

Chidori (Plover)

Ordered by his master, Tarokaja goes out to buy a cask of sake at an accustomed shop, where the shopkeeper won't sell a drop to him, knowing a long bill not yet paid. As usual, Tarokaja invents a trick, and starts talking of his recent trip to Tsushima Festival in Owari (Aichi Prefecture). First he talks of the local children catching plover, then of float-pulling, and then of horseback archery. At each time, he skillfully makes the shopkeeper participate in the acting of the story, and while the latter is acting in ecstasy, he makes away with a cask of sake.

Fujito

Sasaki Moritsune, a retainer of Minamoto-no Yoritomo, was granted the land of Kojima in Bizen (Okayama Prefecture), as he had defeated enemies in battle at Fujito (1184 A.D.) and traveled to the land as governor.

On arrival he announces to the inhabitants that whoever wishes to indict someone may present themselves. In answer to the announcement appears an old woman who complains in deep sadness that her son was killed by Moritsune and implores him to return her son to her. Moritsune rejects her at first, but as she keeps on accusing him of treating her son unfairly, he eventually acknowledges his fault in killing her fisherman son for the purpose of keeping solely in his hand the secret knowledge of the sandbank which the fisherman told him lay between Kojima and the mainland, and over which sandbank his soldiers and horses were able to cross the strait. He apologizes to her for having killed her innocent son and promises that he will perform a memorial service for him, and that the victim's family will be well taken care of.

In the second act when Moritsune is holding a memorial service for the repose of the dead son, his ghost appears before him and bitterly criticizes the warrior's thankless return for his great service. But soon the prayers for his salvation working wonders upon him, his resentment is dispelled and his wandering in the world of sorrow comes to an end. He attains Buddhahood.

The story is taken from *Heike-monogatari*. The mother's grief and complaint against the feudal lord's cruelty is repaid with her son's salvation. The play is chosen as a fitting tribute to Mother's Day, a red-letter day in Japan, to praise her love and care of her son.

(Takao Saijo)