

## 吉田玉男師の芸風

文楽の人形遣いでは、人形の背中の帯の下の穴から左手を入れて首（かしら）を持ち、右手で人形の右手を動かす「主遣い」、人形の左手を動かす「左遣い」、足を動かす「足遣い」の3人で一体を操る。そのために複雑な動きや心理描写が可能となり、文楽は世界に類例のない情感豊かな人形劇となっている。

玉男師の芸は、師の真摯な生き方と長年の修業と鍛錬によって培われたものである。玉男師は、1933年、14歳で、吉田玉次郎に入門して、「玉男」と名乗った。文楽の修業では、介錯という雑用時代に浄瑠璃を聞いて作品の内容を覚え、足遣いでは主遣いの指示で人形それぞれが持つ役の性格を知り、長い年月をかけて人形遣いの技術を体得していくのである。しかし、その修業は長く厳しいものである。

玉男師は「最初の3年の辛抱が大事、3年辛抱が出来れば10年続く。10年続けば30年続く」と言っている。しかし、あまりの辛さに耐え切れず、2度退座している。それでも、この仕事を続けたのは「生来喋るのが苦手で、人形遣いなら喋る必要はない」、という理由と「次第に人形がいとおしくなってきたからだ」という理由だと語っている。若い時は人が叱られているのをわざと聞きに行ったという。その叱責を聞いて、自分の反省点にするのである。また人より早く楽屋入りして、足を吊るして一人稽古したという。それを見て先輩が、こう遣うのだと教えてくれるのを待ったのである。そんな中、私淑していた人形遣いの名人吉田栄三（えいざ）に学ぶ機会を得て、やっと芸の面白さがわかりかけてきた時、兵役に取られた。1939年、21歳であった。人形遣いとして最も重要な時期を通算5年5ヶ月兵役に取られたのは痛手であったが、玉助の左遣いになって修業を再開し、やがて主遣いの役も回ってくるようになった。

吉田玉男師は、「立役」と呼ぶ男役で最も知られている。当たり役のうち豪快な武士や歴史人物は多いが、真骨頂は何とんでも『曾根崎心中』の醤油屋の若い手代「徳兵衛」役である。近松の世話物の第一作である『曾根崎心中』は、文学的には有名だが、初演、再演以降2世紀半近く上演が絶えていた。その上、舞台の大きさや音楽性に近松時代の人形浄瑠璃と大きな違いがあり、また人形の「振り」が定められていなかったため、様々な面に改訂を加えないと上演できなかった。玉男師の心理的な解釈による工夫の一つに、この『曾根崎心中』の徳兵衛と遊女お初との天満屋の段がある。近松の脚本では、縁側に座るお初が徳兵衛に死の覚悟を足で問いかけたところ、縁側の下に潜んだ徳兵衛が「足首取て咽笛撫で、自害をするとぞ知らせける」という文章がある。それまでには、文楽では女形の人形には足がなく、素足を見せるなどという例はまずなかった。男がこのように女の着物の裾に縋り付いて心中を誓う場面では、着物の左右の裾を巧みに動かして、さも足があるように見せるのが常であった。しかし、1955年『曾根崎心中』の文楽復活の記念すべき上演

に際して、この一場面だけ、禁断の「白い足」が初めて登場した。お初の素足で喉を撫でる徳兵衛の型どころは、エロチシズムに満ちるとともに、当時の初公演を見たアメリカ人文学者ドナルド・キーン氏によれば、「ゾツ」とする瞬間であった。そのアイデアを提案したのが当時36歳の若き日の玉男師であった。それから、47年を経た2002年には、玉男師は徳兵衛の人形を遣って、1111回の公演という大記録を打ち立てた。

玉男師は、「型や振りを連綿と受け継ぎ、それをまた伝えていくのが文楽や歌舞伎の伝統の世界です。とはいうものの、その型や振りを子細に検討していくと、どうもこじつけのようだったり、あるいはただ、その方がやりやすいからというご都合主義だったりすることがなくもない。それを正し、自分なりの工夫を付け加えていくのも、伝統に生きる者のつとめではないか、と考えています」と話す。そしてまた、「3百年余の歴史を持つ文楽。たくさんの先輩方の受け継いでこられた伝統を守ることも大切ですが、今の時代に生きる人々に分かりやすい演目の開拓や、見せ方も必要やと思うんです。昔は主役本位の舞台が多く端役の描き方が雑いうか…そういうところは変えました。文楽は人間の性根を表現するわけですから、登場人物の心の葛藤がちゃんと描かれないと心は伝わらない。技術だけじゃなく心なんですよ。人間の性根を知るために、戦地にも浄瑠璃全集を送ってもらって読み込んだものです。今でも毎日が勉強。舞台を務めて、お客さんに教えていただくこともある。人形遣いに終点、完成はありません」と話している。



『曾根崎心中』天神森の段〔写真提供:国立文楽劇場〕

*Sonezaki shinjū* (Love suicides at Sonezaki), "The woods of the Sonezaki Tenjin Shrine" scene. [Photo courtesy of the National Bunraku Theater]

# The Art of Tamao Yoshida

It takes three puppeteers to operate one full-sized Bunraku puppet. The head puppeteer (*omozukai*) uses his left hand to support the torso of the puppet and operate its head, and his right hand to move the puppet's right arm; the first assistant (*hidarizukai*) operates the puppet's left arm; and the second assistant (*ashizukai*) operates the puppet's feet. Working together, the three puppeteers can make the puppet move in complex ways and depict subtle psychological states, making Bunraku the most emotionally charged form of puppet theater in the world.

