Introduction

Atsumori is a warrior, or shura, piece, which belongs to Group II of No plays. It occupies a place between the god-play and the wig-piece in the No program of five plays. Compared with the former, there are some structural changes in the shura piece, but it demonstrates the formal elements of the god-play more than those of the wig-piece. Also, the shura piece lacks the poetic richness of the yugen quality that dominates the wig-piece. Zeami is aware of this, as he states in the “Shura” section of his essay entitled “Kadensho”: “This shura piece is also one type. Though we perform it well, interesting points are rare.” The reason for this problem is that “the shura madness is apt to assume a demon’s action. It should not be performed often.” Consequently, he advises the playwright as follows: “If the No is well done by combining the beauties of nature with the theme of those who are famous among the Genpei, it is also interesting.”

True to this insight, Zeami chose the excellent theme of the story of the young warrior-aristocrat Taira no Atsumori, told in the ninth chapter of the Tale of the Heike and in the thirty-eighth chapter of the Rise and Fall of the Genpei. In this story, Kumagae no Jiro Naozane beheaded Atsumori, who carried the famous bamboo flute, Little Branch, in the brocade bag at his hip and played it the night before he was slain. This sense of courtly elegance in the midst of the battleground made the gallant Genji warriors from the Eastern Land shed tears. Atsumori was then only seventeen, with his teeth dyed black, as was customary for the aristocratic class of the time.

In this play, the candidate whom Zeami selects for the waki is not the usual Buddhist priest who travels from province to province. Zeami introduces him to the audience in the nanori passage as follows: “I am Kumagae Jiro Naozane, a native of the province of Musashi. I have renounced this world and become a Buddhist priest, calling myself Rensei. Since Atsumori was slain by my hand, the sorrow I felt led me to a form such as this.”
The karmic relation between the wa, and the shite sets the touching tone of the play as it opens. In addition, Zeami uses the sound of the bamboo flute so subtly that it serves as a prelude to the coming of the shite. The flute and music appear then throughout the play to unify this warrior-piece.

The grass cutters (tsure) are ushered in by the following powerful line from a poem by Kakinomoto no Hitomaro, one of the great Man'yoshu poets: “There upon the hill stands the man who cuts the grass,” a line that had also impressed Yeats with its image. Among the three grass cutters, Zeami cast the shite as a young man without a mask, which is exceptional, as Condo Yoshikazu observes. This innovation is, indeed, refreshing and appropriately satisfying, and it unfolds the character of the shite effortlessly. The dialogue between the waki and the shite also subtly foreshadows the elegant, artistic side of Atsumori, who never directly reveals his identity, as the chorus sings in his behalf:

though I have not said
my name should be apparent
day and night you say
the Buddhist holy prayers
before the altar
for that one whose name is mine.

After the Interlude, Part II opens with the usual “waiting song” (machiuatai), and the nochi-jite appears with the inset music as a young noble warrior, elegantly costumed with a mask called jurekus. When he stands at the shite seat, as Sakamoto Setchô observed of the nochi-jite as played by Kanze Sakon (1895-1939), “He appears, though warrior-like, somehow sorrowful, and with a loneliness akin to a phantom in a dream, which shows very deep charm.” Then “a confession” serves as a turning point to unfold the “original source” of the story, and there ensue the kuri-sashi-kuse passages, where the nochi-jite tells of the fall of the Heike and of the life at the First Ravine (Ichi no Tani). This section is followed by the gay scene of music and singing that Atsumori enjoyed with his father, Lord Tsumemori, which culminates in the chi no mai, instead of in the quick kakeri dance that appears in seven plays of Group II, while the other seven are classified as quasi-kakeri pieces. “In this piece the chi no mai is perhaps used for the first time,” says Condo Yoshikazu. Nogami also states the following in regard to the chi no mai:

The chi no mai is extraordinary for a shura piece; the shura piece is expressed as though it were a wig-piece. In Atsumori the play is divided into two parts and structured after the typical shura piece, but following the kuse in the second part, the chi no mai danced by the nochi-jite is exceptional. Atsumori is a young noble warrior, and is the same age as Tomosakira and Tomonaga. The pitiable fact that the lovely youth is beheaded by the mighty valor of the Eastern Land made the playwright, I believe, construct the play with the yugen-centered chi no mai.

