

Noh Kurama Tengu 鞍馬天狗

(“The Goblin of Kurama”)

A priest of Kurama Temple sets off a flower viewing excursion with several young pages and companions. The festivities are ruined when a mountain priest joins them uninvited. The temple priest and his companions leave, but the young boy Ushiwaka remains behind. Together the two visit popular flower viewing sites around Kyoto. Ushiwaka, a Minamoto child who cherishes the ambition of destroying the Taira (he later becomes the great general Yoshitsune), discovers that his new friend is actually a tengu (half-man, half-hawk, or goblin). The tengu promises to teach Ushiwaka secret tactics and war strategies, and the two fly off. Later, as Ushiwaka waits garbed for battle, the tengu and his army demonstrate their war tactics. Finally, promising to assist him in the future, the tengu bids Ushiwaka a sad farewell.

Author: Unknown.

Scene: Kurama Mountain and the Kyoto vicinity.

Category: Fifth category goblin (tengu) play, present-time noh in two acts, with taiko stick drum and maibataraki (danced action) dance.

Performance practice: Performed by all five schools.

Characters (in order of appearance)

- Maejite (first half shite main actor): Mountain priest (yamabushi).
- Omo ai/Ai-kyôgen (first interlude actor): Lower ranking priest / servant from Kurama Temple accompanying Waki.
- Waki (secondary actor): Priest from Kurama Temple.
- Wakizure (accompanying secondary actor): Priests from Kurama Temple.
- Kokata (child actor, primary child actor): Ushiwaka, member of the Minamoto clan (who later becomes the great general Yoshitsune).
- Kokata (child actors, first half): Members of the Taira clan.
- Ado ai/Ai-kyôgen (second interlude actors, 2): Male and female tree-leaf tengu, accompanying nohijite.
- Nohijite (second half shite main actor): Tengu (half-man, half-hawk goblin); wears obeshimi mask.

Synopsis: scene by scene.

1. Entrance of Shite: A mountain priest enters and tells of a flower-viewing party which Kurama Temple priests will be holding.
2. Entrance of ai, kokata, waki, wakizure: A servant enters and announces the arrival of the priests, on their annual flower-viewing excursion. The priests enter followed by the pages.
3. Ai, Waki exchange: The priest reads a poem describing the flowers still clinging to the branches, not having begun to fall. The chorus describes the scene of blossoming trees, deep in the

mountains.

4. Ai's dance: At the request of the priest, the servant does a dance as the mountain priest quietly draws near.
5. Exit of kokata, waki, wakizure, ai: The servant notes the presence of the mountain priest, then rises to drive him away. The Kurama priest, concerned for the safety of the young pages, advises them all to leave. The servant leaves in a huff, angry with the mountain priest for disturbing them, but does not notice that one page, Ushiwaka, has been left behind.
6. Shite, kokata exchange: The mountain priest laments the stinginess of the priests, saying that the spring blossoms are for all to enjoy. Ushiwaka speaks, quoting a well-known saying that spending half a day under the blossoms can make strangers become intimate friends. The priest is surprised that he was left behind and the two decide to go flower-viewing together.
7. Shite, kokata second exchange: In reply to the priest's questions about why he stayed behind when the other pages left, Ushiwaka replies that the others are children of the ruling Taira clan, while he alone is a member of the rival Minamoto clan. The priest expresses his sympathy for the boy and the Minamoto clan, saying that even though the petals fall, the tree will blossom again in time. The chorus describes the scenery as they watch the falling flower petals. By the time evening falls, they have visited the most famous flower-viewing sites.
8. Shite, kokata exit: responding to Ushiwaka's questions, the priest reveals that he is actually the king of the tengu. He promises to show Ushiwaka the secrets of warfare so that someday the Minamoto make take their revenge on the Taira. The chorus describes them flying over the clouds, and the shite exits.
9. Ai interlude and action: A male tree-leaf tengu enters and recaps the action of the first half. Then, with a female tree-leaf tengu he demonstrates sparring practice to be prepared to practice with Ushiwaka. This done, he calls for Ushiwaka and the tengu king.
10. Entrance of nochikokata: Ushiwaka enters with a halberd and announces the impending arrival of the tengu king.
11. Entrance of the nohijite: The tengu king enters and tells how tengu from all over have come at his command. The chorus describes the many countries from which tengu have travelled as the tengu moves briskly around the stage, viewing the scene from all directions of the tengu gathering in the valley in the moonlight.
12. Shite's narration: Ushiwaka asks the tengu king to teach him a certain technique. The latter responds by telling how he learned it from Choryô who taught him the secret technique out of gratitude. The tengu says that this technique will help him eradicate the Taira.
13. Shite's danced action, conclusion: The chorus for the tengu entreats Ushiwaka to fight the Taira. Saying that he will be with Ushiwaka in the strength of his sword and arrow, he draws close to the boy. Then, with a wave of his sleeve, he disappears. [Richard Emmert]