

FIGURE 3.61. Senoo prepares to alight, with the pardon tucked into his kimono. He wears the highly stylized costume (*ryūjin-maki*) of a forceful samurai serving as an important envoy and also a curly hair wig (*chirichiri-katsura*) and “queue concealer” (*mage-kakeshi*) hat. Compare the envoy in the noh version in figure 2.26. (Photo by Aoki Shinji.)

Yasuyori, lord of Hei,
are hereby ordered to leave their place of exile
and to return to the capital with all due haste!
You have heard this from the imperial envoy
Senoo Tarō Kaneyasu!

During the reading, Shunkan, not hearing his name, lifts his head and crawls forward a bit.

CHANTER:

Even before the reading is completed,
the two stunned exiles
are groveling with thanks.

SHUNKAN: I beg to ask why the name of Shunkan was omitted from the reading?

SENOO: Be quiet, Shunkan! How dare you accuse a person such as myself of omitting your name? (*Walks heavily toward Shunkan*) If you think there is any other name than the two I read, you can look at this for yourself!

CHANTER:

Senoo thrusts the papers at Shunkan.

SHUNKAN: Let me see!

CHANTER:

Naritsune and Yasuyori also
marvel at this paper as Shunkan
reads it over and over,
this way and that.
Even when he reads the wrapping sheet,
no sign of Shunkan's name or title can be found.

Shunkan puts down the wrapping paper and then reads the sheet with the writing

YASUYORI (*Emerging in his turn*):

And I am Yasuyori.

SHUNKAN: And I, Shunkan, am here
as well.

All bow low.

CHANTER:

They bow formally, their heads
low.

Senoo takes a letter of pardon
from his breast and reads it
with great show of ceremony.

SENOO:

“Because of the recent birth of a
son to their revered majesties,
the Emperor and Empress,
a general amnesty has been
declared throughout the land.
The two exiles to Devil Island,
Naritsune, lord of Tamba, and

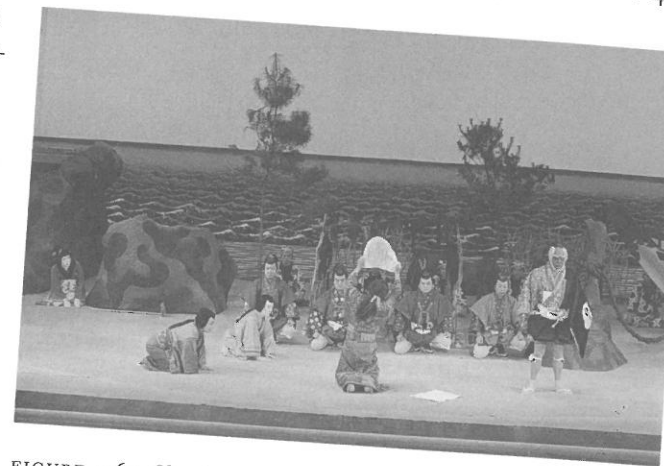


FIGURE 3.62. Shunkan examines the pardon and its wrapping paper, searching for his name. Compare the noh version in figure 2.27. Chidori remains behind a rock at stage right. (Photo by Aoki Shinji.)

on it. He soon puts this down and lifts the wrapping paper, examining it carefully. He picks up the pardon again, his hand trembling, and holds the papers up to the light [figure 3.62].⁹

SHUNKAN: Nothing. (*Pause*) Nothing.
(*Pause*) Nothing, nothing.

He speaks these words faster and faster, his voice fading in a pathetic sob.

CHANTER:

Shunkan faces Senoo.

Shunkan throws down the papers and holds them there with his right hand as he addresses Senoo. The others all are bowing low.

SHUNKAN: I wish to say something to Lord Senoo. Only the names of Naritsune and Yasuyori appear on this official pardon (*points to the names*), but neither my name nor my title is here. Perhaps it is because Lord Kiyomori¹⁰ forgot to add it, or maybe the scribe merely made an error.

SENOO: Shut up, Shunkan! You have been ordered to remain behind alone as the overseer of this island.

SHUNKAN (*Stunned*): What? Overseer of this island?

SENOO: That is the order of Lord Kiyomori!

SHUNKAN: We have committed the same crime and have been exiled to the same place. We should then receive the same pardon!

CHANTER:

Only two of us have been pardoned
and I alone have slipped
through the net of Buddha's grace.
Even Buddha's great love and mercy are discriminatory!

Shunkan slaps the papers.

SHUNKAN: If I had killed myself long ago, I would not have to face this grief I feel. *Shunkan picks up the pardon from the floor and holds it out to his friends, his hands trembling. He grabs the wrapping paper with his left hand and angrily crushes the papers together into a ball. Senoo comes over and grabs them away from him. He puts them in his kimono sleeve. Shunkan, wailing, lies in a heap on the ground.*

CHANTER:

He loudly bemoans his lengthened life,
a life of misery and grief.
A voice is now heard from the boat.

9. This is the high point of Shunkan's role. Actors sometimes play it more simply, looking at the papers and weeping or demanding the wrapping paper separately and carefully comparing the two.

10. Taira no Kiyomori (1118–1181) was the head of the Taira clan during the peak of its domination of Japanese political life in the last decades of the Heian period.