

卒都婆小町

SOTOBA-KOMACHI

INTRODUCTION

Sotoba-Komachi is a *kyôjo-mono* or ‘ mad woman ’ piece of the Fourth Group.

The heroine of the play is Ono-no-Komachi.¹ When young she was greatly admired for her beauty and her poetry. She had many suitors whose love she trifled with and whose pain she mocked at. Among them was Fukakusa-no-Shôshô² who, to prove the sincerity of his love, was asked by Komachi to visit her home on a hundred consecutive nights. Braving wind, rain and snow and coming a long way, he makes a hundred visits but one, when he suddenly dies before his task is complete.

Throughout the action of the play, Komachi is in extreme old age. She has been long forsaken by all her former friends and wanders about the streets of Miyako a poor old beggar woman who suffers from occasional fits of madness, caused by her mind being possessed by the spirit of Fukakusa-no-Shôshô, whom she tormented and who has now returned to torment her in revenge.

The play takes place in the suburbs of Miyako. Some monks of Mt. Kôya,³ on their way to Miyako, meet the old woman who is resting on a stupa,⁴ which in their eyes is a sacrilege. They remonstrate with her and request her to leave it at once. This becomes the occasion for a controversy on Buddhist doctrine. She refutes the monks’ formalist approach from a higher standpoint of Mahayana Buddhism by arguing that all things in effect are phenomenal and the difference between Buddha and mortals is non-existent, and that sitting on a stupa has no more significance than sitting on any other piece of timber.

The monks are impressed by her wisdom and ask her name. She confesses that she is Komachi and starts to reminisce on her youth when she is seized by one of her fits of madness, in which she imagines she is her former lover carrying out his task of love by visiting her on one hundred consecutive nights. She emerges from her madness, with her mind set on a religious path and a humble seeker for Buddha’s mercy.

There is an accepted rule among Noh actors that no one should play the part of Komachi until he has reached the age of sixty. That the rule is strictly observed is a recognition of the

¹ One of the ‘ Six Great Poets ’ of the early Heian period. A court-lady in the service of the Emperors Nimmyô (833-850) and Montoku (850-858), she was famous for her beauty and romantic life. She is also the heroine of *Sekidera-Komachi* and *Sêshiarai-Komachi*.

² I.e. ‘ Major-General of Fukakusa, ’ a fictional character, Fukakusa being the name of a suburb of Kyoto. In the Heian period the higher ranks in the army were conferred on courtiers without reference to their military ability.

³ Mountain (2,858 ft.) situated in Wakayama Prefecture south of Osaka. On its summit there are a hundred and thirty temples, a Buddhist university and a town of about two hundred houses. The principal temple is the Kongôbu-ji founded by Kôbô Daishi. In 835 he died in the posture of medication, and after fifty days his remains were enshrined in a small mausoleum called Oku-no-in (Inner Shrine). It is popularly believed that Kôbô Daishi did not really die but is still alive in a sort of synoptic state awaiting the coming of Buddha.

⁴ A Sanskrit word meaning a mound over the tomb of Buddha, a disciple of Buddha or a king. Later it came also to mean towers built to indicate or adorn Buddhist temples, or towers erected for the benefit of departed souls. In Japan a wooden pillar or a narrow plank which is made to serve in place of a tower in commemoration of the dead has come to be exclusively called *sotoba*. In the present play a wooden pillar is referred to.

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great difficulty in playing this part and the long years of experience required to master it. Compared to other ' old woman pieces, ' *Sotoba-Komachi* is more ambitious and richer in changes and contrasts, and the title-role is more intricate and presents more difficulties of interpretation than other roles in this group.

Author: Kwannami Kiyotsugu (1334-84) It is, however, assumed that his son, Zeami Motokiyo, made a number of alterations to the text before it became fixed in its present form.

Source: *Tamatsukuri-no-Komachi ga Sôsui no Sho* (Record of the Youth and Age of Komachi of Tamatsukuri) which contains the statement that Komachi was reduced to beggary in her extreme old age. But the essential parts of the play must be attributed to the author.

