

Zeitschrift: Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie

Herausgeber: Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft

Band: 58 (2004)

Heft: 3: Performing cultures in East Asia : China, Korea, Japan

Artikel: Stone bridge : a pilgrimage performed

Autor: Borgen, Robert

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-147644>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 04.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

STONE BRIDGE: A PILGRIMAGE PERFORMED

Robert Borgen, University of California

Perhaps scholars like to discuss the term “performance” precisely because the word is so elusive. In colloquial English, one can “perform” an impressively wide range of activities. This paper, for example, will treat three types of activity that would seem to have little in common, except that one can see elements of “performance,” loosely defined, in each. It will initially focus on an individual, the Japanese monk Jakushô 寂照 (962–1034). Jakushô is remembered primarily for his pilgrimage to China in 1003, a time when Japanese rarely ventured overseas. His achievement caught the fancy of the Japanese, who soon began telling stories of his deeds and writing them down. Thus he became a figure in literary composition. Sometime around 1500, his pilgrimage became the subject of a *noh* play that included a spectacular “lion dance,” in which the actor portrays a lion as it appeared in the Japanese imagination. About two centuries later, this play, in turn, inspired a whole genre of *kabuki* plays that feature lion dances but have virtually nothing to do with the story of Jakushô as told in the original play. To put it another way, over a space of 700 years, the performance of a religious rite, a pilgrimage, was transformed into secular entertainment. Superficially, the only connection between the pilgrimage and the dances would be that, in English, people “perform” both. Upon closer examination, however, one can find ties between the sacred world of pilgrimage and the secular world of theatrical dance. Buddhist rites, as much as dances, could have audiences. Perhaps this explains why in Japan, certain types of dance, including those that evolved into the *noh* theater, were performed as part of religious ceremonies. Monks and secular dancers may differ in that former perform rites out of concern for the spiritual welfare of their followers, whereas the latter hope to please an audience with the aesthetic merits of their art. A cynic, however, might suggest that neither could survive without the fees paid by loyal followers, and so both monks and actors may have pecuniary reasons for seeking to attract a large following. This urge to attract an audience, whether for spiritual or material reasons, is a key motivation in the story of how a pilgrimage was transformed into a dance.

The original protagonist of the story, Jakushô, was a historical figure. Standard sources, both Japanese and Chinese, preserve the general outlines of his life. He was born, probably in 962, into the aristocratic Ôe 大江 family and given the name Sadamoto 定基. In the tenth century, the Ôe were a family distinguished primarily for its scholars and literary figures. In this respect, Sadamoto's immediate ancestors were typical. Both his grandfather and father had held such posts as professor of literature, president of the university, and imperial tutor, all of which presumed Sinological expertise. Atypically, however, they also attained positions in the Council of State (*daijôkan* 太政官), placing them among those who actually held political power. This was a rare achievement at a time when such posts were dominated by members of a single family, the Fujiwara 藤原. Presumably their promotions were rewards for their scholarly accomplishments. In an age that valued ancestry, birth had favored Sadamoto, and he showed every sign of following in the footsteps of his progenitors. He was an able writer, with examples of his works, both in Chinese and Japanese, finding their way into major anthologies; his offices included head of the imperial library and professor. Subsequently he was named Governor of Mikawa 三河 Province, the area around the modern city of Nagoya. This was a lucrative post not overly far from the capital.

Although Sadamoto's future looked reasonably secure, in 988, when still a young man of perhaps twenty-six years, he turned to Buddhism and became a monk, taking the name Jakushô. He studied various elements of Buddhism with some of the leading monks of his day, among them Genshin 源信 (942–1017), one of Japan's early exponents of salvationist Pure Land teachings. For a handful of Heian monks who combined faith with a spirit of adventure, China's holy mountains, sources of Japanese Buddhism, remained alluring objects of pilgrimage. Jakushô was one such monk and in 1003 he set off on a journey to China, accompanied by seven disciples. The goal of his journey was Wutai 五臺, "The Five Terraces" in what today is Shanxi Province. These holy peaks were reputedly the home of Mañjusrî, the bodhisattva of wisdom. Surviving evidence suggests, however, that Jakushô never got that far. He also hoped to get answers from Chinese monks to twenty-seven questions that Genshin had posed, and this goal he would attain. In China, he was welcomed at the imperial court in the Song capital of Kaifeng. There he had an audience with Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (968–1022, r. 997–1022), who granted him the purple robe and the title Great Master Yuandong (Jpn. Entsû 円通大師), both emblematic of great distinction in the Chinese Buddhist community. From Kaifeng he headed back to the region around the mouth of the Yangzi River, where he had first arrived in

