

Battle of Ichiotani (Ichinotani futaba gunki), had also collaborated a few years earlier in writing *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*, *Chūshingura*, and *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees*. He had completed the third act of *Ichinotani* when he died in September 1751. Other writers completed the remaining two acts, and the full play opened two months after his death. However, since the premier production, only the “Atsumori’s Camp” and “Suma Bay” scenes from the second act and “Kumagai’s Battle Camp” scene, which is translated here, from the third act have been staged.

**CHRONICLE OF THE BATTLE OF ICHINOTANI (ICHINOTANI
FUTABA GUNKI, 1751)**

Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani is a five-act history play written for the Toyotake puppet theater in Osaka. The first performance was in 1751 and was followed the next year by a kabuki version in both Osaka and Edo. The story concerns the twelfth-century struggle between the Genji (Minamoto) clan, which was led by Yoshitsune and Yoritomo, and the Heike (Taira) clan, which had close ties to the emperor. In the thirteenth-century military epic *The Tale of the Heike*, which is the original source of this story, Atsumori, a young Heike warrior, is slain by Kumagai, an older Genji warrior who wants to spare the young man’s life because Atsumori reminds him of his own son but is forced to slay him because his own troops are approaching. In the story’s reincarnation in the late medieval nō play *Atsumori*, the ghost of the slain Atsumori, who is the protagonist (*shite*), recalls and relives his struggle with Kumagai, who has become a priest, taking the Buddhist name Renshō. In the end, Kumagai, once Atsumori’s foe, becomes his spiritual ally and prays for his salvation. In *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani* the story has been completely recast, adding, in the manner of Edo drama, love relationships with women and a complex web of hidden obligations and ties. Kumagai, the Genji warrior, has been ordered by his superior, the Genji general Yoshitsune, to kill Atsumori, a young Heike warrior and the son of the emperor by Lady Fuji. Kumagai is in a deep dilemma, for earlier both his life and that of his wife Sagami were saved by Atsumori’s mother, Lady Fuji, who pardoned them for a serious transgression, but he must do his duty to his lord and the cause for which he is fighting. To satisfy both his commander Yoshitsune and his conscience, he substitutes the head of his own son Kojirō for that of Atsumori, whom he has taken prisoner. As it turns out, Yoshitsune also has hidden obligations to the Heike, specifically to Yaheibyoe Munekiyo, who saved him and his brother Yoritomo as children and who appears in disguise here as Midaroku, an old woodcutter. In the end Yoshitsune pays back Munekiyo by returning Atsumori to the Heike.

Before the “Kumagai’s Battle Camp” scene, widely considered to be the most

dramatic scene in *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani*, Kumagai has already smuggled the real Atsumori off the battlefield and substituted his own son Kōjirō, whom he has disguised as Atsumori and decapitated. To carry the substitution (*migawari*) to its successful conclusion, however, Kumagai must deceive both his wife, Sagami, whom he wishes to console but cannot, and Lady Fuji, who thinks Kumagai has killed her son and wants to kill him for it. At the emotional climax of the scene, Yoshitsune inspects the severed head in a dramatic convention called *kubi jikken* (head viewing). The power of the drama derives in large part from the double roles that most of the main characters—Kumagai, Yoshitsune, Sagami, and Midaroku—must play simultaneously, resulting in considerable irony in the dialogue and in great tension between their outward behavior and inner feelings, appearance and fact. The tension and mixed emotions are intensified and complicated by the various obligations that the characters bear toward one another, particularly Kumagai toward Yoshitsune and Lady Fuji, Yoshitsune toward Midaroku, and Sagami toward Lady Fuji. The following is the kabuki version, which is very similar to the original jōruri text. It should be kept in mind that in the puppet theater, an evil character like Kajiwara is indicated by the puppet head, which cannot change, thereby making the distinction between good and evil characters absolute.

CHARACTERS

SAGAMI, Kumagai's wife, formerly in the service of Lady Fuji

GUNJI, Kumagai's family retainer

KOJIRŌ, the son of Sagami and Kumagai; the young warrior sacrificed to save Atsumori

LADY FUJI, a court lady, mother of Prince Atsumori, and consort of the emperor

ATSUMORI, a prince, the son of the emperor and Lady Fuji, who fought as a young Heike (Taira) warrior

KUMAGAI, Kumagai Jirō Naozane, a Genji (Minamoto) warrior in the service of Yoshitsune, father of Kōjirō, married to Sagami, and indebted to Lady Fuji

KAJIWARA, also known as Heiji Kagetaka, a retainer of Yoritomo, the Kamakura (Genji) shōgun; an evil man who threatens to reveal to Yoritomo Yoshitsune's kindness to Munekiyo/Midaroku (now a Heike warrior)

YOSHITSUNE, a Genji (Minamoto) general, the shōgun (Yoritomo)'s younger brother, and Kumagai's lord; saved by Yaheibyoe Munekiyo as a child

MIDAROKU, an old stonecutter in disguise, actually Yaheibyoe

Munekiyo, a Heike (Taira) warrior who once saved the lives of the infant Yoshitsune and his brother Yoritomo

Act 3, scene 3: Kumagai's Battle Camp

The scene is Kumagai's battle camp in Ichinotani, at Suma. The main room, raised and with an open veranda fronting it, faces the audience. A cherry tree in full bloom grows to the right, next to an official notice board that reads, "Here stands a rare double-flowering cherry tree from the south. If anyone cuts off a branch, his punishment, following the ancient case of the Maple Tree, shall be to cut off one finger for each branch cut. Second Month, 1184."

CHANTER (*singing to shamisen accompaniment*): Even the heavens turn. Some day will the moon shine over Suma Bay through clear skies? The Heike drift on waves off Yashima Island in the bay, while among the prospering Genji host, the peerless Kumagai, has established his camp in Ichinotani by Suma Bay, encompassing in its impenetrable palisade of felled trees a youthful tree in full bloom, known as Kumagai's cherry tree. Passersby, of whom some can read and some cannot, crowd about staring at the notice board, which forbids the cutting of a single flower.

FIRST FARMER: That's a fine cherry tree, isn't it? Look at the blossoms.

SECOND FARMER: Not the tree, look at the notice. The priest Benkei wrote it, they say. But I can't read one character.

THIRD FARMER: The tree is protected by General Yoshitsune. (*Puzzled*) "Cut off a branch of flowers, cut off a finger," it seems to say.

FOURTH FARMER: That scares me. Instead of a flower, cut off a finger? Sounds like they want our heads.

FIRST FARMER (*wide-eyed*): Just standing here I feel like I'm stepping on a tiger's tail!

SECOND FARMER: Quick as a wink . . .

THIRD FARMER: . . . before we break a branch . . .

ALL: . . . we had better leave! (*They hurry off right to loud drum*

beats.)

CHANTER (*singing to shamisen accompaniment*): Having traveled a long distance, Kumagai's wife, Sagami, approaches . . . (*Sagami, wearing a gold brocaded kimono and covered with a black traveling robe, enters, accompanied by a retainer and bearer.*) . . . immersed in thoughts of her son and her husband, she seeks out the palings of the battle camp and recognizes on the white curtains their family crest.

SAGAMI: We're here at last. (*To the retainer*) You may go ahead.