Here I feel the chi no mai is most appropriate, but not for the reasons that Nogami gives. For Zeami it is illogical to use the standard kakeri dance, because it generally expresses the warrior’s agony in the Ashura World, and here, Atsumori’s unsettled spirit has found peace for the most part. This state is due to the devoted prayers offered “every day and every night” by Rensei, and it is for this reason that Zeami’s use of the chi no mai is significant. This is why a description of Atsumori’s endless sufferings in the Ashura World is absent here, revealing the playwright’s deep insight into the play. Consequently, for Zeami, the heart of this play is to reveal the soul of the artistic side of Atsumori, who loves music and his treasured bamboo flute, which he could not bear to leave behind in the enemy’s hands. It is not only most appropriate, then, but also natural that the chi no mai follows the gay scene of music.

The kakeri between the shite and the chorus leads to the combat scene on the shore. Then, in a blind moment of attachment, Atsumori tries to settle old scores, as the concluding passage shows. The chorus sings for the shite in tsuyogin style:

and at last,
slain and vanquished,
on the Wheel of Fate
that ever turns,
he returns to meet with you.
“My enemy is here,” he shouts
as he’s about to strike him

but here his warring spirit is calmed by the grace of the holy prayers. The chorus continues:

“Evil I’ll repay with good”
for the prayers
you have said for me,
calling on Amida’s name.

At the end of the play, as he makes the tone stamp, he asks Rensei for the last prayer for his final rest and eternal peace:

oh, say the holy prayers
for my memory.

The figure of this young noble, Atsumori, in the concluding section is most memorable; the expression of the No mask lingers vividly even after he has made an exit.
ATSUMORI

BY ZEAMI

Persons: WAKI: Priest Rensei
SHITE (Part I): Ghost of Atsumori (appears as a grass cutter)
TSEEKE: the fellow grass cutters (three)
NOCHI-JITE (Part II): Ghost of Taira no Atsumori (appears as himself)
KYOGEN: A man of the place

Classification: Primary, Group II
Place: Ichinomiya the land of Settsu
Time: August
Kogaki: 4

PART I

[Following introductory music called shidai, the waki, Priest Rensei, wearing a pointed hood (kakuboshi), a less formal heavy silk kimono (moshime), a broad-sleeved robe (mizugoromo), a beard (koshiro), a fan (obi), and a rosary (juzu), comes out to the name-saying pillar and facing the musican's seats, sings the following shidai verse.]

WAKI

[1] (Shidai: au, youga

Yume no yori nareba
odorokite,
yume no yori nareba
odorokite
sutsuru ya uttsuru
naruran.

(The chorus sings the jidori, repeating the above verse, except the third and fourth lines in a lower key.)

CHORUS

[2] (Jidori: au, youga

Yume no yori nareba
odorokite
sutsuru ya uttsuru
naruran.

[After the jidori, the waki intones the following prose passage, called nanori, introducing himself to the audience in free-rhythm recitative style.]

(i) ATSUMORI

By Zeami

Kore wa Musashi no Kuni no jūnin Kumagane no Jirō Naozane 11 shukke shi, Rensei to mōshoshi nite sōro. Sate mo Atsumori 12 o te ni kakeri mōshishi koto amari ni onnitawashiku sōrohodo ni kayō no sugata to narite sōro. Mata kore yori ichi no Tani 11 ni kudari Atsumori no go-bodai o tomurai mōsabayata omoi sōro.

[After the nanori, the waki, still facing stage front, sings the following verse ageuta passage, called michiyuki, “travelsong.”]

WAKI

MICHIIYUKI: au, youga

Kokonoe no
kumoi 14 o idete
yoku tsuki no,
kumoi o idete
yoku tsuki no
minami ni meguru
oguruma no
Yodo no Yamazaki o uchisugite
Koya no lke 18 mizu
Ikutagawa

From the ninefold clouds
singing round the capital,
now the moon departs,
from the cloud-girl capital
like the moon we part
rolling on the southward round
as the little wheel
turns at Pool and Mountain Point
we pass and journey
across Koya’s lake water
and the ikuta;

[The waki faces to his right, goes forward two or three steps, and then returns to his former position, indicating that he has traveled; he finishes the rest of the lines.]

nami koko moto ya 20
Suma no Ura 21
Ichinomiya no
tsukinikeri
Ichinomiya
no
Ichi no Tani
nimo
tsukinikeri
I have also come,
where the First Ravine lies deep
[After the michiyuki, the waki faces stage front and intonates in free-rhythm style the following prose passage, called tsukizerifu.]

