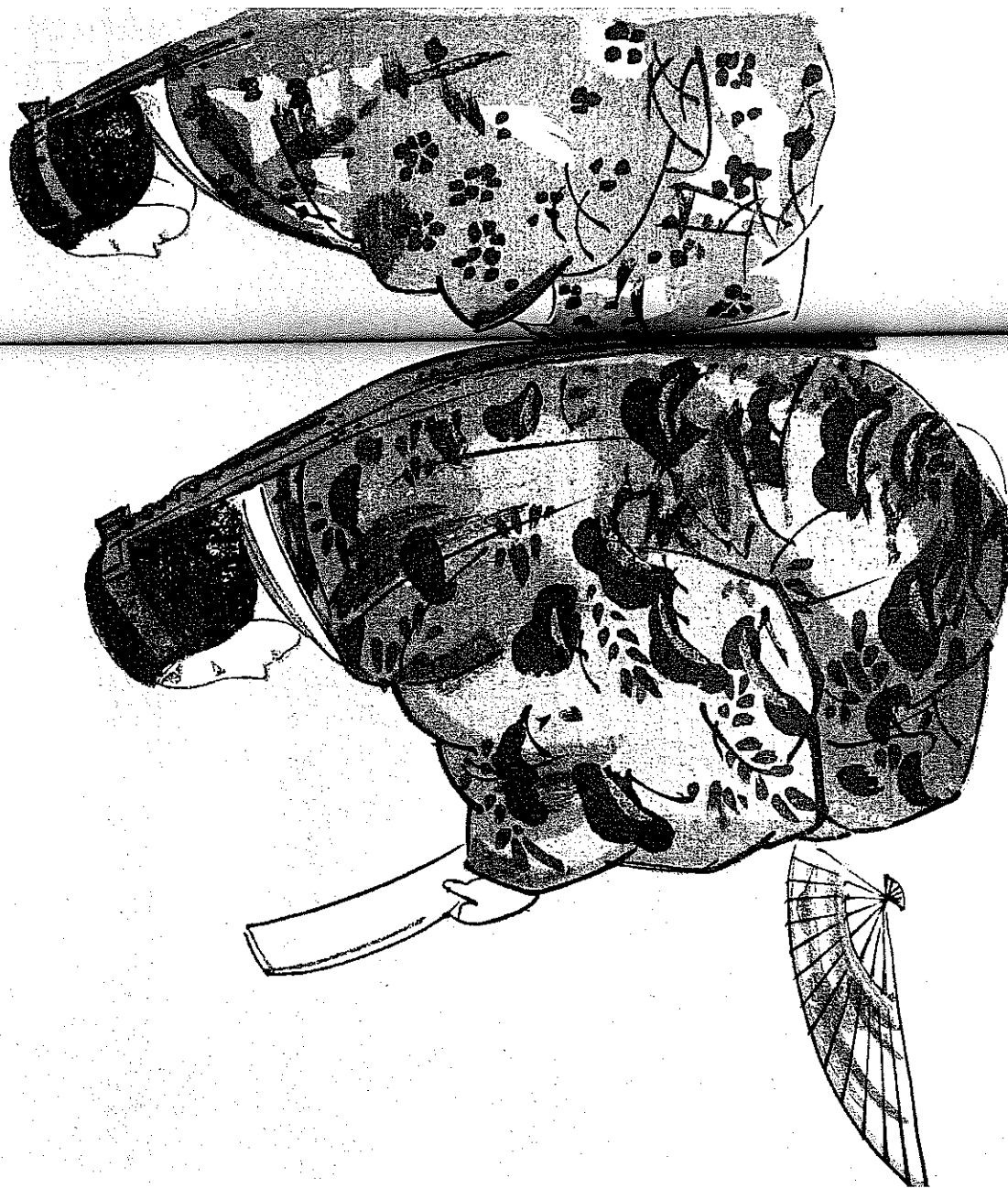


I

East Asian Drama

East Asian and European literary traditions developed on different trajectories. Greek literature began with epic poetry and drama, genres that came to enjoy the highest status in later European literatures. Epic poetry and drama played no role in the early literature of East Asia, where instead short lyrical poetry was prized as the supreme vessel for public opinion, moral education, and personal expression. In this environment, dramatic literature emerged late in China, Japan, and Korea, although theatrical rituals and entertainments had existed for a long time. In China, Northern variety plays (*zaju*) were recorded since the thirteenth century and Southern plays (*chuanqi*) matured into a literary genre in the sixteenth century. In Japan, Noh drama received its defining shape under the patronage of military leaders, the shoguns, in the fourteenth century, and kabuki and puppet theater emerged as popular drama for the new urban commoner class in the seventeenth century. Finally, Korean *p'ansori* narrative drama appeared in the eighteenth century as a form of popular theater in a society ruled by a strict Confucian moral code. These are only some of the many traditional performance genres of East



井 隆
Kōgyō

A late nineteenth-century woodblock print from Tsukioka Kōgyō's series "One Hundred Noh Pictures."

Asia, which also include ritual dances, oral storytelling, and regional theater forms.

Although Chinese, Japanese, and Korean dramatic traditions developed under different historical conditions and in different societies, they share a number of common features. First, they are all dance dramas, variously combining chant with music, singing, and dancing. Spoken drama, concert music, and ballet became separate genres in the West. They could be combined, like in opera, and therefore the local drama that developed in Beijing since the eighteenth century is often called "Peking Opera." However, unlike Western opera, where each work was authored by musical composers, Chinese "opera" relied on a fixed repertoire of tunes. The basic tunes could be performed in infinite variations, but they were still part of the same shared (and anonymous) repertoire, not an individual score. Second, East Asian drama, like the *Commedia dell'arte* in early modern Italy, relies on role-types such as the beautiful woman, the scoundrel, the fool, the demon, and so on. The types can easily be recognized by the masks live actors wear; their vivid, mask-like face paint; or, for puppetry, the puppet type. Third, East Asian drama has, at its most extreme, plays without authors. Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides wrote tragedies that bear their distinctive styles, and generations of European playwrights would later do the same. In contrast, the repertoire of Korean *p'ansori*, for example, consists today of only five anonymous pieces, all products of a longer process of oral transmission. They are reenacted again and again, with archetypal gravity. Other East Asian traditions, especially Chinese drama, developed a rich culture of dramatic authorship; even centuries after Chinese variety plays had disappeared