SOTOKA-KOMACHI

Persons

PRIEST OF MOUNT KÔYA
ATTENDANT PRIEST
ONO-NO-KOMACHI

Waki
Waki-zure
Shite

Place

A Suburb of Miyako

Season

Autumn

1

While the entrance music shidai is being played, the PRIEST OF MOUNT KÔYA, wearing a pointed hood, small-checked under-kimono, broad-sleeved robe and carrying a rosary in his hand [] by his ATTENDANT similarly dressed, a[] crosses the Bridgeway and enters the stage.

PRIEST and ATTENDANT

shidai

The shallow hills on which we dwell,
The shallow hills on which we dwell,
Enfold the solitude deep within our hearts.

CHORUS

jidori

The shallow hills on which we dwell
Enfold the solitude deep within our hearts.

PRIEST

I am a priest of Mount Kôya. I am on my way to Miyako.

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sashi The Buddha that was¹ has passed away
 Long before our birth ;
 The Buddha that is to come²
 In the distant future waits.

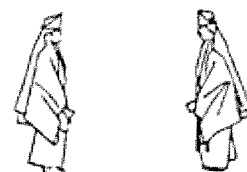
PRIEST and ATTENDANT

Between, a dream-world lies
 Wherein our days are passed.
 What, then, can we regard as real ?
 Blessed by chance to take the shape of man,
 Of countless possibilities,³ a happening rare,
 But rarer and more blessed still,
 We came upon the word
 Of Buddha's Holy Way
 That bears the seed of all enlightenment ;

sage-uta For its pursuit, our bodies clothed
 In priestly robes of black,
 We have devoted all.

age-uta Knowing what we were before our birth,⁴
 Knowing what we were before our birth,
 To those who brought us forth to life
 We owe no love ;
 All children have we long renounced :
 And now have we none as earthly ties.
 A thousand miles we walk,
 Yet never from our home once stir.
 In hills we rest,
 In fields we sleep,
 In them we find our only home,
 In them we find our only home.

PRIEST Let us rest here a while.
 ATTENDANT Yes, let us rest.



*The PRIEST and the
 ATTENDANT go to the
 Waki Seat and sit down.*

While the entrance music shidai is being played, ONO-NO-KOMACHI, wearing an ' old woman ' mask, ' old woman ' wig, painted gold-patterned under-kimono, sober embroidered outer-kimono in koshimaki fashion, broad-sleeved robe, woman's mushroom hat and

¹ I.e. Sakyamuni who died about 486 B.C.

² I.e. Bodhisattva Maitreya, who is to be born 5,670,000,000 years after Sakyamuni.

³ An enlightened soul subject to transmigration may be born according to the nature of *karma* formed during the preceding life into one of the six worlds : hell, hungry ghosts, beasts, *asuras*, human beings and heavenly beings.

⁴ Enlightenment means seeing into one's own nature, i.e. Buddha nature, described in Zen phraseology as one's own features before the birth of one's parents. One who has attained enlightenment will not even own his parents, saying with Jesus, ' Who are my mother and brothers? ' Nor will he be a stranger at any place, finding his home in hills and fields where he happens to rest.

carrying a staff in her hand, appears, advances on the Bridgeway. She stops by the First Pine.

KOMACHI
shidai I am a water-weed adrift,¹
I am a water-weed adrift ;
If the tides would only beckon,
Happily I would go.
Alas ! the waters stir no more.

CHORUS
jidori I am a water-weed adrift,
If the tides would only beckon,
Happily I would go.
Alas ! the waters stir no more.

KOMACHI
sashi How sad to think how proud
I was when young.
Flowing and raven-black my hair,
It fell like branches of a weeping willow
Rustled by a breeze in spring.
The nightingale's sweet song,
Petals of bush-clover² tipped with dew
Before they fall to earth,
Were as nothing to my voice and loveliness.
Now by meanest creatures loathed,
My shame is to the world exposed.
Ungrateful days, unhappy months,
Piled upon my head their ravages,
Until I am old a hundred years.

sage-uta In the city men I dread to see,
Lest their eyes say, " Is it she? "

age-uta With the rising moon I leave my home,
With the rising moon I leave my home ;
The Royal Palace I pass,
Where dwell the ones ' above the clouds, ' ³
No guards will stop or question me,
Among the shadow of trees,
Who am so miserable a form.
I pass the Mound of Love at Toba, ⁴



KOMACHI enters the stage and stands near the Shite Pillar.



