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# Riken no Ken

## Zeami's Theory of Acting and Theatrical Appreciation

by MICHIKO YUSA

Dance movements and gestures are but  
physical movements; what truly counts  
is the mind, the *satori*-mind.

Zeami, *Kakyō*.<sup>1</sup>

THE concept of *riken no ken* 離見の見, literally, 'the seeing of detached perception',<sup>2</sup> is considered by noh specialists to be one of the most important contributions of Zeami Motokiyo 世阿弥元清, 1363-1443, to theater art. In his commentary, Nose Asaji confesses, 'I am irresistibly drawn to this phrase *riken no ken*. Zeami was one of those people who boldly create new terms. Creation of new terms implies the birth of new ideas, ideas previously unknown and unthought, in the minds of human beings.'<sup>3</sup> Nishio Minoru describes *riken no ken* as a concept pointing to a universal standpoint common to all highly creative activities and calls it 'Zeami's great discovery' and the crystallization of 'the height of aesthetic consciousness.'<sup>4</sup>

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All the references to Zeami's writings are cited according to Konishi Jin'ichi 小西甚一, ed., *Zeami-shū* 世阿弥集 [ZS], Chikuma, 1970.

Other texts consulted include: Tanaka Yutaka 田中裕, ed., *Zeami Geijutsuron-shū* 世阿弥芸術論集, Shinchōsha, 1976; Omote Akira 表章 & Katō Shūichi 加藤周一, ed., *Zeami, Zenchiku* 世阿弥禅竹 (NST 24), Iwanami, 1974, 1985; and Nose Asaji 能勢朝次, ed., *Zeami Jūrokubushū Hyōshaku* 世阿弥十六部集評釈, Iwanami, 1930, 1964.

English translations consulted are found in: Mark J. Nearman, tr., *Kakyō*, in MN 37:3-4 & 38:1 (1982-1983); J. Thomas Rimer & Yamazaki Masakazu, tr., *On the*

*Art of Nō Drama*, Princeton U.P., 1984; and Ryusaku Tsunoda *et al.*, tr., *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, Columbia U.P., 1971.

All the translations in the present article are the author's, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> *Mai hataraki wa waza nari. Shuni narumono wa kokoro nari. Mata shōi nari.* 舞はたらきは態なり。主になるものは心なり。また正位なり。 *Kakyō* 花鏡, in ZS, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> *Riken* is 'the aesthetic perception', and *riken no ken* is the knowledge of such perception, which is ultimately synonymous with 'the aesthetic mind'. These terms are of one family, and are treated here together.

<sup>3</sup> Nose, 1, p. 312.

<sup>4</sup> Nishio Minoru 西尾実, *Dōgen to Zeami* 道元と世阿弥, Iwanami, 1965, 1978, p. 204; see also pp. 198-236 & 251-59.

A comprehensive explanation of the term has been provided by Omote Akira. He points out the complexity of the concept and suggests at least two meanings: (1) What the audience sees of the actor, and (2) the quality of art that expresses itself beyond itself and is felt by the audience.<sup>5</sup> Mainly drawing from *Kakyō* 花鏡 and *Shikadō* 至花道, Nishio discusses the term and interprets it as the principle of 'caring for the common folk'.<sup>6</sup>

The idea has not, however, been systematically exposed in its full scope, and in the present article I attempt a comprehensive examination of the concept by closely studying the passages in Zeami's writings in which the phrase is used. Admittedly the term *riken no ken*, or simply *riken*, appears only six times in the corpus of Zeami's treatises, but its significance can hardly be exaggerated. Kanze Hisao offers a penetrating insight into the concept:

The well-known phrase *riken no ken* is found in *Kakyō*, *Shikadō*, *Yūgaku Shūdō Fūken* 遊楽習道風見, *Kyūi* 九位, and *Rikugi* 六義. It is generally held that, since this term has different meanings in different contexts, it is impossible to make coherent sense out of it without involving contradictions. But as I read these passages from the point of view of an actor who stands on the stage and performs, the idea of *riken no ken* presents itself as a remarkable theory that tackles, from various angles, the most pressing and difficult problems of stage art, an art in which both audience and actor must co-exist. It seems to me that the various meanings of this term can be taken to have a fundamentally consistent content.<sup>7</sup>

As shown below, the phrase *riken no ken* is indeed polyvalent. According to context, it can signify the spectator's faculty of aesthetic judgment, the actor's awareness of the spectator's appreciation, or the faculty that spontaneously responds to the sensation of delight. In addition, it can refer to the ontological dimension of aesthetic sensibilities in general, the spectator's faculty that recognizes the intangible quality of art, and the infinitely deep mind on which symbolic allusions rest. But the concept is basically concerned with one single reality of the mind—its nature and function under various aspects in the context of the performance and appreciation of *noh*.

The intuition that Zeami later developed into the idea of *riken no ken* is seminally present in his first *noh* treatise, *Fūshikaden* 風姿花伝, written between 1400 and 1406. The third chapter deals with the ability to foresee the quality of the performance that is to be staged that day, and Zeami stresses the need for the actor to observe and know the audience prior to his appearance on the stage. He must know his audience beforehand if he is to perform successfully, for 'noh is an art that depends on the audience.'<sup>8</sup> For both Zeami and his

<sup>5</sup> Omote & Katō, pp. 471-72, supplementary n. 91.

<sup>6</sup> Nishio, pp. 211, 234-35, and esp. 257-59.

<sup>7</sup> Kanze Hisao 観世寿夫, 'Yūgen na Bi to

*Gei*' 幽玄な美と芸, 1976, in Kanze Hisao *Chosaku-shū* 観世寿夫著作集, Heibonsha, 1980, 1, p. 83.