China and would spend his remaining years. In the Siming 四明 Mountains just west of the modern city of Ningbo, he met one of the great Chinese monks of the day, Zhili 知禮 (960–1028), who composed answers to Genshin's questions. Jakushô impressed the Chinese with both his piety and his skills as a calligrapher. Alas, Chinese officials were so impressed that they rejected his request for permission to return home, although some of his disciples did go back to Japan, bringing with them the answers to Genshin's questions. Eventually, he visited the Tiantai 天臺 mountains where his sect of Buddhism had been founded and spent some years at a monastery in Suzhou, before he finally died, probably in Hangzhou.¹

Since only the bare outlines of Jakushô's life are known, we cannot speak with confidence about his "performance" as a pilgrim, but we have hints that his fellow aristocrats followed his adventures with interest. A court lady, years later, would recall that in her youth, "people gathered to see the embroidered Buddhas he was taking to China as an offering."² From China, he exchanged letters with high officials at court, including the most powerful leader of the day, Fujiwara no Michinaga 藤原道長 (966–1027).³ In other words, one could say his pilgrimage was staged for an audience of aristocrats back home who showed considerable interest in a performance they could only imagine. Moreover, like theatrical performers, pilgrims followed set scripts. For example, in Jakushô's

- 1 This account of Jakushô's life glosses over numerous problematic details. For a fuller discussion, see studies of Jakushô such as Kuboki Tetsuo 久保木哲夫, "Mikawa Nyûdô Jakushô to sono Nissô wo Megutte" 三河入道寂照とその入宋をめぐって *Kokugo to Kokubungaku* no. 680 (Oct. 1980) pp. 52–65; and Saitô Tadashi 齋藤忠, *Chûgoku Tendai-san Shojiin no Kenkyû: Nihon Sôryô no Ashiato wo Tazunete* 中国天台山諸寺院の研究: 日本僧侶の足跡を訪ねて (Daiichi Shobô, 1998), in particular pp. 109–15. Saitô provides numerous illustrations, including excellent pictures of the real Stone Bridge. Relevant primary sources are gathered in *DNS* II.4, pp. 929–55. Some key sources have been translated by Ryûsaku Tsunoda and edited by L. Carrington Goodrich, in their *Japan in the Chinese Dynastic Histories: Later Han Through Ming Dynasties* (South Pasadena: P.D. and Ione Perkins, 1951) pp. 59–60; and my "Through Several Glasses Brightly: A Japanese Copy of a Chinese Account of Japan (Introduction and Translation)," *Sino-Japanese Studies*, vol. II, no. 2 (May, 1990), pp. 5–19.
- 2 This is a slightly modified of Robert Mintzer's translation in his "Jôjin Azari no Haha Shû: Maternal Love in the Eleventh Century, an Enduring Testament" (Harvard University Ph.D. Dissertation, 1978) p. 205; for the original, see Miyazaki Sôhei 宮崎莊平, *Jôjin Ajari Haha no Shû Zen'yakuchû* 成尋阿闍梨母集全訳注 (Kôdansha Gakujutsu Bunko, 1979) p. 168.
- 3 Borgen, "Through Several Glasses Brightly," p. 17.

day, most pilgrims belonged to the Tendai sect of Buddhism and so they aspired to visit China's Tiantai Mountains where their sect had been founded. The Wutai mountains were the second important goal. No other sites associated with Chinese Buddhism seem to have interested them. A curious example of how pilgrimage could be scripted appears in the diary of a slightly later Japanese monk who left a diary recounting his travels to both Tiantai and Wutai in the years 1072 and 1073. When he describes his arrival at Tiantai and his first visits to its holiest sites, he suddenly adopts language more elegant than his customary laconic prose. Closer examination reveals he was taking passages verbatim from the account left by the patriarch of his particular lineage within the Tendai sect who had visited the same sites more than two centuries earlier.⁴ This practice, which he never repeats, can be interpreted several ways. It could be a sign of respect for the patriarch. At the same time, it could also have been intended to show that he was following precisely the correct script as composed by the patriarch, which in turn suggests he presumed a readership for his diary, another reminder that pilgrimages had audiences.