from the stage, new plays were still being written exclusively for reading (staging these plays would have required considerable adjustments). Fourth, because most East Asian theater is not merely spoken drama, but involves such different skills as dancing, chanting, singing, and playing of music, it often requires lengthy and arduous training. Zeami, Japan's most prominent Noh playwright, once suggested that a Noh actor should spend the first ten years of training—from about age seven to age seventeen—merely practicing the vocabulary of dance movements and voice articulations. Only after this training could he move on to actual acting. Consummate mastery and virtuosity acquired through lifelong practice is central to East Asian theater culture.

Since the twentieth century, traditional drama in East Asia has been facing great challenges. It competes with modernist spoken drama, which playwrights adopted under Western influence, often because they believed that the realistic acting of Western drama could be a better tool for social criticism and allowed them to put on stage themes of contemporary relevance. Also, the long apprenticeship and ultimate devotion required by traditional practice has little appeal to many young people. Because traditional East Asian theater depends largely on the transmission from master to disciple, its survival is endangered as the number of performers dwindles. The national governments of China, Japan, and Korea are therefore supporting traditional drama as a part of national cultural heritage. What started as popular entertainment centuries ago has now become a traditionalist icon of national pride.

While East Asian drama has thus faced challenges in China, Japan, and Korea, it has won new audiences in

the West. In particular, Chinese theater and Japanese Noh drama mesmerized twentieth-century writers such as the American poet Ezra Pound, who published English adaptations of Noh plays with the scholar Ernest Fenollosa; the Irish author William Butler Yeats, who wrote Noh-influenced plays; and the German dramatist Bertolt Brecht, who used Chinese and Japanese locales for some of his plays and adopted elements of Chinese and Japanese theater for his aesthetics of "estrangement." The highly stylized theater of East Asia offers an alternative to Western realism and therefore keeps inspiring theater makers throughout the world.