(TSUKIZERIFU: AU, YOUGA,

Isogishōrohodo ni Tsu no Kuni Ichinomiya no
Tani no tsukite sōro. Makoto ni makashi no arisama ima no yō ni omoi idarerare sōro. Mata ano Ueno no atatte fū no ne no kimoe sōro. Kono hito o aimachi

I have traveled so fast that here I am already at the First Ravine in the Province of Tsu. Truly I still recall that scene of long ago as though it were today. [Facing tohsugite.] Besides, over in the direction

11 Jirō Naozane
12 Atsumori
13 Koyanagi
14 Kumoi
15 Yodo
16 Koya
17 Iki
18 Mizu
19 Ikuta
20 Nami koko moto ya
21 Ura
22 Ueno
23 Atsumori

Atsumori
kono atari no kotodomo kubikashiku ta
zunebaya to omoi soro.

of High Meadow I can hear the music of a flute. I will wait for that person. [Facing
stage front again.] Among other things, I would like to ask him about the stories
of this place. [The waki goes to the waki seat
and sits down.]

[Following the shidai music, the shite, the grass cutter, enters the stage wearing a No mask, a collar
in pale blue (eri asagi), a striped, less-formal silk kimono (dan moshoime), an "inferior silk"
broadsleeved robe (shike magurocome), a waistband (koshiba), and a fan (fuki). He is followed by his
fellow grass cutters, similarly dressed, all holding sprays of flowers and facing one another, they sing
the following shidai verse together.]

Shite and Tsure

[Sidai: au, youwinin]

Kusakaribue no koe soete
for the flute grass cutters play,
kusakaribue no koe soete
the breeze comes blowing,
fuku koso nokaze
across the field.

[The chorus sings the jidori, repeating the above verse, except the third and fourth lines, in a lower
key.]

Chorus

[jidori: au, youwinin]

Kusakaribue no koe soete
For the flute grass cutters play,
kusakaribue no koe soete
the breeze comes blowing,
fuku koso nokaze
across the field.

[After the jidori, the shite faces stage front and sings the following verse, called sashi.]

Shite

[Sashi: awazu, youwinin]

Kano okari
There upon the hill
kusakaru onoko
stands the man who cuts the grass,
no o wakete
and across the field
aerusa ni naru
he will be returning home
yumagure.
as the twilight falls.

Shite and Tsure [Facing one another]

Ieji mo sazona
His way home may lead him, too,
suma no umi
near the Suma Sea;
sukoshi ga hodo
short may be the path he takes
gahodo no
on his daily rounds
kayoji ni
deep into the hills
yama ni iri

[At about the time the singing comes to an end, the waki rises. Then, during the following prose
dialogue, called mon’ai, the waki stands at the waki seat and the shite at the shite seat, and they
respond to each other.]

Waki

Ika ni kore naru kusakaritachi ni tazune
mousubeki koto no soro.

Ho, there. Grass cutters. I have something that I must ask you.

Shite

Kona no koto nite soro ka. Nanigoto
Are you speaking to me? What can I do
niti soro zo.

down toward the inlet,
still the work of man’s sad life
is too wearesome.

[Sageuta: au youwinin]

Towaba koso
hitori wabu tomo
kotaemashi.

Should one ask of you
if I live alone and sad,
let you then reply:

[Agruta: au youwinin]

Suma no Ura
moshio tare tomo
shirarenaba,
moshio tare tomo
shirarranba
ware ni mo tomo
arubeki ni
amari ni nareba
wabibito no
shitashiki
(danimo)
utoku shite

by the Suma Bay
dipping seaweed brine I live;
if someone knows me,
dipping seaweed brine I live,
if someone knows me,
then there ought to be a friend
that I too might find,
but this fisher’s life I lead
as a wretched man,
those who are so dear to me
keep their distance now.

[The shite goes to the shite seat, and the sureto the front of the chorus. All stand and sing]

sumeba to bakari
Hoping only to survive,
omou ni zo
as I resign myself
sugosu nari,
living out my days,
sugosu nari.
living out my days.

[Then during the following prose
dialogue, called mon’ai, the waki stands at the waki seat and the shite at the shite seat, and they
respond to each other.]

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Atsumori
WAKI
Tadaima no fue wa katagata no naka ni fukitamaite sōro ka.

About the flute I have just heard, is it played among you?

SHITE
San zōro. Wareraanaka ni fukite sōro.

Yes. The flute is played among us.

WAKI
Ara yasashi ya. Sono mi ni mo ozenu waza. Kaesugaesu mo yasashu koso sōrae.