Although Jakushô's pilgrimage itself was not performed live before a Japanese audience, other Buddhist rites of his day were, and a famous contemporary of Jakushô's noted they could be admired for their aesthetic value. The court lady Sei Shônagon 清少納言 explained:

A preacher ought to be handsome. It is only when we keep our gaze fixed firmly on a good-looking monk's face that we feel the holiness of the text he expounds.⁵

This observation led Ivan Morris to suggest "that for many of the Heian aristocrats religion had become mere mummery."⁶ Although he dismisses Sei Shônagon's remark as cynical, she may be offering a useful observation about the role of performance in religion. Many religious rites involve staged spectacles that are observed and evaluated on their aesthetic merits. At Shinto shrines in modern Japan, worshippers can pay a fee to have a shrine maiden

4 See my "The Case of the Plagiaristic Journal: A Curious Passage from Jôjin's Diary," in *New Leaves: Studies and Translations of Japanese Literature in Honor of Edward Seidensticker*, Aileen Gatten and Anthony Hood Chambers, eds. (Ann Arbor: Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan, 1993) pp. 63–88.

5 Helen Craig McCullough trans. in her *Classical Japanese Prose: An Anthology* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990) p. 165.

6 *The World of the Shining Prince: Court Life in Ancient Japan* (New York: Penguin Books, 1983) p. 119.

perform *kagura*, literally “god music” 神楽, which is typically a dance with simple musical accompaniment. If one asks, the shrine priest would probably explain that the dances are meant to amuse the gods. Although we cannot be sure how the gods react, the performance entertains at least some in its human audience. *Kagura* traces its origins to the beginnings of Japanese history, demonstrating a continuous history of ties between religion and performance as simple entertainment. We may not be able to observe this connection in Jakushô’s pilgrimage, but it certainly was a part of Japanese Buddhist practice in his day.

Jakushô’s story captured the imagination of Japanese, who began recording episodes from his life, some quite plausible, others utterly fantastic. These stories appear in collections of anecdotes that modern scholars label “*setsuwa*” 説話 or tale literature. The term suggests that the genre has its origins in oral traditions of story telling, but in fact a reader need only turn to English translations of *setsuwa* to discover that this cannot be altogether true. Among the most familiar collections of these tales is *Konjaku Monogatari Shû* 今昔物語集, translated as *Tales of Times Now Past*.⁷ It begins with five chapters of Buddhist parables from India, followed by four of tales from China. Included are familiar episodes from both cultural traditions that surely entered Japan in written form. Stories about Jakushô began to appear in such collections, among them *Tales of Times Now Past*. Today both the provenance and nature of these stories are unknown. They could be records of stories first told to an audience or they could have originated as written texts. Similarly, they could be accurate accounts of historical events, fictionalized versions of such events, or pure fantasy. Probably they combine all of these elements: oral and written traditions, fact and fiction. The following episodes illustrate how stories from this body of literature fill a few of the gaps in our knowledge of Jakushô’s life. Some may be true, but all demonstrate how Jakushô’s story could be used for literary effect to entertain at least an audience of readers.⁸

7 Marian Ury, *Tales of Times New Past: Sixty-Two Stories from a Medieval Japanese Collection* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 1993).

8 For a complete listing of these stories, see Sakaida Shirô 堺田四郎 and Wada Katsushi 和田克司, *Zôho Kaitei Nihon Setsuwa Bungaku Sakuin* 増補改訂日本説話文学索引 (Osaka: Seibundô, 1974) pp. 474–75. Two have been translated by D. E. Mills in *A Collection of Tales from Uji: A Study and Translation of Uji Shûi Monogatari* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1970) pp. 227–29 and 394–95.

