a haggard look, gold horns grow out of her wig. The demon of jealousy has taken possession of her.



[16]. The most important woman's head, Kukeyoana, represents a woman of mature age, strong, intelligent, passionate, full of tenderness with children and faithful to her husband. Her features express the feudal period's ideal of beauty. The hook near the mouth is used to hold up her sleeve or a handkerchief at moments of great sorrow or passion.



[17]. This plate shows a new play produced for the state television. It is adapted from the Nō play Ominaeshi (The Woman's Flower). One can just see in the background the hooded figures of the puppeteers. (See also plate no. 33, page 88).

The Puppets and the Operators.

Bunraku owes to the puppets its most distinctive feature, the leading puppeteers enjoy a personal popularity at least as great as that of any chanter who interprets the texts or the Samisen player who employs musical means to create the atmosphere he deems appropriate, the operator does not use the puppet to express his own conceptions; he enables it to express his own emotions by imparting the strength of his body. Each man not only moves his body like a tennis player in graceful , almost automatic reactions to a changing situation, he must endeavour to allow the puppet a free and natural expression of feelings.

The puppets may be classified in various ways. First of all a division is possible among the different species : marionettes operated from above by strings; mechanical dolls, puppets held above the operators heads,small puppets worked on portable stage; large puppets operated by one man, and finally the three man puppet of Bunraku. All these variations may still be found in rural parts of Japan. The most advanced puppet in every way are those of the Bunraku troupe in Osaka. Bunraku puppets (Ningyo) are about half to two-thirds life size (two and a half feet to almost five feet tall) and weigh anywhere from ten to forty pounds. They are operated by three men for all but minor roles. The following is a detailed description of the operation involved in manipulating a puppet by each member of the three man team.I have used Barbara Adachi's version from her book 'The Faces and Hands of Bunraku' as a guide. The head puppeteer Omo-Zukai operates the head and the right arm of the doll, inserting his left hand through the back of the doll's trunk. He grasps the headgrip dogushi, to regulate the position of the Kashira*, and operates the toggles on the headgrip which control strings to raise the

plate no.16, page 50

head, move the eyes, mouth and eyebrows*(1), many heads do not have mobile facial features. While operating the dogushi with his left hand, the chief manipulator uses his own right hand to direct the doll's right arm. Hands and fingers on many of the dolls can also be moved by means of a toggle. The Omo - Zukai thrusts his fingers through a leather strap attached across the palm of the doll's right hand to manipulate the props. The Omo - Zukai, who usually appears unhooded, wears a plain black kimono (white in June, July and August) and a stiff, pleated shirtlike garment, hakama*(2). In special scenes the head puppeteer wears the Kamishimo formal attire that consists of a stiff sleveless vest, Kata - ginn, of elaborate weave or design, and a matching Hakama, worn over his plain kimono. He wears a white thumbless glove on his right hand*(3). The Omo - Zukai sometimes appears dressed like his two assistants in a plain black cotton robe and hood. He always wears high wooden stage clogs, butaigeta*(4) with straw soles which enable him to work at a level four to twelve inches above his two assistants and to slide quickly across the stage.

The second manipulator, Hidari - Zukai, operates the puppet's left arm, moving it with his right hand by means of a rod about fifteen inches long. This armature, Sashigane, is attached to the doll's left arm with cards which control a mechanism that moves or opens and closes the doll's hands*(5). The Hidari - Zukai wears the Kurogo, a plain black ankle-length cotton robe with narrow sleeves, which is wrapped like a kimono and tied close with a large bow over the right hip. His black hood, Zukin, made of coarsely woven linen, or cotton material, completely covers his head and neck, and his

*(1)See plate no.19, page 63
*(2)See plate no.11, page 46
*(3)See plate no.13, page 48
*(4)See plate no.10, page 45
*(5)See plate no.20, page 64

black gloves are thumbless*(1). The Hidari - Zukai wears plain straw sandals, Zori, and is responsible for the props he hands to the omo-zukai as required.

The leg operator, Ashi-Zukai, is the junior of the three man team operating the upppet. Dressed completely in black, hooded, gloved and sandaled like the hidari-zukai, the ashi-zukai crouches to operate the legs of the puppet. It is he who stamps his feet for emphasis in violent or dramatic scenes. He grasps male doll's legs by metal heel grips. Since female puppets do not have legs except in specific scenes, the ashi-zukai pinches the inner part of the kimono with his fingers and manipulates the hem to give the illusion of movement. He bends his arm and clenches his fist to create the knee line.

A traditional way of distinguishing the puppets, particularly the Bunraku variety, is by the sex and age of the characters, both with respect to the frames used for the bodies and to the heads, the focal point of interest in a performance. The male puppets, much larger and heavier than the female, have frames consisting of a large piece of wood for the shoulder line and a bamboo hoop for the hips. Between the two is pasted thick paper (or sometimes cloth) to form a front and back. The puppet's head is inserted into the shoulder board, and the arms and legs are suspended from the same board at the padded ends. The male puppets are equipped with a fixed bamboo rod at the right of the hoop which the operator uses as a prop to supprort the weight. The smaller and simpler female puppets lack the feet, the bamboo rod and the highly articulated hands and facial features*(2).

Thepupppet heads can be divided into different categories. One common division is into good and bad characteristics.There are

*(1)See plate no.14, page 48 ;plate no.33. page 88

*(2)See plate no.32, page 87

heads for children, for various minor comic and eccentric parts and for special rôles which have heads used exclusively for them. Some heads have special variations: the Bunshichi head (middle-aged man) for example, depending on the rôle, may or may not be able to open its mouth. Each head has a fixed personality, though some shadings exist. Shadings in character or in social position are revealed otherwise by the use of approriate wigs and the costuming both of which can transform a given head considerably. The possibility of moving the eyes, eyebrows and mouth enormously increases the expressive range of the heads*(1). For many roles however no such range of expression is needed. The young heroes of Chikamatsu's domestic tragedies for example, exhibit relatively little change of mood in the course of a scene and the heads used for them are accordingly immobile. The greatest vareity of expression occurs in the villainous or comic parts*(2), the least in the 'good' female parts. The fukeoyama (older woman's)head is equipped with a pin projecting from the lower lip which enables the operator to press the grief stricken wife's sleeve to her mouth as she restrains her sobs*(3).

The heads are often beautiful examples of carving and deservedly prized as art objects. The Bunraku company formerly possessed a magnificent collection, many over a century old, but the fire of 1926 and the bombing of 1945 destroyed almost all the best heads. When the company was reorganized in 1946, it was necessary to borrow heads from private collections which had escaped the war; most of the heads currently employed are recently carved.

The wigs used in Bunraku are important, not only in distinguishing say a warror like Kumagai from a nobleman like

*(1)See plate no.22, page 69

*(2)See plate no.29, page 81 ;plate no.30, page 82

*(3)See plate no.16, page 50

Matsuōmaru*(1), but also to define the age of the characters more precisely than is possible with the heads alone.In pre-modern Japan, hairstyles were unmistakeable indicative of a person's age and status, and the difference in appearance of a woman of twenty and a woman of twenty-five can still be conveyed quite precisely in a puppet performance by the hairstyle and the costume even if the face is the same*(2).

Hands and (in the case of the male puppets) feet also vary considerably with the part. Nine commonly used types of hands and another twenty-four more unusual vareities have been distinguished. The fingers of the Tsukamite (grab hand) for example are all independantly moveable, and the takotsukami ('octopus grab') permits additionally the movement of the wrist.These hands are approriate to energetic male puppets but would not be used for a young lover or a female. Most of the female puppets are equipped with hands which possess independant movement only of the thumbs and wrists; the hands used for old women however can excercise movement only of the wrists*(3).