<sup>8</sup> *Fūshikaden*, in ZS, pp. 56 & 93.

father, Kan'ami 観阿弥, 1333-1384, the primary concern of the noh actor was to delight the spectators, whether they were sophisticated urban people or country folk living in remote villages. As Zeami notes in *Nōsakusho* 能作書, 1423, 'The art of noh performance can never be separated or hidden from the public, as its fame depends on the audience's appraisal, both in the city and in the village.'<sup>9</sup> It may well be that Zeami never entirely lost this egalitarian outlook toward the audience, but as he deepened his reflection on the art, he became more concerned with the high expectations and standards of the elite spectators whom he called *mekiki* 日利き, or connoisseurs. It was through the attention he paid to the audience that Zeami developed his insight into the nature of *riken no ken*, which he made into a principle governing the mental attitude that the actor should cultivate in order to become a true master of his art. In *Yūgaku Shūdō Fūken*, ca 1424, Zeami tied this initially practical insight with the Buddhist notion of *sūnyatā* (*kū* 空), or emptiness, and *mushin* 無心, the 'primordial mind' or 'no-mind', the mind clear of conceptualization and images. In this way, the epistemology of noh became closely connected with Buddhist intuition and sensibility in general, and that of Zen in particular.<sup>10</sup>

### Interpretations of *Riken no Ken*

#### 1. *The audience's clear aesthetic judgment*

Zeami introduces the term *riken no ken* for the first time in *Shikadō*, 1420, during his discussion of the three essential endowments of the noh actor: 'the skin, the flesh, and the bones'.<sup>11</sup> He emphasizes that the actor who is blessed with all three of these qualities is a rare performer who is able to captivate and enchant the audience with his art. His innate ability (the bones), his masterful dancing and singing (the flesh), and his elegant appearance (the skin), all of which are the fruit of diligent practice, are perceived through *riken no ken*, the aesthetic eyes of the audience, as the sureness and stability (the bones), as the inexhaustible depth and breadth (the flesh), and as the refined beauty (the skin) of the actor's art.

An actor who is perfectly endowed with all these qualities [of the skin, the flesh, and the bones] has thoroughly mastered the supreme state of the art and has reached the rank of *mufū no i*.<sup>12</sup> When such an actor performs, the audience perceives his art as so enjoyable that they forget themselves while viewing the marvelous sight. When they later reflect on the performance, the actor's solid and self-assured achievement appears to their *riken no ken* [aesthetic perception]

<sup>9</sup> ZS, p. 185.

<sup>10</sup> For Zeami and his knowledge of Zen, see Kōsai Tsutomu 香西精, 'Zeami no Zenteki Kyōyō 世阿弥の禅的教養, 1958, in *Zeami Shinkō* 世阿弥新考, Wanya, 1969, pp. 20-39.

<sup>11</sup> 'I believe that the influence of Dōgen's Zen

formed the foundation of Zeami's philosophy of practice and his theory of art.' Nishio, p. 123.

<sup>11</sup> *Hi* 皮, *niku* 肉, *kotsu* 骨.

<sup>12</sup> 無風の位, the state in which the actor is no longer dependent on his skills.

as the mature art of the 'bone' quality, the inexhaustible repertoires of his art as the mature art of the 'flesh' quality, and the profound beauty and elegance [of his appearance] as the mature art of the 'skin' quality. Such is indeed the actor who is blessed with the qualities of the skin, the flesh, and the bones.<sup>13</sup>

*Riken no ken* here signifies the audience's faculty of recognizing and judging the quality of the actor's art, that is, the audience's aesthetic mind. The fact that even the subtlest qualities of his art are perceived by the spectators' discerning eyes provides the actor with an impetus to deepen and expand his art and obtain complete mastery of it.

## 2. The actor's perception of his own appearance as perceived by the audience

In *Kakyō*, 1420, Zeami applies the intuition of *riken no ken* to the training of the noh actor. The actor must be aware (*ken*) of his appearance as perceived by the audience (*riken*). He comes to know this through his own *riken no ken*, his 'detached perception', which embraces the audience's *riken no ken*. The actor gains this penetrating awareness as he appropriates the teaching of *mokuzen shingo* 目前心後, literally, 'the eyes front, the mind back'. Zeami expounds on this teaching:

In dance there is the principle of *mokuzen shingo*. That is, you look ahead with your eyes to see the front and set your mind behind you to see your rear appearance. This goes hand in hand with the advice I gave you regarding the five kinds of dance. Your appearance as seen by the audience forms for you your detached perception [*riken*]. What your own eyes see is your self-centered perception [*gaken*] and not the seeing of detached perception [*riken no ken*]. When you exercise your *riken no ken*, you are of one mind with the audience. Only then do you fully see your own appearance. If you can see your own appearance, you truly see all around you. While your eyes can see left, right, and front, they cannot see your rear appearance. Unless you are aware of this, you cannot correct any ungraceful aspects in your appearance.

In adopting *riken no ken*, your vision is one with that of the audience [*ken-shodōken* 見所同見]. You will see what your physical eyes cannot see, and you will achieve an elegant appearance and graceful bodily movements. This is possible only if you put your mind behind you and see what your eyes cannot see. Try to understand this teaching of *riken no ken*. Ponder on the saying, 'The eyes cannot see their eyeballs,' and develop your vision of all around you. If you strive after my teaching, you will certainly be able to perform graceful dances that may be compared to a flower or a beautiful jewel. To a *tanbankan*, I would say, 'Mind your right and left, front and back, and perfect [your appearance] down to the details of dance and bodily movements.'<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> *Shikadō*, in *ZS*, pp. 148-49.