RETAINER: Attention inside!

CHANTER (*singing to shamisen accompaniment*): Hearing the noisy call, Gunji comes out. (*Gunji, the family retainer, enters, wearing a samurai's two swords.*)

GUNJI: Who approaches our master's gate? (*He is amazed to see Sagami.*) My lady, what are you doing at the battle camp?

SAGAMI: Ah, Gunji. You are looking well.

GUNJI (*bowing*): Thank you, Madam. But first you must come in. Please enter.

SAGAMI: If I may . . . (*The bearer helps Sagami remove her black traveling robe and replace it with another robe of gold brocaded silk.*) You may rest now.

RETAINER AND BEARER: Yes, my lady. (*Sagami climbs the short steps to the main room and sits in the place of honor to the left.*)

SAGAMI: Tell me, are my husband and son well?

GUNJI: Both are well, my lady.

SAGAMI: Please tell my husband I am here, Gunji.

GUNJI (*bowing*): Master has gone to the temple today, and Kojirō has not recently been seen with our lord. Aren't you tired from your long journey, my lady? Please lie down and rest. (*Sagami nods assent and is about to rise.*)

CHANTER (*singing to shamisen accompaniment*): As they are exchanging numerous greetings, Prince Atsumori's mother, the court lady Fuji . . . (*Alarm drums and cymbals sound. Lady Fuji runs onto the hanamichi, dressed in black and a straw hat low over her face. She carries a small dagger in her hand, ready for use. She looks anxiously behind her.*) . . . fleeing from the jaws of the tiger, hurries under falling blossoms toward the battle

camp. (*She runs under the cherry tree and leans against the gate. She poses as cherry blossoms fall.*)

FUJI (*calling through the gate*): Pursuers are close behind. Please hide me!

GUNJI (*startled, answers stiffly*): This is a camp at war. You won't find a safe place here.

SAGAMI (*compassionately*): Wait, Gunji. A woman understands a woman's plight . . . (*She goes to the gate. Opening it, she takes one quick look at Fuji before she hides her face.*) Ahh! Isn't it Lady Fuji?

FUJI (*cautiously looking out*): Your voice . . . is it Sagami? (*They joyously recognize each other. Sagami kneels politely before Fuji, formerly her mistress at the imperial court.*)

SAGAMI: Imagine meeting again unexpectedly . . .

FUJI: . . . after so long. You are well I hope . . .

SAGAMI: . . . and you? My!

FUJI: My!

TOGETHER: My, my!

SAGAMI: Please enter, my lady.

FUJI: Forgive me. If I may. (*Sagami places her hands delicately before her and bows low. She gestures politely for Fuji to enter.*)

CHANTER (*singing*): She is welcomed with an open heart. (*Fuji loosens her robe, goes up the steps, and sits in the place of honor at the left. Sagami kneels opposite her. After closing the gate, Gunji kneels behind his mistress and bows low.*)

GUNJI: Clap if I can be of service, my ladies.

CHANTER (*singing*): Gunji then rises and leaves. (*The two women look fondly at each other. Sagami glances to each side to see that they are alone, then bows.*) Sagami, at last, bows. . . .

SAGAMI (*warmly*): Truly, an age has passed like a dream since the time you lived in the palace, an intimate of the emperor, and I, infatuated with the warrior Satake Jirō, then on duty at the palace too, was forced to flee with him to the east. You could not know it, but it pleased me to hear that after you had conceived by his Majesty, you became engaged to Lord Tsunemori, chief minister of the Heike clan, and shared in the time of Heike power and prosperity. Then, when this war between Heike and Genji

scattered the Heike clan, I was worried for your safety. How relieved I am to see your ladyship's smiling face.

FUJI (*smiling*): Dearest Sagami, it is good to see you well. My, my. I heard you were carrying a child when you went away, and I do not even know if you gave birth to a girl or a boy. How is the child?

CHANTER (*singing*): Let two women meet even briefly and, happy in their tears, piled-up words tumble forth. Eyes glistening, Lady Fuji

. . .

FUJI: Humans cannot escape adversity. The son I gave birth to and raised to become a handsome youth, dear Atsumori, has been slain in battle, while my husband, out at sea off Yashima Island, has left me alone to face I cannot imagine what future! Can you understand my despair?

CHANTER: As she laments plaintively . . . (*The two women dab their eyes with their kimono sleeves.*)

SAGAMI (*bowing sympathetically*): No wonder you are upset. I will consult with my husband. Out of consideration for the kindness you have shown us in the past, please entrust your welfare to us. While my husband was a member of the imperial Northern Guard he was called Satake Jirō; now his name is Kumagai Jirō Naozane. He is well known, the commander of all samurai forces in Musashi Province.

CHANTER (*singing*): Hearing this, Lady Fuji . . .

FUJI: The warrior you married as Satake Jirō is now Kumagai Jirō?

SAGAMI (*modestly*): He is.

FUJI: This Kumagai Jirō is . . . your husband? (*Fuji rises on her knees wide-eyed then slowly sinks back.*)

CHANTER: . . . calms her shocked heart.

FUJI (*deceptively quiet*): Do you remember, dear Sagami, when your adultery was discovered at the palace and the emperor sentenced you to prison? It was I who interceded and enabled you to escape with Satake Jirō through the great gate at night?

SAGAMI (*warmly*): How could I forget your kindness?

FUJI: If you have not forgotten, then you will return that favor by helping me slay an enemy.

SAGAMI: Kill someone? Who?

FUJI (*looks at Sagami piercingly*): Your husband. Kumagai. (*Sagami recoils.*)

SAGAMI: Ehh? You harbor such anger?

FUJI: I do! (*She weeps.*) The man who killed Prince Atsumori is . . . your husband, Kumagai! (*Fuji falls forward weeping.*)

SAGAMI: Can this be true?

FUJI: Haven't you heard?

SAGAMI: I have just arrived after the long journey from the east. Now to hear your story . . . it is unbelievable! (*Trying to mollify Fuji*) Allow me to ask my husband when he returns if this is true.

CHANTER (*singing*): Struggling to speak through their tears . . .

SENTRY (*off, at the rear of the hanamichi*): Announcing Lord Kajiwara!

FUJI: Why should he come here?

SAGAMI (*worried*): He must not see you. Quickly . . . (*They rise. Sagami directs Fuji toward the small room at the left.*)

FUJI: When Kumagai returns . . .

SAGAMI: . . . I will find out the truth . . .

FUJI: . . . and if he is my son's slayer . . .

SAGAMI: . . . even though he is my husband, he is your enemy.

FUJI (*intensely*): Kill him without fail.

SAGAMI (*weak and close to tears*): You may . . . trust me.

FUJI: Then, dear Sagami . . . !

SAGAMI: Lady Fuji . . . ! (*Fuji goes into the small room at the left. Sagami closes the sliding doors and stands alone, upset.*)

CHANTER (*singing*): Entering immediately, Kajiwara seats himself in the place of honor. (*Drums play, indicating the entrance of an evil person. Kajiwara strides onto the hanamichi. He wears dark-colored battle dress: armor, leggings, straw sandals, and a samurai's two swords. His face is dark and cruel. Without ceremony he enters the room and sits at the left.*)

GUNJI (*bowing politely*): What can I do, my lord?