¹ Allusion to Komachi's poem in the *Kokinshū* :

I am wretched
Like a water-weed adrift ;
If there is a tide to invite me,
I will go wherever it may be.

² I.e. *Lespedeza bicolor*, a Japanese shrub flowering in autumn.

³ The Imperial court was called ' abode above the clouds ' ; hence courtiers of high ranks were referred to as ' men above the clouds. '

⁴ The mound is situated in Toba, a southern suburb of Kyoto. It is said to contain the severed head of the tragical Lady Kesa. She was a beautiful woman, and already married to Minamoto-no-Wataru, when she came to be loved by her cousin, Endō Moritō, a passionate and reckless warrior. She would not listen to his entreaties, but being

And the Hill of Autumn.¹
 Upon the Laurel River² I see
 A barge beneath the autumn moon.
 Who are the rowers in the moonlight ?
 Who are the rowers in the moonlight ?
 Oh, how weary I am ! Let me rest awhile on
 this decaying post.

*Leans on her staff with
 both hands.*

*Goes to the centre and
 taking off her hat, sits down.*

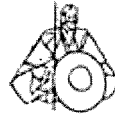
3

PRIEST Come ! Night has fallen. Let us hasten on our
 our way. Look ! That beggar is sitting on a holy
 stupa. I will go and tell her to get off it at once.

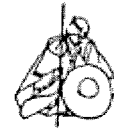
*The PRIEST and the
 ATTENDANT rise.
 Sees KOMACHI.*

ATTENDANT Yes, you must.

PRIEST Old beggar, what you are
 sitting on is a sacred stupa, a
 symbol of Buddha's body.³
 Get off it at once and rest
 yourself elsewhere.



KOMACHI You say it is a sacred symbol of Buddha's body ?
 But I see no words written on it, nor has it any carved
 figures. I thought it was merely a decaying piece of
 timber.



PRIEST On lonely mountains
 The cherry-trees even when decayed
 Cannot conceal themselves
 When in full flower.⁴
 How much more true of wood carved as a symbol
 of Buddha's body !

KOMACHI I, too, am a fallen tree
 Decaying in the earth,
 Yet in my heart

obliged to choose between her honour and her husband's life, she deceptively promised to yield to the lover after his murder of her husband and gave him instructions about how to carry out the plot. On the appointed night, dressing her hair as a man's and laying herself in her husband's bed, she was killed by Moritô. Awakened to the direful consequence of his misplaced love, Moritô renounced the world and performed extravagant austerities to atone for his sin. Then he turned into a passionate devotee of religion ; for its sake he defied the authority both of the Imperial court and the ascendant Heike family. Exiled to Izu Province he instigated Yoritomo, also an exile there, to rebel against his rival clan.

¹ I.e. Akinoyama which also lies in Toba.

² I.e. Katsura-gawa. The river Hozu in Kyoto Prefecture, famous for rapids-shooting, assumes the name of Ôi while it flows along the base of Mt. Arashi, and takes the name of Katsura in its lower reaches before joining the river Yodo.

³ The upper part of a timber stupa is notched into five sections, which like a five-storied pagoda, represent the five elements : earth, water, fire, wind, and void. The tower is a symbol of Dainichi Nyorai (the Great Sun Buddha, Skr. *Mahāvairocana*), who is called the ' Law Body of Buddha, ' i.e. the fundamental truth of the universe.

⁴ Allusion to a poem by Minamoto-no-Yorimasa (1104-80) in the *Shikashû* (1153).

Flowers burst in poetic bloom
Which I might offer to my holy Lord.
But why do you call a stupa Buddha's body ?

ATTENDANT Listen ! The stupa is the symbol,
Which Diamond Sattva¹ in incarnation gave,
Of Vairocana Buddha's body.

KOMACHI In what elements is he manifest ?

PRIEST In earth, water, fire,
In air and void.