ZEAMI MOTOKIYO

ca. 1363–1443

Imagine a theater without sets and with virtually no props, with no interest in depicting character development or dramatic conflict, a music-drama at the hypnotic pace of solemn ritual. This is Noh, the oldest dramatic form of Japan and one of the world's oldest living professional theater traditions.

Zeami Motokiyo, arguably Noh's foremost practitioner and theorist, did as much as anyone to establish the traditions and aesthetics of this sophisticated art form, which fascinated modern dramatists in the West and which is practiced to this day.

THE BASICS OF NOH

The word *Noh* may be translated as "talent," "skill," or "accomplishment." Like many traditional Japanese arts, Noh is hereditary: actors and musicians learn from their parents or masters and undergo strenuous training from early childhood on. True mastery is said to come only with advanced age.

Noh is the most stylized of Japan's dramatic genres, which also include *kyōgen* ("wild words"), comical inter-

missions performed between Noh acts. Although Noh emerged in the fourteenth century, its basic elements of dance, music, and recitation have older roots. It adapted elements from Buddhist chanting, from the music and dances of the Japanese imperial court (which were imported from Korea and China and are still practiced today) and from "Monkey/comic music" (*sarugaku* or *sangaku*), variety entertainment that included acrobatics and mime. Out of these and other performance traditions Noh emerged, and the playwrights Kan'ami (1333–1384) and his son Zeami gave the genre its defining shape.

Noh plays contain a limited number of actors: the "leading actor" and the opposite, though not antagonistic "supporting actor," with their companions. There is also a chorus, stage attendants, and occasional child actors. Although women played an important role in the development of Japanese dramatic arts, professional actors are traditionally all male. The current repertoire of some 240 plays is divided into five groups, depending on their central protagonist:

plays about gods, warriors, women, and demons, and miscellaneous plays. Most plays extract particular moments from famous literary works. They explore strong, obsessive emotions—grief, despair, anguish, love, devotion. Although today some plays are written on contemporary themes—a Noh play on heart transplants premiered in 1991—traditionally, Noh plays are based on old stories and are studied with famous phrases from classical literature.

Noh is performed on an austere, undecorated stage of polished cypress wood, and consists of a main stage and a bridge, on which the actors enter the stage. Except for child actors and actors playing living adult characters, actors impersonating ghosts, gods, or demons wear masks. Because most masks have enigmatic expressions, they are open to various interpretations. The actors mostly move at an extremely slow pace, and their performance is accompanied by a flutist and three drummers playing a hip, shoulder, and stick drum. The musicians sit along the back of the stage under the lone pine tree painted on the wall, the single and unvarying decoration for all Noh plays.

Stylization is central to Noh. Noh is like a slowly moving tapestry of emotions framed into fixed performance patterns, and every move on stage is precisely choreographed. For example, the act of weeping is suggested by the actor's slow raising of his hand to eye height, followed by an equally poised lowering. It is the vocabulary and grammar of these stylized moves that Noh actors need to master through tireless training not unlike a Western musician practicing typical cadences or trill patterns. The fixity of form and gesture in Noh is enhanced by the fluidity of space, time, and narration: the absence of a set leaves spatial boundaries and distances unclear; the key

events belong to the murky realm of memories and dreams, where the boundaries between past and present merge; and narration is fluid because characters do not necessarily speak their own lines and thoughts. For example, the chorus does not comment on the action as in Greek plays, but can take the place of a narrator or recite the words or thoughts of a character. In turn, actors can sometimes function as character, opponent, and narrator at the same time, as in a famous scene from Zeami's play *Tada-no-ri*, where the protagonist at the crucial final moment plays both Tadanori and the warrior who kills him. The disjunction among actor, character, and voice gives the text an enthralling autonomy from the action on stage.

