The story of Taira Atsumori, a youthful warrior killed during the battles between the Heike (or Taira) and the Genji (Minamoto) in the twelfth century, has been retold in numerous genres over the centuries: medieval biwa players recited the *The Tale of the Heike* version of his life; noh and kōwaka actors selected and revised elements of the tale to suit their own aesthetic and political purposes; and playwrights for the puppets and kabuki radically recontextualized the story to meet the expectations of Edo-period audiences. Noh, kōwaka, and kabuki versions of Atsumori’s death are presented in this anthology to illustrate how the different genres mold their materials to accomplish their goals.

Zeami’s noh play *Atsumori* emphasizes both the tragic end of the aristocratic Taira clan, reduced to living as humble seafolk, and the accomplishments of the young Atsumori, renowned as both a musician and a brave warrior. (Another noh play, *Ikuta Atsumori* by Komparu Zempō [1454–1532?], has the ghost of Atsumori appear to his son and describe his suffering after death.) As a child, Zeami received the patronage of the highest-ranking warrior of the time, the shogun Ashikaga Yoshimitsu, and the tutelage of a major poet, Nijō Yoshimoto, so it is not surprising that his works promote the medieval concept of *bumbu*, the combination of artistic and martial skills that came to be the mark of the ideal warrior.

In this play, Atsumori is depicted as an accomplished flutist and is compared through skillful allusions, with the ninth-century poet Ariwara no Yukihira and the fictional Prince Genji, both of whom were exiled at Suma, the setting of the noh play. In addition, the play enhances the stature of the lower classes (explicitly of grass cutters but implicitly of lowly actors as well) by arguing that they too have artistic talents. An effective parallel is drawn between the grass cutters in act 1 and the Taira clansmen in act 2. The play advocates a social message—don’t envy your superiors or despise your inferiors, for in this topsy-turvy world, those at the top may en
up at the bottom, and vice versa—and the Buddhist concept of nondualism—opposi-
tives are equivalents; enemies indeed are friends.

Atsumori is the most elegant of the sixteen works currently included in the small
category of ghost-of-warrior plays (shura mono). It includes three danced sections:
the kuse, sung in the melodic mode and danced in the feminine mode, combines
grace with melancholy; the dance to instrumental music (either a medium-tempo
dance or a male dance, depending on the school of the shite) expresses vitality tem-
pered by refinement; and the final dance, performed in the martial mode to dynam-
ic song, portrays battle, death, and the resolution of fate in a forceful, rhythmic man-
ner. The stick drum is not used for this play.

Most of the plays in the warrior category feature men who lost their lives in the
Gempei wars in the twelfth century. Only a few are about victors—Yashima is a
good example. Among the defeated-warrior plays, Tadanori is similar in theme and
setting to Atsumori. Ebira depicts the suffering of a deceased warrior in the realm of
the asura, where ghosts are condemned to constant battle. Sanemori reveals the
pride of an old man going off to battle; Tomoe stars a female warrior; and Kiyotsune
explores misunderstandings between a warrior and his wife. The category is small
but significant, for it both reflects and helps define the image of the warrior that was
so important to medieval Japan.

This translation and many of the notes are based on Yokomichi and Omote
1960, and the stage directions reflect Kita school practices. The aikyōgen text is
from Sanari 1931. Zeami drew on The Tale of the Heike for the basic story and in-
corporated many images from The Tale of Genji, as filtered through the waka and
renga traditions.
CHARACTERS
SHITE: in act 1, a grass cutter without a mask; in act 2, the ghost of Atsumori
TSURE: two or three other maskless grass cutters
WAKI: Renshō (or Rensei), the priestly name of Kumagae (or Kumagai) no Jirō
Naozane, the man who killed Atsumori in battle
AI: a local man

MUSICIANS
Chorus of eight or ten members
A flute and two hand drums

ACT 1
Shidai entrance music  To the music of the hand drums and the flute, the waki,
dressed as a priest, enters the bridgeway and moves slowly to the shite spot.