<sup>14</sup> *Kakyō*, in *ZS*, pp. 198-99.

For the possible meaning of *tanbankan* 担板漢, a narrow-visioned person who can see only

the front, I have found that in *Kōsai*, pp. 35-36, most persuasive and follow his interpretation here.

The actor must be aware of how he appears to the audience's detached and objective eyes (*riken*), and develop his encompassing awareness (*riken no ken*). Only then can he correct any shortcomings and elevate his dance and physical movements to the height of graceful beauty. If he embodies the teaching of *mokuzen shingo*, he can attain the 'flower' (*hana* 花), the secret that makes noh delightful.

In formulating the teaching of *mokuzen shingo*, Zeami clearly maintains that the faculty of perception is the mind. The contrast he makes between *riken no ken* and *gaken* 我見, literally 'ego-perception', is illuminating. If *riken no ken* is an 'objective, self-less, and "detached" mode of seeing', *gaken* is a 'subjective, self-centered, and "attached" mode of seeing', colored by various preconceptions and feelings, and limited in scope.<sup>15</sup> As the actor transcends his ego-bound mode of being, his *gaken* gives way to the more universal *riken no ken*, which objectively embraces the subjective viewpoint as well as the hitherto objective viewpoints, that is, those of the audience. *Riken no ken* is the mental eye by which the actor knows what the audience sees of him and identifies his viewpoint with that of the audience.

This emphasis on the mind is clear throughout Zeami's writings: it is the mind and not the physical eyes that truly sees noh. 'He who understands noh sees it with his mind; he who does not, sees it with his eyes.'<sup>16</sup> It is also the mind of the actor that 'renders his appearance beautiful.'<sup>17</sup> Zeami actually adopts the term *shingen* 心眼, or 'mind-eye', in his discussion of the mental capacity that varies from person to person. He claims that, owing to the different degrees of the mind's perceptiveness, or *shingen*, some people can see and appreciate noh better than can others.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. *The seat of aesthetic experience*

In *Goi* 五位, ca 1425-1426, Zeami discusses five kinds of noh art:

1. *myōfū* 妙風, ineffable art.
2. *kampū* 感風, art that moves the audience.
3. *ifū* 意風, art that successfully expresses the actor's interpretation of the play.

<sup>15</sup> *Gaken* is of Buddhist origin and appears in *The Diamond Sutra*. The translation based on the Sanskrit text reads: 'the view concerning the ego-self'.

Nakamura Hajime 中村元 & Kino Kazuyoshi 紀野一義, tr., *Hannyashingyō, Kongō-Hannyakyo* 般若心經, 金剛般若經, Iwanami, 1960, 1983, p. 123.

The view held by the ego-self means, in Zeami's text, the way in which the ego-centered self sees.

<sup>16</sup> *Shirumono wa kokoro nite mi, shirazaru*

*wa me nite mirunari* 知る者は心にて見、知らざるは目にて見るなり. *Shikadō*, in ZS p. 149.

'[To see the truth is to see] not by the physical eyes, but by the eyes of wisdom; it is to see without seeing and without the object to be seen. There is no seeing nor any object of seeing—this is the state of non-duality of truth and falsehood.' *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, 8:31.

Nagao Gadjin 長尾雅人, tr., *Yuimakyō* 維摩經, Chūōkōron, 1983, p. 132.

<sup>17</sup> *Kakyō*, in ZS p. 216.

<sup>18</sup> *Shūgyokutokka*, in ZS p. 308.

4. *kempū* 見風, art consisting of beautiful dance movements that give pleasure to the eye.
5. *seifū* 声風, art that dwells in beautiful music that delights the audience.

Zeami places *riken no ken* in relation to *kampū*, the second rank of art:

The art of moving the audience consists in surprising the minds and eyes of the audience at unexpected places. There are three ways of moving the audience: *sokuza*, *sokushin*, and *sokumoku*.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the sudden shift of the focus of attention [*ki* 気] can move *riken no ken* [the mind of the audience]. It is written in *The Book of Odes*, '[Poems] correct successes and failures, shake heaven and earth, and move ghosts and spirits.' This is what is meant by 'to move' [*kan*].<sup>20</sup>

The actor's skillful performance moves *riken no ken*, the feeling-faculty of the audience. In the Great Preface of *The Book of Odes*, Zeami finds a universal claim that aesthetic power can move the entire cosmos as it pierces through the feeling-faculty of all beings.<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. Perception of the most natural artless art

In *Yūgaku Shūdō Fūken*, Zeami discusses the idea of *riken no ken* in the context of the Buddhist notion of *kū*, or emptiness (*sūnyatā*), and quotes the celebrated line from *The Heart Sutra*, '*Shikisokuzekū, kūsokuzeshiki*' 色即是空空即是色, 'The world of sensuous experience is empty, emptiness is the world of sensuous experience.'<sup>22</sup> He asserts that there are two ways of conceiving reality—'*Rūpam* is *sūnyatā*,' that is, *shiki* 色, all that has form and visible existence, is *kū*, non-form, invisible emptiness, and '*Sūnyatā* is *rūpam*.' In the same way, there are two kinds of art tending to either of these directions. Art that achieves the fullness of expression belongs to the '*rūpam* is *sūnyatā*' type, while art that transcends artistic expression belongs to the '*sūnyatā* is *rūpam*' type. Art of the latter category is superior to the former, he maintains, for it transcends the criterion of good and bad, and is beyond techniques and calculations to gain artistic effect.