KAJIWARA (*rudely*): Call your master.

GUNJI: Master Kumagai Naozane went to offer prayers at the temple today. Be so kind as to entrust any message to me.

KAJIWARA: What? Kumagai's left camp? Agh! (*Shouting off*) Hey! Soldier! Bring in the old stonecutter!

SOLDIERS (*off, at the rear of the hanamichi*): Yes, my lord!

CHANTER (*singing*): Saying yes, they drag before Kajiwara the innocent-looking stonecutter Midaroku. (*Two soldiers bring Midaroku, bound with ropes, down the hanamichi and force him to the ground by the veranda. He is an old man and is wearing work clothes.*)

KAJIWARA: Well, old man, who ordered you to make a monument for Atsumori? Since all the Heike have been driven into the western seas, a two-faced Genji samurai must be your benefactor. Confess it! I'll torture you with boiling lead, slice you down the back, and rub salt in your wounds if you lie! Well, you old fool?

MIDAROKU (*a bit ironically*): Your accusation is absurd. I told you, Atsumori's spirit requested the grave marker. He placed the order and vanished. I don't care whether he had any interest in buying a monument to the Five Roads to Virtue, but it's the principle of the thing, and he didn't pay me a penny, principal or interest. At least I'd have borrowed his soul-fire as a night-light to work by if I'd known what he was up to. Should I send a bill to the devil? I can't shake money from a ghost in hell, so, believe my story or not, the best one you'll get this side of nirvana is that I did a favor for Atsumori's ghost. *Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu.*

CHANTER (*singing*): His words are as slippery as eels.

GUNJI: You can see that talking to him is like pounding nails into rice paste. Please rest inside for a while, sir.

KAJIWARA (*though furious, bides his time*): It's obvious who ordered you to carve the marker. When Kumagai returns, the three of us will have this out face to face! Take this fellow in! Gunji, lead the way!

CHANTER (*singing*): The old stonecutter is forcibly led away. Kajiwara is ushered into the inner room. . . . The sun is setting in the west when Sagami slides open the center doors to wait for her husband's late return. (*Sagami enters and crosses slowly to the center of the room.*)

SENTRY (*off, at the rear of the hanamichi*): The master has returned!

CHANTER: Does Kumagai Jirō Naozane, slayer of Atsumori in the flower of youth, understand life's impermanence? (*Kumagai appears on the hanamichi. He wears a formal kimono of white silk, covered by trousers and a vest made of royal brocade. A*

temple bell tolls. Deep in thought, head sunk on his chest, he slowly approaches the camp. Sagami, seeing him, kneels and bows very low.) Although he is a fierce warrior, he is capable of compassion, and returning home, his heart is full. *(He pauses and gazes at the Buddhist prayer beads grasped tightly in his hand. Slowly he crosses to the gate.)* He looks at his wife, Sagami . . . *(Angered that Sagami is there, he faces front, slaps his thigh, and strides up the steps into the room, where he immediately sits down.)* with stern displeasure and goes to sit without speaking. *(To distract his master, Gunji speaks immediately.)*

GUNJI *(bowing)*: Lord Kajiwara arrived a short time ago, wishing to discuss with you his investigation of the stonecutter Midaroku, whom he has brought with him. He is waiting in the inner room, Master.

CHANTER *(singing)*: He spins out the details.

KUMAGAI: What is he investigating, I wonder? In any case, see that he is offered saké. *(Still trying to protect his mistress, Gunji hesitates.)* Serve him saké, I say. What are you waiting for? Go!

CHANTER *(singing)*: Severely scolded, he has no choice. . . . *(When Gunji rises to leave, Sagami pulls on his sleeve to hold him. Frightened, he politely frees himself and goes out to the center doors.)* . . . Sagami pleads with her eyes, and even though Gunji leaves, his heart remains behind. Watching him go, Kumagai speaks . . .

KUMAGAI *(harshly, to cover his grief)*: You! Wife! What do you mean coming here? When I left home you were strictly warned not to disturb us, but you have paid no attention. You also know women are forbidden to enter a battle camp! Insolent, brazen woman!

CHANTER *(singing)*: Before his angry display, Sagami hesitantly . . .

SAGAMI *(bowing politely)*: Your rebuke is justified, dear husband, but I worried so much about Kojirō going into his first battle that I couldn't sleep. So, wondering whether I would walk only a mile and learn how he is or walk five miles and have word from him, I found I had traveled seven miles down the road, then ten, and, before I knew it, one hundred miles . . . until I was in the capital. *(Hoping to disarm him, she laughs.)* Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! *(She covers her face with her partly open fan. Still unmoved, he looks*

stonily ahead.) Arriving in the capital and hearing stories on every hand about the battle raging at Ichinotani, what parent would not be drawn to where her child was? Forgive me, I beg you. (*She bows, then looks up happily.*) Is Kojirō well?

CHANTER (*chanting*): The question draws a harsh reply from Kumagai!

KUMAGAI (*strongly*): Agh! When a warrior enters the battlefield, he abandons life! It looks cowardly to cling to affections, to ask if Kojirō is well. (*Pausing, he steals a glance.*) And if he had been killed, what would you do? Well?

SAGAMI (*slowly, with dignity*): You don't understand. If Kojirō died, even in his first battle, my heart would be at ease as long as the opponent who killed him was a worthy general.

CHANTER (*singing softly*): Her brave words match the thought in his heart. His face softens as he speaks . . .

KUMAGAI: Listen, then:

By wrestling from Hirayama Mushadokoro the honor of advancing to the head of our troops, Kojirō distinguished himself. Single-handed, he slashed his way into the Heike camp. Although he was slightly wounded in the struggle, he has brought eternal glory to our family.

SAGAMI (*startled*): What? It wasn't a fatal wound?

KUMAGAI: Ah. I see regret is written on your face. (*He poses strongly. His right hand rests on his closed fan. He glares at her.*) Answer me! If his wound were fatal, would you grieve?

SAGAMI (*with difficulty she lies*): It's not that. I was moved to ask out of joy whether his efforts were at least meritorious to the extent that he was slightly wounded. (*She pauses and looks closely at Kumagai.*) Were you with Kojirō then?

KUMAGAI (*gesturing with the closed fan*): I was. From the time of his first danger we were together in the battle. I took him, protesting, under my arm and carried him back to camp. Later, to my incomparable glory, I took the head of their rear-guard commander, Prince Atsumori! (*Kumagai poses. Sagami falls back with a gasp.*)

CHANTER (*rapidly to shamisen accompaniment*): At his words Sagami pales with shock while behind her, the emperor's intimate

listens . . .

FUJI (*rushing from the room at the left*): My son's enemy! Kumagai!

CHANTER: Unsheathing her dagger, she cries "Kumagai!" He uses her scabbard . . . (*Fuji slashes at Kumagai several times to loud beats. He fends off the blows with the empty scabbard.*)

KUMAGAI: Who calls me an enemy?

CHANTER: . . . Pressing her to the floor. (*He does not see her face.*)

SAGAMI: Do not be hasty. She is our Lady Fuji.

KUMAGAI: What? Lady Fuji? (*He lifts her up enough to recognize her. He is aghast.*) Truly it is Lady Fuji!