How elegant! The performance is unbecoming for folks like you, but it is very, very elegant indeed, I should say.

SHITE
Sono mi ni mo ozenu waza to uketamewaredomo sore masanu mo uraya-mazare. Otoru o mo iyashimu na to koso mite sōrae. Sono uke shōkabokuteki to wa,

Though I hear you say the performance is unbecoming for folks like us, there is a saying: “Do not envy those who excel you. Do not despise those who fall short of you.” Besides, in the case of the “woodsman’s song” and the “herdsman’s flute.”

[The shite and the tsure face one another and sing the following verse passage.]

SHITE and TSURE

(Awazu, yowagin)

kusakari no fue kikori no uta no
kikori no uta wa
kajin no eu ni mo
kusakari no fue
futeke no

for the flutes grass cutters play,
and the songs the woodsmen sing
are recorded in the verses
and superb they are

[Facing toward the waki they make a tsumeashi gesture.]

fushin na nasase-tamai so to yo

made of bamboo out of joint
you ought not find us so.

[They remain standing in the same positions. There follows the kakeai, in free-rhythm yowagin style.]

WAKI
Geni geni kore wa kotowari nari. Sate sate shōka bokuteki to wa

Yes, indeed, what you have said
appears reasonable;
what you’ve said of woodsmen’s songs
and of flutes for shepherds;

[The shite makes a tsumeashi gesture toward the waki. During the following ageuta passage sung by the chorus, the kyōgen comes out quietly through the half-lifted curtain, goes to the kyōgen seat, and sits down. As the chorus starts to sing, the shite makes a hiraki gesture toward stage front.]

CHORUS

(Ageuta: awu, yowagin)

mi no waza no sukuru kokoro ni yoritake no
sukeru kokoro ni
sukeru kokoro ni

as they work, which seems pleasing to their hearts, they find drifted bamboo-joints,
sukeru kokoro ni yoritake no
sukeru kokoro ni

as they work, which seems
pleasing to their hearts they make drifted bamboo-joints

Saeda Semiore samazama ni
such as Little Branch,

Saeda Semiore samazama ni

Saeda Semiore

[The shite goes out slightly toward stage front and makes a hiraki gesture.]

fue no wa
okeredomo
kusakari no
fuku fue naraba
kore mo na wa
Aoba no Fue to

Broken Cicada,
as the names are many
for those famous flutes,
So the name we gave, “Green Leaf,”
should be considered
suitable for the flute
grass cutters play.

SHITE
kusakari no fue kikori no uta no

they’re grass cutters’ bamboo flutes,
and woodcutters’ songs for all

SHITE
ukiyo o wataru hito fushi o
help them through the fleeting world
with the melody,

SHITE
utō mo
mō mo
dance the rounds,

WAKI
fuku mo
blow the tunes,

WAKI
asobu mo
and play as well

SHITE
asobu mo
and play as well

CHORUS

(Ageuta: awu, yowagin)

mi no waza no sukuru kokoro ni yoritake no
sukeru kokoro ni
sukeru kokoro ni

as they work, which seems
pleasing to their hearts, they find

Saeda Semiore samazama ni
such as Little Branch,

fue no wa
okeredomo
kusakari no
fuku fue naraba
kore mo na wa
Aoba no Fue to
oboshimese.

Broken Cicada,
as the names are many
for those famous flutes,
So the name we gave, “Green Leaf,”
should be considered
suitable for the flute
grass cutters play.

Atsumori
【As the chorus sings the following passage, the shite goes out to the eye-fixing pillar and, turning around to his left, goes to the shite seat, while the tsure make an exit across the bridge.】

Sumiyoshi no migiwa naraba
Kombokue ni ya arubeki.
Kore wa Suma no shioki no
Were we at the shore of Sumiyoshi, the flute of Koguryō should suit us well.

【The shite, at the shite seat, faces toward the waki.】
amana no Takisashi ni to
oboshimese,
amana no Takisashi to
oboshimese.

【The following dialogue, called kakeai, is exchanged between the shite and the waki.】

WAKI

Fusūgi ya na. Yo no kusakaritachi wa
ma in na kaeritamino koto nani no yue nite
aruyaran.

【As the elapsed time.】

SHITE

Nani no yue to ka yûnamino koe o
chikara ni kitaritari, jûnen mitsuke owa
shimase.

WAKI

Yasuki koto jûnen oba sazukenmôsube
shi. Sore ni tsuketemo okoto wa ta so.