Shidai  Congruent song in the melodic mode with sparse drum accompaniment,
the waki faces the pine tree painted on the back wall of the stage.

WAKI:
Awake to awareness, the world's but a dream,
awake to awareness, the world's but a dream,
one may cast it aside—is this what is Real?¹

Jitori  Chanted quietly and pitched low, in noncongruent rhythm.

CHORUS:
Awake to awareness, the world's but a dream,
one may cast it aside—is this what is Real?

Nanori  Intoned speech with no accompaniment; the waki faces front.

WAKI: I am Kumagae no Jirō Naozane, a resident of Musashi, who has renounced
this world and taken the priestly name Renshō. I did this because of the deep
remorse I felt at having killed Atsumori. Now I am going to Ichinotani to pray
for the repose of his soul.²

Ageuta  He continues to face front, to melodic song congruent with drum
accompaniment.

WAKI:
Departing the capital as clouds part

Brief instrumental interlude (uchikiri).

departing the capital as clouds part,

¹. The confusion between dream and reality (yume and utsuru) is a common metaphor for the illusory and transient nature of this life. Here, in the thematic opening song (shidai), the waki quesses whether simply taking religious vows is enough to allow one to attain enlightenment.

². Ichinotani is the place on the Japan Sea near Suma where Kumagae killed Atsumori. It is located in present-day Kobe.
the moon too travels southward,
a small wheel rolling toward
Yodo; Yamazaki soon passed;

Brief instrumental interlude.

then the ponds of Koya, Ikuta River,

Takes a few steps to indicate travel.

Suma Bay, where “waves surge beside us”,
at Ichinotani I have arrived,

Takes a few steps to indicate his arrival.

I have arrived at Ichinotani

Tsukizerifu  Intoned speech without accompaniment, the waki still facing front.

Waki: How quickly I’ve reached Ichinotani in the province of Tsu. Scenes from
the past come to mind as if present. (Hands together in a prayer gesture) Hail,
Amida Buddha. (Turns slightly to the right) What’s that? I hear the sound of a
flute coming from that high meadow. (Faces front) I think I’ll wait for the
flutist and ask him to tell me something about this place.

Shidai entrance music  The shite and two or three tsure costumed as humble grass
cutters enter along the bridgeway. They are unmasked, and each carries a bamboo
pole with grass attached. They proceed to the front of the stage and form two lines
[figure 2.7].

3 This is the first of many phrases in this play taken from the “Suma” chapter of The Tale of Genji.
Shidai  The shite and tsure face each other and sing the following melodic song to sparse, congruent drum accompaniment.

**SHITE and TSURE:**
The grass cutter’s flute adds its voice,
the grass cutter’s flute adds its voice
to the wind blowing over the meadows.

**SASHI**  The shite faces front, to non-congruent, melodic song [figure 2.8].

**SHITE:**
The “man who cuts grass on that hill”\(^4\) makes his way through the fields in the gathering dusk; it’s time to go home.

**SHITE and TSURE**  (*Facing each other again*):
Was his way home, too, beside the Suma Sea?
How limited the path we tread entering the hills, returning to the shore; how miserable the lowly lives we lead.

Brief instrumental interlude.

**SAGEUTA**  Continuing to face each other.

**SHITE and TSURE:**
“If anyone should ask after me,
my reply would speak of lonely grief

*Brief instrumental interlude.*

**SAGEUTA**
here at Suma Bay
where brine drips from seaweed.”\(^5\)
Should anyone learn who I am,

---

4. A line from the *Shūshi*, poem 567, by Hitomaro, in which the speaker asks that the grass not be cut, so that it can serve as feed for the horse of an expected lover. Another version of the poem appears in the *Manyōshū* as poem 1291.

5. A variation on poem 962 in the *Kokinshū*, by Ariwara no Yukihiira.
Brief instrumental interlude.

should anyone learn who I am,
then I, too, would have a friend.
Such wretched seafolk we’ve become that
“even dear ones are grown estranged.”

