

## Uwo-Zekkyō (The Fisherman Monk's Preaching)

A fisherman, who is fed up with his long years of catching and killing fish, has turned monk and travels to the capital to enjoy the famous sights he has never seen. On his way he meets a person who is looking for a monk to perform a religious service for his newly built family shrine. The fisherman, when courted, accepts the service expecting that a good meal and certain remuneration will be offered in return. But although he has become a monk overnight, he can hardly read the scripture; his single specialty lies in the field of fish. Therefore he starts filling in the names of fish wherever sounds in the scripture seem similar. The patron listens to him for a while, but soon finds that it is nothing other than the endless list of fish in all their enormous variety, and becomes infuriated.

## Kiyotsune

Kiyotsune (1163-83) was the third son of Taira-no-Shigemori (1138-79), and a grandson of Kiyomori (1118-81), the first courtier of a warrior family and chief minister of the government in late Heian Period. The noh is based on a touching story recorded in *The Heike Monogatari*.

Awazu-no-saburo, faithful retainer of Kiyotsune, visits his lord's wife in the capital bringing with him a lock of his hair, saying that he drowned himself at Yanagi-ga-Ura in the province of Bizen (present-day Ōita Prefecture) and that he left it as a keepsake for her. She bears a grudge against her husband as he had faithfully promised to see her again, but without fulfilling his promise he took his life away. She therefore returns the keepsake to Saburo since, as she says, it sorely increases her sorrow just to look at. While she sobs herself to sleep, he appears in her dream with his famed bamboo flute in his hand and accuses her for returning his keepsake. His wife, however, reproaches her husband for having committed suicide. The ghost of Kiyotsune relates how the tragic fall of the Heike came as the oracle of Usa Hachiman Shrine had foretold; how he chose to drown himself instead of exposing himself to ignominious death; and how he underwent agonies in the strife-torn world of Asura where there were ceaseless battles and torments. After he has explained that he was finally purified from all anxieties through invoking Amitabha at the moment of death, and entered Nirvana, the ghost disappears.

The entrance of the *shite* on the stage, while his wife sobs herself to sleep, follows a particular stage-tradition preserved in the Kongo school of Noh ("hikō-no-deha"). The chorus sings out in a low tone, "Sleepless, her longing grows ever stronger," and repeats the same verse in a much lower tone to reinforce the atmosphere of stage, when the flute player, looking towards the curtain, starts producing sound (accompanied by no other musical instruments). Drawn out by the sound of the flute, the *shite* quietly appears on the bridge-way. When the flute stops, the *shite* stops and listens to its lingering sound. The flute starts again, and he too starts moving forward, thus coming on to the stage, where he begins singing. A particularly sophisticated technique is required from both the *shite* and the flute player for the successful staging of this scene.

(Takao Saijo)