First, these stories explain why Jakushô became a monk. According to one version, dating from the first years of the twelfth century, the youthful Sadamoto had scorned Buddhism and delighted in hunting until he was appointed governor of Mikawa, where his beloved wife died. Since he could not bear to part with her, instead of cremating her body, he kept it by his side. Watching a corpse decay happens to be a form of Buddhist meditation and so it was that the putrefaction of his wife's body inspired Sadamoto to become a monk.⁹ Another version, perhaps recorded only a few decades later, elaborates further. In this retelling, Sadamoto abandons his wife for a younger woman, and it is she who dies in Mikawa. In still later versions she is a prostitute. Additional details are provided to explain Sadamoto's religious awakening. After the death of his wife, or at least the death of a woman he loved, he asks that a pheasant be plucked and roasted alive because it is said to be tastier prepared that way. The narrator first offers a gory description of the butchering and cooking, before explaining that Sadamoto, moved to tears by the scene, had observed this only to test his faith.¹⁰

Another tale in the same collection adds one more detail. A woman, looking elegant but haggard, comes to sell him a mirror, a precious object. With it is a poem:

<i>kyô made to</i>	Today, one last time,
<i>miru ni namida no</i>	I look and tears well up.
<i>masu kagami</i>	Clear mirror:
<i>narenuru kage wo</i>	please tell no one
<i>hito ni kataru na</i>	whose image it reflected.

The message of the poem is that the woman, presumably an aristocrat fallen on hard times, must sell the mirror, but, because she is ashamed of her poverty, she does not want to reveal her identity. Sadamoto is so moved that he gives her a wagon loaded with rice and returns the mirror to her. He also wrote a reply to her poem but did not tell anyone what it was. This incident too stirred his faith in Buddhism.¹¹ The poem in fact sheds light on how either writers or storytellers

- 9 *Zoku Honchô Ôjôden* 続本朝往生伝, in Inoue Mitsusada 井上光定 and Ôsone Shôsuke 大曾根章介 ed., *Ôjôden Hokke Genki* 往生伝・法華験記, *Nihon Shisô Taikei* 日本思想体系 7 (Iwanami Shoten, 1974) p. 247–8, 578.
- 10 *Konjaku Monogatari Shû*, vol. 4, Yamada Yoshio 山田孝雄 et al. ed., (NKBT vol. 25) pp. 57–60; a similar version is found in *Uji Shûji Monogatari*, see Mills trans, pp. 227–29.
- 11 *Konjaku Monogatari Shû*, vol. 4, NKBT, p. 345, with details added from *Jikkinshô* 十訓抄, Asami Kazuhiko 浅見和彦 ed., *Nihon Koten Bungaku Zenshû* 日本古典文学全集 51 (Shôgakkan, 1997) p. 437–8.

created tales in this genre of literature, for a slightly different version of both the anecdote and poem had been first recorded in an anthology of poetry at the beginning of the eleventh century, around the time Jakushô went to China and more than a hundred years before the version described here.¹² In the earlier rendition, the poem was presented to Jakushô's elder brother. Perhaps Jakushô replaced his brother in the story only after his pilgrimage made him the more famous of the two. Changing one of the characters to a devout and heroic monk made the story more engaging, and once such stories established Jakushô as an appealing figure, he started to appear in ever more of them.

Many other stories recount Jakushô's deeds. A few further demonstrate how they prize entertainment value over prosaic accuracy. For example, one records that the Chinese emperor summoned him along with a group of Chinese monks, and on imperial command he sent his bowl flying to fetch food. Everyone, including the emperor, paid homage to him.¹³ Other episodes place Jakushô at Wutai, a key element in the subsequent theatrical version of his pilgrimage. One of them alludes to his final poem. It is recorded in several collections of tales, but they disagree on where he died. The earliest account, dating from around the year 1100, says he died in Hangzhou, but, a century and a half later, two retellings move the scene to Wutai.¹⁴ One additional anecdote again places Jakushô at Wutai. There he prepares a bath for the general public. A filthy woman, disfigured by a terrible skin disease appears with her child and dog. When everyone else wants to chase her away, Jakushô treats her kindly. After she mysteriously disappears, a purple cloud is seen rising upward from the eaves of the bathhouse and everyone realizes that she had been a manifestation of the bodhisattva Mañjusrî.¹⁵ In fact, before he left Japan, Jakushô had requested permission to make a pilgrimage to Wutai. Chinese sources, however, first place him at the Song capital of Kaifeng, where we are told he asked to visit Tiantai, not Wutai. Afterwards, he is said to have settled in Suzhou, where he learned to speak in the local dialect.¹⁶ Since Tiantai, Suzhou and Hangzhou are

12 *Shûi waka shû* 拾遺和歌集, Komachiya Teruhiko 小町谷照彦 ed., *SNKBT* 7, p. 133.