Brief instrumental interlude.

We live our lives, such as they are,
yielding to misery, we exhaust our days,
The shite goes to the shite spot while the tsure line up in front of the chorus.
yielding to misery, we exhaust our days.

Mondō The waki stands at the waki spot, faces the shite, and speaks.

Waki: Hello there! There’s something I’d like to ask you grass cutters.

Shite: Are you speaking to us? What is it you want?

Waki: Was one of you playing the flute just now?

Shite: Yes. One of us was playing.

Waki: It was exquisite! And all the more exquisite because such music is not expected from men in your position.

Shite: You say it’s unexpected from men in our position. People should neither envy superiors nor despise inferiors, or so it is said.

Tsure (Chanting):
“Foresters’ songs, shepherds’ pipes” is a set phrase;
grass cutters’ flutes and woodsmen’s songs

Shite and Tsure:
are well-known topics in poetry;
bamboo flutes have widespread fame.
Do not think it strange.

Kakeai Congruent song in the melodic mode to quiet drum accompaniment.

Waki:
Indeed there is sense in what you say.
Those “foresters’ songs and shepherds’ pipes”

Shite:
are the flutes of grass cutters
Waki:
and the songs of woodsmen

6. An allusion to the Japanese preface to the Kokinshū, which states that even close friends desert those who fall in status.

7. A phrase from a Chinese poem by Ki no Seimei that appears as poem 559 in the Wakan rōei-shū: “When the sun sets on mountain roads/the sounds of foresters’ songs (shōka) and shepherds’ pipes (bokuteki) fill the ear./When the birds return to valley nests/the tints of bamboo smoke and pine mist obscure the vision.” The sinicized terms shōka and bokuteki are replaced in the next line in the play with the Japanese terms ashikari no fue (grass cutters’ flutes) and kikori no uta (woodsmen’s songs).
SHITE:
“passing through this bitter world, a melody”

WAKI:
to sing

SHITE:
to dance,

WAKI:
to blow,

SHITE:
to play.

Brief instrumental interlude.

Ageuta Melodic song in a higher pitch.

CHORUS:
We lead our lives

The shite faces front and spreads his arms.
guided by discerning hearts that fancy,

Brief instrumental interlude; the waki sits at the waki spot.
guided by discerning hearts that fancy
bamboo flutes: Tender Branch, Broken Cicada,
such names as these are numerous.

The shite moves forward slightly.
The flute the grass cutter plays
also has a name:
know it as Green Leaf.
At water's edge near Sumiyoshi

The shite circles the stage to the left, and the three tsure quietly exit up the bridgeway.
one would find Korean flutes;
here at Suma one might say
seafolk play Charred Stick,
seafolk play Charred Stick.

Kakeai Intoned speech, no accompaniment.

8. This phrase, ukiyo o wataru hitofushi, was used in the kusemai Saikoku kudari, composed by a poet known as Tamarin, to describe the songs of female entertainers. Atsumori borrows other phrases from this kusemai.

9. Flutes and other valuable instruments were often named. According to The Tale of the Heike, Tender Branch (sreda) was the name of the flute Atsumori carried with him to his death; however, other sources claim that the flute was called Green Leaf (aoba).

10. Sumiyoshi, in present-day Osaka, was a port frequented by ships from Korea. “Korean” flutes (koma-fue) are used in court music (gagaku).

11. Taki-sashi. The Suma seafolk burned firewood to boil down brine for salt. There is a reference in book 10 of the Jikkinshō, a thirteenth-century anthology of tales, to a flute called Charred Head (kashira-taki).
WAKI (Speaking to the shite from the waki spot): How strange. All the other grass cutters have left, yet you remain. Why is that?
SHITE: Even you ask why? Drawn by the power of your voice above the evening waves, I have come to request ten Hail Amidas. Say them for me, please.
WAKI: Ten Hail Amidas is an easy thing to grant. For whom should I pray?
SHITE: To be honest, I am related to Atsumori.
WAKI: You're related, you say? How nostalgic that makes me, he says, putting his palms together (clasps his rosary between his hands), Hail Amida Buddha.
SHITE (The shite kneels, and they chant together): “Should I attain enlightenment, no being in all the world
WAKI: who calls my name shall be cast aside.”