CHANTER: Meeting so unexpectedly, he leaps back and bows in respect. (*He takes the dagger from her hand and starts to bow to her. Fuji seizes his long sword and is about to draw it out. To show his sincerity, he quickly removes the short sword from his sash and pushes it toward her, thus disarming himself. He looks Fuji directly in the eye, then prostrates himself before her. For the moment she is unable to kill him, but her desire for revenge is undiminished.*)

FUJI: How inhuman, Kumagai, to take the head of a mere child in combat. (*She weeps loudly. Recovering, she nods to Sagami.*) You have sworn to kill your husband.

SAGAMI: But I . . .

FUJI: Did you lie before?

SAGAMI: But . . .

FUJI: Will you help me?

SAGAMI: Well . . .

FUJI: Well?

BOTH (*alternately*): Well, well, well, well!

FUJI (*hand on hilt of Kumagai's long sword*): Well? Sagami! Will you?

SAGAMI (*weakly, after an anguished pause*): I . . . will!

CHANTER: "I will," she replies, although her breast feels paralyzed!

SAGAMI (*bowing, the words scarcely audible*): My Lord Naozane. Knowing all the while that Prince Atsumori was the noble seed of an emperor, you felt obliged to kill him. There must be some reason. If there is . . .

SAGAMI AND FUJI: . . . I pray . . .

CHANTER: They speak as if suffocating . . . (*Fuji seems ready to*

draw Kumagai's long sword, but Sagami gestures for her to stop. Fuji slowly sinks to the floor.) . . . tears fall unrestrained.

KUMAGAI (*looking coldly ahead*): What nonsense. In this war all Heike warriors are enemies. Why should we forgive Atsumori, a Heike prince, or anyone else, when we're fighting for our very lives?

(He falls back on one hand and calms Fuji with a gesture.)

Listen to me, Lady Fuji, what happens on the battlefield is beyond human power. Resign yourself to it. I will tell you what happened that day and how Prince Atsumori died in battle.

CHANTER (*sings, with great emotion, to shamisen accompaniment*): He settles himself and begins to narrate the tale! (*Fuji sits reluctantly. He moves forward and poses on his knees, grasping the closed fan in his right hand.*)

KUMAGAI (*strongly*): Now then, it so happened that during the long night of the sixth, at the time the clouds in the east were beginning to brighten, among the throng of Heike warriors who assaulted our vanguard of two—Hirayama and Kumagai—one man stood out . . .

CHANTER: . . . “unsurpassed in scarlet-laced armor, forcing even Hirayama to cease fighting and flee to safety on the beach!” (*Kumagai lifts the closed fan, strikes his chest with it, and points into the distance, miming the action described in the narration.*)

KUMAGAI: What a fearless young samurai! “Come back,” I shouted, “don't waste yourself on a fleeing enemy when I, Kumagai, am here! Come back! Come back!”

CHANTER: Holding the fan, he motioned him to return . . . until he turned his horse's head and strikes blows twice, three times, on the wave-struck shore. (*Kumagai closes the fan and, to block beats, strikes his thighs as if whipping a horse.*)

KUMAGAI: “Let us fight,” I said; “Yes,” he replied.

CHANTER: Casting away their long swords, they crash to the earth between their horses! (*He moves the fan back and forth as if the two were grappling over it, opens it, and suddenly presses it down to the floor.*)

FUJI (*trembling*): Ah! Then did you hold down the young warrior?

KUMAGAI: Looking closely at his face, I saw he was some sixteen years old, the same age as my son, a court child with blackened

teeth and eyebrows delicately plucked, surely still living with his parents. Thinking of their deep agony and of my own affections for a son, I lifted him to his feet.

CHANTER (*slowly*): Brushing off the dust . . . (*Kumagai mimes brushing the dust from his sword.*)

KUMAGAI: “Quickly! Flee!”

FUJI: Did you urge him to go? Then you did not intend to kill him?

KUMAGAI: Although I urged him, “Quickly, flee,” “No,” he replied, “once thrown to the ground by the enemy, I am dishonored. Take my head quickly . . . Kumagai!”

FUJI: What? Did he say, “Take my head”? What a noble phrase! (*She collapses, weeping loudly.*)

KUMAGAI (*straining for control*): My lady, please! When I heard this, even more tears welled up in my breast. (*Forcing back tears, he presses the closed fan against his chest.*) Ahh, what if my son Kojirō had been thrown to the ground by the enemy and was about to lose his life in this same way? The way of the samurai is not so base! Even though I seized my long sword . . .

CHANTER (*singing loud*): “I hesitated! I could not draw! (*Kumagai seizes his long sword. Rising on his knees, he stamps one foot on the top step of the stairs and poses in an anguished pose to loud block beats. The chanter cries out Kumagai’s agony.*) Then I heard! From the mountaintop behind me, the routed Hirayama cried out!!”

KUMAGAI (*chants powerfully*): “Kumagai! You are a traitor! He is at your mercy, yet you dream of helping Atsumori,” he called out to me! Ahhhh!! (*With a prolonged cry, Kumagai falls forward. He steadies himself by leaning on the upright closed fan.*) “There is nothing I can do. Have you any final words? If so, speak and I will . . .” (*He breaks off and puts his hands to his eyes.*)

CHANTER: Eyes brimming with teardrops . . .

KUMAGAI: “Father is safely at sea, but Mother’s welfare weighs on my heart. In this unsettled world, yesterday’s clear skies have clouded. My single request, Kumagai, is that you help my mother in the difficult life to come.” There was nothing else to do but . . . strike off the child’s head! (*Screaming*) Thus I fulfilled the custom of the battlefield! (*The two women rise on their knees in horror, then sink back weeping loudly. Kumagai’s face twists in agony;*

he rises on one knee, holds the open fan before his chest, and poses. He throws the closed fan to the floor in a gesture of revulsion. His chest heaves with sobs, and he prostrates himself on the floor. The three weep together.)

CHANTER (*singing*): In the midst of this narrative, Lady Fuji . . .

FUJI: Had he truly loved his mother, couldn't he have hidden in the capital as his father urged . . .

CHANTER (*speaking for Fuji*): “. . . instead of setting out for Ichinotani? Ah, how I bitterly regret that when you bravely dressed in armor . . .” (*Rising on her knees, Fuji mimes bidding Atsumori farewell.*)

FUJI: . . . I urged you, joyfully, to go!

CHANTER (*for Fuji*): “Although I was resolved, my heart bursts with anguish!” (*Sagami and Fuji look comfortingly at each other, then fall forward, weeping loudly and wiping their eyes. In her grief Fuji turns away. Kumagai sits impassively.*) Thinking, “how natural her grief,” Sagami deliberately raises her lamenting voice.

SAGAMI: No, my dear lady. Among all the soldiers who fled by ship to Yashima Harbor, only one, Prince Atsumori, remained behind to earn through death a greater fame than that of a hundred thousand mounted warriors. Would you be happy if he quaked in hiding, the object of people's jibes and laughter? How disgraceful that would be.

CHANTER (*singing*): As she is admonished, Kumagai . . .