13 *Tales from Uji*, Mills trans. pp. 394–94.

14 He died at Hangzhou according to *Zoku Ôjôden* p. 248; at Wutai according to *Jikkinshô*, p. 438 and *Kokon Chomonjû* 古今著聞集, Nagazumi Yasuaki 永積安明 and Shimada Isao 島田勇雄 ed (*NKBT* vol. 84, 1966) p. 175; or an unspecified location according to *Hosshinshû* 発心集 (Miki Sumito 三木紀人 ed, *Hôjôki, Hosshinshû* 方丈記・発心集 [Shinchô Nihon Koten Bungaku Shûsei, 1976] p. 99).

15 *Konjaku Monogatari Shû* vol. 4, p. 60.

16 See my *Sino-Japanese Studies* article; *Song Shi* only mentions his audience.

all in the same general region, probably he went there and eventually died in Hangzhou without ever achieving his original goal of making a pilgrimage to Wutai.

One way to understand the evolution of stories about Jakushô is to treat them as part of two related traditions, preaching and storytelling. Many collections of tales are explicitly Buddhist in nature. For example, stories about Jakushô appear in one with a title that might be translated “An Anthology of Religious Awakening” (*Hosshinshû* 発心集). Its stories were meant to inspire faith, perhaps in the context of sermons by preachers who needed colorful anecdotes to keep the attention of their audiences. Jakushô provided excellent material for sermons. Possibly the death of a loved one turned him to religion when he was still a young man with a promising career ahead of him, but even if it was a total fabrication, it made an edifying anecdote. Storytellers elaborated on it, attaching unrelated episodes such as that of the pheasant and the noble woman. As noted, Jakushô’s pilgrimage to China had attracted the attention of his contemporaries. His stated goal was to visit Wutai, mountains famed as the home of the bodhisattva Mañjusrî and long revered in Japan. Some information about him found its way back to Japan, where people knew the Song emperor had honored him at an imperial audience. This too provided material for the storytellers. They assumed he completed his pilgrimage to Wutai, and, if he visited Wutai, surely he would have encountered the resident bodhisattva. The story of Mañjusrî’s appearing in the form of a diseased person at a public bath is remarkably similar to another story about a Nara period empress famed for her piety. When she welcomes a leper to a public bath, he reveals himself to be a Buddha.¹⁷ The earliest record of this story dates from 1165, somewhat later than the story of Jakushô, but the provenance of both is unknown. Perhaps both are based on a Buddhist parable transposed to a Japanese setting. Similarly, like Jakushô, other revered monks were said to have the power to cause their begging bowls to fly.¹⁸ In other words, the wonders attributed to Jakushô were part of a repertory of miracles associated with devout Buddhists and thus Jakushô was being used as a stock figure in conventional stories of religious faith.

17 Marian Ury, “Nuns and Other Female Devotees in *Genkô Shakusho*,” in Barbara Ruch ed. *Engendering Faith: Women and Buddhism in Premodern Japan*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Center for Japanese Studies, 2002), pp. 194–96, 205.

18 For a familiar example, see *Tales from Uji*, Mills trans., pp. 286–91.

As noted, these stories appear in collections of anecdotes that Japanese today classify as *setsuwa*, a genre that flourished in the late Heian and Kamakura periods, roughly the years 1100 to 1300. Interest in Jakushô seems to have declined with the genre, but he reappeared two centuries later as a character in a play for noh theater. The origins of *Noh* are complex, but among its principle sources were performances staged at Buddhist monasteries toward the end of the period when *setsuwa* enjoyed their greatest popularity. The form of noh that survives to the present day began in the late fourteenth century, when Japan's military rulers, then in the ancient capital of Kyoto, began to patronize the art. Although it came to be performed in secular venues, noh remained strongly Buddhist in its content. Sometime around the year 1500, an anonymous author wrote the *noh* play "Stone Bridge" (*Shakkyô* 石橋) with Jakushô as one of its main characters.¹⁹ Jakushô's pilgrimage was thus transformed from a sacred to a theatrical performance, albeit one with religious overtones.