NOH PATRONAGE

Zeami was born to a father who was a gifted playwright and headed a *sarugaku* troupe. He attracted the attention of Ashikaga Yoshimitsu (1358–1408), the third shogun of the Muromachi military regime (1338–1573), when performing in his father's troupe as a beautiful boy actor. Although a later shogun shifted his patronage away from Zeami and even exiled him in 1435, Zeami's earlier favor with the shoguns gave a decisive turn to the fate of Noh: it was to become a sophisticated art sponsored by the military rulers for their domain lords and retainers to enjoy. In 1868, when Emperor Meiji abolished the shogunate, Noh lost its greatest patron. That Noh survived this watershed moment was partly thanks to the symbolic power of foreign relations. Mindful of Western opera, which was presented to Japanese diplomats during their visits to the West, the Japanese government entertained the American president Ulysses Grant with a Noh performance when he visited Japan in 1879. From an

obsolete tradition it became a national art: nowadays the Japanese government sponsors Noh and grants exquisite actors stipends and the honorary title of "Living National Treasures."

THE WARRIOR PLAY ATSUMORI

Atsumori is an example of how Zeami gave the grisly subject matter of battle action and tormented warrior ghosts a new, cultivated form that appealed to the increasingly sophisticated warrior elite. It focuses on the death of the young Heike warrior Atsumori, a famous episode from *Tales of the Heike*. During the battle at Ichi-no-tani, a decisive moment in the civil wars between the Genji and Heike clans in the 1180s that resulted in the defeat of the Heike, the Genji supporter Naozane catches sight of a Heike warrior alone on the seashore. When Naozane realizes that the soldier, Atsumori, is only a boy the age of his own son, he takes pity, but is in the end forced to kill the boy when fellow Genji warriors suddenly approach the scene. The flute that Naozane finds under the dead boy's armor testifies to his courtly elegance. Plagued by remorse, Naozane soon becomes a monk to pray for Atsumori's salvation.

The Noh play revisits the final encounter between Atsumori, now a ghost, and Naozane, now a monk named Renshō.

Atsumori¹

Persons in order of appearance

The monk Renshō, formerly the Minamoto warrior Kumagai
A YOUTH (*no mask*)

Two or three COMPANIONS to the YOUTH
A VILLAGER

The phantom of the Taira warrior ATSUMORI
(*Atsumori or Jūroku mask*)

In the first act, Renshō meets Atsumori's ghost, who is disguised as a reaper. In the second act, the ghost appears in its true form and remembers the pleasures of a banquet held the night before his death. The play ends with a double salvation, as Naozane prays for Atsumori and Atsumori forgives him. Because the episode unfolds at Suma Bay, where Genji, the protagonist of the eleventh-century *Tale of Genji*, was exiled, *Atsumori* frequently alludes to Murasaki Shikibu's tale and draws an analogy between its central protagonist Genji and the young Atsumori. (Allusions in Noh plays could be powerful enough to bend history: a later puppet-play version of *Atsumori* claimed that the historical Atsumori was the son of an emperor, just like the fictional Genji.)

In an age of action movies and fast-paced entertainment, what has Noh to offer? Can we appreciate its ceremonial slowness and minimalist understatement? Measured on the scale of the cosmic significance of Noh themes—death, salvation, obsessive emotions—Noh performances have an eerie power to transform our perception of time and significance. Although the artistry of Noh is fully realized only on stage, reading the rich and allusive text does give an indication of its graceful power.

1. Translated by Royall Tyler.

ACT I

Enter RENSHŌ, carrying a rosary. He stands in base square,² facing rear of stage.

RENSHŌ The world is all a dream, and he who wakes the world is all a dream, and he who wakes, casting it from him, may yet know the real.

He turns to the audience.

You have before you one who in his time was Kumagai no Jirō Naozane, a warrior from Musashi province. Now I have renounced the world, and Renshō is my name. It was I, you understand, who struck Atsumori down;³ and the great sorrow of this deed moved me to become the monk you see. Now I am setting out for Ichi-no-tani, to comfort Atsumori and guide his spirit towards enlightenment.