Uta. The shite looks at the waki and lowers his hands.

CHORUS:
Please cast me not aside.
Though a single cry should suffice,
each day, each night, you pray.
How fortunate I am, my name

Looking down, he stands and then goes toward the shite spot.

unspoken, yet clear, at dawn and at dusk too
you hold services for the soul of one

He turns and looks intently at the waki.

whose name is mine, he says

At the shite spot, he circles right.

as his figure fades from sight,

Facing front, he spreads his arms to indicate his disappearance.

as his figure fades from sight.

He walks quietly up the bridgeway and out under the raised curtain.

Kyōgen Interlude

Mondó  The aikyōgen, who has entered inconspicuously and seated himself at the kyōgen spot at the back of the bridgeway, now rises and moves to the shite spot.

AI: I am a person who lives at Suma Bay. Today I’ve come to amuse myself by watching the boats go by. Hm! There’s a priest I’ve never seen before. Where are you from?
WAKI: I’m a priest from the capital. Do you live nearby?
AI: Yes, indeed I do.
WAKI: Then please come over here. I’ve something I’d like to ask you.
AI (Goes to center stage and sits): Certainly. What is it you want to know?

12. Based on a passage in the Kammuryōjukyō, a basic sutra of Pure Land Buddhism that describes meditations centering on Amida.
WAKI: It's a bit unusual. I've heard that this is the harbor where the battle between the Heike and the Genji was fought. Could you please tell me what you know about the death of the Heike nobleman Atsumori?

AI: That's certainly an unexpected request. Those of us who live around here don't know much about such things; however, since you've come out of your way to inquire, what can I do? I don't really know much, but I'll tell what I've heard.

WAKI: Thank you.

Katari In stylized speech, facing the audience.

AI: Sometimes in the autumn of Jōei 2 [1853] when the Heike were forced from the capital by Kiso Yoshinaka, they retreated to this spot. However, the Genji dividing their sixty thousand cavalry into two groups, attacked fiercely from both left and right. The Heike fled, scattering here and there. Among them was the young Atsumori, son of Tsunemori, chief of the Office of Palace Repairs. Atsumori had reached the shore, intending to board a ship, only to realize that he had left his precious flute, known as Little Branch, in the main camp. Not wanting it to fall into enemy hands, he went back to fetch it.

Upon retrieving his flute, Atsumori raced again to the shore, only to discover that all the boats, the imperial barque and the troopships, had already put out to sea. Atsumori's horse was strong, so he urged it into the sea. Just then, however, a resident of Musashi Province, Kumagae no Jirō Naozane, beckoned Atsumori with his fan, and he turned back to face this enemy. They fought in the waves, then grappled on the shore, finally falling from their horses. Kumagae, who was unusually strong, managed to come out on top and was about to cut off Atsumori's head when he glimpsed the face beneath the helmet. He saw the powdered brow and blackened teeth of a youth of fifteen or sixteen.

"A pity! What an elegant warrior. If only I could spare him." He looked around. Doi and Kajiwara were fast approaching with a dozen other warriors.

"I would like to spare you," he explained, "however, as you can see, a group of my allies is almost upon us. I will kill you and then pray for your soul." Thus he took Atsumori's head.

Examining the corpse, he found a flute in a brocade bag. When he made his presentation before the general, people remarked on how cultivated the dead man must have been. Even among the nobility, few would concern themselves with a flute in such a crisis. The victors' armored sleeves were dampened by their tears. Eventually the youth was identified as Atsumori, the young son of Tsunemori.