KOMACHI All five are found within the human frame ;
Where, then, lies the difference ?

ATTENDANT These elements you have,
But not the virtue.

KOMACHI What, then, are the virtues of a stupa ?

PRIEST " If man upon a stupa looks but once,
From evil states shall he be ever free. " ²

KOMACHI " If one aspires to Buddhahood
For but a single moment, — " ³
Then need my mind in virtue yield to stupa ?

ATTENDANT If you aspire to Buddhahood,
Why not renounce the world ?

KOMACHI Renunciation of the world is not
A thing of body but of mind.

PRIEST But you have shown a callous mind in that
You failed to know the Buddha's body here.

KOMACHI It was because I knew it that I came to see it.

ATTENDANT Why, then, did you sit on it
Without first offering up a word of prayer ?

KOMACHI Since already it was resting on the ground,
Why should not I also with it rest ?

PRIEST Your actions do not at all accord
With ways that lead us to salvation.

KOMACHI Contrary ways may lead us to salvation.

ATTENDANT The sins of Daiba⁴



¹ This name is based on the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *Vajrasattva*, who received the complete instruction in Esoteric Buddhism from Dainichi Nyorai and is regarded as the second patriarch of Shingon Buddhism. The *Dainichi-kyô* (the Great Sun Buddha Sutra), one of the basic scriptures of the sect, consists of the Buddha's sermons addressed to Diamond Sattva.

² It is said in the formula used at the dedication of a new stupa : " If a man looks upon a stupa even once, he shall be forever free from the three evil states of life : hell, hungry ghosts and beasts. If one builds a stupa, he shall surely be reborn in Paradise. "

³ A partial quotation of a verse in the *Kegon-kyô* (*Gandavyûha*). The full sentence is, " If one aspires to Buddhahood for but a single moment, it is a greater merit than building a hundred, nay a thousand stupas, for magnificent stupas will in course of time crumble to dust, but the aspiration will ripen into the attainment of Buddhahood. "

⁴ Abbreviation of Daibadatta (*Devadatta*). He was a cousin and disciple of Sakyamuni, but envious and ambitious, he established a schismatic school of Buddhism with the intention of replacing Sakyamuni, and made several

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KOMACHI And mercies of Kwannon¹ are one.
 PRIEST The folly of Handoku²
 KOMACHI And the wisdom of Monju³ are one.
 ATTENDANT What is called Evil
 KOMACHI Is also Good.
 PRIEST What is called Passion
 KOMACHI Is Enlightenment.
 ATTENDANT The tree of Enlightenment ?⁴
 KOMACHI There is no such tree.
 PRIEST The all-reflecting mirror of the mind ?
 KOMACHI There is no such mirror.
 CHORUS Truth is nothingness ;
 age-uta Man and Buddha differ not.
 By his sacred word
 Both ignorant and sage
 He has vowed to save.
 Then may not the way of sin
 Lead to salvation in the end ?
 Thus she spoke.
 And the priest :
 “ This is no outcast beggar,



attempts on his life and it was believed that after his death he would fall into the deepest pit of hell and undergo never-ceasing torments.

¹ Abbreviation of Kwanzeon Bosatsu (*Avalokiteshvara*). He is a Buddhist deity of mercy, and has a chapter in the *Lotus Sutra* devoted to the description of his readiness to save people from all distresses by assuming the thirty-three bodies upon hearing their earnest invocation of his name. Kwannon is erroneously called ‘ Goddess of Mercy. ’

² Abbreviation of Shurihandoku (*Cûdapanthaka*). He was proverbially stupid among Buddha’s disciples. He was with the master for many years, but could not remember a single saying so that his brilliant brother advised him to return to the worldly life. He persisted, however, and finally attained enlightenment by meditating on a broom given him by Buddha.

³ Abbreviation of Monjushiri (*Manjusri*). He is a major bodhisattva and regarded as a deity of wisdom. His image is enshrined in a meditation hall in the Zen sect. In various plastic and pictorial representations of him, he is shown riding a lion.