In the version of the noh play found in standard literary anthologies, Jakushô arrives at Stone Bridge, the famed natural span at Tiantai suspended over a precipitous waterfall. It is a spectacular sight, but not a bridge most would want to traverse, for as the play notes it is very narrow. Only the enlightened, it is said, can cross it. The *noh* version improves upon mundane geography by moving the bridge to Wutai, where Mañjusrî was known to appear before devout pilgrims. This change could be the result of simple ignorance, but it may also be the result of *setsuwa* consistently placing Jakushô at Wutai, not Tiantai. Having changed the setting, the play goes on to incorporate details suitable to the bridge's new location. According to the play, anyone who can cross the bridge arrives at Mañjusrî's Pure Land. In Buddhist iconography, Mañjusrî was customarily portrayed either in the form of a youth attending the Buddha or as an independent figure seated on a lotus atop a lion. Although Mañjusrî never actually appears in the play, the principal actor plays the part of a youth in the first act and then reappears in the second as a lion, both suggesting the presence of the bodhisattva.

When Jakushô first sees the bridge, he exclaims that he would like to cross it, but the youth then appears on stage to explain, in lines spoken by the chorus, that only the most holy of monks are able to do so with the Buddha's help. As the youth exits, the chorus notes that we now can hear the music of Mañjusrî's Pure Land, alluding to Jakushô's deathbed poem from the *setsuwa* collections

19 I have translated the play as "Stone Bridge (*Shakkyô*)," in *Japanese Language and Literature* 37.2 (Oct. 2003) pp. 105–16.

that place it in two different locations. The lion then appears and performs a spectacular dance, far more colorful and lively than one normally associates with the austere noh theater. The end of the dance brings the play to an abrupt conclusion, but one imagines that Jakushô will eventually achieve his goal of crossing the Stone Bridge and thus attain rebirth in Mañjusrî's Pure Land.

The best noh plays may be works of sublime beauty, but *Stone Bridge* is no dramatic masterpiece. Its first act is repetitious and only loosely connected to the second act. Because the dance is clearly the best part of the play, today it is typically performed alone. Although one can only speculate on what the playwright had in mind, perhaps his plan was to bring together elements he expected his audience to find familiar and auspicious: Jakushô and Mañjusrî, plus the geographically incongruous Wutai and Stone Bridge. Then he added a crowd-pleasing dance. At some point, however, performers apparently discovered that audiences responded only the dance in the second act and so they abandoned the rest of the play. Thus, in the interest of creating an entertaining performance, the elements of the play tying it, even loosely, to either the historical Jakushô or the stories about him disappeared, leaving only a spectacle that is pleasing to watch.

This practice hints at an aspect of noh drama that is sometimes overlooked. Although noh indeed preserves a continuous performing tradition that is over six centuries old, it has not been always the living theatrical fossil it appears to be today. The performance history of *Stone Bridge* is not been fully documented and the best modern annotated edition is based on a relatively version, dating from 1657. Surviving details, however, reveal that what modern audiences see is not the same as the original play. By the beginning of the Edo period, it had been dropped from the repertoire because it was too difficult to perform. In 1718, a noh actor wrote that, when the founder of the Tokugawa shogunate Ieyasu 家康 (1543–1616, in office 1603–05), wanted to see “Stone Bridge,” he could not find anyone to perform it, and so eventually his son and successor Hidetada 秀忠 (1578–1632, in office 1605–23) ordered that it be revived.²⁰ Today, it is performed in several versions that differ significantly. In some schools of noh, the principal actor appears in the first act in the guise of a wood-gatherer or other rustic old man, not a youth, thereby eliminating a subtle hint at Mañjusrî's

20 Tokuda Chikatada 徳田隣忠, *Osewasuji Hikyoku* 御世話筋秘曲, in *Osewasuji Hikyoku: Shakkyô no Enkaku* 御世話筋秘曲:「石橋」の沿革, Sakamoto Setchô 坂元雪鳥 ed., *Nôgaku Shiryô*, vol. 1 (Wan'ya Shoten, 1933), pp. 71–72. In 1651, a *kyôgen* actor had already noted the story of Hidetada, although he omitted Ieyasu; see Ôkura Toraakira, *Waranbegusa* わらんべ草, Sasano Ken, ed. *Iwanami Bunko* (Iwanami Shoten, 1962) pp. 381–86.

presence. The most conspicuous variation is in the second act, when sometimes not one but two or more lions, parent and child, come out to dance, a practice that later would inspire a kabuki dance based on the play. The origins of these variants, unfortunately, are unknown.²¹