Legs and feet are less complicated; there are six principal varieties for the male puppets and one each for the female and child puppets. They vary depending on whether or not they will be fully visible and also on the strengthand size of the character portrayed. Legs and feet are rarely used for female puppets. In general Bunraku heads and hands are allowed only the maximum amount of movement necessary. Unless there is some special reason for a character to open his mouth, for example, the head employed for the role will have a fixed mouth;the fewer the moving parts, the more attractive the head or hands. In certain rôles the

*(1)See plate no.25, page 75
*(2)See plate no.23, page 70
*(3)See plate no.20, page 64

character plays a musical instrument and specially designed hands are therefore employed. For a few plays in which a woman in the course of the action reveals her true idendity as a demon, a head has been contrived which splits horizontally revealing a hideous demon's grin*(1).

The operator manipulates not only the puppets but most props figuring in the action. If a sword, lantern or broom must be used by a character, the operator inserts his own hand in the sleeve of the puppet, and holds the object for it. In a few special instances puppet hands are used which are specially made to hold a brush, a drumstick or fan. The stage settings are specially designed to reveal the category of play (whether historical or domestic tragedy), the class of soceity to which the characters belong (nobility, warrior, merchant) or else a particular landscape (riverside, street, forest), which dominates the scene. The presentation of Bunraku plays continues to change as a result of improvements in stage apparatus and shifts in taste. Puppet plays were originally performed out of doors in uniformly bright light, but it is now possible in the theatre to dim or extinguish the illumination creating new effects.

Two varieties of gestures can be distinguished in Bunraku: the first is a stylised reproduction of familiar human movements, whether the manner of using the body to express grief or joy, or the way a woman sews clothes or plays a musical instrument. The second is not so much a reproduction of human attitudes as an extension of them which permits the operator to display the unique line of beauty which puppets can achieve. The former vareity of gestures is known as'juri', the latter as 'kata'.The creation of a definitive pattern of juri and kata for a given role is normally a long process, involving constant experimentation by successive operators until experts are agreed that the exact meaning of the

*(1)See plate no.15, page 49

text has been visually realised. The effect produced on Bunraku audiences by the kata for male and female puppets differs considerably even when the movements are similar. The female kata, though apparently lovely to watch, may possess little dramatic significance the male kata on the other hand, usually occur at dramatic moments, and are as appropriate to a particular character as the head or costume.

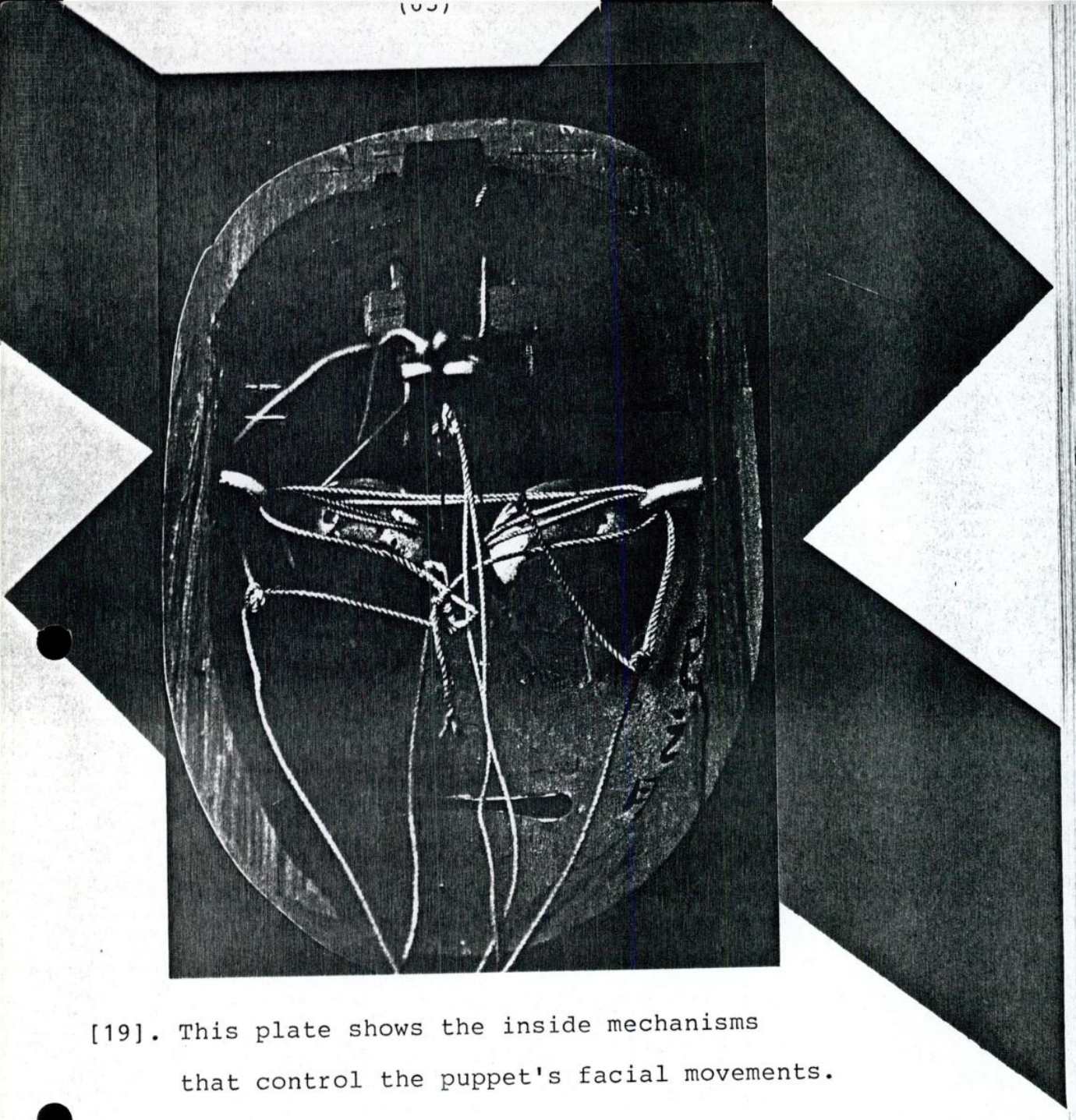
> "Bunraku puppets do not merely act out a story or dance to music. Puppeteer, tayu, and samisen player join together to create a dramatic and aesthetic experience and to peer into the depths of human emotions and the audience".[4]