The wandering moon,
issuing from among the Ninefold Clouds⁴
issuing from among the Ninefold Clouds,
swings southward by Yodo and Yamazaki,
past Koya Pond and the Ikuta River,
and Suma shore, loud with pounding waves,
to Ichi-no-tani, where I have arrived
to Ichi-no-tani, where I have arrived.

Mimes walking.

Having come so swiftly, I have reached Ichi-no-tani in the province of Tsu. Ah, the past returns to mind as though it were before me now. But what is this? I hear a flute from that upper field. I will wait for the player to come by and question him about what happened here.

Enter the YOUTH and COMPANIONS. Each carries a split bamboo pole with a bunch of moved grass secured in the cleft. They face each other at front.

YOUTH and COMPANIONS

The sweet music of the mower's flute
the sweet music of the mower's flute
floats, windborne, far across the fields.

Those who gather grass on yonder hill
now start for home, for twilight is at hand,

YOUTH and COMPANIONS

They too head back to Suma, by the sea,
and their way, like mine, is hardly long.
Back and forth I ply, from hill to shore,
heart heavy with the cares of thankless toil.
Yes, should one perchance ask after me,
my reply would speak of lonely grief.⁵

2. Back left corner of the stage.

3. For the passage on which this play is based, see Vol. B, *Tales of the Heike*, "The Death of Atsumori."

4. Reference to the capital. The moon suggests Renshō himself, wandering from Kyoto

to the Suma shore, the site of the battle of Ichi-no-tani, where Atsumori was killed.

5. These and the following three lines allude to a poem by Ariwara no Yukihira (818-893 c.e.), who was also exiled to Suma.

On Suma shore
the salty drops fall fast, though were I known
the salty drops fall fast, though were I known,
I myself might hope to have a friend.
Yet, having sunk so low, I am forlorn,
and those whom I once loved are strangers now.

While singing, YOUTH goes to stand in base square, COMPANIONS before Chorus.

But I resign myself to what life brings,
and accept what griefs are mine to bear
and accept what griefs are mine to bear.

RENSHŌ rises.

RENSHŌ Excuse me, mowers, but I have a question for you.

YOUTH For us, reverend sir? What is it, then?

RENSHŌ Was it one of you I just heard playing the flute?

YOUTH Yes, it was one of us.

RENSHŌ How touching! For people such as you, that is a remarkably elegant thing to do!⁶ Oh yes, it is very touching.

YOUTH It is a remarkably elegant thing, you say, for people like us to do?

The proverb puts the matter well: 'Envy none above you, despise none below.' Besides,

the woodman's songs and the mower's flute

YOUTH and COMPANIONS

are called 'sylvan lays' and 'pastoral airs';⁷

they nourish, too, many a poet's work,

and ring out very bravely through the world.

You need not wonder, then, to hear me play.

I do not doubt that what you say is right.

Then, 'sylvan lays' or 'pastoral airs'

mean the mower's flute,

the woodman's songs:

music to ease all the sad trials of life,

singing,

dancing,

fluting—

all these pleasures

Below, YOUTH begins to move and gesture in consonance with the text.

CHORUS

are pastimes not unworthy of those

who care to seek out beauty: for bamboo,

who care to seek out beauty: for bamboo,

washed up by the sea, yields Little Branch,

Cicada Wing, and other famous flutes;

while this one, that the mower blows,

could be Greenleaf, as you will agree.

Perhaps upon the beach at Sumiyoshi,

6. Flute playing is associated with the aristocracy, to an elegant line from a Heian poetry collection.

7. Atsumori and his companions refer here

one might expect instead a Koma flute;⁸ but this is Suma. Imagine, if you will, a flute of wood left from saltmakers' fires a flute of wood left from saltmakers' fires.

Exeunt COMPANIONS. YOUTH, in base square, turns to RENSHO.