The kabuki theater offers a clue suggesting that around the start of the eighteenth century, *Stone Bridge*'s lion dance already had been separated from the story of Jakushô, for that is when kabuki actors began staging lion dances known as "Stone Bridge pieces" (*Shakkyô-mono* 石橋物).²² The earliest examples ignore events from the first act of the noh play and focus exclusively on the dance, thereby suggesting their creators either had seen only that part of the play, performed in isolation, or at least they agreed with modern critics who see little merit in play's first act. The oldest extant text to a Stone Bridge piece dates from 1734 and has a title that might be roughly translated as "Conjugal Lion" (*Aioi-jishi* 相生獅子). It was followed by two similar pieces, "Pillow Lion" (*Makura-jishi* 枕獅子) in 1742 and, again freely translated, "Emotionally Attached Lion" (*Shûjaku-jishi* 執着獅子) in 1754.

Although their original choreography is long lost, the dances have been reconstructed and today are staples in the kabuki repertoire. All three feature *onnagata* 女形, the male actors who perform female roles, and as their titles imply the plays have a distinctly erotic quality. Although they differ in detail, they share a general pattern. Each begins in an elegant room where an actor in the role of a beautiful woman appears. In most productions, she is a courtesan, although the plays have alternate versions in which she is noblewoman. At first she languidly dances while the chorus sings of love. Then, with the help of stage assistants, she removes the outer layers of her costume and places a lion mask on each hand, one red, the other white, representing a mated pair. Butterflies, held at the end of long poles by stage assistants, appear on stage and the "lions" playfully chase after them, eventually exiting. The scene shifts to a garden with a

- 21 Kaneko Naoki 金子直樹 "Kaisetsu 解説," in *Watashitachi Nihon no Kokoro: Nô to Kyôgen* わたしたちの日本の心: 能と狂言 22 (Feb. 1993) pp. 1–2 offers the only outline of the performance history of *Stone Bridge* that I have been able to find, although the published "singing texts" (*utaibon* 謡本) of the various schools reveal the differences in their modern versions, as do videotapes of performances available at Tokyo's National Noh Theater.
- 22 The entry "*Shakkyô-mono*" by Nishikata Setsuko 西形節子 in *Kabuki Jiten* (Heibonsha, 1983) p. 217 cites one from the Genroku era (1688–1704) that is no longer extant. This item is also a source for some of the material in the paragraphs that follow.

stone bridge, the music become reminiscent of that used in noh plays, and the principal actor reappears. With shoulders bared and long flowing mane, “she” has now become the lion, performs a lively dance, and makes a spectacular exit via the *hanamichi* 花道, a ramp running through the audience from the stage to the back of the theater. The term “stone bridge” appears in the texts, as do a few phrases from the original noh play, but Jakushô, Mañjusrî, and all other religious content is missing. These dances date from a time when dances by *onnagata* where particularly popular and were designed to show off the skills of leading performers. As with the original noh play, the final dance is the highlight.²³

In the nineteenth century, many aspects of Japanese culture were transformed, and the kabuki theater was no exception. One of the less conspicuous changes was that theatrical taste evolved and by the end of the eighteenth century, actors who played male parts had began to perform vigorous dances and soon new Stone Bridge pieces appeared to suit their talents. Some performers followed the example of the noh actors and simply cut the opening scene of the Stone Bridge pieces, leaving only the spectacular lion dance. Then, in 1820, a dance version of the noh play was created that kept the original title and left the text largely untouched but performed it in a new theatrical environment.²⁴ Thus, Jakushô, the internationalist who had indirectly inspired the Stone Bridge pieces, found his way into the world of kabuki dance just over three decades before Japan was forced out of its age of relative isolation. Although a revised version of this play is still performed, it does not share the popularity of other Stone Bridge pieces. The lion dances pleases audiences more than the pilgrim.