BACK STAGE THEATRE

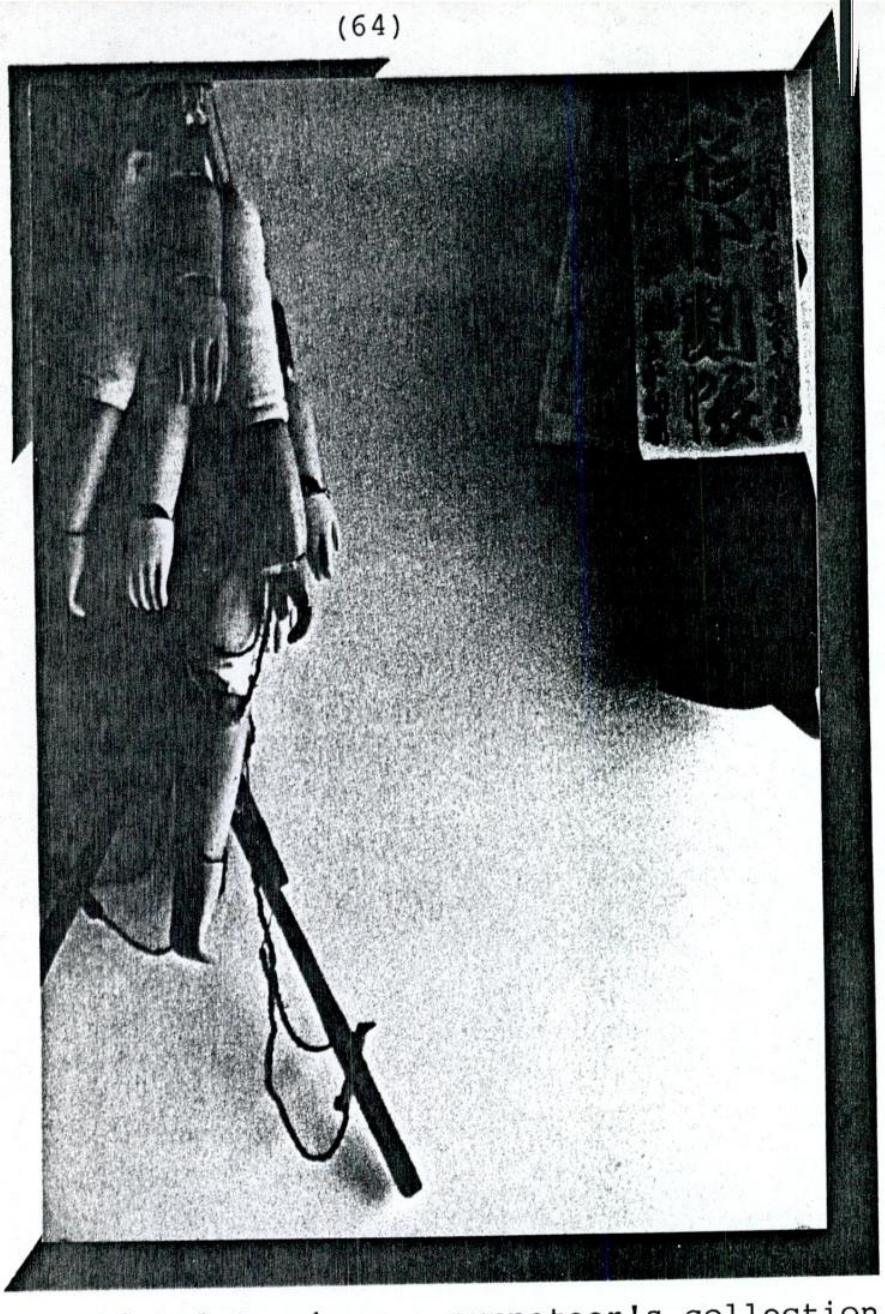
hind the scenes in contemporary Bunraku theatre, there is a nstant hive of activity, with each stage in preparation for a ow or tour perfected to a fine art. From the carver of the heads, e wig master, repairer and keeper of the heads, costume keepers d creator of puppets, to the selection of puppet heads for each rformance, all are indespensible units in the creation of Bunraku eatre.

Barbara Adachi in her book, 'The Voices and Hands of nraku', gives a very graphic description of the present day rforming puppet troupe based in Osaka, known as the 'Bunraku Troupe'. e interviews each person in their rôle in the company, giving the ader an interesting angle from which to view this fascinating t. In this last section of my thesis, I have given an account each area in preparation for a puppet performance, with the aid the information compiled by Barbara Adachi. Through each epatory stage, one can see centuries old traditions carried on own through the ages, with craftsmen using instinct and great ntegrity to present artistry in the form of a Bunraku puppet erformance. When one reads about the meticulous attention to etail and finish displayed by each craftsman, one can aesthetically ppreciate the performance on stage. However not yet having had the ppe nity to view a live performance, my appreciation is imited to what I have read and the accompanying photographs in my esearch to date.

[18]. Minosuke Oe, present day carver of heads for the puppet troupes, he is shown here at the fine carving stage, he outlines the features to guide his final work.



[19]. This plate shows the inside mechanisms that control the puppet's facial movements.



[20]. This plate shows a puppeteer's collection of limbs, a hood and cue books.

The Carver of Heads.

ıe head, Kashira, of a Bunraku doll, Ningyo, is hand carved of
ıpanese Cypress, gessoed white, pink or beige and permanently
:tached to a head grip dogushi, which is inserted into the
:amework of the doll's body. A Kashira measures from three to four
ıches wide by three to five and one-half inches high. With few
:ceptions, every one of the two hundred and sixty Kashira used
ı Bunraku performances today is the work of Minosuke Oe, the
eventy year old carver of wood, who works in a village not far
:om Naruto on the Island of Shikoku. He also makes the wooden
:ms, legs, hands and feet of the puppets.

A Cypress slab is placed on the carver's workblock , ead to be shaped into a Kashira. Firstly a pencil is used to ark in the central nose line, the intersecting eyeline and the outh line. Outlines of the features are brushed in with sumi ink. chisel is then used to gouge out the basic shape of the puppet ead, the tools are gradually decreased in size as the first eatures of the Kashira are carved. When the head is completed it s divided in two, the inside is scooped out until it resembles thin mask, complete with almond shaped holes into which eye- alls will be fitted.*(1)

The secret of the realistic movements of eyes, mouths nd heads in Bunraku is Kujina no hige (literally, 'whale's beard' .e. Baleen whalebone). A narrow strip of strong, flexible aleen functions as a spring to make the eyes close smoothly ather than to jerk shut, and the head to lower naturally rather han drop. This whalebone spring works in unison with other tring controls to keep the head action smooth. The head grip, logushi, for the puppeteer's hands , is tempororily fitted into he puppet's shoulder board for each performance. The neck is ttached to the dogushi at an angle - tilted more for a female

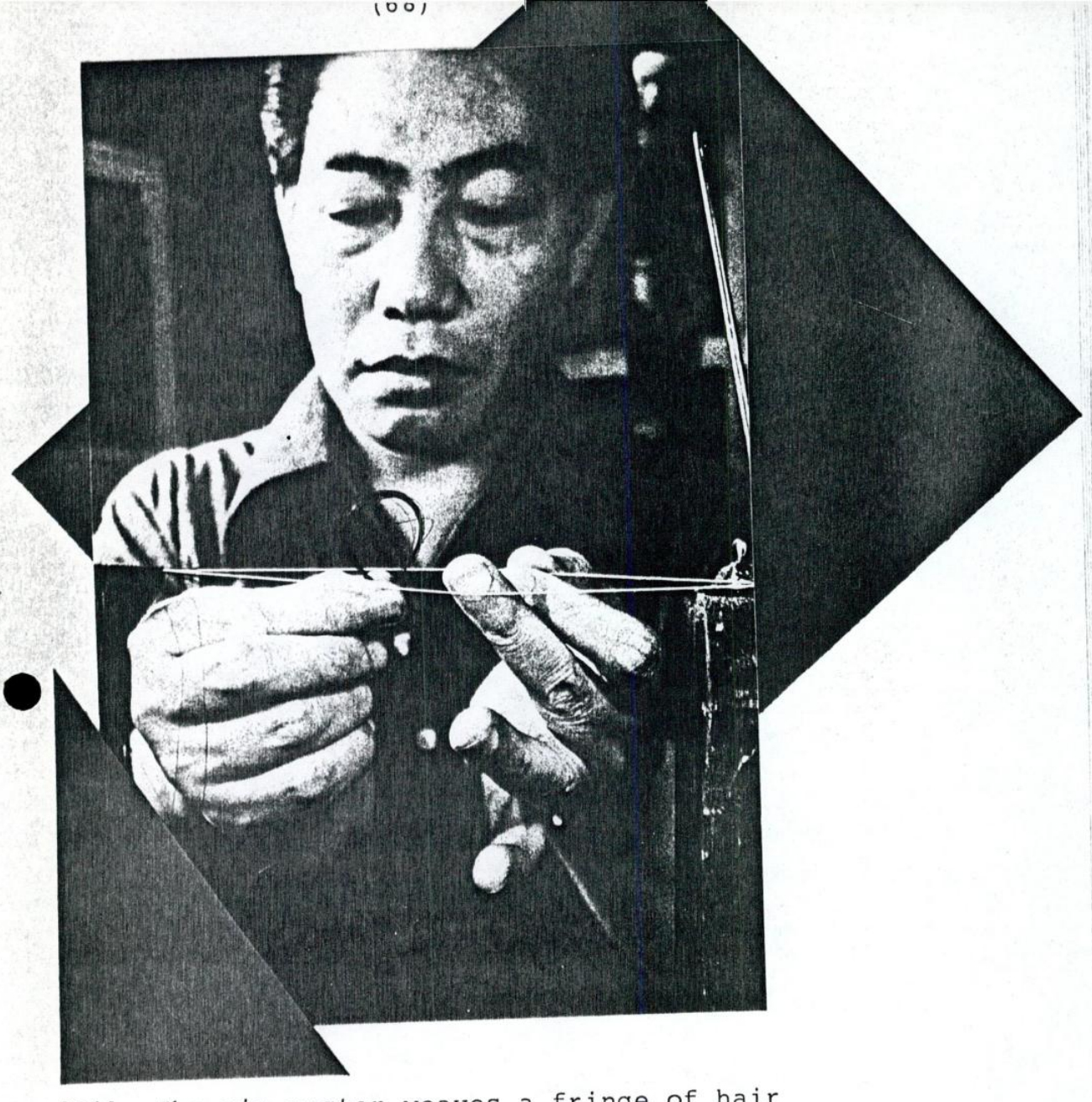
See plate no. 18, page 62.