⁴ Hêng-jèn (弘忍), fifth patriarch of Zen in China, desirous of choosing his successor, called on his numerous disciples to state their respective attainments in verse. His foremost pupil, Shen-hsiu (神秀) wrote :

The body is like unto the Bodhi tree ;
 And the mind to a mirror bright ;
 Carefully we clean it hour by hour
 Lest dust should upon it fall.

Though the abbot praised the poem as expressive of the sound principle of self-cultivation, he was not quite satisfied with the sentiment. Hui-nung (慧能 638-713), who was an uneducated man and was employed in refining rice for the monastery, was also dissatisfied with the poem and composed his own :

Neither is there the Bodhi tree,
 Nor yet a mirror bright ;
 Since in reality all is void,
 Whereon can dust fall ?

The patriarch approved of the verse and made Hui-nung his successor in the Way. But secretly fearing that harm might come to Hui-nung from his fellow-disciples’ displeasure and envy, the master put the pupil in a boat and rowed him across the river under the cover of night, telling him to lie hidden till a more propitious day. In the time of Hui-nung as sixth patriarch Zen became a prosperous sect of Buddhism in China.

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	But a soul enlightened ; ” And bending their heads to the ground Three times they do her reverent homage.	<i>The PRIEST and the ATTENDANT sit down and make a bow.</i>
KOMACHI	This triumph makes me bold To improvise a jest in rhyme : “ Stupa as a seat in Paradise Would with reason scandalize, But in this other world without Does such a use in fact count ? ” ¹	
CHORUS	What a bother the exhortations of these priests ! What a bother the exhortations of these priests !	<i>KOMACHI rises and goes towards the Shite Pillar.</i>

4

PRIEST	Come now ! Who are you ! Pray tell me your name.
KOMACHI	I am ashamed to do so, but I will. In me you see the ruin of Ono-no-Komachi, Daughter of Ono-no-Yoshizane, ² Once Prefect of Dewa Province.
PRIEST and ATTENDANT <i>sashi</i>	Alas, alas ! Is this famed Komachi, A lady once so lovely, More bright than any flower, Her painted brows arched like crescent moons, ³ Her face white-powdered ever, Whose gauze and damask robes Filled her laurel mansion ?
KOMACHI	In the language of her land And the speech of distant China Her verses she composed.
CHORUS	And when she held a banquet-cup, A glowing moon shone from her hand.
<i>sage-uta</i>	When did such loveliness pass away ? How did the years bring this wretched plight ?
<i>age-uta</i>	Her head is crowned with frosted weeds ; “ Locks once long and lovely Now are withered wisps ; For ever lost the hue of distant hills

¹ The Japanese *sotoba* for *stupa* is nearly homonymous with *sotowa*, which means ‘ outside, ’ the doggerel turning upon this pun.

² Second son of Ono-no-Takamura (802-852), a high-ranking courtier and a famous scholar and poet in Chinese as well as in Japanese in the Heian period. Takamura was once appointed deputy envoy in a mission to the Imperial court of T’ang, but quarrelling with the ambassador, he did not sail and was exiled to the islands of Oki in the Japan Sea.

³ In ancient Japan it was customary for women to shave off their eye-brows and in their place paint pretty arches with a material prepared from soot of rape oil, quicksilver, vegetable rouge and camellia oil.

From the painted arches of her wondrous eyes."¹
 Oh ! fain would she hide in shame
 Her tangled seaweed hair,
 That lacks but one to know a hundred years,
 From the fading moon in dawning skies.



KOMACHI *hides her face with her hat.*

5

CHORUS What does the wallet hold
rongi That hangs about your neck ?
 KOMACHI Not sure of life to-day,
 I store against to-morrow's needs,
 I carry rice and some dried beans.
 CHORUS And in the bag upon your back ?
 KOMACHI Only garments soiled and dirty.
 CHORUS And in the basket on your arm ?
 KOMACHI Arrow-heads of black and white.
 CHORUS The tattered rain-cloak wrought of straw,
 KOMACHI The broken hat of sedge,
 CHORUS Which scarcely hides my head—
 KOMACHI Can they keep off the frost and snow,
 The dew and falling rain ?
 CHORUS Not sleeves enough to wipe the tears
 That fall upon my cheeks,
 And now I roam about the streets,
 Begging passers-by for alms.
 And when refused, my temper flares,
 And I am seized with madness,
 My voice is then transformed.
 Oh, terrible my acts !

