

Noh Kagekiyô 景清

The renowned Heike warrior Kagekiyo has been exiled to the province of Hyûga and is now a blind old beggar. His daughter journeys from Kamakura to find him and by chance comes to his desolate hut to ask directions. Ashamed of his wretchedness, he sends her away without revealing himself. A villager brings her back and father and daughter are moved to tears at their reunion. Kagekiyo consents to tell of his exploits in battle but resolves that she must return home. After the narration of his exploits the daughter leaves her father.

Author: Unknown. While many secondary sources attribute it to Zeami (1363? – 1443?), there seems to be no clear evidence for this.

Scene: Early Kamakura period (late 12th century), Miyazaki in Hyûga Province, the present Miyazaki City in Miyazaki Prefecture, Kyushu.

Category: Fourth category miscellaneous (compassion) play, present-time noh without taiko stick drum.

Performance practice: Performed by all five shite schools.

Characters (in order of appearance)

- Tsure (companion actor): Hitomaru, daughter of Kagekiyo from Kamakura. Wears a young woman's mask (ko-omote).
- Tomo (attendant): attendant to Hitomaru.
- Shite (main actor): Akushichi-byôe Kagekiyo, a former renowned warrior of the Heike clan, now a blind old beggar in exile in Kyushu. Wears a blind old man's mask (kagekiyo).
- Waki (secondary actor): a local villager.

Synopsis: scene by scene.

1. Tsure and Tomo entrance: A framework thatched hut hidden by a curtain is brought on the stage. Hitomaru, Kagekiyo's daughter, enters with an attendant on shidai entrance music. Hitomaru announces that they are travelling from Kamakura to see her father who is in exile in Miyazaki. They sing a travel song making references to places they have passed, and they announce their arrival in Miyazaki.
2. Shite exclamation: From inside the covered hut, the voice of the blind Kagekiyo sings of his long loneliness and his bent bones and decayed flesh. The chorus singing for him tells of his own repulsive plight for which no one pities him or gives him solace. The curtain around the framework hut is lowered.
3. Tsure and Shite monologues: Inside and outside the hut, Hitomaru and Kagekiyo sing in tandem each revealing their uncertain emotions. Hitomaru wonders about the solitary voice coming from the desolate hut. Kagekiyo senses the approach of an unknown visitor.
4. Tomo and Shite exchange and Shite reminiscences: Hitomaru's attendant asks the master of the hut where the exile Kagekiyo lives. Kagekiyo feigns ignorance and tells him to ask

elsewhere. After they leave, Kagekiyo realizes that it was his daughter. He recalls how long ago he had a daughter by a courtesan in Atsuta and then left her in charge of the mistress of a pleasure house in Kamakura. The chorus singing for him tells that out of love for her he let her pass without revealing himself.

5. Tomo and Waki exchange: A villager enters. Hitomaru's attendant asks where Kagekiyo lives and is told that they have passed his thatched hut along the way. Hitomaru weeps, the attendant explains to the villager that she is Kagekiyo's daughter and tells of Kagekiyo's deception. The villager says that Kagekiyo must have been too ashamed to reveal himself. He offers to take them back to the hut.
6. Waki and Shite exchange and Shite exclamation: They return to the hut and the villager yells out for Kagekiyo. Holding his hands over his ears at the commotion, Kagekiyo tells how he had just been visited by someone from his distant home but was too ashamed to reveal himself. The chorus singing for Kagekiyo tells how he becomes angry when called by the name he has long ago cast off. He laments the death of his passion and his present deformed state. Yet, he says there are things which only a blind man can see.
7. Shite and Waki exchange, Tsure and Shite exchange and Shite's exclamation: The villager scolds Kagekiyo for concealing his identity and introduces Hitomaru. In tears, Hitomaru asks why her father has been so cruel to her. Kagekiyo explains that he wanted to protect her youth from the shame of having such a wretched father. The chorus sings for Kagekiyo of his sadness at having closed his door to his own child. It goes on to tell of his bravery in battle and how his wise counsel was once valued above all. But now he is reduced to this broken state.
8. Waki and Shite exchange and Shite narration: The villager requests Kagekiyo to tell his daughter of its exploits in the battle of Yashima. Kagekiyo consents if she is then willing to leave when the tale is finished. Kagekiyo narrates how he offered to lead the fight against the seemingly invincible Genji troops led by Yoshitsune. The chorus sings and he mimes how he pursued and slashed at the attacking enemy. He grabbed the helmet of one Mionoya but after a violent struggle it broke and its owner fled. From a distance, Mionoya turned to praise Kagekiyo's strong arm. Kagekiyo in turn praised Mionoya's strong neck. They parted with laughter.
9. Shite and Tsure parting: With the chorus continuing, Kagekiyo says that he is now old and weak and his mind has grown confused. He asks Hitomaru to return home and pray for him. They bid a simple yet poignant farewell and she leaves as her father weeps.
[Richard Emmert]