doll - and a long whalebone spring attached inside the neck is fastened inside the head.

Into two other holes in the top of the Kashira, an old Samisen string is attached and then brought down through the neck into a channel cut in the front of the dogushi and attached to the choi, the main toggle. This wooden toggle controls the main part of the head, the up and down or nodding movement basic to all expressions. The heavy silk threads that operate the eyes, mouth and brows, come down into little channels at the back of the neck and continue down into the back of the headstick. small toggles are attached to these strings*(1). The puppeteer grips the headstick with his left hand, the choi between his middle and ring fingers, he moves his thumb to control the toggles at the back of the headstick.

Once the two halves have been carved out and mechanisms have been inserted, the hollowed out Kashira is glued back together and given as many as twelve coatings of different grades of gojun, a type of gesso made of ground shells and glue. If the drying is too fast, the gojun will shrink and crack, so timing and temperature are critical. White, beige or a deep pink is used for the face; lines are painted in to accentuate the eyes, nose and jowl lines. A carver would spend as much effort and care in carving hands, joining finger joints, tying together a leg at the knee and painting calves and thighs of kiri wood as he does in making heads*(2).

*(1)See plate no. 19, page 63
*(2)See plate no. 20, page 64



[21]. The wig master weaves a fringe of hair on the mino stand.

[22]. Male heads are more expressive than female because they possess greater capacity for movement. The large Danshichi head with its elaborate hairstyle reveals a variety of emotions.

[23]. The head Sasaya is intended for the part of the pure young maiden or young lover. The gentle expression and small mouth are those of the ideal beauty of the Edo period. Here the head is dressed in princely fashion.

The Wig Master.

The present wig master of the Osaka company is Shoji Nagoshi, who has spent twenty-five years at his craft. A wig master is in charge of all hairdressing, the making and attaching of wigs, and the changing and dressing of all coiffures. The way the hair is dressed conveys to a bunraku audience, not only the sex, age and social position of the rôle portrayed, but also occupation and in the case of females, marital status. The hairdo on a kashira also indicates whether the character is good or bad, rustic or urban, in court, religious or military life, calm or distraught, and a figure in a historical tale or a drama about ordinary folk. All puppet plays, no matter what date in history they represent are set , as far as costumes and hairstyles go, in the middle of the Edo period, about 1750*(1).

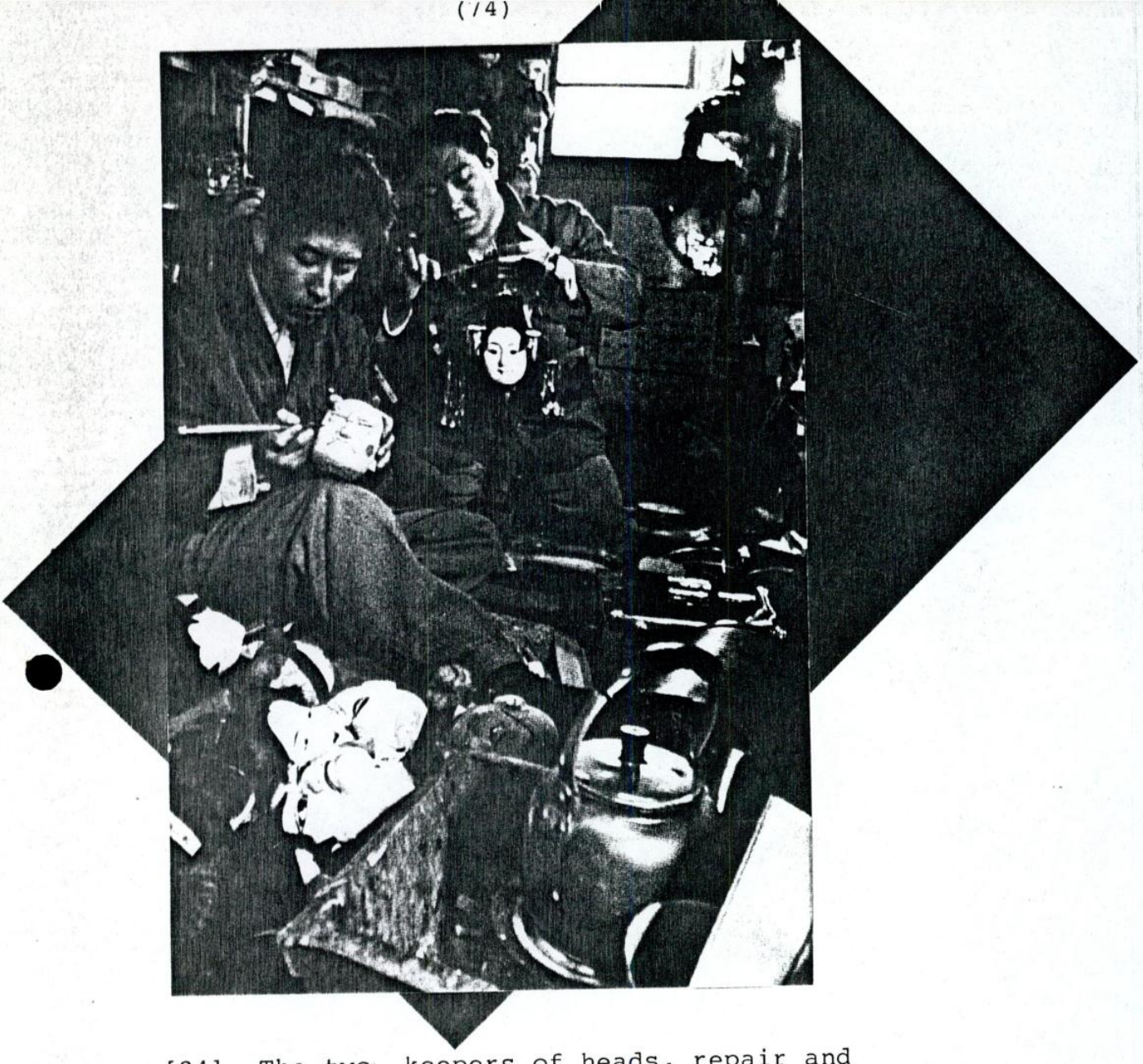
Styles of the Edo period topknots had names like 'mushroom','chestnut burr','tea-whisk', and'hundred days growth'. There were sidelocks that stood out like wide-toothed combs from the face, in braids or drawn into bouffant semicircles*(2). A young unmarried woman wore a certain style of hair ornament, a courtesan quite a different one. The wife of a Samurai would never be mistaken for a fisherman's wife because the hairstyles were so different, and a merchant's daughter would be coiffed differently from a country girl.

