

Otabi Festival Children's Kabuki 2019

Daimonji-cho: "At the Shin-Yoshiwara Ageya" from

The Tale of Shiroishi, A Latter-Day Taiheiki

碁太平記白石噺 新吉原揚屋の場

Gotaiheiki Shiroishi Banashi – Shin-Yoshiwara Ageya no Ba



The play is set primarily in the pleasure district of Shin-Yoshiwara, located in Edo (present-day Tokyo), and revolves around the lives of the courtesans who live there. This is the 7th of a series of 11 acts, but remains the only one regularly performed today.

We begin our story at the *Daikokuya*, one of the many pleasure houses of Shin-Yoshiwara. There, the courtesan **Miyagino** sits in her rooms preparing for the day. The scene begins with the entry of her attendants, **Miyazato** and **Miyashiba**. Together with them is the new girl, who hails from the countryside. Amused by her unusual countryside accent, they have brought the new girl over to entertain Miyagino. Miyagino scolds the two attendants for their attitude before dismissing them from the room, leaving her and the new girl alone.

Realizing that the unusual dialect is one from her hometown, Miyagino asks to hear the girl's backstory. She soon realizes the girl is her sister **Onobu**, from whom she has been separated. They confirm their relationship when each produces an identical amulet from their local home shrine. Miyagino goes on to learn that their mother has since passed away, and their father killed by the local governor.

Their conversation is overheard by the master of the pleasure house, **Soroku**, who was hiding in an adjacent room. He had come up to check on Miyagino, since she missed her appointed meeting time.

The sisters hatch a plan to run away and avenge their father's murder, but are interrupted by the appearance of Soroku. Miyagino attempts to kill him but is easily stopped. Soroku then advises them that in order to carry out a successful revenge, they should bid their time, and train as the brothers from the "Tale of the Soga Brothers" did.

So that the pair can carry out their revenge legitimately, he returns to them their release papers, freeing them from their contract.

Notes:

1. The *Ageya* refers to the house where guests or patrons would be received and entertained, and contrasts with *Okiya*, or their living quarters.
2. Courtesans apprentices often train and work as attendants under an older courtesan before they are allowed to work. They are often sold to a house where they will work to pay off their contract. It is not unusual for girls from the countryside to be sold.
3. The "Tale of the Soga Brothers/*Sogamonogatari*" is considered one of the 3 great revenge stories in Japan. Much of the play centers on the brother preparing their revenge over a long period of time.
4. Stories of vengeance killings are popular in Kabuki. Under the Japanese honor system, certain circumstances had to be met to make it a legitimate revenge.