

Noh Zegai 是界 / 善界 / 是我意

(“Zegai the Goblin”)

The great Goblin king of T’ang China, Zegai-bô, comes to Japan intent on stopping the spread of Buddhism and visits Tarô-bô, the goblin of Mt. Atago, to enlist his aid. They discuss the unfortunate fate of goblins to have to fight Buddhism even though they know that through the power of the mighty god Fudô Myôô, they will be destroyed. They decide to go to Mt. Hiei to observe Buddhism in Japan.

The Chief Priest of Mt. Hiei then appears amidst a violent storm and prays to Myôô to appear and destroy Zegai-bô. Myôô and other deities do appear and the crush the goblin king, making him swear that he will never return to Japan.

Author: Takeda Hôin Sadamori (1421-1508).

Scene: Atago-yama in Yamashiro Province, in the present Naritaki, Ukyô Ward, Kyoto; then, Mt. Hiei in Ômi Province, the present Ôtsu city, Shiga Prefecture.

Category: Fifth category ending (goblin) play, present time (genzai), noh in two acts, maibataraki (danced action) piece, with taiko stick drum.

Performance practice: Performed by all five schools. The Kanze school writes the name as 善界; the Kongô as 是我意

Characters (in order of appearance)

- Maejite (first half shite main actor): Zegai-bô, the goblin king, dressed as a yamabushi mountain priest.
- Tsure (accompanying shite actor): The goblin Tarô-bô also dressed as a yamabushi priest.
- Ai/Ai-kyôgen (interlude actors): A servant.
- Waki (secondary actor): The Chief Priest of Mt. Hiei.
- Wakizure (accompanying waki actor): Companion priests.
- Nochijite (second half shite): Zegai-bô, the goblin king. Wears a goblin (ôbeshimi “large clenched mouth”) mask.

Synopsis: scene by scene.

1. Shite entrance: The goblin king Zegai-bô enters to shidai music and sings of going to visit Japan. He introduces himself telling how he has had great success in gathering people to follow him in China. In Japan, however, Buddhism is very popular so he is now going there to see if he can obstruct its progress. He sings a travel song telling of the beauty of Japan and his arrival there, and his visit of Mt. Atago where he elicit help from the goblin Tarô-bô.
2. Tsure entrance, Shite/Tsure discussion: Zegai-bô visits Tarô-bô. The latter enters and invites Zegai-bô in. Zegai-bô again tells about his many successes in finding adherents in China and his plan to do the same in Japan even though it is a religious country and Buddhism is strong. Tarô-bô tells of nearby Mt. Hiei being the center of the Tendai Buddhism sect where he can find

out the situation of Buddhism here. They sing of the secret practices of Tendai and the chorus for Tarô-bô sings of guiding Zegai-bô to Mt. Hiei.

3. Shite’s emotion: The chorus for Zegai-bô sings of the five guardian deities of Buddhism and particularly of the god Fudô Myôô’s ability to burn away enemies of Buddhism, and his inner compassion as opposed to his outer ferocious mien. It is the unfortunate fate of goblins, meanwhile, forced in the web of transmigration, to oppose theses deities and no doubt be burned away. Thus it is that dream and reality are one and, though it would make sense to goblins to follow Buddhism, their sad and fleeing fate does not allow it. All they can do is waiting for Myôô’s sword to destroy them.
4. Shite exit: The chorus for Tarô-bô sings in exchange with Zegai-bô of going to Mt. Hiei and facing their fateful enemy Buddhism. They disappear into the clouds, mist and storm above distant Mt. Hiei. They depart to Raijô music.
5. Ai speech: A servant from Mt. Hiei enters to kyôgen raijô and tells how the Chief Priest of Mt. Hiei has been ordered to the capital to conduct prayers to defend against the activity of the goblin Zegai-bô. The servant tells again the background as to how Zegai-bô has come from China to obstruct the spread of Buddhism. The servant has been sent ahead by the chief priest, but already now a storm is brewing. He decides not to go on ahead and stops to warn people of this terrible danger.

Stage attendants bring on stage a framework carriage.

6. Waki/Wakizure entrance: The Chief Priest of Mt. Hiei enters along with several companion priests to issei music. They sing of leaving Mt. Hiei for the capital to conduct prayers. The chorus for theme describes the fierce storm winds, rain, and earthquakes which occur.
7. Nochijite entrance: Zegai-bô enters to strong yet slowly ôbeshi music and sings how the path of Buddhism is that of the devil, and people born into the world of greed will be sent to the streets of hell.
8. Shite’s danced action: The chorus describes the demons cries from out of the clouds and goes on to say that the Buddha and the devil are one, and one must only call out Myôô’s name for protection. Zegai-bô dances an iroe “color” dance [also called tachimawari “walk around”]. The chorus describes Myôô’s voice thundering from below. Zegai-bô dances a mai-bataraki action dance.
9. Conclusion: The chorus describes how Zegai-bô fights with Myôô and various other deities and is finally defeated by the power of Buddhism and is forced to swear that he will never bother Japan again. [Richard Emmert]