RENSHO How strange! While the other mowers have gone home, you have stayed on, alone. Why is this?

YOUTH You ask why have I stayed behind? A voice called me here, chanting the Name.⁹ O be kind and grant me the Ten Invocations!¹

RENSHO Very gladly. I will give you the Ten Invocations, as you ask. But then tell me who you are.

YOUTH In truth, I am someone with a tie to Atsumori.

RENSHO One with a tie to Atsumori?

Ah, the name recalls such memories!

Presses his palms together in prayer over his rosary.

'Namu Amida Bu,' I chant in prayer:

YOUTH goes down on one knee and presses his palms together.

YOUTH and RENSHO 'If I at last become a Buddha,

then all sentient beings who call my Name

in all the worlds, in the ten directions,

will find welcome in Me, for I abandon none.'²

CHORUS Then, O monk, do not abandon me!

One calling of the Name should be enough, but you have comforted me by night and day—

a most precious gift! As to my name,

no silence I might keep could quite conceal

the one you pray for always, dawn and dusk:

that name is my own. And, having spoken,

he fades away and is lost to view

he fades away and is lost to view.

YOUTH rises.

Exit YOUTH.

INTERLUDE

VILLAGER entered discreetly and sat at villager position.

He now comes forward to base square.

VILLAGER You see before you one who lives here at Suma, on the shore.

Today I will go down to the beach and pass the time watching the ships sail by. [Sees RENSHO.] Well! There's a monk I've not seen before. May I ask you, reverend sir, where you are from?

RENSHO I came from Miyako.³ Do you live nearby?

VILLAGER Yes, I do.

RENSHO Then would you please come nearer? I have something to ask of you.

VILLAGER Very well, reverend sir. [Sits at centre, facing RENSHO.] Now, what is it?

RENSHO Something rather unexpected, perhaps. I hear this is where the Minamoto and the Taira fought, and where the young Taira noble, Atsumori, died. Would you tell me all you know of the way he met his end?

VILLAGER That certainly is an unexpected request, reverend sir. I do live here, it is true, but I really know very little about such things. Still, it would be too bad of me, the very first time we meet, to claim I know nothing at all. So I will tell you the story as I myself have heard it told.

RENSHO That is very kind of you.

VILLAGER [Turns to audience.] It came to pass that in the autumn of the second year of Juei, Minamoto no Yoshinaka drove the Taira clan out of Miyako.⁴ This is where they came. Then the Minamoto, bent on destroying the Taira for ever, split their army—sixty thousand and more mounted warriors—into two wings and attacked without mercy. The Taira fled.

Now one among them, a young gentleman of the fifth rank named Atsumori, was the son of Tsunemori, the Director of Palace Repairs. Atsumori was on his way down to the sea, meaning to board the imperial barge,⁵ when he realized that back in the camp he had forgotten his flute, Little Branch. He prized this flute very highly and hated to leave it behind for the enemy's taking. So he turned back, fetched the flute, and again went down to the beach. But by this time, the imperial barge and the rest of the fleet had sailed. Just as he was riding into the sea, hoping to swim his horse out to the ships, Kumagai no Jirō Naozane, a warrior from Musashi province, spread his war fan and challenged him to fight.

Atsumori wheeled his horse and closed fiercely with Kumagai. The two crashed to the ground between their mounts. But Kumagai was a very powerful man. He instantly got Atsumori under him and ripped off his helmet, meaning to take his head. He saw a youth of fifteen or sixteen, with powdered face and blackened teeth—a young man of high rank, there was no doubt about that.⁶ Kumagai wanted to spare him. Then he glanced behind him and saw Doi and Kajiwara riding up.⁷ A good seven or eight other warriors were with them. 'I do not wish to kill you,' said Kumagai, 'but as you can see, there are many men from my own side behind me. I will take your head myself, then, and afterwards pray with all my heart for the peace of your spirit.' So he cut off Atsumori's head. On examining the

8. Presumably bamboo washed up by the sea yielded particularly fine flutes. "Greenleaf": a legendary flute. "Little Branch": Atsumori's own flute, mentioned in this list of famous flutes. "Sumiyoshi": where ships from Koma (Korea) once used to put in, thus "Koma flute."