Kumagae is said to have retired from the world to pray for Atsumori's enlightenment. Since he didn't spare Atsumori when he might have, this seems like a pack of lies to me. If that Kumagae should come here, we would kill him to prove our loyalty to Atsumori.

That's about all that I've heard. Why do you ask me about it? It seems a bit strange.

WAKI: You were kind to tell me this tale. Why should I conceal anything? I was Kumagae no Jirō Naozane. Now I have become a priest and taken the name Renshō. I have come here to pray for the repose of Atsumori's soul.
What? You're that lord Kumagae? Unwittingly I've told you these things. Please forgive me. A force for good is said to be a force for evil too. Maybe it works both ways. I hope that you will pray for Atsumori's soul.

Don't be upset. I have come only to pray for his soul. I would like to remain a while and read some efficacious sutras. I shall pray diligently.

If that's the case, I can give you lodging.

Thank you. That would be helpful.

At your service.

He goes to the kyōgen spot and sits. After the shite has made his entrance, the kyōgen walks quietly up the bridgeway.

ACT 2

Machi Cal Chanted in the melodic mode as he kneels at the waki spot.

Machi

Spreading dew-drenched grass to make a bed,
short instrumental interlude.

spreading dew-drenched grass to make a bed,
now that the sun has set and night fallen
I'll pray to Amida that Atsumori
may yet achieve enlightenment, that he
may yet achieve enlightenment, I'll pray.

The shite, now costumed as the warrior Atsumori, enters to

instrumental music.

Go to en Standing at the shite spot facing front.

what: Back and forth to Awaji plowers
fly their cries awaken one
who guards the pass at Suma.”

What is your name?

Ensai Sings with the shite standing at the shite spot and the waki sitting at the

note spot.

look here, Renshō,
Atsumori has arrived.

What: How very strange!
Beating on the gong, performing holy rites,
I have not had a moment to doze, and yet
Atsumori appears before me.
Surely this must be a dream.

9 The passage draws on poem 270 in the Kinyōshō, by Mitiyamato Kanemasa (fl. early twelfth century). In the “Suma” chapter of The Tale of Genji, the exiled hero also is awakened by the cries of plovers. For the sound of plovers is a metaphor for the voice of the praying priest.
SHITE:
Why need it be a dream?
To clear the karma left from this waking world
I make my appearance here.

WAKI:
This can’t be. It’s said,
“A single Hail Amida erases countless sins”
I’ve offered ceaseless prayers
to clear away all sinful hindrances.
What karma can remain from this rough sea of life,

SHITE:
so deep my sins, please wash them away,

WAKI:
and in doing so, my own salvation seek.

SHITE:
Your prayers affecting both our future lives—

WAKI:
once enemies

SHITE:
now instead

WAKI:
in Buddha’s Law

SHITE:
made friends (takes a step toward the waki).

Uta The shite spreads his arms facing front;
the melodic song is congruent with the accompanying drum rhythms.

CHORUS:
Now I see!
“Cast aside an evil friend,
The shite points at the waki with his left hand
and moves toward him.

beckon near a enemy who’s good”;
The shite flips his sleeve over his left arm and
stares intently at the waki.

that refers to you!
How fortunate, how very fortunate!

Changing the mood, the shite circles left to the shite spot.

And now, with my confessional tale
let us while the night away,
At the shite spot, he turns to face the waki.

let us while the night away.

Kuri The shite goes to center stage and sits on a stool provided by the stage attendant. The song is noncongruent and elaborately embellished [figure 2.9].

Spring blossoms mounting tips of trees inspire ascent toward enlightenment;
the autumn moon sinking to ocean's depths symbolizes grace descending to mankind.

Sashi All remain seated.

SHITE:

Even though the clan put forth new sprouts, kinsmen branching out in all directions,

CHORUS:

"our glory was that of the short-lived rose of sharon."¹⁴
How difficult to find encouragement toward good—
good hard flintstones engender sparks
whose lights are gone before one knew they were—
the lives of humans flash by like this.