Zeami refers to a verse by Fujiwara Teika 藤原定家, 1162-1241, as an exemplary poem of the '*sūnyatā* is *rūpam*' type of art:

<sup>19</sup> *sokuza* 即座: the actor enchants the entire audience as he grasps the atmosphere and the mood of the day.

*sokushin* 即心: he enchants the minds of the audience.

*sokumoku* 即日: he enchants the senses of the audience.

<sup>20</sup> *Goi*, in zs p. 280. Zeami refers to this passage from *Shijing* 詩經, also in *Goongyoku* 五音曲 and *Ongyoku Kowadashi Kuden* 音曲声出口伝, in zs pp. 339 & 137.

<sup>21</sup> 'Therefore, correctly to set forth the successes and failures [of government], to move

Heaven and Earth, and to excite Beings to action, there is no readier instrument than poetry.'

James Legge, tr., *The Chinese Classics*, 4, p. 34.

<sup>22</sup> Zeami's interpretation of this passage is unique. Modern Buddhologists understand by this passage the negation of the uniqueness of the individual (*rūpam sūnyatā*) and the simultaneous affirmation of the uniqueness of the individual (*sūnyatā eva rūpam*).

Takasaki Jikidō 高崎直道, *Bukkyō Nyūmon* 仏教入門, Tokyo U.P., 1986, p. 178.

*Koma tomete*  
*sode uchiharau*  
*kage mo nashi*  
*sano no watari no*  
*yuki no yūgure*

There is no shelter  
 To rest my horse  
 And brush off my sleeves;  
 Snowy twilight falling  
 As I cross the Sano plains.<sup>23</sup>

Zeami observes that the secret of this poem's success is due to the absence of any contrived technique or unusual word; in the art of *noh*, too, the same principle is at work.

The art of a truly master actor seems to have this sort of inexpressible, wondrous quality. As the Tendai master Myōraku says, 'Where there is no room for words, where things are mysterious, and where all mental activities cease—this is the realm of the inexpressible [*myō* 妙],' so the actor manifests this state [of art through his acting]. When the expert arrives at this stage [of inexpressible art], there remains, just as in Teika's poem *Koma tomete*, no trace of artificiality in his acting, nor does he strive after artistic refinement. He moves feelings beyond [ordinary] feelings.<sup>24</sup> If this [artless art] amounts to augmenting family fame, such an actor is truly the master of the inexpressible art of *noh*.<sup>25</sup>

The paradoxical expression, *mukan no kan*, literally, 'feeling of no-feeling', points to the inspiration of deep feeling beyond ordinary feelings. This 'feeling beyond feelings' that responds to artless art is perceived by the audience's *riken no ken*, which sees the expression of art beyond conscious expression. In the same spirit, Zeami ranks the actor's completely natural acting as the highest art of *noh*. Not only does the discerning audience consider the moment of no-acting 'the most enjoyable',<sup>26</sup> but 'no-action is the innermost secret of *noh* acting.'<sup>27</sup> In the same fashion, Motomasa 元雅, Zeami's son, taught that it is best 'not to act what is not necessary.'<sup>28</sup> Indeed, 'excess is deficiency.'<sup>29</sup> *Riken no ken* discerns and appreciates this economy of acting, the most natural of art, which betokens the intuition of '*sūnyatā* is *rūpam*.'

<sup>23</sup> *Shinkokinshū* 新古今集, 6:671.

The poem is also translated in Robert H. Brower & Earl Miner, *Japanese Court Poetry*, Stanford U.P., 1961, p. 306.

<sup>24</sup> *Mukan no kan* 無感の感, which appeals to *riken no ken*, or the discerning mind of the audience.

<sup>25</sup> *Yūgaku Shūdō Fūken*, in *ZS*, p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> *senu tokoro ga omoshiroki* せぬ所が面白き. *Kakyō*, in *ZS*, p. 219. Translation from Tsunoda, 1, p. 285.

Zeami attributes the secret of successful acting to the actor's keen awareness (*naishin* 内心 or *anshin* 安心), which should not be visible to the audience, and which brings all acting into one single whole. Confer '*mannō o isshin ni tsunagu koto*' 万能縮一心事, in *Kakyō*,

in *ZS*, pp. 219-21.

<sup>27</sup> *senu o mote tedate to surunari* せぬを以て手立とするなり. *Kakyō*, in *ZS*, pp. 232-33.

What Zeami considers the highest art of acting in his short treatise *Kyakuraika* 却来花, 1433, and to which he elliptically alludes, is 'the art that one should perform only once in one's old age.' This may belong to the category of no-action, although the text is vague and difficult to interpret.

<sup>28</sup> *Kyakuraika*, in *ZS*, p. 360.

<sup>29</sup> *sugitaru wa oyobazaru ni onaji* 過ぎたるは及ばざるに同じ. *Shūgyokutokka*, in *ZS*, p. 326. Also see *Kyokuzuke Shidai* 曲付次第, in *ZS*, p. 247.

The passage quoted is from *Analecets*, Book 11, Chapter 15:3.



### 5. The direct experience of the ineffable

In *Kyūi*, ca 1428, Zeami discusses the nine grades or ranks (*i* 位) of noh plays and the skills of the noh actor,<sup>30</sup> and names the highest stage of art as *myōkafū*, ‘the art of the inexpressibly wondrous flower’. This ultimate state of art is perceived by the audience’s perception, *riken*. In highly Zen-like language, Zeami describes this rank of art:

‘In Silla, the sun is bright in the middle of the night.’