【With the rosary, the waki holds his hand in prayer.】

WAKI

Yukari to kikeba
natsukashi ya to

[The waki makes an exit quietly behind the curtain.]
Nakairi (Interlude)

[The kyōgen, wearing a striped, less-formal heavy silk kimono (dannoshimono), the kyōgen two-piece (kyōgen kamishimo), and a waistband (koshibi), and carrying a fan (ōgi) in his hand, comes out the name-saying pillar and intones the following prose passage.]

KYŌGEN

(Monday: guzu, koteba)

Kore wa miyakogata yori idetaru so nite sōrō. On-mi wa kono atari no hito nite watari sōrō ka.

Nakanaka kono atari no mono nite sōrō.

Yes, I come from this neighborhood.

KYŌGEN

Kore wa omoi mo yoran moshigoto nite sraedomo kono tokoro wo Genpei ryoke no kassen no chimata to uketamawari oyohite sōrōchū ni mo. Heike no kindachi Atsumori no hatetamairu yōteigozhou ni oite wa katarite on-kiwake srae.

Indeed, this is something you may not expect from me, but I hear that, among other things, this place was the very battlefield where the two houses of the Taira and of the Minamoto had fought. Please tell me the story if you know about the death of Atsumori, a noble of the Heike clan.

KYŌGEN

Omoi mo yoran moshigoto nito sraedomo kono tokoro wo Genpei ryoke no kassen no chimata to uketamawari oyohite sōrōchū ni mo, Heike no kindachi Atsumori no hatetamairu yōteigozhou ni oite wa katarite on-kiwake srae.

How strange that you should ask me about such things. Though we live in this neighborhood, I don’t know too much about the details. But since I am asked by a person that I meet for the first time, it would not be quite right to say that I know nothing at all; so I shall tell the story roughly the way I’ve heard it.

WAKI

Sayō nite shrawaba mazu chikō onniri sōrē, Tazunetaki koto to sorō. Kashikomatte soro. Sate on-tazune soro, mono kana.

Yes, holy priest. (Goes to the center of the stage and sits down.) Well, you would like to ask me something. What sort of business do you have in mind?

WAKI

Saruhodo ni Heike wa Juei ninen aki no koro Kiso Yoshinaka ni Miyako o oto sare, kono tokoro e utsuritama ga. Genji wa Heike no horobosan to roku-ma yoki o futate ni wake sayū no uchi yaburi go-iemon wa chirijiri ni ochi tamō. Naka ni mo Shuri no Tayū Tsenemori no on-ko Mukan no Tayū Atsumori wa gozabune ni tote nagisa no kata to enn ide arishi ni Koeda to mōsu go-hizo no foe o honjir ni wa suretamō ga, ato nite teki ni toraren koto o kuchioshioku oshimichi, mata honjir ni o-kaeri arite fue o tori nagise to enn ide arishi ni gozabune o hajime kyō sen domo kogotokoto oki e idemoshi soro aida, uma wa tsuyoshi ooyogasen tote uma o umi e wa shite to otoke ni Musashi no Kuni no Junin Kumagae Jirō Nosezō ōgi o hiraki manekireba Atsumori yagate totte kake, namuchi giwa nite muzyu to kumi ryōba ga aida ni do to ochiru. Kumagae wa daigo no mono nareba sono mama tote osae kubi o kakan to shite uchikabuto o mireba, jugoroku bakari to miete keshō shite kane kuro guro to tsuketamo aida, ap pare yoki mushi kana. Tazuketaya to ushiro o mireba, Dohi Kajiwara jikaki bakari tsukuzituri. Kumagae mōsu yō wa tasukemoshitaku soraedomo goran no gotoku mikata őzeti tsukuzituri. Kumagae ga te ni kake onnato nengoro ni tomuraimasu tote on-kubi kakiotoshi on-shigai o mitatemusareba koshi no nishiki no fukuro ni fue o gozō aida, sunawachi taishō no kenzan ni ire ni sraedomo sayō no koto kuwashiku wa zonzezu sōrō, saragara hajime to o-me ni kakari o-tazune nasare sōrō mono o, nan toro zonzen ni mōsu mo ika nite sōrēba oyoso uketamawariyo bitaru to o-monogatari mōsōzuru nite sōrō.

