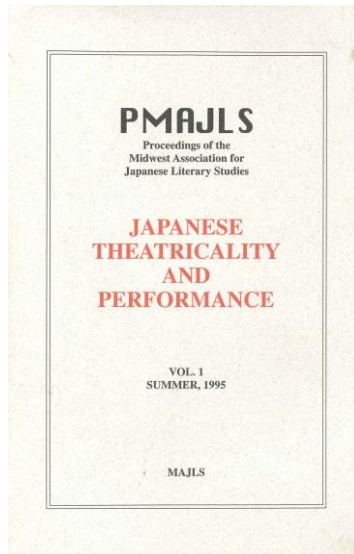


“Japanese Classical Drama as Viable English
Playscript”

Andrew Tsubaki

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JAPANESE CLASSICAL DRAMA AS VIABLE ENGLISH PLAYSRIPT

ANDREW T. TSUBAKI

University of Kansas

The frequency of staging Japanese drama in English significantly increased in the late 1960's to 70's, particularly through theatre productions of colleges and universities in the U.S.A. In tandem with such a trend, the level of interest in Japanese theatre has been at a respectable level, strong enough to generate continued publications of anthologies of modern drama as well as classics even in the late 1980's and the early 1990's.

In this paper I shall delineate kind of problems I have dealt with in my experience as a director who has to select a proper translation of a Noh, Kyogen or Kabuki play to stage. Frequently this task meant to revise partially the chosen script or to translate a play completely, simply because there is no translation available. I will clarify several problematic cases of translation for one reason or other and show how I tried to resolve them. What I am trying is not to nit pick problematic passages of translations but more to call the attention of those who may be thinking to engage in the translation of classical drama in the future, and in general to raise the understanding of the reader of these plays about a problem that has not been addressed with proper care. The better the translation, the fewer worries we, directors, will have. Hopefully I can suggest some possible solutions to deal with these problems through

my experiences in the past as well as the careful analysis of what care needs to be applied to the translation process to make the work worthwhile.

Since 1968 when I began teaching at the University of Kansas, I directed five Kyōgen , two Noh and Kyōgen and one Kabuki productions. Of these I translated three Kyōgen and one No plays. When I have directed plays using someone else's translation, it has been necessary for me to revise partially or extensively to satisfy the need of having playable texts, particularly if there are passages to be chanted or sung. Even where the passages are not chanted or sung, many lines are delivered with particular intonational patterns unique to each genre; thus, a certain amount of revision is needed to accommodate such patterns.

Furthermore, converting Japanese dialogue as spoken English demands unique and special care to be applied so that the nuance and meaning of the original language will be preserved in English translation despite the acute differences in syntax and grammar between the Japanese and English languages. The length of each word and each sentence, as well as placing an important words approximately in a corresponding position within a sentence without changing the meaning or relative value to each key word is another significant aspect to be concerned with.

I shall present a sample of several passages which are characterized by different nature and functions and show how I treated them in my translation:

I. Dealing with a Noh play *Sumidagawa*.

The Japanese text of this Noh play is the *utaibon* text with chanting notation) of the Kanze School published by Hinoki shoten (Tokyo) in 1989.

The English text is taken from “*Sumidagawa*” of *Japanese Noh Drama, Ten Plays*, Vol. 1., translated and published by Nippon Gakujutsu Shinkō kai, 1959.

My translation is rendered in block letters.

A. Straight passage with intonational patterns added.

1. Waki's (Ferryman) *nanori* (introduction), straight-forward delivery with a moderate intonational pattern.
2. The same waki's *katari* (story telling), with a more prominent intonation.

B. Chanted passage with drum beat not corresponding to the basic 8 beats of Noh chanting and instrumental music.

C. Chanted passage with drum beat corresponding to the basic 8 beats of Noh chanting and instrumental music.

Keys to the symbols:

- v a quick inhalation
- V a regular inhalation
- || an end of a sentence, a pause for inhalation
- / a sliding up tone
- \ a sliding down tone
- ~ a medium length prolongation of a vowel

II. Dealing with a Kabuki play *Kanjinchō*

The Japanese text of this Kabuki play is "*Kanjinchō*" by Gohei Namiki, III, in *Meisaku Kabuki Zenshū*, Vol. 18, published by Tokyo Sōgen Shinsha, 1969.

The translation is by James R. Brandon and Tamako Miwa, "*Kanjincho*" in *Kabuki Plays* published by Samuel French, Inc., 1966.

The musical score of *Nagauta Kanjinchō* (Shamisen Bunkafu) is composed by Yashichi Kineya IV and published by Hōgakusha, 1952.

A. Straight passage with intonational patterns.

The Tsubaki's translation in block letters.

B. Passage chanted in the Nagauta style.

The English translation by Tsubaki is added to the Japanese score.

I hope these samples, though limited in number, provide a good set of guidance for the future translators of classical drama of Japan to understand what a director who uses an English text for his/her production looks for, particularly when he/she plans to reproduce Japanese intonation and/or musicality of chanting in English, thus bringing up the quality of English translation one step further by providing an additional quality beyond a simple literary and linguistical equation in translation.