The realm beyond words and the activities of the mind is ‘inexpressible’ or ‘marvelous’ [*myō*]. The sunrise in the middle of the night—how is it possible? What do you make of it? The subtle art of the experienced noh actor is beyond all praise. His art moves no-mind [*mushin no kan* 無心の感], that is, [the audience’s] *riken* [aesthetic perception] of the art of ‘rankless rank’ [*mui no ifū* 無位の位風], and it is indeed the inexpressible, wondrous flower.<sup>31</sup>

By *mushin no kan*, literally, ‘feeling of no-mind’, Zeami points to the aesthetic experience that moves ‘no-mind’, the mind beyond the ordinary mind. The inexpressible quality of the actor’s art appeals to the audience’s *riken*, the perception that belongs to the realm where ‘all the activities of the mind cease.’ No-mind, that is, the primordial mind free of conceptualization and images, receives and perceives this ineffable grade of art.

### 6. The infinitely deep mind

In *Rikugi*, 1428, Zeami attempts to see how the nine ranks of the art of noh may correspond to the six poetic categories: *fū* 風, *fu* 賦, *hi* 比, *kyō* 興, *ga* 雅, and *shō* 頌.<sup>32</sup> He notes the correspondence between the second poetic category, *fu*, defined in *Kokinwakashū* as ‘poems that weave together multiple images,’

<sup>30</sup> The nine ranks are: (1) *myōkafū* 妙花風; (2) *chōshinkafū* 籠深花風; (3) *kankafū* 閑花風; (4) *shōkafū* 正花風; (5) *kōshōfū* 広精風; (6) *senmonfū* 浅文風; (7) *gōsaifū* 強細風; (8) *gōsofū* 強麁風; and (9) *soenfū* 鹿鉛風. See nn. 32 & 34, below.

<sup>31</sup> *Kyūi*, in ZS, p. 288.

<sup>32</sup> *Rikugi*, in ZS, pp. 297-300. These categories were originally taken from Chinese poetry criticism and are discussed in the preface of *Kokinwakashū*.

*Fū*, the wind, according to Zeami’s interpretation, is that which renders the formless visible, consisting in the art of metaphor or allusion. Zeami assigns the highest of the nine ranks, *myōkafū*, to this category. *Fu* stands for the poetic form that weaves together several images into one poem. *Hi* stands on the comparison of two images, and to this corresponds the third rank, *kankafū*, as *kan* 閑,

‘gentle beauty’, and *ka* 花, ‘alluring beauty’, are both the same thing, writes Zeami.

*Kyō* is ‘to judge superiority and inferiority between two things’, and to this corresponds the fourth rank, *shōkafū*, the art of mastery of certain repertoires, as mastery of certain plays implies non-mastery of others. The category of *ga*—‘things in correct order’—corresponds to the fifth rank, *kōshōfū*, for the wide range (*kō* 広) and detailed (*shō* 精) art is ‘correct and orderly’.

*Shō*, the poem of dedicatory nature or praises of gods, corresponds to the seventh rank, *gōsaifū*, for it denotes both strong (*gō* 強) and delicate (*sai* 細), wherein the actor follows his will—this is nothing but celebratory.

For a possible connotation of ‘*mui*’, rankless, see n. 37, below.

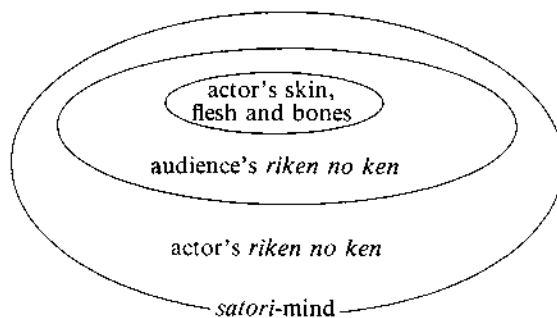
and the second highest of the nine ranks of the art of noh, *chōshinkafū*, ‘the art of the deeply beautiful flower’.

*Chōshinkafū* designates a graceful, beautiful [*chō*] appearance. ‘Deep’ [*shin*] signifies *riken no ken* [the aesthetic mind]. ‘Flower’ [*ka*] signifies that a beautiful appearance is manifested and is perceived by the audience. The art of *chōshinkafū* has various layers of meaning, and corresponds to the poetic category of *fu*.<sup>33</sup>

*Riken no ken* here designates the aesthetic mind in general, the mind of the audience and of the actor, which recognizes beautiful appearances; rich, multifarious images dwell in this infinitely ‘deep’ (*shin*) mind. In *Kyūi*, Zeami comments that this second highest rank of art is ‘deep’ rather than ‘lofty’, because ‘to height there is limit, but to depth there is none.’<sup>34</sup> He attributes infinite depth and inexhaustibility to *riken no ken*.

### Analysis

As has been shown in the above discussion, the concept of *riken no ken* has distinct meanings: the audience’s faculty of aesthetic perception (in *Shikadō*, *Goi*, *Yūgaku Shūdō Fūken*, and *Kyūi*), the actor’s awareness that encompasses this *riken no ken* (in *Kakyō*), and the aesthetic mind in general (in *Rikugi*). A closer study of these meanings reveals that there are two different conceptual models in operation. The expositions of *riken no ken* in *Shikadō* and *Kakyō* form one model, which deals with the reality of the mutually embracing nature of consciousness. The actor’s *riken no ken* embraces that of the audience, which discerns the actor’s innate talent, the intensity of his training, and the quality of his achievement.



Model 1

<sup>33</sup> *Rikugi*, in *ZS*, p. 298.