Well. It was about autumn of the second year of the Juei era that the Heike were defeated at the capital by Kiso Yoshinaka and the Heike moved to this place. The Genji, however, determined to destroy them. Dividing their gallant warriors six hundred thousand strong into two forces, the Genji crushed the Heike right and left, and as the Heike fell, they scattered and dispersed. Among them was the son of Lord Tsunemori, the vice-minister of the Service Bureau, was Atsumori, who held no office. He went out to the shore to board the royal ship, but as he forgot his treasure bamboo flute called Little Branch in the main camp, he was vexed at the thought that later it might fall into the enemy’s hands. So he went back to the main camp and recovered it. When he came back to the shore again, the royal ship and those of the soldiers were all out at sea. His steed was strong. He tried to make him swim but as he spurred him, Kumagae Jirō Nosezō, who came from the Province of Musashi, opened his fan and beckoned him back with it. Soon Atsumori returned ashore. They grasped each other and down they fell between the horses by the shore. Huge heroic man that Kumagae was, he held Atsumori accordingly and pressed him down, but, looking under the helmet as he was about to behead him, he saw that Atsumori seemed fifteen or sixteen years old, with his face powdered and his teeth dyed black. He seemed

isterworks of the Nō Theater
Nengoro ni on-monogatari sōrō mono kana. Ima wa nani o ka tsutsumimōsuzukiri. Kore wa Kumagae no Jirō Naozane shukke shi Rensei to mōshō mō shi nite sōrō. Atsumori no go-bodai o tomurai mōsan tame kore made mairite sōrō yo.

How kind of you to tell me all about the story. Now why should I conceal anything about myself from you? I am Kumagae Jirō Naozane who renounced this world and is now called Rensei. I have come to this place in order to perform a holy service for Atsumori’s memory.

Kokoro mōshitesōrō.

Not at all, good priest

[After the Interlude, at the waki seat, the waki sings the following ageuta verse, called machiuatai, “sitting song”]

5 (Machiuatai: au, yowagin)

[PART II]

Kore ni tsuketemo tomurai no, kore ni tsuketemo tomurai no hōji o nashte yomosugara nenbutsu mōshi Atsumori no bodai o nao mo tomurawan.

For this connection let me say a holy prayer, for this connection let me say a holy prayer and the Buddhist service too let me hold nightlong calling out Amida’s name for Atsumori that his soul may find true rest as I pray still more, that his soul may find true rest as I pray still more.

Comen sōrō. Sate zen ni tsuyoki wa aku nimo tsuyoshi to mōsu ga katagara no koto ni sōrō beshi. Yaya Atsumori no onnato on-tomurai arekashi to zonji sōrō.

No, no. I am not offended I do not mind all this. The reason I came to this place is that I wanted most earnestly to say some holy prayers for Atsumori’s memory. I will stay here for a while and with the recitation of sutra, I would like to hold a holy service.

Sayō nite sōrawaba o-yado o mōsūuru. If that is so, may I offer you lodgings nite sōrō.

That is kind of you. Thank you.

PART I

That is kind of you. Thank you.

P R A T I
Of the No Theater
[Changing his mood, the shite goes around to his left toward the shite seat]

arigatashi.
Total sange no monogatari yosugara izay mōsan, yosugara izay mëan.

I am so grateful. Now I wish I could relate all of my story to you in this confession throughout the night. to you in this confession throughout the night.

[At the shite seat, the shite faces toward the waki. Then, from in front of the musicians, the shite goes out toward center stage and sits on the stool provided by the stage attendant as the choruses sing the following passage. called Kuri.]

[7] (Kuri: awazu, yorogiin)

Sore haru no hana no jū no noboru wa jōgu bodai no kō ni susume aki no tsuki no suitei ni shizumu wa geke shujō no katachi o misu.

All the flowers in the springtime rising toward the treetops higher lift us and inspire us all to true salvation, and the moon at autumn shines across the water on its bed to reveal its form to save all the lowly beings,

[While all sit, the shite sings the following sashi passage in free-rhythm yowagin style.]

SHITE

(Sashi: awazu, yorogiin)

Shikaru ni ichimon kado o narabe rujoyōda o tsuraneshi yosoosi yet in spite of this the Heike lined their mansions' gateways, flourished like a mighty tree intertwines its leafy branches.

CHORUS

makoto ni kinka ichijitsu no ei ni onaji, yoki o susumuru oshi ni wa o koto kataki no ishi no hikari no ma zo to omowazarishi ni no narawashi koso hakanakere. As the morning glory blooms only for a day with its glowing splendor, so the law that glorified good and teaches men did not realize its goal for a moment brief like flintstone's spark for we were all thoughtless, hampered by accustomed habits in this fleeting world.