Greater change followed in the second half of the century as Japan first opened itself to foreign influences and the Meiji Restoration placed a new government in power. The world of traditional theater was touched by the spirit of the day, as new Stone Bridge pieces reveal. The first was “Two Lions” (*Ren-jishi* 連獅子), based on the variation of the noh play in which two lions appear in the second act. The kabuki version has the lions as father and son. The father kicks the son over a cliff to test his offspring’s fortitude and anxiously watches

23 Annotated texts and information about the history and performance of these plays can be found in *Nihon Buyô Zenshû* 日本舞踊全集 (Nihon Buyôsha), *Aioi-jishi* in vol. 7 (1985) pp. 201–24, *Makura-jishi* in vol. 5 (1981) pp. 483–507, and *Shûjaku-jishi* in vol. 3 (1979) pp. 180–202. For the latter two, texts with good introductions but no annotation are also in *Meisaku Kabuki Zenshû* 名作歌舞伎全集 (Sôgen Shinsha) vol. 24 (1972) pp. 8–18.

24 The text and background on the kabuki’s “Stone Bridge” are in *Nihon Buyô Zenshû* vol. 3, pp. 161–79.

as he scrambles upward to safety. Then they dance together. This piece was first performed on a small-scale in 1861 and revised for the kabuki, first in 1872 and again in 1901. The final version called attention to the piece's origins by placing it on a kabuki version of a noh stage. It also added a comic interlude before the final dance, in which two monks appear and argue over the merits of their respective sects. Unlike the historic Jakushô or the character in the noh play, these monks are comic figures. The second new kabuki play was "Mirror Lion" (*Kagami-jishi* 鏡獅子), first staged in 1891. It is based on one of the earlier Stone Bridge pieces, "Pillow Lion," but the principal character in the first part is now a maid in the shogun's castle who is ordered to dance with a lion mask on her hand. The spirit of the lion possesses her and she reappears as a masculine lion for the usual final dance. This play has become one of the most popular in the kabuki repertoire.²⁵

In ways not always obvious, these plays reflect the times in which they were written. Although today kabuki is treated as one of Japan's classical theatrical forms, its origins were plebeian and its content not a little vulgar. It achieved its current dignified status in part as a result of efforts made in the Meiji period. The transformation of Stone Bridge pieces illustrates something of the process. "Two Lions" adds a bit of moralizing about parental concern for a son and a child's efforts to succeed. Although it never mentions Jakushô, it contains more allusions to the original noh play than did the earliest Stone Bridge pieces and came to be performed on a noh-like stage. Since noh had always been a theater of the elite, moving the play closer to its noh origins elevated its status. "Mirror Lion" improved upon its earlier model, "Pillow Lion," in two ways. Although it did not eliminate love from the script, it expurgated clearly the erotic elements that started in the original version's very title. Less obviously, its first scene attempted to accurately recreate life in the shogun's castle, something that would have been illegal under the shogun's rule.

25 Annotated texts and information about the history and performance of these plays can be found in *Nihon Buyô Zenshû*, *Ren-jishi* in vol. 7 (1985) pp. 131–56, and *Kagami-jishi* in vol. 1 (1977) pp. 580–97. In *Meisaku Kabuki Zenshû*, they appear in vol. 18 (1969) pp. 300–06 and 279–85 respectively. Paul M. Griffith has translated both, and provided detailed introductions and notes on performance. His versions are in *Kabuki Plays on Stage, Volume 4: Restoration and Reform, 1872–1905*, James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter (Honolulu, University of Hawaii Press, 2003), pp. 38–55 and 346–64. The editors' introduction (pp. 1–36) is also very helpful. A DVD of Bandô Tamasaburô's 1992 performance of *Kagami-jishi*, recorded by Shochiku Co. Ltd., is available outside Japan from Marty Gross Film Productions Inc., Toronto Canada.

This nod toward realism helped make the play more “modern” and hence more socially acceptable. The spectacular dances characteristic of Stone Bridge pieces are retained and remain the principle object of audience interest. One goal of these plays, however, was to attract a slightly different, more elite audience. Again, the story was changed for the sake of its audience.

The story of how a pilgrimage in 1003 evolved into kabuki dances performed a thousand years later is complicated, and this paper cannot possibly treat all the steps along the way. Different though they are, however, both a pilgrimage and a dance can be seen as performances that had some sort of an audience. Although the pilgrim’s goal may not have been to please an audience, people took an interest in his experiences. As they retold and rewrote it, they improved upon the simple facts. Eventually, elements from these improved versions were staged and the original pilgrimage was dropped from the action, presumably because a pious monk failed to please an audience as much as did a largely secular dance. In other words, the exigencies of performance have colored the way Jakushô’s life has been, in some cases remembered or in other cases overlooked even in plays that claim at least a tangential tie to it.