KUMAGAI (*turns to Sagami, soberly*): Excellent, Wife. It will not do for a lady of the court to remain here. Go with Lady Fuji at once, anywhere she wishes. (*He faces Fuji gravely.*) Resign yourself, my lady. I must prepare for Lord Yoshitsune's inspection of Prince Atsumori's head. Gunji, are you there? Gunji? Gunji! (*The two women bow very low. Kumagai replaces the short sword in his sash and takes the long sword in his hand. He rises and looks intently at Fuji.*)

CHANTER: Calling, he goes out of the room. (*Kumagai gestures to Fuji to be restrained, then strides out through the doors at the center, which automatically open and close for him. A time bell tolls in the distance. Sagami rises and helps Fuji put on her outer robe. Plaintive poetic narration.*) As the sunset bell tolls time's

uncertain passing, the lights of the battle camp light up more and more⁷ (*The bells toll again. Two boy servants bring out small glowing lanterns.*) . . . the grief of stricken Lady Fuji. (*Sagami sheathes the small dagger and hands it respectfully to Fuji. She kneels and bows. The bell tolls.*)

FUJI (*sadly, to quiet shamisen accompaniment*): When I think of him, pity overwhelms me. He carried an object next to his flesh, from which, until his death, he was never parted:

This flute called Green Leaves. (*She takes out a small flute wrapped in cloth.*) It proves how strong the bond between mother and son is, that this flute, which Atsumori gave the stonecutter as payment to raise a marker over his grave, should mysteriously come into my hands. (*She gazes wonderingly at the flute.*)

CHANTER (*singing slowly for Fuji*): "If the soul still remains on earth, why do you not appear before me?"⁸

FUJI: You do not hear my voice, my son. Ahh! What memories are contained in this flute! (*She folds back the cloth and gazes longingly at the polished bamboo tube.*)

CHANTER: Pressing it inconsolably to her breast, she laments. (*Fuji presses the flute to first one cheek and then the other. She cradles it tenderly in long kimono sleeves and holds it tightly to her breast. She sinks to the floor, weeping loudly.*)

SAGAMI (*drying her tears*): The flute should be a consoling memento, its notes, even more than a chanted dharani prayer, leading his soul through all obstacles to repose. Dearest mistress, let its sound be Prince Atsumori's voice. (*Sagami looks inquiringly at Fuji.*)

CHANTER: In accordance with her urgings, Lady Fuji plays. . . . Although her tears flow into the holes of the flute and her fingers tremble, the notes rise clear. . . . (*Two boy servants enter from the inside room. One carries a black lacquered pitcher of water and matching basin; the other, an incense tray. The first servant pours water over Fuji's hands, then moves back respectfully. The second servant passes a small white towel to Sagami, who in turn passes it to Fuji, who carefully dries her hands. Fuji takes the flute from inside her kimono, unwraps it, and holds it before her reverently. Sagami places a pitch of incense on the coals*

and clasps her hands in a silent prayer. Fuji raises the flute to her lips.) Bound by ties of love between mother and son . . . (Gentle notes of “Tsukuebue,” flute accompaniment. The shadow of a man appears on the translucent paper doors.) She catches one fleeting glimpse of a form, vague as shadows of a heat wave, cast on the sliding paper doors. “Surely it is Atsumori!”

FUJI: My child! My beloved!

CHANTER: Rushing forward, she is stopped and calmed by Sagami.

SAGAMI: Dear lady, please listen. The spirit of the dead may appear in the smoke of incense.⁹ When Fujiwara Sanekata died in exile, his soul’s longing for the capital was so great that he returned in the form of a sparrow. While this form you see may be such a spirit, it is said that the ties of parent and child last but one lifetime. If you approach, his spirit will surely vanish.

FUJI: No, no! Isn’t it said that souls of the dead wander on earth for forty-nine days before their incarnation? At least a single word . . . !



Lady Fuji (*left*) and Sagami, in white, in the jōruri version of *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani*. (Photograph courtesy of Barbara Curtis Adachi Collection, C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University)

CHANTER: Shaking loose, breaking loose . . . ! (*Three times Sagami tries to prevent Fuji from reaching the doors, but in the end Fuji forces Sagami to the floor and rushes to the doors.*) When the sliding doors rattle open, there is no figure to be seen, only a suit of scarlet-laced armor standing in its place. (*Both women fall back in surprise.*)

FUJI (*tremulously*): Was the shadow only this?

SAGAMI (*on her knees, gently*): Did you imagine this form in the longing of your heart?

FUJI: Oh, Sagami!

SAGAMI: Dearest lady!

CHANTER: Bound in yearning, unheedingly . . . they cry out their weeping lament. (*Both women wipe their eyes as they cry out rhythmically in unison.*) Time slips by. Then Kumagai Jirō Naozane enters carrying the head box. Sagami pulls her husband's sleeve. (*Kumagai, a deeply melancholy expression on his face, slowly enters. He wears formal dress and carries under his left arm a round case, made of plain wood, used to contain a head taken in battle or execution. Sagami politely holds his sleeve so that he cannot move.*)

SAGAMI (*modestly*): Dear Naozane, the life of mother and child together ends here. Allow them to take final leave of each other at least.

CHANTER (*singing to shamisen accompaniment*): Lady Fuji, still in tears . . .



Lady Fuji, Kumagai holding the head box, and Sagami. (Photograph courtesy of Barbara Curtis Adachi Collection, C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University)

FUJI (*weeping*): Kumagai, don't you have a child, too? Understand what is in a parent's heart. Even wild beasts grieve for their children. Have pity, allow me one last glimpse.

CHANTER: Although wretchedly imploring him . . . ! (*She sinks to her knees and pulls on his other sleeve.*)

KUMAGAI (*severely*): No! Until the head has been identified, permission cannot be given to view it!

CHANTER: As he pulls free and moves between them, about to go . . . (*He pulls first one sleeve free, then the other, and deliberately walks down the steps. Suddenly the clear, refined voice of Yoshitsune is heard offstage. Kumagai stops and looks back.*)

YOSHITSUNE (*offstage*): Kumagai! Kumagai, don't leave with Atsumori's head! Give it to Yoshitsune! I shall verify it immediately!

CHANTER: With the call of "I shall verify it immediately," the door flies open to reveal . . . General of the Army Yoshitsune! (*Nō drums play a military piece. The center doors slide open to reveal Yoshitsune, the shōgun's younger brother. He wears armor*

threaded with gold, black leggings, and red shoes. His handsome face is powdered a delicate white.) Jirō Naozane, his wife, and Lady Fuji fall prostrate. Yoshitsune takes his seat. . . . *(Yoshitsune holds a large war fan firmly in his right hand. Kumagai quickly mounts the steps and kneels at center stage while Sagami and Fuji bow flat to the floor. Four samurai squat on their heels behind Yoshitsune, keeping guard. The music stops.)*

YOSHITSUNE (*elegantly, yet with great inner strength*): Kumagai, to delay in presenting the head for verification and to request leave in the midst of battle cast doubt on your intentions. Concealed in the inner room, I have heard your conversation from beginning to end. I command you: This instant, produce Atsumori's head!

CHANTER (*singing slowly to the shamisen*): Hearing his words, Kumagai strongly answers yes and moves quickly to the young cherry tree, where a notice board has been stuck in the ground, which he pulls out and places, unafraid, before Lord Yoshitsune.

