

# The Japanese Philosophy of Life and Death as Expressed through *Noh*

Hiroshi Tsunoi

## Abstract:

It is true that you can see some influence of Buddhism on Japanese *Noh* plays, but *Noh* is not performed for any religious purpose. There are many *Noh* plays which have no religious elements, Buddhist or otherwise. *Noh* plays should be considered to be a reflection of traditional Japanese culture rather than Buddhist teachings.

*Noh* plays present a traditional Japanese view: Life in this world is linked to another life in the past and to a life in a future world after death. However, the relationship among these three lives is not clearly described. Despite this, there are many *Noh* stories in which people console the souls of the dead, and the dead ask the living to pray for them. Some *Noh* plays tell us that those who have killed other people in this world will be most severely punished after death by being burned in flames. Other *Noh* plays depict people's wishes that they will be born again in this world as a better person.