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Maibayashi: *Takasago*

Performance, with chorus and musicians, of the last scene of *Takasago* by Shite, God of Sumiyoshi in his original holy manifestation. Up till now, he is a partner of an old woman, but after having crossed the Bay of Naniwa from Aioi to Sumiyoshi and alighted on the famed pine tree, he is now a young and energetic god, praying while giving various dances for a long and splendid reign of the country, and for the safety and happiness of his people.

A Kelp-Seller

A lord, granted the right to use a surname and wear a sword, leaves home for visiting a famous festival in Kyoto. As all servants are out at work, he is obliged to pick up a sword-bearer as his travelling companion on his way. He soon finds a kelp-seller on his way to Kyoto, and without much ceremony the lord asks if he may grant him a favor. The peddler replies that a lord may have no business with a kelp-seller, but if it is possible in his humble life to be of service, he may be at his service. The lord thanks him for his laudatory response.

All at once he starts talking of his need of a sword bearer. The peddler politely refuses his offer of help. The lord gets angry and says, with hand on hilt, that a peddler refuses to offer what a warrior has humbled himself to ask. An immediate answer comes from behind that he will, but the lord's constant mockery on his sword-bearing manner is quite annoying. Calling him "Taro-kaja," the lord is triumphant, but the enraged peddler is not behindhand with his retaliation. Soon gaining the upper hand over the lord by threatening his life with a sword, he asks if he does not abandon his small sword. The lord says he may part with anything but a soldier's pride; yet as soon as he starts drawing a sword, there is no knowing what may happen. The lord starts advertising the fame of good taste of the Wakasa-kelp, first in the manner of Noh-play chanting, followed by the Joruri manner with occasional beatings of a three-stringed guitar, and finally by adapting them to popular rhymes. After poking fun at him in this way, the peddler slowly runs off with two swords under his arm, followed by the duped lord.

*Kinuta* ("The Fulling Block")

The heroine of the play is the wife of a feudal lord of Kyushu, the Lord of Ashiya. He has been up to Miyako for three years for the purpose of settling his personal lawsuit in vain. During these long years, not a single tidings has been sent from him, so that his wife has suffered from unusual sorrow and dejection, thinking that she might have been abandoned. Here a young maid named Yugiri comes home with a message that his lordship will at last be expected to come home at the end of the year.

She is much grieved at the news, it is true, but the thought that she will meet him, if she patiently waits, revives her hope. In the stillness of cold autumn nights, she hears, from afar, sounds of women beating cloth on a cloth-block. And when she remembers an ancient tale of Sobu (206 BC-24 AD), who, as envoy at a faraway region, would beat cloth at night in the hope that the sounds would carry his love and tenderness to his wife and children at home, she starts beating cloth. The sounds of beating cloth in the stillness of night, with occasional sobs and lamentations followed, are doleful to hear, yet she endures all this for one blissful moment of reunion.

But again from her husband a message arrives that he is unable to fulfill his promise even at the end of the year. Crushed by sorrow and disappointment, she falls ill, and dies eventually.

Hearing of her death, the Lord of Ashiya hurries home. He laments the death of his wife and regrets his ungratefulness towards her. He performs at home a birch-bow ritual to call up his wife's spirit in order to express his due apology. His wife appears as a ghost and unburdens herself to him of her complaints, but at the same time describes the torments of Hell she deserves because she dies of jealousy and resentment. Soon, however, the chanting of *the Lotus Sutra* transforms her agony and grief into knowledge and enlightenment, and released from sufferings, she finds eternal rest.

Takao Saijo