KOMACHI *goes near the Shite Pillar.*



Looks at her hat and mimes while the following lines are being chanted.



KOMACHI *drops her staff.*

6

KOMACHI Give me alms, you priests. Give me alms !
 PRIEST What do you mean ?
 KOMACHI I must pay a visit to Komachi.
 PRIEST You *are* Komachi. What nonsense are you talking !
 KOMACHI No, Komachi was beautiful, exquisite.
 Love-letters came to her
 Ceaseless as the rains of May,
 And yet to none would she return a word.
 Now in her hundredth year
 In madness retribution comes.

Goes to the PRIEST, holding her hat before her with both hands.



¹ Quoted with some adaptation from a poem by Po Chu-i.

Oh ! I love her ! I love her !

Weeps.

PRIEST You say you love Komachi. Whose spirit has possessed you ?

KOMACHI Among the many who longed to win her love, Fukakusa-no-Shôshô was the most devoted to her heart.

CHORUS Unbearable his suffering
My cruel whims have caused,
And now he comes to take revenge.
Possessed by Shôshô's angry soul,
I must make once more
The nightly journeys to Komachi's home.
What time of day ? It is the dusk.
The moon is my companion on the way,
Watchmen may stand at barriers on the road,
Yet never can they stop me.



KOMACHI comes to the front.

KOMACHI looks towards the Bridgeway.

KOMACHI sits down near the Stage-attendants' Seat. She puts on a smaller stand-up cap and a dancing chôken robe.

7

KOMACHI Lifting the hem of my silken skirt,
CHORUS Lifting the hem of my silken skirt,
Folding down my stand-up cap
And hiding with my sleeve my head,
I go my way avoiding eyes of men.
I go without a pause,
On moonlit nights, on moonless nights,
In falling rain, in roaring winds,
Leaves showering down,
Snow deep upon the road.



Rises and goes near the Shite Pillar. Then she mimes while the following lines are being chanted.



KOMACHI As water dripping from the roof-eaves
In quick succession
CHORUS I go and come, I come and go
One night, two nights, three nights, four,
Seven nights, eight nights, nine ;
Then came the tenth.
It happened on the evening
When was held Toyo-no-Akari,¹
The banquet at the court.
But I was absent and without regret.
As faithful as a cock
That marks the coming dawn,

¹ More fully Toyo-no-Akari-no-Sechie which used to be given at the Imperial court in November (Old Style) on the day after *Niiname-sai* (Newly-harvested-rice-tasting Festival) when the new rice of the year was offered to the Imperial ancestral deities. At Toyo-no-Akari, the Imperial family and court nobles partook for the first time of the new rice, which formed the feature of the grand banquet enlivened with classical music and dancing. The list of new appointments and promotions was also published on the occasion.

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KOMACHI
CHORUS

I seek Komachi's gate to mark
The number of my visits on the stand¹
Where rests the carriage-shafts.
One hundred nights I was to come,
I lack but one.
O what pain ! It turns my head !
Thus in agony he died
Before the dawn had come.
I am possessed by Shôshô's spirit,
Its anger turned my wits insane.



KOMACHI *subsides.*

KOMACHI *rises and
turns towards the PRIEST.*

8

CHORUS
kiri



From this my misery
I needs must
Pray for my salvation
In the life to come hereafter.
By piling high the pebbles into stupas²
To win for me a body burnished gold,³
By making to gentle Buddha
My offerings of flowers,
I'll enter on the Way of Truth,
I'll enter on the Way of Truth.

KOMACHI *joins her
hands in prayer near the
Shite Pillar.*

¹ A sort of low, lacquered four-legged table, which supported the ends of the shafts of an ox-coach, when the ox was taken off. It was also used as a step, when the rider climbed into or out of the vehicle.

² Five pebbles placed one upon another may serve the same purpose as a tall pagoda, for it is the spirit of devotion that counts in religion.

³ I.e. Buddha's person. His body is described as golden because his skin was a pale yellow colour.