To make a wig the wig master starts off with a wooden stand on which is stretched two silk threads across the top. He ties one small bunch of hair after another onto these two threads to make a long fringe of hair . The section for the front of the coiffure is looped on fifteen hairs at a time. Hair used underneath the coiffure is tied in bunches of fourty or one hundred*(3).

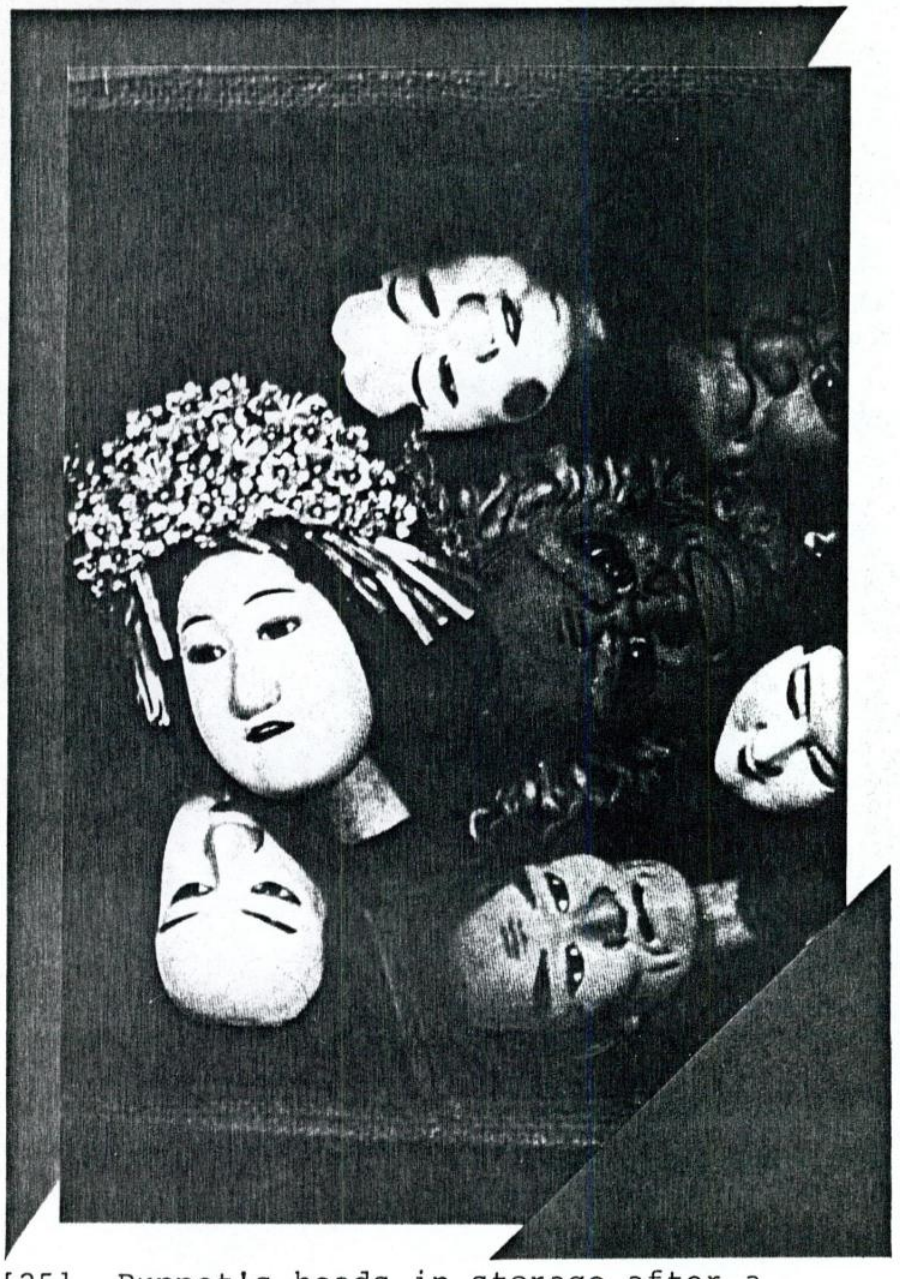
*(1)See plate no.23, page 70.
*(2)See plate no.22, page 69.
*(3)See plate no.21, page 68.

To create the attractive loops and curves so typical of both male and female hairstyles of the Edo period, Nagoshi the wig master, uses several varieties of wax, one a special old mixture that hardens to create durable topknots.The hardest of all according to Nagoshi are the hairstyles that are just gathered at the back in a strip or silk or binding cord for young emperors, princesses or elderly nobles. They have to hang just right, so they don't get caught in the neckline of the Kimono. The weight has to be calculated so that the puppeteer can still tilt and nod the doll's head properly.

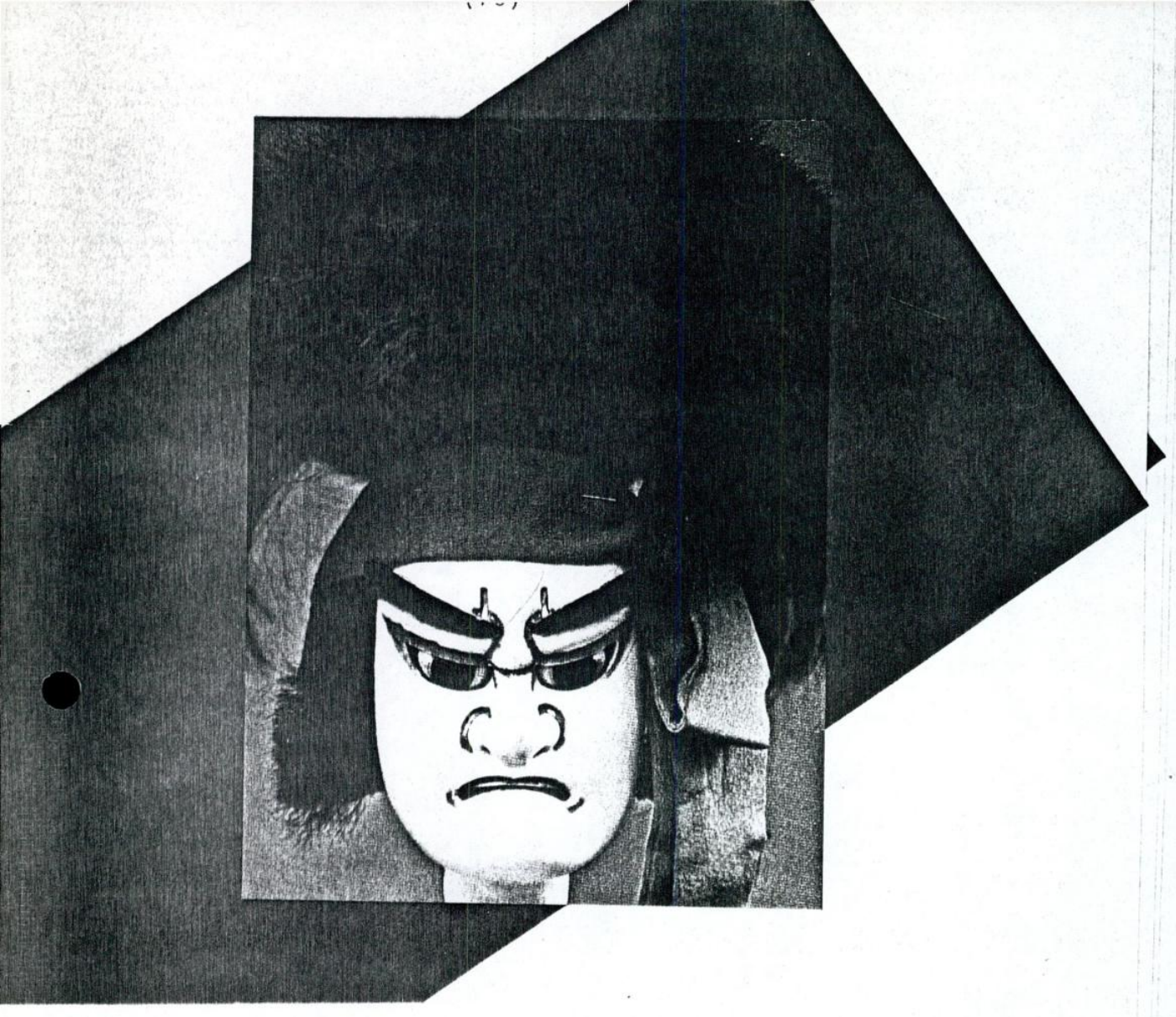
It is important for the wig master to get the wig attached just properly in the first place, the lengths of hair have to be tied and anchored strongly. The puppets move around the stage at a great rate, so the hair has to be secure for the puppeteer.