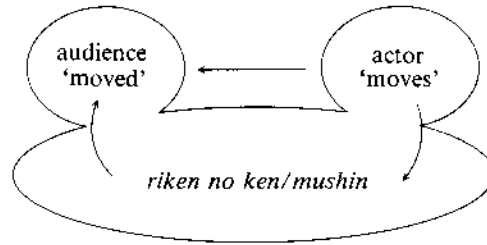
<sup>34</sup> In *Kyūi*, in *ZS*, p. 288, the second rank is described as:

‘*Chōshinkafū*, “the art of deeply beautiful flower”—“All one thousand mountain peaks

are covered by snow, but why not one peak?”

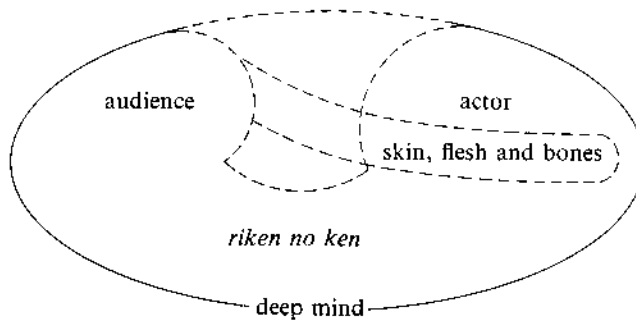
An ancient said, “Because Mt Fuji is high, the snow does not disappear.” Criticizing this, a Chinese said, “Because Mt Fuji is deep, the snow does not disappear.” What is extremely

The second conceptual model of *riken no ken* is found at the basis of the expositions in *Goi*, *Yūgaku Shūdō Fūken*, and *Kyūi*. This model deals with the nature of the audience's *riken no ken*, or aesthetic perception, which spontaneously responds to aesthetic sensation on the one hand and consciously recognizes this sensation on the other. While the actor's task is to move the audience's *riken no ken*, the audience enjoys the sensation of delight by means of its own *riken no ken*.



Model 2

*Riken no ken* as treated in *Rikugi*—the deep mind that underlies aesthetic expressions and impressions—brings these two models together, uniting them as two aspects of the mind itself.



These two models can be further clarified according to the Zen doctrine of the nature of the mind, namely, (1) the *satori*-mind, possessed by only those people who have had the *satori* experience, and (2) *mushin*, or 'no-mind', the pure mind free of conceptualization and images (which is universally shared by all, but consciously apprehended by only those who have had the *satori* experience). The first property (Model 1) of *riken no ken* deals with the acquisition of the *satori*-mind, the second (Model 2) with the nature and function of *mushin*.

high is deep. To height, there is limit; to depth, there is none, it is unfathomable. Thus the profound imagery of one thousand peaks

but one covered with snow corresponds to this rank of art, *chōshinkafū*.'

*Riken no ken* as the *satori*-mind

Attainment of *satori* is the initial goal of Zen practice. Clear apprehension of the radical interpenetration and oneness of subject and object, or the self and the world, marks the attainment of *satori*, 'the acquisition of a new point of view for looking into the essence of things.'<sup>35</sup> This acquisition involves a radical change in a person's viewpoint, affecting both the intellectual/cognitive and existential/emotive dimensions of his or her mode of being.

Acquisition of *riken no ken* also involves the same change in the actor's mode of being. *Riken no ken* lies beyond the narrowly defined subjective way of seeing (*gaken*); it embraces both subjective and objective standpoints, and realizes that, at the immediate moment of aesthetic experience, there is no distance between actor and audience. For an actor to achieve this stage, *riken no ken*, is for him to attain the *satori* mind. His acquisition of *riken no ken* transforms his art, just as the acquisition of *satori* transforms a person's being. The 'enlightened' spectators equally appreciate the actor's art with their *satori*-mind. *Riken no ken* is nothing but the aesthetic *satori*-mind exercised in the theatrical art, applied both to performance and appreciation of performance. Inasmuch as the performance and appreciation of *noh* are based on *riken no ken*, they are based on the aesthetic *satori*-mind.<sup>36</sup>

In *Shūgyokutokka* 捨玉得花, Zeami compares the actor capable of the ultimate art of *myōkafū* to the authentic Zen person—what Zen Master Rinzai called 'the true person of no fixed rank',<sup>37</sup> a free person unattached to any stationary 'abode' (*mujū* 無住). Just as an enlightened Zen-person dwells on no fixed point but manifests his or her dynamic subjectivity, so the *noh* actor of this caliber manifest himself as the authentic 'doer', the *shite* 為手, or the main actor in *noh* terminology.

Zeami describes such an actor as being of 'free and secure rank' (*yasuki kurai* 安き位), an actor who has thoroughly assimilated his learning and technique into his body as a physical competence and exercises total control over his art in such a way that he is no longer bound by it.<sup>38</sup> He is totally beyond the

<sup>35</sup> D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, Grove, New York, 1964, p. 88. Suzuki explains *satori* as the 'acquiring of a new viewpoint', an 'unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of the dualistic mind.'

<sup>36</sup> D. T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, Princeton U.P., 1959, 1973, pp. 219-20. Suzuki identifies the creative moment experienced by the artist with *satori*: 'This supreme moment in the life of an artist, when expressed in Zen terms, is the experience of *satori*. To experience *satori* is to become conscious of the Unconscious (*mushin*, no-mind), psychologically speaking. Art has always something of the Unconscious about it.'

Also, 'The [haiku] poet's *satori* is an artistic one, so to speak, while the Zen-man's grows out of a metaphysical background.' Ibid, p. 226. What Suzuki calls 'unconscious' is the 'pre-self-conscious' phase of the mind.

<sup>37</sup> *mui no shinjin* 無位の真人. *Rinzairoku* 臨濟錄, 'Jōdō' 上章, 3: 'There is the real self in your physical body. It freely comes in and goes out through the senses. Those who have not yet apprehended this fact, look! look!'