9. That of Amida, the "Buddha of Infinite Light." Invoking his name (*Namu Amida Bu*) saved the believer and was a typical practice of the Pure Land school of Buddhism.

3. The capital.

4. Yoshinaka, a Genji warrior who was later killed by his own clan because of his ambitions for power, conquered the capital of Kyoto in 1183 during the Genpei Wars (1180–85) recounted in the *Tales of the Heike*.

5. The Taira (or Heike) fled Kyoto with the

6. Couriers of both sexes wore white powder and blackened their teeth. Teeth in their natural state (certainly Kumagai's) were considered unsightly by the aristocracy.

7. Warriors, like Rensho, on the Genji side.

child emperor Antoku, whose mother belonged to the Taira.

body, he found a flute in a brocade bag attached to the waist. When he showed the flute to his commander, all present wet the sleeves of their armour with tears. To think that he had been carrying a flute at a time like that! Even among all those gentlemen from the court, he must have been an especially gentle youth! Eventually, Kumagai found out that his victim had been Atsumori.

I wonder whether it's true, as they say, that Kumagai made himself into a monk to pray for Atsumori. If he was that sort of man, though, he wouldn't have killed Atsumori in the first place. But he did kill him, so the story must be wrong. I'd like to see that Kumagai here now! I'd kill him myself, just to make Atsumori feel better.

Well, that is the way I have heard it told. But why did you ask? I am a bit puzzled.

RENSHŌ Thank you very much for your kind account. Perhaps there is no harm in my telling you who I am. In my time I was Kumagai no Jirō Naozane, but now I am a monk and my name is Renshō. I came here, you see, to give Atsumori's spirit comfort and guidance.

VILLAGER You are Kumagai, who fought in the battle here? Why, I had no idea! Please excuse all the silly things I said. They say the man mighty in good is mighty, too, in evil. I'm sure it's just as true the other way round. Anyway, do go on comforting Atsumori's spirit.

RENSHŌ I assure you, I am not in the least offended. Since I came here to comfort Atsumori, I will stay on a while and continue chanting the precious Sutra⁸ for him.

VILLAGER If that is your intention, then please accept lodging at my house. RENSHŌ I will do so gratefully.

VILLAGER Very well.

[Exit.]

ACT 2

RENSHŌ Then it is well: to guide and comfort him
then it is well: to guide and comfort him,
I shall do holy rites, and through the night
call aloud the Name for Atsumori,
praying that he reach enlightenment
praying that he reach enlightenment.

Enter ATSUMORI, in the costume of a warrior. He stops in base square.

ATSUMORI Across to Awaji the plovers fly,
while the Suma barrier guard sleeps on;
yet one, I see, keeps nightlong vigil here.
O keeper of the pass, tell me your name.⁹

8. The Lotus Sutra, a central text in certain schools of Buddhism.

9. The barrier on the pass through the hills behind Suma was well known in poetry, which often features its nameless guard, an older man seen at night. Atsumori's words, "O keeper of the pass, tell me your name," are from a 12th-century poem.

Behold, Renshō. I am Atsumori.

Strange! As I chant aloud the Name, beating out the rhythm on this gong, and wakeful as ever in broad day, I see Atsumori come before me.

The sight can only be a dream.

Why need you take it for a dream?

For I have come so far to be with you in order to clear karma that is real.

I do not understand you: for the Name has power to clear away all trace of sin. Call once upon the name of Amida

and your countless sins will be no more:

so the sutra promises. As for me,

I have always called the Name for you.

How could sinful karma afflict you still?

Deep as the sea it runs. O lift me up,

that I too may come to Buddhahood!

Let each assure the other's life to come, for we, once enemies,

are now become,

in very truth;

fast friends in the Law.

Below, ATSUMORI moves and gestures in consonance with the text.

CHORUS Now I understand!