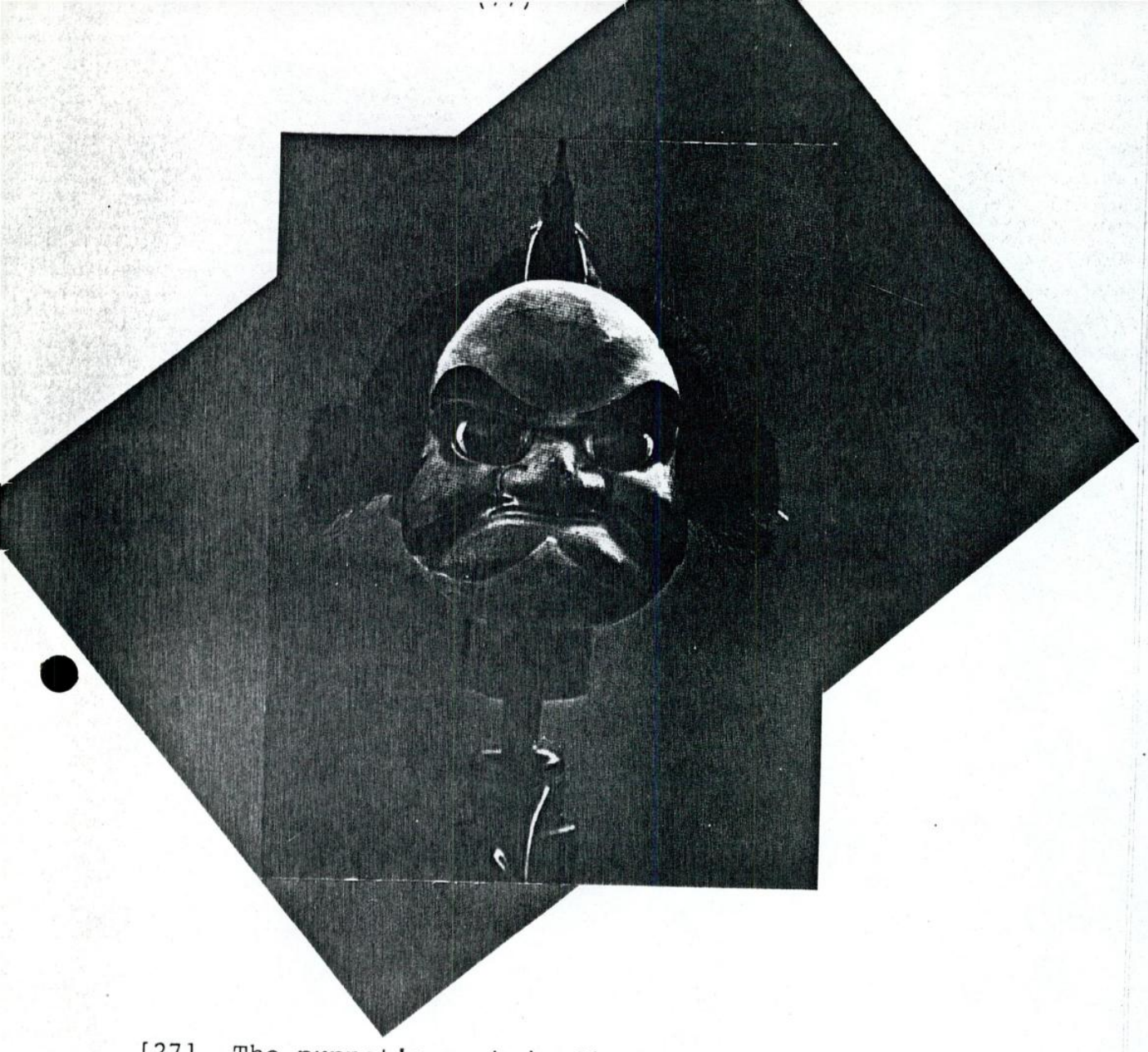
[24]. The two keepers of heads, repair and touch up the hairstyles of puppets that need constant attention.



[25]. Puppet's heads in storage after a performance.



[26]. The most famous man's head, Bunshichi, created in 1718, represents a rough warrior at the prime of life. These features show the influence of Kabuki make - up.



[27]. The puppet's neck is fixed onto its head. Male character's heads are mounted vertically on the rod, which the puppet master holds in his left hand, while the woman's head is slightly bent forward. The mechanism that moves the eyes, eyebrows and mouth is inside the head which is hollow. The strings visible in the picture are held together in the hand of the chief manipulator.

The Repairer and Keeper of Heads.

The troupe's resident repairer and keeper of the heads, Koji Hishida, refinishes, restrings and repairs heads, toggles and limbs. *(1). He is sometimes known as the'make - up man' in the troupe, he has to be sure that the recoating of a puppet's head is the right shade of pink or beige, or a uniform white. The details of each head, i.e., the lines around the eyes, nose and mouth and the blueish shading indicating shaved forelocks, vary according to the particular role in a play*(2).

To get the right mixture for white complexions, solid bone glue is mixed with water and heated, then it is mixed with ground shells. When the correct thickness is achieved it is strained through several layers of gauze into an enamel cup, ready to be coated onto the puppet's head with a flat brush.

The young woman's characters get black eyebrows in most cases, but the brow shape depends on the Kashira, the role and the puppeteer's preferance*(3). Since the married woman of Edo days shaved their eyebrows, most of them have just pale blue lines painted on*(4).

*(1)See plate no. 24 page 74.
*(2)See plate no. 25 page 75; plate no.26 page 76.
*(3)See plate no. 23 page 70.
*(4)See plate no. 29 page 81.

[28]. This Bunshichi head is used for the role of Matsuomaru, and can express a wide range of emotions.

[29]. This Fuke - Oyama head has a patrician quality that suits it for the role of the noble wife of a statesman.

[30]. The Yokambei head is used for comical villians and other manical characters. The eyes cross, and it has an overall reddish colouring.

