

Ichō: Kakitsubata

The singing of the final section of *Kakitsubata* ("The Iris")
to the accompaniment of a 'big drum'.

The Story of "Kakitsubata": when a travelling priest stops at Yatsushashi in the province of Mikawa (present-day Aichi prefecture), the spirit of Iris appears before him as a simple young girl of locality and tells a tale of tender passions between Ariwara-no-Narihira (825-880) and Empress Takako. That evening while he is falling asleep, Iris appears in the bright robe ('karakoromo') of Takako, with Narihira's *kammuri* ('headgear') on—symbolizing that she appears in the form of Narihira, the Bodhisattva of poetry and dance—and narrates how he was first granted with the *kammuri*, and then obliged by ill fortune to travel eastwards, eventually arriving at Yatsushashi, where he composed a famous waka-poem on Iris. That many an account of females he met with is given in the *Ise-monogatari*, but that he himself is the Bodhisattva of poetry and dance travelling from above to save the world. Then Iris performs a dance of joy and, at daybreak, fades away into air.

Noh: Ataka

Minamoto-no-Yoshitsune (1159-89), who is highly honoured for driving the Heike clan out of the capital to their destruction, but who is hunted by his brother Yoritomo (1147-99) after incurring his displeasure, is on his travel towards Hiraizumi for the protection and safety that Fujiwara-no-Hidehira (?-1187) will be sure to offer him. He and his followers, including Benkei, are disguised as travelling monks, and arrive at the Ataka Barrier in the province of Kaga (present-day Ishikawa Prefecture), newly built for the purpose of apprehending them.

Here at Ataka, Lord Togashi, keeper of the barrier, harbours a doubt about the group and wonders if they are only masquerading as monks. When questioned, however, Benkei immediately produces a scroll, in which we are supposed to believe the objective of raising religious funds authorized by the Todaiji-temple is written, and reads it with great fluency. And when Yoshitsune, who is bringing up the rear, is stopped by Togashi and told to remain behind, Benkei snatches away the young man's staff and beats him violently, saying he alone lags behind so that all the others fall under suspicion. Taken aback but his doubts thoroughly cleared up, Togashi lets them pass.

Later when they are taking a rest, Togashi comes up to them with a gift of *sake* and apologizes for his rude behaviour. They all relax and enjoy the feast, but Benkei, not accepting his apology and gift wholeheartedly, keeps watch even while performing a dance of gratitude. As soon as the dance is over he urges them to leave the place quickly to get themselves out of range of Togashi's pursuers.

(Takao Saijo)