

Noh Fujito 藤戸

The Genji commander, Sasaki no Saburô Moritsuna, has been awarded the fief of Kojima for his meritorious service at the battle of Fujito. He goes to claim it and asks if there are any grievances to be brought before him. A woman approaches and accuses him of killing her son. Though first denying it, Moritsuna eventually admits that he had her fisherman son show him how to cross the strait in order to surprise the enemy, and how, so the same information would not go to the enemy, he killed the fisherman. The woman hears the story and, grieving, begs the lord to return her son. Moritsuna agrees to say prayers for the dead fisherman, and as he does so, the spirit of the fisherman appears, tells of his suffering, but due to the prayers, is at last able to attain salvation.

Author: Unknown. Though often attributed to Zeami (1363?-1443?), present scholarship suggest a later author, possibly Zeami's son, Kanze Motomasa (1400?-1432).

Scene: Early spring, 1185, Fujito, in the fief of Kojima, the province of Bizen, the present Kurashiki City, Okayama prefecture.

Category: Fourth category miscellaneous (anguished woman/attached male) play, in two acts (present-time (genzai)/phantasm (mugen), without taiko in Kanze/Hôshô, with taiko in Kita/Kongô/Komparu.

Performance practice: Performed by all five shite schools of noh.

Characters (in order of appearance)

- Waki (secondary actor): Sasaki no Saburô Moritsuna, lord of Kojima.
- Wakizure (accompanying waki actor): several retainers of Moritsuna.
- Maejite (first half shite main actor): a middle-aged or old woman, the mother of a fisherman killed by Moritsuna. Mask: mature woman (fukai, shakumi) or gaunt woman (yase-onna).
- Ai/Ai-kyôgen (interlude actor): Moritsuna's servant.
- Nochijie (second half shite): the spirit of a young fisherman killed by Moritsuna. Mask: gaunt man (yase-otoko "thin man" or kawazu).

Synopsis: scene by scene.

1. Waki/Wakitsure entrance: Sasaki no Saburô Moritsuna, with retainers, enters to shidai music and sings of the spring and of traveling to Fujito. He announces himself and tells how as the victorious commander at the Battle of Fujito, he was awarded the Kojima fief to which he is now on his way. They sing a travel song describing their ship's route, passing islands, and arriving at Fujito.
2. Waki/Wakitsure exchange, Wakitsure announcement: Moritsuna orders a retainer to announce that anyone with a grievance can come forward. The retainer makes the announcement.

3. Shite entrance: A woman enters to issei music and tells of her desire to meet with Moritsuna since he killed her son. She then sings nostalgically for the springs of yesteryear.
4. Waki/Shite exchange: Moritsuna wonders why the woman is so upset and asks her name. The woman sings of the sea tangle which divers reap which harbors a creature which sheds salt tears, of a great warrior's crime which is retribution for her past sins, and of her anger toward Moritsuna for killing her son. Moritsuna feigns innocence. The woman further laments. The chorus for the woman sings asking why Moritsuna hides the truth, describing the grief that is felt when the bonds between mother and child are severed, and asking Moritsuna to at least pray for his soul
5. Waki narrative: Moritsuna admits the truth and tells the details of the son's killing: how the son has led him to a shallow spot in the sea which could be crossed on horseback, but fearing he might reveal the same information to others, how he killed him with his sword and sank his body in the waters. Moritsuna says he will pray for his soul and take care of his wife and children.
6. Shite/Waki exchange, Shite's lament: The woman asks where exactly her son was killed and the Waki points out the place. The chorus sings of the woman's lament of living on while her son is already dead, wonders if he was just a dream and what hope she has to sustain her remaining years, and describes how, in grief, she rushed forward to Moritsuna demanding that he returns her son.
7. Shite's departure: Moritsuna promises the woman that he will say prayers for her son and will have his wife and children cared for. He calls a servant to lead the woman back to her home. As he leads her away, the servant tells her how sorry everyone feels for her.
8. Ai speech, Ai/Waki dialogue, Ai announcement: The servant expresses his sympathy for the woman but defends Moritsuna's action. Moritsuna asks the servant to convene the musicians for a memorial service. The servant announces that the musicians are to assemble and that no creature's life shall be taken for seven days.
9. Waki/Wakitsure: Moritsuna and his retainers sing of chanting sutras to comfort the spirit of the young man.
10. Nochijite entrance: The spirit enters to deha (with taiko) or issei (without taiko) music and sings of his wandering in the afterlife and his suffering due to memories of his unjustifiable killing.
11. Waki/Shite exchange, Shite dance: The spirit thanks Moritsuna for his prayers but tells of his resentment toward him. They recall how the fisherman had led Moritsuna to a place to cross. Speaking for the spirit, the chorus sings how the young man was killed, how his body sunk in the sea where it became a baleful dragon in order to vent its wrath, and yet how Moritsuna's prayers have allowed his spirit to find the path to Buddha. [Richard Emmert]