**List of Tsubaki's Japanese Traditional
Theatre Productions**

All productions are staged in English at the University
of Kansas, unless noted otherwise.

Noh

Fujito * (with Kyō gen , *Shimizu*) , 1985
Sumidagawa (with Kyō gen, *Suehirogari*),
1992 (1) and 1993 (2)

Kyōgen

Busu, Kamabara, # Dondarō,* 1970
Suminuri,* 1979
Shimizu, 1985
Kani-Yamabushi, Kamabara, Chidori, * (3) 1988
Kani-Yamabushi, Kamabara, Busu, (4) 1989
Busu with The Missing Lamb (an adaptation of *The
Second Shepherd Play*), (5) 1992
Suehirogari, 1992 and 1993

Kabuki

Kanjinchō (with Buyō dance, *Ayame Yukata*),
1973, 1974 (6) and 1976 (7)

* a production in Tsubaki's translation

a production in Japanese

(1)toured to east to Long Island and others

(2)a guest direction at Carleton College

(3)toured to east to New York City and north
to Minnesota

(4)a guest direction at Gustavus Adolphus College

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(5)toured to Oregon (Portland) and Japan
(Toyama, Tokyo and Hiratsuka)

(6)a guest direction at Carleton College

(7)a guest direction at Tel-Aviv University, Israel

I. *Sumidagawa*

A. Straight passage with intonational patterns added:

1. Waki's *nanori* straightforward delivery with a moderate intonational patterns.

I am he who rows the ferry across the Sumida in
the province of Musashi. (NGS,147)

Kore wa Musashi no kuni ^v Sumidagawa no ^v

I am he in the Musashi province who provides a

wata / ^{shimori} nite so~ ro ou || (Utaibon, 1)

ferry / ^{service} acro ~ ss the Sumida River.

2. The same waki's *katari*, with a more prominent intonation.

But perhaps because of his *karma*, he grew worse
and worse. When he was at the point of death, we
asked him, "Where were you born, who are
you?" (NGS,154)

zen /^{ze} no koto nitemo ya so~ rai ke _n ^v

Be /^{cause} of his *karma*, perhaps, nothing could help \ him.

ta~n da ^v yo / warini yowari ^v sudeni ma / (ftn) go to ^v

Gradually he / weak \ened, and ca / (me) clearly to

mi /^{eshi} toki ^v o ko to wa i zu ku ^v

the point /^{of} death we asked him from where he'd come

i /^{kanaru} hitozoto ^v chichi no myo~ji wo mo ^v

and /^{who} he was. What was his father's name?

ku ni wo mo ^v ta /^{zunete} so~raeba ^v (Utaibon, 9)

Where was he born? Those /^{questions} we asked.

B. Chanted passage with drum beat not corresponding to the basic 8 beat of Noh.

Shite's (Mother) *Issei Sashi* (entry passage).

“Although a mother's mind / May be unclouded,
 She well may lose her way / Through love of her
 child.” How true that is! / Where does my
 darling stray? Shall I ask these travelers? / Does

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he know his mother's grief? (NGS,149) [See the following CHART.]

CHART ONE: Shite Issei Sashi from *Sumidagawa*

	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
H)		ge	ni ya hi to no o ya mo	ko	ko	ro	wa		
		Truly	uly the mind of a mother	lo	oo	kin			
		ya mi ni	a ra ne do mo	o	o	o			
		for her lost child	is not unlike being in the		dark	ness.			
		ko o o mo	o mi chini		ma yo o				
		But in	searching she can		ea-si-ly				
		to wa	a a	i ma ko so o mo	o o				
		lose her	way	that	is as obvious	as			
		shi ra	a yu		u ki no	o			
		the	whi-(ai)-te ne		(e) es of snow-				
		mi	i chi yuki bi to	ni	ko to zu te	te			
		By	aski-ning	ap- passing	tra-ve-ll-er-				
		yukue o nani to ta zu mi ra			a	a n			
		cou-ld I po-ssi-bly find my s ₁		on's	wher ^{er} (er)	a-bout			
		(Utaibon, 3, with the Tsubaki's translation)							

C. Chanted passage with drum beat corresponding to the basic 8 beat of Noh.

Shite's Issei.

“Does not the skyey wind

Chorus.

Whisper to the waiting pines?” (NGS,149) [See the following CHART.]