[31]. The Ōjūto or 'large father-in-law' head is used for stubborn and cruel old male characters. It is generally used in historical tragedies. The eyebrows and mouth move and the eyes move laterally; it is usually reddish in overall colouring.

The Selection of Heads.

The distributor of the heads, Kashirawari-iin, assigns heads Kashira to the chief puppeteers for their rôles in puppet plays. Bunjaku, as a distributor of heads for the Osaka company has to select the ones that will best fit the character of each rôle. The Osaka troupe has about two hundred and sixty Kashira, a few of which are owned by individual puppeteers. Bunjaku is familiar with the line of the chin, the length of the nose, the furrows of the brow, and the cheek line of every Kashira. Before a troupe goes on tour, the Bunraku Association consults with major puppeteers who hold positions of leadership, and with leading narrators, to decide on the plays to be performed, and to assign rôles to the thirty-one puppeteers in the group. Then it is up to Bunjaku to cho[illegible] the head for each rôle. There are roughly fifty different types of heads in general use in Bunraku today.

The Kashira fall into natural categories - male and female, young old and middle-aged, good and evil, each with its refinements. They are stored in boxes marked with the carachter [illegible]e Kashira displays, for example, in the box marked Ojuto, old [illegible]n or father-in-law, one will find Kashira with sharp chins, [illegible]ickered lips and lined brows. These features distinguish the [illegible]ads used for stubborn and cruel old male carachters generally [illegible]ed [illegible] historical tragedies*(1). The Kashira used for elderly [illegible]urt ladies and statesmen's wives have a decidedly patrician [illegible]ality which the heads in the Keisei courtesan box lack*(2). [illegible]e most important Kashira of Bunraku, and the most majestic head [illegible] all, Bunshichi, comes in some seven variations and occupies an [illegible]ire box. Whether it is the regular or large sized Kashira, the [illegible]cially coiffed or the scarred, the Bunshichi head conveys [illegible]ted strength of character and an iron will tinged with grief.

*(1) See plate no. 31, page 83.
*(2) See plate no. 29, page 81.

The heads are marked by masculinity and determination, but the heavy brows, and strong downturned mouths, reflect tragic emotions masked by a Samurai's courage*(1)

Bunjaku is also responsible for matching the skills and personality of the puppeteer to the Kashira appropriate for the part. He has to consider the puppeteer's tastes, style and idiosyncrasies, skill as well as the way he wants to play the rôle. The composition of the programme also has to be taken into consideration. One long play may call for five variations of the Bunshichi head, since the emotions expressed in different scenes need different mouth lines or face sizes. If the programme is made up of scenes from several different plays, young women are apt to appear in two or even four of them, so different Musume heads are chosen to make the programme interesting.

The choice of the Kashira even determines the character of the music that is composed for the Samisen player, additionally the tayu bases his tone and style on the personality conveyed by the particular Kashira chosen. So to a certain degree, the temper of the play rests on the selection of the heads.

*(1)See plate no.27, page 77.

[33]. This plate shows the colour version of the play produced for the state television. A black and white version can be seen in plate no. 17, page 51.

The Puppet Costumes.

In Bunraku, the puppet is the costume, the costume is the character. The moment a puppet appears on stage the audience knows the social status of the character and his general nature, as well as the type of play to be performed. The costumes show immediately whether the play is a historical drama or a domestic tragedy. The clothes say right away that the characters are Shogun or shopkeeper, rural folk or nobility in disguise, princess or courtesan, good or evil*(1).

Osamu Ishibashi, costume designer for the Osaka Company presides over a storeroom stacked to the ceiling with silk robes, cotton jackets, embroidered overgarments and brocade Obi. Entire outfits are bundled togrther neatly with narrow lengths of silk carefully labelled by role and puppeteer. In the holding room beside the storeroom, puppets swing from ropes fully attired, but lifeless, without the heads or arms, which the puppeteers attach before going on stage.

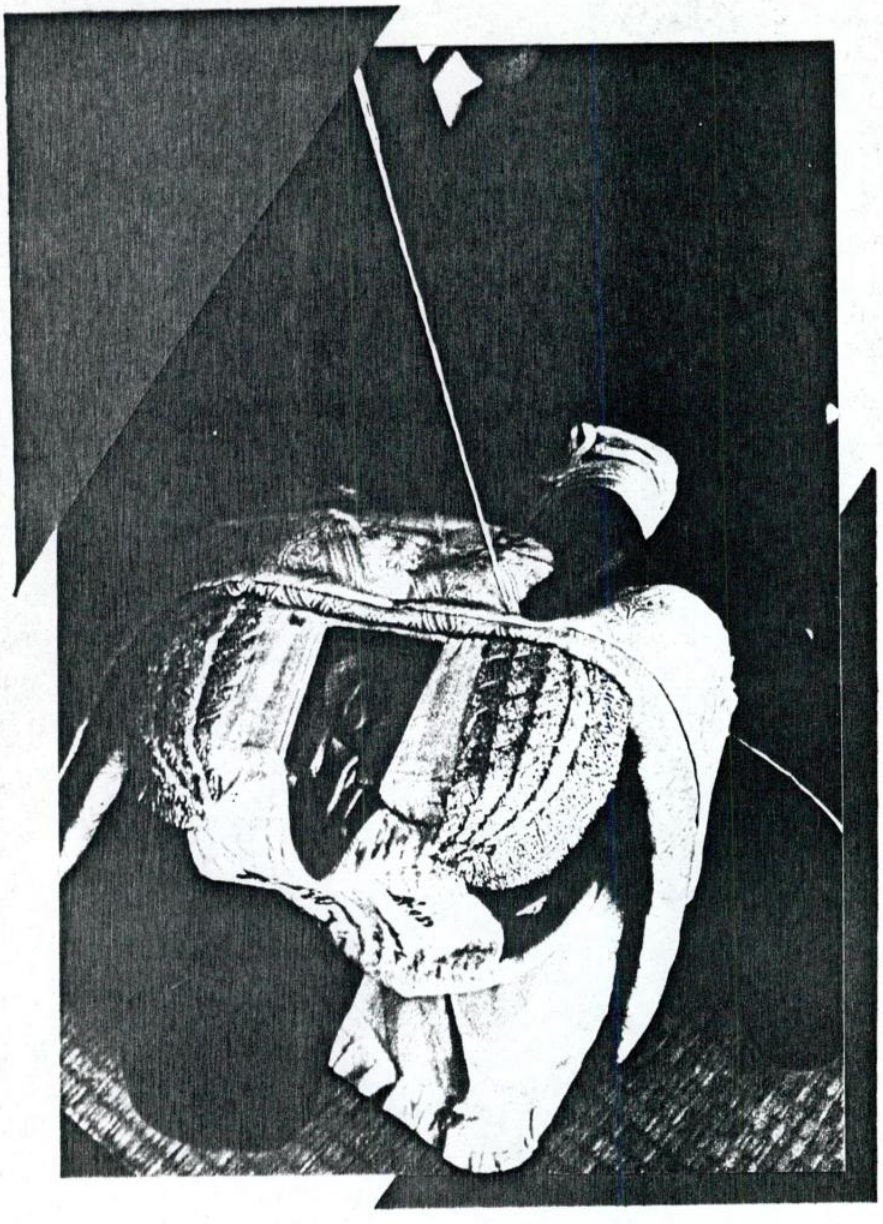
Costumes become more than mere clothes or adornment in Bunraku. In creating and putting together costumes, the designer, Ishibashi, must keep in mind not only the play and the nature of the different characters in it, but also the manner in which the puppeteer creates a doll out of the costume provided and his own individual style of manipulating the puppet on stage. There are lots of conventions and precedents for Bunraku costumes, the most important one being that they are nearly all Edo period costumes. Also certain patterns or colours have traditionally been used for specific roles in certain plays. So, when Ishibashi is designing a new costume for a particular role, he has to stay within these limitation.The designer also has to keep in mind the type of

*(1)See plates no. 1 - 6, pages 11 - 16 inclusive.

scenery and lighting involved, traditional meanings of patterns and colours, established colour harmony, and the aesthetic considerations involved in setting many puppets on stage at one time. The costume must also reveal the character of the doll wearing it*(1). Within the framework of aesthetics and tradition, it is up to Ishibashi to create costumes both for new plays and for old plays for which records no longer exist. For revivals of a play or certain scenes not done for a century or more, the designer must decide on fabric, colour and pattern; have the material woven, dyed and embroidered in Kyoto, and then work out the cut and accessories.