Tamao Yoshida's art is the fruit of an earnest lifestyle and many years of training and refinement. In 1933, at the age of 14, he became an apprentice to the Bunraku master Tamajirō Yoshida and assumed the stage name Tamao. A Bunraku apprenticeship starts with a period of menial labor and errand-running, during which students are expected to learn the content of *jōruri* plays through repeated hearing of the narratives. From this they progress to the status of second assistant puppeteer and receive instruction from the head puppeteer on the character of each of the roles. Over the course of many years of difficult training, apprentices gradually acquire the skills needed to operate the puppets.

"The first three years require great perseverance," comments Tamao. "If you can make it through those three years, you can make it through ten. And if you can make it through ten years, you can make it through thirty." At two different times in his life, he himself found he couldn't stand the hardship and left the troupe. Still, he always came back. "I'm not much of a talker by nature," he says, explaining his motives. "When you operate a puppet, there's no need to talk. Also, I gradually grew very fond of the puppets." During his younger years, he would listen in when others were being scolded and apply the admonitions to himself to improve his own work. He also liked to arrive at the theater earlier than anyone else, hang up the feet from a puppet, and practice puppeteering, hoping that his elders would notice and give him some pointers. Then, just as he got the chance to study with one of his heroes, the famous puppeteer Eiza Yoshida, and began to appreciate the true fascination of Bunraku, he was drafted. It was 1939, and he was 21 years old. It was a painful blow to have five-and-a-half years taken away at that critical juncture in his career, but after the war he took up again as the first assistant to Yoshida Tamasuke, and eventually began to perform as a head puppeteer.

Tamao is best known for his roles with male puppets, including powerful warriors and historical figures, however the role thought to best display his genuine talents is that of the young soy sauce shop employee Tokubei in *Sonezaki shinjū* (Love suicides at Sonezaki). Though considered to be Chikamatsu's greatest domestic play, this work had not been performed on stage for almost 250 years when it was revived in 1955, and it thus needed numerous modifications to bridge the differences in stage size and music between the Chikamatsu's time and today, as well as to compensate for the lack of defined gestures for the puppets. The Tenmaya scene between Tokubei

and his lover Ohatsu in particular evidences the kind of innovative interpretations Tamao brought to this play. Chikamatsu's script reads that when Ohatsu—seated on a veranda beneath which her lover is hiding—questions Tokubei's resolve with her foot, he “nods and, taking her ankle, passes it across his throat to let her know that he is bent on suicide.” However, in Bunraku, female puppets have no legs, as they would always be hidden under the folds of their kimonos. Showing bare feet was even more inconceivable. For a scene such as this, when a man clings to the hem of his lover's kimono and vows to commit double suicide with her, the traditional approach would have been to manipulate the folds the kimono to the right and left in such a way as to suggest legs and feet. But at the first performance of *Sonezaki shinjū* in 1955, an exception was made for this one scene, and the long-forbidden bare “white feet” were extended from Ohatsu's kimono, an extraordinarily erotic gesture that created, as noted scholar Donald Keene recalls, “a terrifying moment.” It was the 36-year-old Tamao who proposed this new treatment of the scene for the first revival performance of *Sonezaki shinjū*. Forty-seven years later, in 2002, Tamao performed the Tokubei role for the 1111th time, a prodigious record.

“The essence of a traditional art like Bunraku or Kabuki is to learn the forms and movements and pass them on to the following generations,” says Tamao. “But if you really look closely at the patterns, you discover many instances where the interpretation is strained, or where a certain method was adopted simply because it's convenient or easy to perform. I believe that part of being a traditional performer involves correcting things like that and devising your own approach. Bunraku has a history of more than 300 years. It's important to preserve the traditions that have been passed down by the many artists who have gone before us, but I also think it's necessary to devise creative performance methods and develop new plays that are easy for contemporary audiences to understand. In the past, the focus was on the main characters, and peripheral characters were not depicted with as much care. But I've changed that. Bunraku is supposed to express the essence of what it means to be human, and unless you show all of the complexity in the heart of the character, the spirit of the art will not be conveyed to the audience. It's not just about technique—it's about heart. To plumb the depths of the human heart, I had the entire repertory of plays sent to me on the battlefield during the war and read them with complete absorption. Even now I study every day. And through performance, I learn things from the audience, too. There's no end point, no completion to the art of puppetry.”