

Chikubushima-Visit

(Kyogen)

Vexed by his servant Taro-kaja's absence without his leave, the lord severely questions him on his return about where he has been to. Taro-kaja says that he was on a visit to Chikubushima, a noted island for pilgrimage. Pleased with this virtuous deed, he asks if he met something new on the journey. He improvises a humorous sketch of birds, followed by another of animals. He says he saw a dog, a monkey, a frog, and a snake talking together in front of a shrine, and at parting the dog said it would "inuru" (go home) for evening gathering, the monkey "saru" (leave) as expecting a visitor, and the frog "kaeru" (return) as others would leave the place. The lord is greatly pleased with these witty remarks, but when it comes to the snake, Taro-kaja was utterly at a loss. Pressed by the lord to go on, he begins telling that it made a circle, and with its head raised...but no witty idea comes to his rescue. In desperation he hazards a remark that it "slimed" its way into a stone wall, and he is greatly reproached by the lord for his lies and negligence.

The Crest of Three-Triangles

(Noh)

Hojo Tokimasa (1138-1215), the first Hojo shikken (regent) of the Kamakura Bakufu, was born in a noted samurai house, but did not own a family crest. Therefore he visited Enoshima-island in the province of Sagami, to pray to Sarasvati, the goddess of fortune, for the crest to be bestowed. On the last day of his 3-week prayer in a cave, a local lady appeared before him and said that his prayer would be answered; and then she disappeared into the shrine.

While he kept on praying, the shrine rumbled and Sarasvati appeared before him with her attendant, bearing a flag with three-triangles embroidered upon it. Saying that if he was besieged in all directions by enemies, simply to hoist this flag would exterminate them by virtue of its divine power, she awarded it to him and, opening the doors of the shrine, went into the sanctuary.

(Takao Saijo)