

Lecture 7

Bushido

Review of the readings (Yamaga Soko and Hagakure): what were the differences between them?

- Hagakure stressed courage: all other qualities stem from having courage
- Also stresses death, of course (detachment from problems in life, acceptance of death as inevitable)

Yamaga:

- stressed that samurai no longer fought in wars
- samurai's duty is to spend his time living "properly" (instead of dying honorably)
- ethics, but doesn't really mention Confucianism

Note: following one's lord into death through seppuku was outlawed.

Confucianism:

- ideal social order: moral conduct of rulers, proper ritual conduct, observance of status norms. Very minute things were important, such as "farmers shouldn't wear silk."
- filial piety is source of morality; most fundamental of all social relations.
- intellectual cultivation: studying texts and developing oneself
- benevolence: if a ruler is benevolent, then it will follow down the status chain

More an ethical code than a religious one. Sets proper behavioral context for the ruling class, mostly.

Noh (there were aspects of Noh in Throne of Blood):

- oldest professional theater in the world
- based on sparse props and semi-elaborate costumes; mask is the distinctive feature
- based on very determined movements
- the character is determined by the mask
- overall, there is a very firm structure through which the story is told

Noh story:

- contemporary Noh: realistic stories -- vs. phantasmal Noh: relationship between natural and supernatural worlds.
- Always only two characters: Shite (main) and Waki (supporting). Waki is not masked.
- Story always begins with Waki; Shite is introduced later; tells the Waki a story and leaves, then the Waki sleeps and dreams of the Shite (and now the waki knows the shite is a ghost) and his terrible story is told, and waki learns why shite cannot reach Buddhist paradise. Turns out shite has to tell a priest his story in order to redeem himself. Then the tale will end either with a dance of redemption, or the shite's dance of regret/anguish that he can't be redeemed.

[viewed clips of Noh theater from website:

<http://www2.ntj.jac.go.jp/unesco/noh/en/movie.html>]

[Entrance of the Shite.]

[A Shite dance.]

Images of Noh masks:

- emaciated woman mask – looks similar to Asaji’s makeup in Throne of Blood (usually depicts older women and ghosts of wives)
- mountain demon mask
- heita: typical warrior - mustache, bushy eyebrows
- shakumi: a young woman, once beautiful, who is about to go mad
- fukai: distraught mother

[clips from Throne of Blood]

The piles of bones that appear in the movie come from a Noh play called “The Black Pile”, in which some traveling monks encounter a creepy old woman. In their dream after her story, they learn that she lives off of eating other human beings. In the dream, they defeat the woman.

Washizu’s death scene is like the Shite’s ending dance in Noh (in this case, one of agony).

Why does Kurosawa use Noh?

How is this film different from Macbeth (upon which it’s based)?

For next Thurs: watch 47 Ronin (do readings first to get idea of the story)