Asahina Sōgen 朝比奈宗源, tr., *Rinzairoku*, Iwanami, 1935, 1984, p. 28.

<sup>38</sup> Shigenori Nagatomo, 'Zeami's Conception of Freedom', in *Philosophy East and West*, 31:4 (October 1981), pp. 401-16.

mental image that an actor ordinarily intends to communicate to the audience (*ikei* 意景) and the idea of how to perform it (*taisō* 態相). Liberated even from his learning and knowledge, he moves freely. But it must be remembered, Zeami warns, that the actor arrives at this stage only after a long period of systematic and diligent practice. Anyone attaining this rank is 'like the gold in the sand, the lotus flower in the mud'. Whatever role he performs, he is not tinged by his environment, for his acting is his being itself. Zeami calls such a state 'the genuinely empty marvelous flower' (*honmumyōka* 本無妙花).<sup>39</sup>

Just as the experience of *satori* is not the end of Zen practice but only the beginning of true Zen life, so in the art of noh 'once a person becomes thoroughly enlightened, he realizes that the present reality is no different from that of pre-enlightenment.'<sup>40</sup> Once he has securely established and perfected the highest stage of the art, the actor moves on to the lower stages of art if he is to become a truly well-rounded actor (as in *Kyūi*). This theme of 'going beyond perfection', or the idea of *kyakurai* 却来, 'returning to the starting point after perfecting the ultimate stage,' explains, for instance, the art of *ran'i* 蘭位, a 'free rank' or 'free state', wherein the actor intentionally blends the imperfect into highly polished art, thereby effecting a new, unexpected sense of delight.<sup>41</sup> Zeami describes the actor who can freely move up and down the nine stages of the art of noh as a man of 'wide awareness' (*kōgaku* 広覚); similarly the spectators who can appreciate varieties of 'flowers' and not merely the cherry blossoms are the superior spectators who have 'expansive vision' (*kōdai no manako* 広大の眼).<sup>42</sup> The encompassing awareness and expansive vision are precisely the nature of *riken no ken*, the aesthetic *satori*-mind, which allows the actor to move beyond perfection and to be free even from perfection itself, and which allows the audience to appreciate this art of complete naturalness.

### *Riken no ken as mushin*

According to the Zen doctrine of *mushin*, or 'no-mind', the original state of the mind is pure, devoid of any self-reflection, and clear like a mirror.<sup>43</sup> Zeami's words, *mukan no kan* (in *Yūgaku Shūdō Fūken*) and *mushin no kan* (in *Kakyō* and *Kyūi*), are based on this doctrine of 'no-mind'. *Mushin* has two interrelated meanings in Zeami's writings: (1) the pre-reflexive state of the mind that spontaneously responds to artistic input, and (2) the enlightened mind (*satori*-mind) that is aware of the reality of 'no-mind'.

*Riken no ken* as 'no-mind', or the pre-self-conscious mind, is the seat of aesthetic delight: in *Kakyō* and *Shūgyokutokka*, Zeami observes that the experience of delight perceived by no-mind precedes the rise of reflexive self-consciousness. He refers to *The Book of Changes*, or *Yijing* 易經, wherein

<sup>39</sup> *Shūgyokutokka*, in ZS, p. 313.

<sup>40</sup> *satori satorite wa migo ni onaji* 悟々同未悟. *Shūgyokutokka*, in ZS, p. 314. See also *Goongyoku*, in ZS, p. 333.

<sup>41</sup> *Shikadō*, in ZS, pp. 144-46.

<sup>42</sup> *Shūgyokutokka*, in ZS, p. 309.

<sup>43</sup> D. T. Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No Mind*, Samuel Weiser, New York, 1977, p. 23.

the word 'to feel' or 'to move', *kan* (感, Ch. *gan*), is written without the heart component underneath as *kan* (咸, Ch. *xian*), for 'there is no [self-conscious] mind when the real *kan* [inspiration] overtakes one.'<sup>44</sup> In *Shūgyokutokka*, Zeami calls the mind of the present moment when it perceives *noh* as delightful *sokushin* 即心, the 'immediate mind'. 'Sokushin is *mushin no kan*, no-mind that is moved.'<sup>45</sup> At the very moment (*soku*) when the mind (*shin*) is moved, the mind is empty (*mushin*) of itself, devoid of any thought. Zeami finds a psychological insight equivalent to this aesthetic experience in the mythical story of Amaterasu emerging from the rock cavern. The audience's spontaneous delight is like the light that suddenly pierced through the total darkness as the Sun Goddess came out of the Heavenly Cave and returned into the world.<sup>46</sup> The mind comes to recognize its delight only in its subsequent phase, in its reflexive state.

As far as Zeami is concerned, this empty-mind (*mushin*) is the ultimate 'audience'. As for the actor, it is the highest honor to attain this art (or rather, art beyond art) of *mushin no kan*, for it captivates the spectators by directly touching their minds. Zeami teaches that practice makes a good *shite*; if such an actor grasps with his mind (*kokoro*) what makes *noh* interesting (*hana*), he becomes a master *shite* who can delight the audience. If he can further attain *mushin no kan*, namely, art that purely captures the audience who can but be moved with 'Ah!' beyond thought and beyond the idea of 'interesting', he wins the fame of the whole world.<sup>47</sup> The experience of *mukan no kan* or *mushin no kan* is why Zeami wrote 'noh plays that have their roots in the mind' (*shin yori idekuru nō* 心より出で来る能), which are 'the plays of no-mind' (*mushin no nō* 無心の能) or 'the plays beyond expression and no-expression' (*mumon no nō* 無文の能). These 'icy plays' (*hietaru kyoku* 冷えたる曲) that

<sup>44</sup> *Kakyō*, in *ZS*, pp. 211-12, and *Shūgyokutokka*, in *ZS*, p. 311.