The puppet's Kimonos are only one half or two-thirds life size, but there is more work to one than for a real person. There are special little differences in the sleeves and the skirt, there is also the horizontal slit at the back to reach in to grasp the doll's headstick. The costumes have to be lined and padded with cotton so they will hang properly on the framework*(1). All this is not necessary for human actors, but the puppets need this extra attention to detail to make them look elegant.

(1)See plate no. 32, page 87.



[34]. In this plate a puppeteer attaches two neckbands to the framework; the rounded layering of vegetable sponge for the shoulders indicates that the puppet will be a young woman.

[35]. Odanshichi, 'large Danshichi' head. It represents warriors of violent temperament. The eyebrows and mouth move laterally.

The Creation of a Puppet.

The basic framework of a puppet is simply constructed. A carved wooden head, Kashira, is attached to a headgrip, dogushi, which is thrust down through an opening cut out of a wooden shoulder board. A length of material hangs from the front and back of the shoulder board, and to the cloth is attached the bamboo hoop that serves as the hips. Arms and legs are tied to the shoulder board with lengths of rope. The doll's costume, isho, is sewn on to cover the framework of wood, cloth and bamboo. A horizontal slit in the back of the costume allows the chief puppeteer to reach inside to grasp the dogushi.

The chief puppeteer starts with the shoulder board, which is shaped to about eight inches long, three inches wide and from about a quater to an inch thick. The rounded shoulder ends of the board and the standard key-hole centre opening for the head grip are bevelled and smooth. Heavy cloth or paper stitched to the front and neck of the shoulder board hangs down to waist level, where a hoop of bamboo is attached to serve as hips. A strip of vegetable sponge, hechima, is attached in a curve over the end of the shoulder board. These sponge strips are stitched in overlapping layers to create the form of the shoulders*(1). A young courtesan needs nicely rounded shoulders; an old lady, narrow bent ones with less sponge. A warrior's shoulders will be high and wide; an old man's, sloping and low. Each trunk or do, as it is referred to in Japanese, is made by the chief puppeteers, so they can have a variety prepared to suit the different rôles, and their own individual tastes.

When the do is prepared, the inner neckband is stitched into the collar board and extends down to the bamboo hoop. It is usually stuffed and covered in white silk. The next flat neckband in white silk lined with crimson is placed on top of the puffy one. For a courtesan puppet, the neckband will be

*(1) See plate no. 34 page 82.

delicately draped so that several inches of the crimson will peep out at bosom level when the doll is fully dressed. Next, two kimonos , layered one inside the other - a long scarlet kimono with an embroidered neckband over an under - kimono of printed silk - are attached to the do, so that the edge of each of the four neckbands shows. The kimono covered do is placed on a bamboo stand to check the draping of the gowns. A flat bustline is created, with the stiff brocade obi attached around the waist, keeping the crossover in place.

The puppeteer then inserts a square of red silk to fill the space where the kimonos fall open at the hem, he tucks in and stitches the inside hems to provide material for the fingers of the ashizukai to pinch when he manipulates the kimono skirt on stage to give the appearance of walking, running or sitting. The wooden arms are tied to the shoulder board under the heavy costume.Plate no. 35, page 93, shows the layered necklines under a warriors kimono.

[36]. The main puppets need three people to operate them. The first moves the head and right arm, and his left arm takes most of the puppet's weight,(20 kilos, approximately) during the performance. The second assistant works the left arm, the third, the feet. Female characters have no feet; their movements are suggested by the skirt of the kimono.

Summary.

A semi - governmental agency, the Bunraku Kyokai was established in 1963 to oversee the puppet troupe and the Bunraku Theatre. With the help of the Ministry of Education, the Government of Osaka and the Japan Breadcasting Corporation (NHK), this association administers the affairs of the troupe today. The troupe 's home base in Osaka is the Asahi - za, as the Bunraku-za was renamed. Although over one hundred amateur Ningyo-jōruri groups perform in Japan today, only this professional Osaka Company is known as the Bunraku troupe.

The troupe also appears regularly at the National Theatre in Tokyo which was built to include a hall designed to accomodate Bunraku performances. There are frequent Bunraku performances on television and the troupe is on the road for as many as seventy days a year in Japan and occasionally abroad. The Bunraku troupe of Osaka was designated an"important intangible cultured property" by the Japanese government in 1955, and over the years thirteen individual members of the troupe have been named "living national treasures" and honoured for their skills.

The Bunraku troupe today is made up of twenty two narrators, tayu, who sing, chant and declaim, as they describe the scenes and recite the dialogue, twenty musicians Samisen, who accompany them, and thirty - one puppeteers ningyo -zukai. The men range in age from eighteen to seventy - nine and their experience extends from over sixty years to just one year.

A young narrator, musician or puppeteer joins the troupe as the deshi (apprentice) of an experienced performer. He may come with no previous training, or, as is more usual these days he may join the troupe after two years in the training course established by the Bunraku Association at the National Theatre in Tokyo. A puppeteer starts his training learning to operate the legs and progresses to left arm operator after three to ten years. After more experience he usually makes his debut as a head

puppeteer , using a puppet in a small role , such as a child or messanger assisted by the customary left - arm operator and leg operator Although the progression from leg operator to head operator is established by custom, the years spent at one level or another are determined by skill*(1).

No single man is designated the leader of the Bunraku troupe. Responsibility for the affairs of the troupe at present is shared by senior narrators and puppeteers. It is only through the joint efforts of every member of the Bunraku Community that the traditions of puppet drama have been kept alive over the centuries.

Today Bunraku flourishes with a vital resurgence of interest throughout Japan and abroad. Although the repetory consists mainly of eighteenth century plays, sold - out performances are no longer unusual . The themes of sacrifice, loyalty, heroism and passion in conflict with duty continue to move people's hearts despite the difficulties of a poetic but archaic and complicated language.

> "Bunraku might be described as the 'art of threes': the spell-binding co-ordination of of three puppeteers manipulating one doll, the unity achieved by three independant elements - puppet, narrator and musician, and the intersecting lines of communication established between puppeteer and narrator, narrator and musician, musician and puppet. This interlocking of artistic triangles continues to fascinate, puzzle and intrigue theatre-goers."[5]

The colour, glamour and excitement combined with highly skilled techniques that I have experienced while researching Bunraku puppet theatre, has spurred me on to further research on the

(1) See plate no. 36. page 97.

't. In my research in the near future, I hope to travel to
where I can experience a live performance of Bunraku.
search has also led me into the sister art of Bunraku,
., which consists of actors rather than puppets, but never-
s equals in its colour, glamour and excitement. I hope to
the art of Kabuki in my thesis for my degree year.

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Notes.

[1]. 'The Art of Japanese Puppet Theatre': Donald Keene.
Page 3.

[2]. 'The Voices and Hands of Bunraku': Barbara Adachi.
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[3]. 'The Voices and Hands of Bunraku': Barbara Adachi.
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.knowledgements.

ne following are the names of the institutes where I have

arried out my research on Bunraku:

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