SHITE

Kami ni atte wa shumo o nayamashi From on high, the mighty look on the low whom they oppress,

asterworks of the No Theater

[The shite rises from the stool and dances, periodically making appropriate gestures, during the following kuse passages sung by the choruses in strict-rhythm yowagin style.]

(Kuse: aw, yorogiin)

Shikaru ni Heike yoobotte niyuyōten makoto ni hitomukashi no suguru wa yume no uchinare ya.

On the other hand, Indeed, here the Heike ruled this world for twenty years and longer, but a generation passes only like a span of a dream we dream.

[The shite advances slightly forward toward stage front]

In Juei
aki no ha no yomo no arashi ni

as the autumn leaves are all tossed before the storm,

[Pointing the fan around, the shite looks to his right]

sasoware chirijir no naru ichiyō no fure no uki

raging fiercely scattering and scattering like a single leaf floating in a boat

[The shite makes a sayū gesture, indicating a stop.]

nami ni fushite yume ni dani no kaerazu.

upon the waves we slept dreaming, never turning even homeward,

[The shite goes out toward the chief fixing pillar.]

Rōchō no kumo o koi, kigan tsura o midaru naru,

like the caged birds longing for the clouds and returning columned geese left astray behind

[Looking at the sky, the shite turns in a large arc to his left.]

sora sadamenaki tabigoromo hi no kasanarite toshitsuki no tachikaeru

in the skies unsettled still dressed in traveling robes days that piled on days we found months turned into years, ending to return

[From the front of the choruses the shite goes forward toward center stage.]

haru no koro kono ichi no Tani ni komori te

with the spring again in the First Ravine we sheltered in seclusion

47 Atsumori
[The shite makes a sayugay gesture, indicating a stop.]

shibashi wa koko ni for a little while and lived
Suma no Ura. by the Suma Bay.

[The shite opens the fan, makes an agegigay gesture and sings the following verse, called ageha.]

**SHITE**

(Ageha)

Ushiro no Roaring downward
yamakaze from behind us
fukiochite comes the mountain blast,

[With an utazugay gesture, the shite goes out toward stage front as the chorus sings the rest of the kuse passage.]

**CHORUS**

(Kuse: au, yonagin)

no mo saekaeru till the fields turned frosty too
umigawa ni by the ocean shore
fune no where our boats
yoru to naku were afloat at hand,
hiru to naki day and night throughout
chidori no koe mo came the plovers' crying too

[At stage front the shite flips up his left sleeve, and, using it for a pillow, he sits down.]

waga sode mo dampened with sea spray,
nami ni shioruru like the beach we slept upon,
isomakura are our sleeves with tears.
ama no In the huts

[The shite rises and goes out toward the eye-fixing pillar; then, turning to his left, he goes to the shite seat.]

tomaya ni of the fishers,
tomone shite close with them we slept
Sumabito n nomi and were used to Suma folks,

[Raising the fan up, the shite goes out toward stage front from the chorus front, holds the fan horizontally, and folds it.]

sonarematsu no wind-embraced like shore-pines
tatsuru ya twisting upward
yukemuri rose the evening smoke,
shiba to yagumo fed by what they called brushwood
orishikite which we broke and lay,
onomi o Sama no thinking of this Suma-life

[Pointing upwards with his fan, he looks above to his right.]

**WAKI**

Sate mo Kisaragi muika no yo ni mo
narishikaba, oya nite
warera o atsume
imayō o utai miasobishi ni. Then it was around the sixth day of the second month. My father, Tsunemori, called us all together. And we sang modern ballads as we danced and played.

[During the following passage exchanged between the shite and the waki, called kakeai, the shite stands in front of the hand-drum players, and the waki at the wakiseat. The prose passage is intoned by the shite.]

SHITE

(Kakeai: awazu, tsuyagin)

Sate wa sono yo no
onna sobi narikeri. That was how it happened then
Jo no uchi ni in the night you held your feast,
sa mo omoshiroki fue no ne no in your stronghold;
yosete no jin made even at the camped position
kikoeshi wa of your enemy.

SHITE

Sore koso sashimo Atsumori ga saigo Yes, indeed, that was until the final moment Atsumori kept the bamboo flute,

WAKI

ne mo hitofushi o playing such a melody,
utaiasobu singing, too, enjoying

SHITE

imayō roei modern ballads, chanting verses

WAKI

koegoe ni line by line aloud

iterworks of the NO Theater
Chorus

(isseki awazu, tsuyogin)

Hyōshi o sore
koe o age
keeping time in unison
we raised our voices.