KUMAGAI (*strongly composed*): A short time ago at Horikawa Palace, my Lord Yoshitsune made known his will to one of his vassals by means of a poem fastened to a mountain cherry. In the same way here, Priest Benkei has written on this notice board your command to take Atsumori's head. In obedience to my lord's decree, as written here, the head has been taken! Now, then, confirm it!

CHANTER (*ponderously singing to the shamisen*): When he lifts open the lid . . . ! (*Sagami recognizes Kojirō.*)

SAGAMI: Ahh! That head is . . . !

CHANTER (*singing rapidly*): Struck by the truth, the wife rushes forward; Lady Fuji strains to see! (*With lightning speed, Kumagai claps the lid back over the head. Sagami rushes forward, but he forces her down the steps with the notice board. Fuji, straining to see, is prevented from approaching by Kumagai, who presses her back, using the notice board as a pole.*)

KUMAGAI (*harshly*): Stop! You may see the head after our lord has verified it! You will be silent now! Silence! (*The last word is drawn out in an agonized cry. They pose in a tableau.*)

CHANTER (*emotionally*): Kumagai's admonition . . . (*Both women try*

to move forward. Kumagai shakes his head fiercely and pushes Fuji back with the board.) . . . calls them to shame . . . wanting to approach but unable to . . . (Kumagai raises the notice board over his head. Fuji, suddenly released, plunges headlong down the steps.) . . . racked by unendurable anxiety! (To loud beats they pose: Kumagai flicks a long trouser leg forward, plants his foot loudly on the top step, presses the notice board upside down against his shoulder, and glares at the women; Sagami and Fuji, kneeling, face Kumagai, hold up their hands to protect themselves, then fall forward, sobbing bitterly.) Circumspectly, Kumagai Jirō Naozane proceeds.

KUMAGAI (*gripping the board emotionally*): Prince Atsumori is the emperor's offspring, living in the emperor's Southern Palace. (*Glances significantly at the notice board*) "Rare double-flowering cherry tree from the south: if any person strikes off the flower of one branch, he must strike off the flower of the other."¹⁰ Inferring what your intentions might be, I have cut off his head to correspond to the flower of your command! (*His words are a strangled scream. His body trembles violently.*) Has my lord's will been fulfilled? Or has Kumagai misunderstood? Pronounce judgment!



This triptych by Utagawa Toyokuni III (1786–1864) depicts “Kumagai’s Battle Camp” with the actors who starred in the 1863 performance of *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani* at the Ichimura Theater in Edo. Yoshitsune (*right*), played by the kabuki actor Ichimura Uzaemon XIII (1844–1903), is dressed in elegant battle

armor and seated on a brocade stool. On the stairs, Kumagai, acted by Ichikawa Kodanji IV (1812–1866), holds off with a notice board his wife, Sagami, performed by Onoe Kikujirō II (1814–1875), while secretly holding the head of their son Kojirō. The vertical cartouches note each actor's name and role. (Courtesy of the Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum, Waseda University)

CHANTER: He cries out! . . . (*The chanter's voice quivers with emotion. His face contorted, Kumagai throws down the notice board and, with a single gesture, takes the lid from the case and thrusts the head of Kojirō before Yoshitsune. The chanter's voice becomes hushed.*) Yoshitsune smiles and initiates the inspection. (*Yoshitsune opens his fan in a languid movement, holds it before his face, turns toward the head, and then slowly lowers the fan. Kumagai looks intently into Yoshitsune's eyes, trying to read his lord's expression. Yoshitsune nods slightly as he recognizes Kojirō. He continues to gaze at the pale face of the dead boy as he speaks delicately, yet he is deeply moved.*)

YOSHITSUNE: Ahh. You have read Yoshitsune's heart to spare the flower. The head was well taken. Now, let those relatives present pay final honor to this dead person, who unmistakably . . . is Atsumori.

CHANTER (*sings slowly*): After hearing these words . . . (*Kumagai bows and moves, on his knees, to the veranda.*)

KUMAGAI (*scarcely audible*): Here, Wife. (*He places the head before her on the veranda.*) Show Prince Atsumori's head to Lady Fuji. (*He looks at her with a look of warning. She slowly raises her eyes to meet his. A look of understanding passes between them. He retires upstage.*)

SAGAMI (*bowing*): Yes.

CHANTER: Saying no more than yes, the wife . . . (*Sagami rises, anguished, unable to look at the head of her son. She sinks to her knees weeping.*) . . . lifts the pitiful head in her hands . . . (*At last, she turns and looks but cannot bring herself yet to touch it. She takes folded paper from her breast, bites down hard on it to gain control of herself, turns away, and stands in a grief-stricken pose, head rhythmically bobbing up and down like a puppet to express her conflicting emotions.*) . . . with brimming eyes she gazes at the changed face of her dead son . . . her breast,

choked with bitter grief, her body quaking . . . (*She staggers, catches herself, then sinks to the floor. Holding the head out at arm's length, at last she gazes at it, lovingly, as she rocks from side to side.*) ahhh! . . . the head in her trembling hands . . . (*Taking the paper from between her teeth, she cradles the head in the crook of her arm and wipes Kojirō's face. Her hands and body tremble.*) . . . seems to be nodding . . .

SAGAMI: . . . as he did, when turning back at the gate, he smiled at me! When I recall his features . . . (*She clutches the head to her breast and presses her cheek against Kojirō's.*)

CHANTER (*emotionally*): . . . how tragic . . .

SAGAMI: . . . how pathetic!

CHANTER: Her voice stops in her throat!

SAGAMI (*tearfully*): Dear Lady Fuji. Look. Lamented Prince Atsumori's . . . head! (*Putting a piece of clean paper beneath it, Sagami places the head on the floor facing Fuji. Seeing the head of Kojirō, Fuji turns to Sagami in wonder.*)

FUJI: What? That head is . . . ?

SAGAMI: Yes, it is! (*Sagami quickly covers the head with the trailing of her robe as if to protect it and cries anew. She looks meaningfully at Fuji and partially uncovers the head.*) Look carefully upon this head. May it dispel your rancor. You should, indeed, pay homage . . . pay homage to it! . . . (*Covering the head again, she cries softly in time to the rhythm of the shamisen.*) Ahh, this head . . . at the time I was secretly pregnant by Kumagai at the palace and forced to flee to the east to give birth . . . this head . . . you, too, gave birth to a child who became . . . Prince Atsumori! Together we carried a child in our wombs when we left our homes.

CHANTER: That, after sixteen years of separation, a maid-in-waiting could be of service to her lady . . . (*Sagami looks down at the head under the robe. She waves her hands in the air distractedly.*) . . . surely is an act of karma!

SAGAMI (*frantically*): At least, in death were his . . .

CHANTER: . . . last moments brave? she asks in tormented fear. (*She lifts the robe to peer at her son's face, then drops the robe with an agonized expression on her face. Tearfully she hugs the head*

in the robe to her breast.) The husband does not even blink before his lord, but tears stream from his eyes. . . . (*Kumagai grips his fan tightly, his lips tremble, but he does not speak.*) Were he to speak a word of consolation, he would choke on tears, he would spit blood! (*Sagami falls to the floor, leans back first on one hand and then on the other. Suddenly she rises and runs to embrace Kojirō's head once more, but Kumagai firmly gestures for her to go back. She collapses on the floor weeping.*)

Lady Fuji, in tremulous voice . . .