According to Richard Wilhelm, tr., *The I Ching, or Book of Changes*, Princeton U.P., 1950, 1967, pp. 122-25, *kan* 咸, Ch. *xian*, is the thirty-first hexagram, 'Influence (Wooing)'. The 'Commentary on the Decision' reads, 'Heaven and earth stimulate each other, and all things take shape and come into being. The holy man stimulates the hearts of men, and the world attains peace and rest. If we contemplate the out-going stimulating influences, we can know the nature of heaven and earth and all beings,' (p. 541).

The character *xian* 咸 differs from the character *gan* 感, comments Wilhelm, 'in that the heart is not a constituent part of it, as it is of the latter. Hence it represents an influence that is unconscious and involuntary, not one that is conscious and willed. It is a matter of objective relationships of a general kind, not

those of a subjective, individual character,' (p. 541).

<sup>45</sup> *Shūgyokutokka*, in *ZS*, p. 311.

This 'immediate mind' is free in that it is unattached to any object. This emphasis on the momentariness, the radical present of the moment, is a Zen insight *par excellence*.

<sup>46</sup> *Shūgyokutokka*, in *ZS*, p. 311.

<sup>47</sup> *Kakyō*, in *ZS*, pp. 211-12; see also *Shūgyokutokka*, in *ZS*, pp. 310-12, for a 'trinity' of *myō*, inexpressive marvel beyond all the workings of the mind; *ka*, the 'flower', or the conscious apprehension of *myō*; and *omoshiroki*, the recognition of the conscious apprehension of the inexpressible as 'interesting'.

Zeami compares *myō* to the darkness prior to the emergence of the Sun Goddess, the brightness after her emergence to the flower, and the recognition of the flower as a certain form as 'interesting'.

appeal to the mind are contrasted with the plays that appeal to the visual or auditory faculties. They are not written to 'divert' the audience in the usual fashion and may well not win the appreciation of the uncultivated eye, says Zeami, but they can touch and move the spectators who see noh with their *riken no ken*, with their aesthetic mind, or 'no-mind'.<sup>48</sup>

### Conclusion

Zeami's insight into *riken no ken* is the insight into the nature of aesthetic sensation, perception, and appreciation. *Riken no ken* is rooted in the reality of the primordial mind, *mushin*, the idea so cherished by Zen, and it is enacted by the *satori*-mind. Sustaining the dynamic interaction and interpenetration of the audience and the actor, *riken no ken* is ultimately the *satori*-mind adopted and enacted in the art of noh. As it is the mutually embracing awareness of both actor and audience, *riken no ken* is essentially the integrating principle that brings together the standpoints of subject (*shite*) and object (*kensho* 見所). Any possible distance between the audience (the viewer, that which presents the objective viewpoint to the actor) and the actor (the doer, the subject) is overcome by *riken no ken*. In this way the actor and the audience together form a single theatrical experience. It is clear that the concept of *riken no ken* touches the aesthetic-epistemological core of the world of noh, and that the entire theatre hinges on this *riken no ken*, which is like a 'socket'.<sup>49</sup> It is also by virtue of *riken no ken*, which draws its food from the awareness of 'emptiness is form' (*sūnyatā eva rūpaṃ*), that we are able to appreciate in the manifestation (*nāma rūpa*) the form of the formless, the color of the colorless.<sup>50</sup>

Zeami gives this advice on how to critique noh:

Forget whether the performance is good or bad, and look at the acting [*nō*]. Forget the acting, and look at the actor [*shite*]. Forget the actor, and look at the [actor's] mind [or his intention]. Forget the mind [both of the actor and your own], and you will understand noh.<sup>51</sup>

As we reflect on Zeami's insight expressed by his concept of *riken no ken*, his words help us to understand and appreciate the profound world of noh.

<sup>48</sup> *Kakyō*, in *ZS*, p. 227. On the interpretation of *mumon*, 'beyond expression and non-expression', see Kōsai, p. 23. Konishi, p. 228, n. 2, notes that *hie* 冷え was an important aesthetic concept cherished by the *renga* poet Shinkei 心敬, as well as by a *dengaku* performer, Zōami 増阿弥. *Hie* suggests supremely refined beauty—something of the supernatural beauty of the heavenly maiden, for instance, and this is symbolized by the white plum blossom.

<sup>49</sup> See *Zhuangzi* 莊子, ch. 2.3. Burton Wat-

son, tr., *Chuang Tzu, Basic Writings*, Columbia U.P., 1964, p. 35, has the imagery of hinge and socket as the metaphor of inexhaustibly dynamic *Dao*.

<sup>50</sup> *Kyokuzuke Shidai*, in *ZS*, p. 240. Zeami quotes from *The Book of Rites* 礼記: *Koenakute kiki, ironakute miru* 声無くて聴き、色無くて見る, 'One hears the voiceless, one sees the colorless', in reference to how the student learns the secret of enunciation and singing—only intuitively and from a master.

<sup>51</sup> *Kakyō*, in *ZS*, p. 228.

‘To human life there is a limit, but to noh there is none,’ wrote Zeami.<sup>52</sup> And this is due in no small part to *riken no ken*, the epistemological foundation, which is infinitely deep, always fresh, and ever responsive to aesthetic delight, to things beautiful and the beyond.

<sup>52</sup> *Inochi ni wa owari ari, nō ni wa hate* | るべからず. *Kakyō*, in ZS, p. 236.  
*arubekarazu.* 命には終はりあり, 能には果てあ |