'Leave the company of an evil friend,

cleave to the foe you judge a good man';

and that good man is you! O I am grateful!

How can I thank you as you deserve?

Then I will make confession of my tale,

and pass the night recounting it to you

and pass the night recounting it to you.

ATSUMORI sits on a stool at centre, facing audience.

The flowers of spring rise up and deck the trees to urge all upwards to illumination;

the autumn moon plumbs the waters' depths

to show grace from on high saving all beings.

Rows of Taira mansions lined the streets:

we were the leafy branches on the trees.

Like the rose of Sharon, we flowered one day;

but as the Teaching that enjoins the Good

is seldom found,¹ birth in the human realm

quickly ends, like a spark from a flint.

This we never knew, nor understood

that vigour is followed by decline.

1. It is only by great good fortune that a sentient being gets to hear the Buddha's teaching, and it is only as a human being that one has the potential to reach enlightenment.

ATSUMORI
CHORUS

Lords of the land, we were, but caused much grief;
Blinded by wealth, we never knew our pride.
ATSUMORI rises now, and dances through the passage below.

Yes, the house of Taira ruled the world
twenty years and more: a generation
that passed by as swiftly as a dream.
Then came the Juei years, and one sad fall,
when storms stripped the trees of all their leaves
and scattered them to the four directions,
we took to our fragile, leaflike ships,
and tossed in restless sleep upon the waves.
Our very dreams foretold no return.
We were like caged birds that miss the clouds,
or homing geese that have lost their way.
We never lingered long under one sky,
but travelled on for days, and months, and years,
till at last spring came round again,
and we camped here, at Ichi-no-tani.
So we stayed on, hard by Suma shore,
while winds swept down upon us off the hills.
The fields were bitterly cold. At the sea's edge
our ships huddled close, while day and night
the plovers cried, and our own poor sleeves
wilted in the spray that drenched the beach.
Together in the seafolk's huts we slept,
till we ourselves joined these villagers,
bent to their life like the wind-bent pines.
The evening smoke rose from our cooking fires
while we sat about on heaps of sticks
piled upon the beach, and thought and thought
of how we were at Suma, in the wilds,
and we ourselves belonged to Suma now,
even as we wept for all our clan.
ATSUMORI stands before drums.

ATSUMORI
RENSHŌ

My father, Tsunemori, summoned us
to play and dance, and sing *imayō*?
Why, that was the music I remember!
A flute was playing so sweetly in their camp!
We, the attackers, heard it well enough.
It was Atsumori's flute, you see:
the one I took with me to my death
and that you wished to play this final time,
while from every throat

2. Popular songs much appreciated at court in the late 12th century.

CHORUS

rose songs and poems
sung in chorus to a lively beat.
ATSUMORI performs a lively dance, ending in base square. Below, he continues dancing and miming in consonance with the text.

ATSUMORI
CHORUS

Then, in time, His Majesty's ship sailed,
with the whole clan behind him in their own.
Anxious to be aboard, I sought the shore,
but all the warships and the imperial barge
stood already far, far out to sea.
I was stranded. Reining in my horse,
I halted, at a loss for what to do.
There came then, galloping behind me,
Kumagai no jirō Naozane,
shouting, 'You will not escape my arm!'
At this Atsumori wheeled his mount
and swiftly, all undaunted, drew his sword.
We first exchanged a few rapid blows,
then, still on horseback, closed to grapple, fell,
and wrestled on, upon the wave-washed strand.
But you had bested me, and I was slain.
Now karma brings us face to face again.
'You are my foe!' Atsumori shouts,
lifting his sword to strike; but Kumagai
with kindness has repaid old enmity,
calling the Name to give the spirit peace.
They at last shall be reborn together
upon one lotus throne in paradise.
Renshō, you were no enemy of mine.
He drops his sword and, in base square, turns to RENSHŌ with palms pressed together.

Pray for me, O pray for my release!
Pray for me, O pray for my release!

Facing side from base square, stamps the final beat.

*Brandishes sword.
Drops to one knee.
Rises, retreats.*