FUJI: Ah, dear Sagami, it had not crossed my mind until now that Kumagai had compassionately sacrificed your son for mine. With what words can I thank you? As to how he could play his flute and show his shadow on the doors—now I understand. (*She faces Yoshitsune and bows deeply, indicating that she knows he has arranged these events. Suddenly battle alarms—a conch shell and drums and cymbals—sound offstage.*)

CHANTER (*rapidly*): Carried by the wind, the conch shell's battle cry clamorously pierces the ear! Roused by its sound, Yoshitsune . . .

YOSHITSUNE (*briskly*): Kumagai. The conch shell sounds assembly. Prepare yourself. Prepare for battle!

CHANTER (*singing rapidly to shamisen accompaniment*): Obedient to his words, Kumagai hurries from the room. Kajiwara, who has been listening all the while, runs in from the garden gate!

KAJIWARA: I heard you, I heard you! (*Laughs harshly*) I expected something like this, so on the excuse of investigating the stonecutter, I've done some spying! (*He runs to the hanamichi.*) The Kamakura shōgunate will be pleased to hear that Yoshitsune and Kumagai want to save Atsumori! Ha, ha! Just wait!

CHANTER: He shouts over his shoulders as he rushes off, when from behind, a stonemason's steel chisel pierces his back as cleanly as a dagger's blow! With a single cry, breath and life expire! As the general is thinking, "Who has done this?" the old stonecutter enters. (*Midaroku, holding a stone chisel in his hand, runs on stage from the left. Seeing Yoshitsune, he assumes a pose of innocent old age.*)

MIDAROKU: Well, well. A piece of worthless trash blocking your way has been removed, and a recent conversation has set my mind at

ease. I will take my leave.

CHANTER: . . . he says, turning to go.

YOSHITSUNE: Wait, old man.

MIDAROKU: What is it you wish, my lord?

YOSHITSUNE: Identify yourself.

MIDAROKU: I have nothing to conceal. I am an old stonecutter:
Midaroku from Mikage Village.

YOSHITSUNE: Then stand. You may go. (*Relieved, Midaroku bows and crosses onto the hanamichi with the small slow steps of an elderly person. Yoshitsune suddenly glares at him.*) Munekiyo, wait! Yaheibyoe Munekiyo! Wait!

CHANTER: Surprised at Yoshitsune's words, he gasps but shows an innocent face.

MIDAROKU: Hey, Yahei! Our commander is calling you! Hey there, Yahei! (*He enters and bows contritely to Yoshitsune.*) No person called Yahei is here, your lordship.

YOSHITSUNE: The saying is true: "When a man is touched by extreme hatred, sorrow, or joy, these are not forgotten through a lifetime." I recall with joy how, long ago, when my mother, Tokiwa, was nursing me at her breast, your kindness saved her, my brothers, and me from freezing in the snows of Fushimi outside the capital. Although I was only three years old, I remember your face and can clearly picture, whether or not you conceal it, the mole between your eyes. You disappeared soon after Councillor Shigemori died. It is good to see you well, Grandfather.

CHANTER (*singing*): Hearing this, Midaroku briskly returns, staring at Yoshitsune's face as if to bore a hole through it!

MIDAROKU: Your insight is monstrous! They say Laozi was born wise,¹¹ that by the age of three Zhuangzi could read a man's face! But you, Yoshitsune! (*A stage assistant helps him drop his kimono top, showing a samurai's white underkimono beneath it, and take off his cap, revealing a thatch of snow white hair. No longer acting as the devious commoner, we see him as he really is: a proud samurai.*) Had I not overlooked you that time, long ago, there would have been no general to breach the cliffs at Tekkai and at Hiyodorigoe and to reduce the Heike force at Suma Bay. Had I not saved Yoritomo's life, the Heike would be ascendant now. Aghh! The greatest error of my life was helping

you! Because of you, Lord Shigemori knew the Heike faced a perilous future. At the time of his death, he advised me to renounce the warrior's life, go into hiding, and offer masses in memory of all the Taira who might fall. I took under my care the only remaining princess of the Taira family¹² and retired to Mikage Village with three thousand gold *ryō*, which was intended for memorial services at the Heike ancestral temple at Iozan. Throughout Harima Province, at Nachi and Mount Kōya—at Heike mausoleums everywhere—I erected gravestones for those already departed, each memorial, each one, sprung from the bitter tears of its unknown donor . . . Yaheibyoe Munekiyo!! (*He points to himself and screams his name as if it were a curse.*) Although I had not seen Atsumori since he was an infant and could not possibly remember his face, without knowing why, I somehow felt the man who came to order Atsumori's marker was a noble of the vanquished Heike, so I accepted his commission happily, never dreaming that he was ordering a stone memorial on this shore for the salvation of Kojirō's soul, whose fate had changed his! Agh! The will of heaven is beyond man's understanding, but for the two infants whom I saved from death—Yoritomo and Yoshitsune—to become leaders who would utterly annihilate the greatest Taira nobility . . . !

CHANTER: “. . . is fate too cruel to bear!” (*Midaroku clasps his hands supplicating heaven.*)

MIDAROKU: I am the traitor among the Heike who betrayed their trust! How the spirits of dead Taira lords and warriors will vent their hatred on me! Ahhh! Munekiyo! Wretched man!! (*Like one demented, he tears his hair. He strikes his chest and arms.*)

CHANTER: First raging, then contrite, his tears . . . challenge a waterfall! Ahhhhh! (*Midaroku tumbles down the steps and collapses, weeping bitterly.*) Wise since birth, General Yoshitsune says . . .

YOSHITSUNE (*sensing Kumagai's presence offstage*): Ah, it is you, Kumagai. Bring the box of armor from the small room.



Midaroku revealed as a proud samurai with a white underkimono. (Photograph courtesy of Barbara Curtis Adachi Collection, C. V. Starr East Asian Library, Columbia University)

CHANTER: Kumagai Jirō Naozane enters from within. Bearers place an armor box before their lord. (*Kumagai wears battle dress: dark armor, gloves, leggings, and helmet. Bearers bring out a large wicker box and place it in front of Yoshitsune.*)

YOSHITSUNE: Old man, take this box of armor to the princess. Do it . . . Midaroku!

MIDAROKU (*surprised*): Midaroku, did you say? Ah, I see. A Genji general can't ask Munekiyo, friend of the Heike, for a favor! Ha, ha! Isn't this an interesting situation? (*He chuckles and assumes his previous guise of innocent old age.*) I could do what you request, but armor for a girl? It seems inappropriate. I'll just peek inside . . .

CHANTER (*sings*): When he lifts the lid and looks inside . . . ! (*Opening the lid, he sees Atsumori. Fuji rushes forward.*)

FUJI: Aah! Is it . . . ? (*Midaroku claps the lid on the box. She tries to open it. He holds the lid tightly with one hand and pushes her back with the other.*)

MIDAROKU (*seeing Atsumori inside the box*): There is . . . nothing . . . inside. (*He pushes Fuji gently back and shakes his head. He looks at her meaningfully.*) Even a traitor would be satisfied. Give thanks to Kumagai for . . . (*He picks up the notice board and looks at it with tears in his eyes.*) . . . strike off the flower of one branch, strike off the flower of the other. Ahh! How grateful we are! (*He bows to Kumagai and Yoshitsune, weeping quietly in gratitude.*)

CHANTER (*sings*): Hearing this, Sagami turns to her husband . . .

