

Noh Tôru 融

(“Lord Tôru”)

A travelling priest visiting the capital meets an old man at the Kawara-no-In who tells him how Lord Tôru long ago built a replica there of the Saltwater Bay as seen from Chika in Michinoku (northern Honshû). The old man describes the beautiful scenery, and then draws saltwater before vanishing in the moonlight. He later returns to the priest, announces himself as the ghost of Tôru and then dances in the moonlight before he vanishes again.

Author: Zeami (1363? – 1443?).

Scene: Autumn, the Kawara-no-in (“River Mansion”), Rokujô, the capital, the present Kikoku Villa of the Higashi Honganji Temple in Shimogyô Ward, Kyoto.

Category: Fifth category ending (nobleman) play, phantasm (mugen) noh in two acts, banshiki hayamai (high-pitched quick dance), with taiko stick drum.

Performance practice: Performed by all five schools. A number of variant performances concern the second hayamai dance.

Characters (in order of appearance)

- Waki (secondary actor): a travelling Buddhist priest.
- Maejite (first half shite main actor): an old salt maker. Wears an old man (warai-jô, asakura-jô, or sankô-jô) mask.
- Ai/Ai-kyôgen (interlude actors): a local man.
- Nochijite (second half shite): the ghost of Minister Minamoto no Tôru. Wears a lieutenant (chûjô) mask.

Synopsis: scene by scene.

1. Waki entrance: A priest enters to nanori solo flute music, announces that he is travelling to the capital for the first time, sings of his long journey beginning with a first step, and in a travel song describes the many nights and dawns and his arrival at the capital. He says he will sightsee at the Kawara-no-In.
2. Shite entrance: An old man, balancing on his shoulder a pole with two wooden pales, enters to issei music. He sings of the rising moon and tides, the lonely scene of Shiogama (“Salt Kiln”) Bay, the lovely spots of Michinoku (northern Honshû), the moon which shines brightly on the surface of Shiogama Bay and clears the heart, and how it is now mid-autumn here in the this reconstructed Shiogama in the capital. He then sings in rhythmic match with the drums of his aged white hair, the years which pile up like drifting snow, the passing seasons awaiting death with each rain, the cold sleeves of his salt-filled robe, and the evening of this autumn bay.
3. Waki/Shite exchange: Under the priest’s questioning, the old man tells that he is a drawer of saltwater and that the great minister Tôru built a replica here of the Kawara-no-In mansion and its view of Shiogama Bay from Chika in Michinoku. Together they look at the famous Hedge

Island and the moon rising, and are reminded of an old poem of a priest knocking on a gate beneath the autumn moon. The chorus sings of the shining autumn moon, the mid-autumn winds rising through the pines, Hedge Island half hidden in mist, and viewing this beautiful inlet from Michinoku of long ago.

4. Shite narrative: The old man tells how Tôru in the reign of emperor Saga reproduced the beauty of Shiogama here, having men haul saltwater daily from Mitsu Bay and boiling it here. But later, no one continued this and the bay dried up with only occasional pools of rain filled with fallen leaves. He recalls a Tsurayuki poem describing the desolate scene. The chorus sings of only the moon remaining of this desolate place, the waves of old age as the past is recalled, and yearning for the past of which only the cry of a lonely plover remains.
5. Waki/Shite exchange, Shite exit: The old man points out the various nearby mountain peaks and famous places. The chorus joins in pointing out more, then for the priest asks about other places which the old man describes. Together they describe the stormy winds of this autumn night, the lonely moon, how the old man forgot himself in a his long narrative, but how he now recalls that he must draw saltwater, and scooping with the moon in his sleeve, he vanishes into the night like the ebbing tides.
6. Ai narrative: Under the priest’s questioning, a local man tells in details of Lord Tôru and how he reproduced Shiogama Bay. The priest tells him of the old man he just met. The local man says it must have been the spirit of Tôru and urges him to stay for a while.
7. Waki’s wait: The priest sings of using a stone for a pillow and toss for a bed to lie down to sleep and wait for a marvelous dream.
8. Nochijite entrance: The ghost of Lord Tôru enters to deha music and sings of having long forgotten the world and now returning to look at Shiogama like a “bay person” as in past ages when it was made by Minister Tôru, and states that he is himself that Tôru who gave his heart to this bay with its pines and beautiful moon.
9. Shite’s dance: The ghost with chorus sings of the twirling of cloud sleeves, moonbeams scattering like flowers, and the delightful waves of White Rivers on which float wine cups joyfully received with dancing sleeves. He then dances the hayamai “quick dance”.
10. Shite’s admiration: Alternately, the chorus and ghost sing of the delightful dance and music, and the various forms the moon takes in a month, comparing it with eyebrows, a silver boat, fish at play, and shadowed bow. The chorus describes how Tôru graciously and, with a courtly air, disappears in the moonlight.

[Richard Emmert]