SHITE:

Yet those high up inflict pain on people down below;
those living lives of luxury are unaware of arrogance.

Brief instrumental interlude.

Kuse The shite stands and dances during the following segment sung in the melodic mode, congruent with the drum accompaniment. The flute enters midway.

CHORUS:

It happened that the Heike
ruled the world some twenty years,
truly a fleeting generation,¹⁵
passed in the space of a dream.
"That famous autumn, leaves"¹⁶

Move forward slightly.

lured by "winds from the four directions,"¹⁷
scattered here and there in leaflike

¹⁴ Based on a couplet by Po Chü-i included in the Wakan rōeishō as poem 294: "The pine has a thousand years, yet in the end it dies; the rose of sharon a single day, to enjoy its glory."

¹⁵ The Nago version of The Tale of the Heike states: "A generation (hito mukashi) used to last thirty-three years, but now it's only twenty-one." It was twenty-three years from the first Heike uprising of 1160 until the Heike Rōjō in 1183.

¹⁶ Based on the Kakuichi version of The Tale of the Heike, book 7, "Now it was clear to every eye that adversity and happiness follow the same path, that prosperity and decline are as a turn of the hand. Who could help feeling pity? Once, in Hōgen, they had flourished like springtime blossoms; now, in late autumn leaves" (McCullough 1988:246).

¹⁷ This phrase and eight others in the kuse were listed in an early handbook by Yoshimoto Nijō (1312–28) as appropriate phrases (yorii) from the "sumai" chapter of The Tale of Genji to use in linked verse (Goi 1931:45–66; Wada 1976:5). The kuse also borrows from the kusumai Saikoku kudari.
Moves his fan in a sweeping gesture and looks to the right.

boats bobbing on the waves, we sleep,
not even in our dreams returning home—
"caged birds longing for cloudy realms,
Goes toward the corner.

ranks of homing geese broken, scattered,\(^{18}\)
uncertain skies, aimless travel gowns tied
Looks up at the sky and circles left.

and layered sunsets, moonrises, months, a year
journeys by, returns to spring
here at Ichinotani secluded for a while
Moves from the back to center stage.

here at Suma Shore we live.

SHITE:

From the hills behind, winds roar down

Opens his fan and raises it before his face.

CHORUS:

to coastal fields keenly cold

our boats draw up, no day or night without

Moves forward.

the cries of plovers,

our sleeves too

Twirls his sleeve over his arm to make a pillow and kneels.

dampened by the waves that
drench our rocky pillows,
in seaside shacks we huddle together

Stands and goes to the corner.

befriended only by Suma folk—
bent like wind-bent pines on the strands

Circles left to the shite spot.

of evening smoke rising from the fires—

Waving his fan in his left hand, the shite moves forward.

brushwood, it’s called,

Holding out his fan parallel to the floor.

---

18. Based on book 10 of the Kakuichi version of The Tale of the Heike, where the phrase refers to Heike clan’s Bohemian poet, Shigezane, who was captured by the Genji: “Must not his thoughts, fiery as a bird longing for the clouds, find themselves afloat on the southern seas a thousand leagues distant, not his feelings, sad as those of a homing goose lost from its fellow?” (McCullough 1988:331).
this stuff piled up to sleep upon.

Goes to the corner.

Our worries, too, pile up in rustic Suma,
where we're forced to play out our lives

Pointing his fan to the right, he looks up.

becoming simple Suma folk—

Circles to the left.

such is our clan's fate; how forlorn we are!

Stops at backstage center.

Kakeai The chanting changes from the melodic to the dynamic mode.

SHITE:

And then, on the night of the sixth day of the second month,
Tsunemori, my father, gathered us together
to enjoy ourselves with song and dance.

WAKI:

And your entertainment that night,
the elegant flute music from your encampment,
was clearly heard by us on the opposing side.19

SHITE:

It was indeed Atsumori,
awaiting the end, his bamboo flute

WAKI:

accompanying a variety of

SHITE:

ballads and songs,

WAKI:

many voices

Issai The shite circles right to the shite spot.

