

## Noh Tokusa 木賊 (Scouring Rushes)

A young boy, Matsuwaka, has been enticed away from his home in Shinano. A priest finds him and takes him back. Along the way, they meet some men gathering scouring rushes and are given lodging by one of them. The man tells the priest that his child disappeared from his home some time ago and then puts on the clothes his son used to wear, sings songs and performs a dance that the boy used to do. Meanwhile, Matsuwaka has recognized the man as his father and when the entertainment is over, the two are reunited. So happy is the old man at having his son back that he determines to turn his home into a temple as a sign of his gratitude.

**Author:** Zeami (1363?-1443?)

**Scene:** Mt. Sonohara in Shinano province, the present Nagano prefecture.

**Category:** Fourth category miscellaneous (special) play, present-time (*genzai*) noh in one act, *jo-no-mai* (slow, elegant dance) piece without *taiko* stick drum.

**Performance Practice:** Performed by all five schools.

**CHARACTERS:** (in order of appearance)

*Kokata* (child actor): The child Matsuwaka.

*Waki* (secondary character): A traveling priest.

*Wakitsure* (accompanying *waki* actors): Two accompanying priests.

*Tsure* (accompanying main actors): Three men.

*Shite* (main actor): An old man.

**SYNOPSIS:** Scene-by-Scene

1. *Kokata/Waki/Wakitsure entrance:* A young boy followed by three priests enters to *shidai* music. The priests sing of traveling in Shinano. The main priest introduces them and tells how the boy was lead away from his home by a foolish priest. Now the boy wishes to return to his home and so the priests are taking him back. They sing a travel song and of their arrival at Mt. Sonohara in Shinano. There they see some grass cutters to whom they decide to ask directions.

2. *Tsure/Shite entrance:* Three men and an old man enter to *issei* music and sing about cutting the scouring rushes at Mt. Sonohara in Shinano. The chorus sings with them.

3. *Waki/Shite exchange*: The priest asks the men about their work and they tell him how they are cutting the famous scouring rushes of Sonohara, which have been mentioned in poems throughout history. The priest asks if the village of Fuseya is nearby and they tell him that in fact the forest of Fuseya where the village is, is very close by. They mention one of the special trees in the area called a broom tree and the old man shows one to the priest. The chorus sings of the old broom tree and reference to it in the poems of old.

4. *Shite's invitation*: The old man invites the priests' party to stay the night at his home, telling them that he has a child who was enticed elsewhere and has been lost. He tells how the boy used to sing and dance and that now he himself often sings and dances to remember him, so he would be glad if they could come to his house. The priests accept and follow him home. The young boy tells the priest that the old man is in fact his father. The priest says how fortunate and is about to tell the old man, but the child wants to hide the fact at first.

5. *Shite's story*: The old man offers the priests *sake* and tells them about songs of a famous Zen priest from long ago to which his son used to sing and dance. The priest encourages him to sing them now. With the chorus, he sings and then begins to dance the slow, elegant *jo-no-mai*.

6. *Ending*: The old man remembering his son expresses how sad it makes him. The priest and boy then reveal that the boy is actually the old man's son and they are happily reunited. The old man tells how happy he is and that he will turn his home into a temple as a sign of his gratitude.

[Richard Emmert]