SAGAMI (*dabbing her eyes*): Although I am resigned knowing my child's death was an act of loyalty, still, how could Kojirō and Atsumori, opponents in the battle, be exchanged?

KUMAGAI (*gruffly*): I have told you: I carried Atsumori from the field, pretending he was wounded. Obviously, it was Kojirō whom Hirayama challenged and Kojirō's head I took!

CHANTER: She weeps at his harsh words.

SAGAMI: You are inhuman, Kumagai! He was not your child alone. After I have come one hundred, two hundred miles hoping anxiously to see his face, how can you scold me, saying nothing of what you have done except "obviously it was Kojirō's head I took"?

CHANTER: She has reason to weep bitter tears and raise her voice. The general understands her feelings.

YOSHITSUNE: Kumagai. The time has come to depart for battle in the west. Prepare yourself.

KUMAGAI: My Lord, please grant the leave I have requested.

YOSHITSUNE: I understand. From time immemorial, the samurai has fought for fame in life in order to pass on glory to his heir. Should one's son die before him, the will to battle dies, too. I grant your request, Kumagai. Enter monkhood in good spirits and offer services for the repose of my parents' souls, I pray.

CHANTER (*sings*): This compassionate command is heard gratefully as he loosens his sash and slips off his armor. . . . (*Beneath his helmet his head is shaven, and beneath his armor he wears a monk's black cloak and plain gray kimono.*) Seeing this, Sagami says . . .

SAGAMI (*amazed*): But . . . Kumagai . . . !

KUMAGAI (*calmly, holding Buddhist prayer beads in his hands*): I am doing nothing strange. In the midst of strife the general has generously granted my deep desire to renounce the world. From this moment, let me take the monk's name Renshō and turn my steps toward Amida Buddha's Western Paradise, where Kojirō—embarked before me on the Nine Stages of Bliss—and I shall one day sit together on the same lotus. Buddha Merciful All Hail. *Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu, Namu Amida Butsu.*

CHANTER (*singing*): Commendable . . . and . . . heartbreaking! (*Kumagai lifts the prayer beads to his forehead and prays.*) Thinking “a long stay brings misfortune,” Midaroku plans to conclude the affair and quickly leave. (*Midaroku kneels in front of the armor box and tries to tie it onto his back.*)

MIDAROKU: Yo, ho! Yo, ho! Yo, ho! (*Panting, he tucks one leg under him, plants the notice board firmly in the ground and, to accelerating shamisen music, manages at last to rise to his feet. He staggers left, then right, and finally stands straight.*) Lord Yoshitsune! What if Prince Atsumori gathers once again remnants of the Heike clan and returns evil for good?



Kumagai as a monk, his head shaven, in a black cloak. (Photograph courtesy of

YOSHITSUNE: It would be no more than heaven's just retribution, for when Yoshitsune and his brother Yoritomo were saved, they rewarded with evil the kindness done to them.

KUMAGAI: Truly, when that time comes, the vanity of this world abandoned, unfettered to any man, Kumagai will stand apart from the bloody carnage and help equally the tortured souls of both Genji and Heike dead . . .

CHANTER: . . . offering prayers for their salvation. (*Kumagai raises the prayer beads to his forehead and eyes. Midaroku looks at Kumagai and laughs wryly.*)

MIDAROKU: When that time comes, Midaroku will abandon this world and return as Munekiyo!

KUMAGAI: Thoughts of a monk's black robes fill my heart. I shall become a disciple of Priest Hōnen, submitting to his teaching in Kurodani, Black Valley. (*Turns to Yoshitsune*) May your good fortune increase, my lord.

CHANTER (*singing*): Saying this, wife joins husband . . . the stonecutter, together with Lady Fuji, stand beneath the eaves of the encampment. (*Fuji kneels by Midaroku and looks questioningly at the box. Midaroku indicates with a reassuring nod that Atsumori is safe in his care.*)

SAGAMI AND FUJI (*slowly in unison*): If destiny allows . . .

CHANTER: . . . say the women . . .

KUMAGAI AND MIDAROKU: . . . we shall meet again . . .

CHANTER: . . . say the men.

YOSHITSUNE: Live your lives in good health!

CHANTER (*singing*): Hearing their lord's will, with tears of gratitude, tears of sad remembrance . . . (*Kumagai looks at Yoshitsune with an expression of gratitude. He bursts into tears and bows down to the ground. After a moment he rises, and Sagami puts over his shoulder a monk's alms bag and gives him a plain straw hat and walking staff.*) . . . reminded, the general takes into his own hands Kojirō's head.

YOSHITSUNE: This shall be consecrated at Suma Temple, so that the unblemished name of . . . Atsumori, inscribed in gold shall live for

generations to come. (*They pose for a moment in silence, then express their unbearable anguish in a linked dialogue of alternating phrases.*)

MIDAROKU: Though we pity the flower, mentioned on the sign . . .

FUJI: . . . of Musashibō Benkei, we must pity more . . .

SAGAMI: . . . the forsaken samurai . . .

RETAINER: . . . the pride of a warrior thrown aside . . .

KUMAGAI: . . . a traveler whose place of rest will never be known . . .

YOSHITSUNE: . . . in this transient and mutable . . .

ALL: . . . world of man!

CHANTER: Tears cloud their voices!

YOSHITSUNE: Kumagai! (*Slowly Kumagai turns back. Although he has renounced the world, he cannot help wishing for a final view of his son.*)

KUMAGAI (*anguished*): Now that I am entering Buddha's blessed land . . . all cares have vanished! (*He turns away from Kojirō to gain control over himself, trying to forget the ties of earthly affections, but he cannot. Again he turns to look at his son.*) Ahh! Sixteen years have passed, like a single day! Ahh! It is a dream, a dream! (*Numbly he lifts his hand to wipe away a single tear. He turns his back on Kojirō.*)

CHANTER (*quietly singing*): A single teardrop of dew, splashing to the ground; from a holly leaf sprinkled, by winter's first snow; melted in the sun's clear light¹³ . . . how like Kumagai! (*Kumagai, Fuji, Midaroku, Sagami, and Yoshitsune stand in a strong group pose. The curtain is slowly closed to loud, accelerating ki clacks. Drawn once again by the memory of the son he killed, Kumagai slowly pivots to look back. His shoulders are slumped, the hat and staff hang loosely in his hands. The music stops. He stands motionless, silently recalling the past. Hesitantly, as if worldly ties were holding him back, he begins to leave, each deliberate footstep accented by drum and cymbals and shamisen music. He pauses, looks up once more, and, then with an expression of agonized resolve, pulls down his hat sharply in a gesture of humility and runs faster and faster down the hanamichi and off to accelerating music and loud bata-bata tsuke breaks.*)

[Toita Yasuji, ed., *Kabuki meisakusen* 2: 71–86, adapted from a translation