CHORUS:

arise, creating steady cadences.

Chu no mai or otoko-mai The shite performs a sprightly yet elegant dance to the
music of the flute and hand drums. This dance, unusual in a warrior play, empha-
sizes Atsumori's artistic sensitivity. The context also foregrounds the flute music,
which is the normal accompaniment to the dance [figure 2.10, left].

SHITE (Standing at the shite spot, he raises his fan [figure 2.10, right]):

And so it is,
the royal barque sets forth

Brief instrumental interlude.

19 This statement and the following description of Atsumori's death are based on the account given
Figure 2.10. During the first part of a long dance (chū-no-mai), the shite performs with his spread-tip fan (chûkei) closed. It is opened after the introductory segment of the dance, as in the photo on the left. In the right photo, the ghost of Atsumori uses his open fan to emphasize looking out to sea at the departing ships. (Courtesy of the Noh Research Archive of Musashino Women’s College.)

Noriji  The dynamic song becomes strongly rhythmical; it is congruent with the steady beats of the drums.

chorus:
and all the members of the clan

The shite stamps his feet.
board their ships to sail.

Making a sweeping point with his fan, he turns to the right.
Not wanting to be late
Goes to the front of the stage.

Atsumori races to the shore;
the royal barque and troopships, too,
have already put out to sea.
Rises his fan over his head and looks out into the distance.  
*Shite* (noncongruent): It’s hopeless! Reining in his horse  
Mimes pulling on the reins with his left hand.  
amidst the breakers, he stands bewildered.  
Waves his fan in a figure-eight pattern to indicate agitation.  
Chinori-ji The dynamic song is congruent with half-beat drum rhythms.  

**Chorus:**  
At that very moment  
The shite stamps his feet.  
from behind comes  
He turns and faces the bridgeway.  
Kimagae no Jirō Naozane.  
“Don’t flee!”  
Hurries to the shite spot.  
he shouts and charges.  
Atsumori too  
Moves quickly to center front.  
turns about his horse, and  
Reins in his horse and races backstage.  
in the breakers they draw swords  
Mimes drawing a sword (represented by his fan) and goes to the corner.\(^{20}\)  
and exchange blows, twice, thrice,  
Strikes with his fan.  
they are seen to strike;  
on horseback they grapple,  
Wraps his arms around himself.  
then fall onto the wave-swept shore,  
Twists around and kneels.  
one atop the other; finally  
struck down, Atsumori dies;  
holds his fan at his head and looks down.  
the wheel of fate turns, and they meet.  

---

\(^{20}\) In the Kanze school, the shite throws down his fan and draws his sword here.  
\(^{2}\) The ren of the priest’s name is written with the character for lotus.
Stands, goes to center back, and draws sword [figure 2.11].

"The enemy’s right here!"

Hurries toward the waki at the waki spot.

he cries and is about to strike.

Raises his sword to strike.

Returning good for evil,

Kneels.

the priest performs services and prays

Stands and returns to backstage.

that in the end they will be reborn together

Spreads his arms, moves toward the waki again, and drops his sword.

on a single lotus petal,

Circles to the corner.

and Renshō the priest\(^2\)

is an enemy no more.

Returns to the shite spot.

Please pray for my soul,

Makes a prayer gesture toward the waki.

please pray for my soul.


\(^2\) Renshō is a Buddhist monk, often portrayed in Noh plays as a divine figure who offers protection and guidance.

**Figure 2.11.** The ghost of Atsumori draws his sword to attack the waki, whom he recognizes as his former enemy, Kumagae. Here the fan represents a shield, and its design, a red sun amid waves, is emblematic of a defeated warrior (*make-shura*). (Courtesy of the Noh Research Archive of Musashino Women’s College.)

*Turns to face the bridgeway and performs closing stamps; then exits slowly.*