(The shite dances to the hayashi music. This dance should be performed vigorously.)

Chū no mai

([After the dance, the shite makes an agegi gesture and sings the following lines.]

Shite

(saruhodo ni mi-fune o hajimete) Sometime afterward, first the royal barge was launched

(The shite stamps the floor as the chorus sings the following passage.)

Chorus

(Noriji:  ōnori, tsuyogin)

Ichimon minaminada and as all the mighty clansmen

(Pointing outward with his fan and turning to his right, the shite goes out toward stage front from the shite seat.)

Fune ni ukameba had put out their boats to sea,

Norikureiji to shouting loud, “We will not be left behind,” and Atsumori rushed to the shore, but all the soldiers’ boats

Goza bune mo hyōsen mo

[At stage front, the shite makes a kumo no Ogi gesture and looks into the distance.]

Haruka ni nobitamb. and royal barge had fled far out to sea.

(The shite sings the following in free-rhythm tsuyogin style as he retreats to the shite seat.)

Shite

(Awazu, tsuyogin)

Senkata nami ni Left so helplessly behind
koma o hikae against the surging waves

(The shite makes a yūgen gesture with his fan, indicating his feeling.)

Aki Rehanataru Atsumori held his steed,
Arisama nari. overwhelmed completely

(The shite goes outward waki front; the chorus sings the following verse.)

Chorus

(Chunori, tsuyogin)

Karukeru in a circumstance
tokoro ni like this. Meanwhile,

(Atsumori points backward and the shite looks.)

Ushiro yori from behind there came
Kumagae no bravery Kumagae

[Turning to his left as if to pull on the reins, the shite goes to the shite seat.]

Atsumori mo Atsumori, too
Una hikikaeshi wheeled his steed and turned ashore

(Uchimono muite) that came pounding back and forth

(Futauchi) he drew his sword

Miuchi wa and twice or thrice

(Utsu zo) to he seemed to strike the enemy,

Tsu ni and at last,

Utarete slain and vanquished,

Useshi mo on the Wheel of Fate

(Uchimono muite) that came pounding back and forth

[Looking over at the waki, the shite rises.]

Ingawa that ever turns

Meguraitari ni he returns to meet with you.

(Lifting up the sword, the shite goes in front of the waki.)

Kakata wakore zo to “My enemy is here,” he shouts
Utan to suru ni as he’s about to strike him:

(Retreats to position in front of the hand-drum players.)

Ada oba on nite “Evil I’ll repay with good,”
Hōi no for the prayers

(Kneeling, the shite turns around and faces stage front.)

Nenbutsu shi you have said for me
tomurawarureba calling on Amida’s name,
Introduction

One of the most attractive figures among the Genpei warriors for No playwrights is, indeed, Tadanori, as Zeami selected him for this shura piece, which belongs to Group II of No plays. There are, among other factors, two good reasons for Zeami to do so: namely, Tadanori was a noted poet and equally renowned for his valor as a great general of the Heike clan. The fact that the Heike were defeated in war adds to the story an acute sense of sadness, tinged with an air of mutability. Moreover, the famous ninth chapter of The Tale of the Heike is highly praised for its literary excellence, which Zeami used as if providing the very proof for his conviction, which he stated in his essay entitled “On No Composition”: “The image of the warrior. If, for instance, your source is about a famous captain of the Genji or the Heike, take special care to write as it is told in the Tale of the Heike.” As a playwright, he seems to have had great confidence in this piece, for he dictated in the “Sarugakudangi”: “Michimori, Tadanori, Yoshitsune, these three numbers are good No for the shura style.” This opinion is reiterated by Zenchiku (1405–72) in his “Kabuzuinoki”: “Satsuma no Kami Tadanori has the Deeply Hidden Style and the Yügen Style.” He also considered it as the representative piece among the Group II plays.

Since Tadanori excelled in the arts of both poetry and arms, Zeami emphasizes his ties to poetry in this play rather than the agonies he suffered in the Ashura World. Among the attachments that continue to bind him to the temporal world, the strongest is the fate of his poem “On the Flowers at my Native Place”:

Though the capital
at ripple-lapping Shiga
lies in ruined waste,
the mountain cherry blossoms
are the same as long ago.