CHART TWO: Shite Issei from *Sumidagawa*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Koi ai	ya		ha	△				
H)	na	a	n		ya	ya	ha	○
	a	bow	ts.	ISSEI	kr ku ya	ika	a-a	
					H ma-y	he- ^{ar} ca	ar- ^{ar} ca	
Fishikake	ya	△	han	ha	•	△	ya	△
							ha	△
								•
	a	a	ni		u	wa	no	so
	(ar)-(ar)	some	how	(ow)	since	even	the	mind
								less.
uchikake-	ya	ha	yo	△	ya	a		
Trukashira								
	ka	ze	d	ani		i	mo	△
	wi	n	d	of	the	sk	(y)	
						yi	yi	
	Iya	△	ha		•	•	Iya	△
JI	ma	a	a	tsu	u	u	u	
	Ha	a	a	a	a	ha	a	

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shikake	△	△	△	△	△	△			●
	hi		o		o		o	to	
	hi	it		o		o		of whi	
uchikake	ya	wa	yo					Iya	
osaerukashira		su ru		u				na rai	
		(i) - sper		(y) - ng				to	the
	ya	a						Iya	
	i	a	a	a	a		ri	i	
	a	w	ai	tr	ng		p	(a)	(a)
	Iya		yo						
	i	i	i	i					
	(a)	(a)	(i)	h			ne	s.	

II. Kanjinchō

A. Straight passage with intonational patterns:

Kataoka: Isshin no hozo o katame, sekisho no bansotsu

(Brandon) Let us resolve! Cut the soldiers

(Tsubaki) Let us resolve right now! Cutting down soldiers

kiritaoshi, sekio yabutte to~rubeshi.

(Brandon) down! We shall fight our way through this barrier!

/ \ / /

(Tsubaki) of the barrier, we should dare to fight our

/ \ /

way through the gate!

Kamei: Tanen no buon wa kon'nichi tadaima.

(Brandon) The years of obligation to Our Lord shall be repaid today! We must pass through, My Lord!

/

(Tsubaki) To show our deep gratitude to you here and

\ / /

now, we must, My Lord!

Hitachi: Ideya sekisho wo.

(Brandon) - - - - -

(Tsubaki) - - - - -

Four Retainers: Fumi yaburan. (MKZ,187)

(Brandon) We shall pass through! (24)

/ \

(Tsubaki) We must break through!

B. Passage chanted in the Nagauta style. [See CHART below.]

Chorus Leader:

Passed is the Mountain of Osaka,
 Before whom those coming and going part,
 Where friends and strangers meet,
 Beautiful the hills,
 Shrouded by the mists of spring.

Full Chorus:

By furtive ship,
 Through distant paths of waves,
 Arriving, now at last,
 At Kaizu Bay. (Brandon, 22 and 23)

CHART THREE: *Nagauta* Passage from *Kanjinchō*

ツン ド ツ ツン ド ツ ツレ チ ツ ドン ツー レ ツチ テン ツチ テン ツチ テン ドン テン

This

チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン

wa-y and that w-a-y — Peo-

ルン ヲツ ツ ツン ツン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン チー ン

ple come and go-(o)-(o)-, parting from Fri-

^{テン}10 ^{テン}9 ^チ5 ^ン— ^{テン}4 ^{レン}4 ● ^チ6 ^ン6 ^{レン}6 ^{レン}6 ● ^チ7 ● ^チ6 ^チ4 ^{レン}4 ^チ4

ら……ぬ……も……いおおさか の……やまか

ends and strangers at O-wasaka — Mountain, grace-

^{テン}6 ^{テン}1 ^{テン}0 ● ^{テン}10 ^{テン}10 ^{テン}10 ^{テン}5 ^チ4 ● ^チ3 ^チ4 ^チ5 ^チ4 ^チ3 ^チ4 ^チ0 ● ^チ4 ^チ0 ●

ふ……り……た……ん……だ……ん……

fu — lly stand — ing — ,

^ツ2 ^ツ2 ^ツ2 ● ^ツ2 ^ツ2 ● ^ツ2 ^ツ2 ● ^ツ1 ^ツ1 ● ^ツ0 ^ツ3 ^ツ0 ^ツ4

か す …… み …… ん …… は る わ …… ゆ

thus, shrou — d — ed by mi — st of

^ツ1 ^ツ4 ^ト0 ● ^チ9 ^チ10 ^チ5 ^チ4 ● ^チ4 ● ^チ4 ^チ4 ^チ4 ● ^ツ7 ^ツ6 ● ^チ4 ^チ4 ^チ6 ●

か …… し …… け …… る ……

spring ti — (i) — me — .

^フ6 ● ^フ7 ^フ6 ● ^フ7 ^フ6 ● ^フ6 ● ^フ6 ● ^フ6 ● ^フ6 ● ● ^フ6 ^フ9 ^フ10 ^フ9 ● ^フ9 ^フ6 ● ^フ4 ^フ4 ● ^フ7

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なみ い ち は
な 2 い 4 ち 0 は 0

Through long paths of

る か に け ぶ の
る 0 か 7 に 0 け 4 ぶ 4 の 0

wa-ves, the ship has trave-(e)led,

かい づ の 6 に つ き に け
かい 4 づ 4 の 0 6 0 に 4 つ 0 き 0 に 0 け 0

arriving at Kaizu Bay, safely at la-(a)-

い ん ご お
い 2 ん 2 ご 2 お 0

-(a) ————— st.