

Dōjōji

A fourth-category play of attachment

Translated by Donald Keene

One of the more spectacular plays in the noh repertory, *Dōjōji* enacts what is possibly the best-known tale in Japan. The theme is misogynistic and reflects a widely held belief that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned. In this case, she is scorned by a monk. As in *Miidera*, the woman seeks to enter a temple and is admitted contrary to priestly orders. Whereas in *Miidera*, the mother achieves peace of mind and reunion with her son, the woman in *Dōjōji* turns into a fire-breathing serpent whom the priests are able to evict but are unable, or perhaps unwilling, to enlighten. It has not always been so. An earlier noh version of the story called *Kanemaki* (Coiling around a bell), recently revived after years outside the repertory, includes a much longer discussion of religion by the woman and ends with her achieving release from her passionate attachment. Although *Kanemaki* is sometimes attributed to Kanze Kojirō Nobumitsu (1435–1516), there is no hard evidence for this attribution and no indication of who was responsible for converting it to *Dōjōji*. Both plays were performed during the sixteenth century, but *Dōjōji* became the preferred version.

Dōjōji is technically difficult and serves as a kind of rite of passage to full professional status for the actor playing the shite role. Permission from the head of his school is required for an actor to debut in this role. The two most demanding aspects of the play, the rambyōshi dance and the leap into the bell, were added during the process of transformation from *Kanemaki* to *Dōjōji*.⁶ The rambyōshi, a dance that probably predates noh, was sometimes performed by shirabyōshi, the type of dancer who appears in act 1 of the noh play. Dancing a rambyōshi in *Dōjōji* used to be a specialty of the Komparu school (other schools included the dance in different plays), but now it is performed by all schools only in this play. The rambyōshi is danced to a shoulder drum solo. As the drummer produces a series of piercing, drawn-out calls, each followed by a drumbeat and a long pause, the dancer bends from the waist, lifts and turns her toe, raises her leg, stamps to the drumbeat, and

then remains still in the silence before the next call. The dancer traces triangles on the stage, matching the serpentine triangles in her costume and suggesting the climb up the stairs of the bell tower. The increasing tension as the two performers repeatedly strain to match the movements, drum beats, and drummer's cries creates a near hypnotic trance, broken only when the rambyōshi comes to a sudden end and a quick dance (*kyū no mai*) to the flute and all three drums begins.

At the climax of her dance, the dancer knocks off her tall cap and stands under the large bell prop with her hands raised. As the bell falls, she leaps into the air, and for a brief moment, there is only space between the rim of the descending bell and the floor. Within the dark confines of the bell, the actor must change his costume, mask, and wig without the usual assistance from stage attendants. By the end of the *kyōgen* interlude, he must have hung the discarded costume parts on the pegs in the bell and be in position, kneeling with his head covered by his robe and facing front. This is no easy task.

Dōjōji is usually labeled an exorcism piece (*inori mono*) and is grouped with two other plays about scorned women seeking revenge: *Aoi no Ue*, in which an ignored woman kills her lover's wife, and *Kanawa*, in which an abandoned wife attempts to kill her husband and his new wife. A broader category called *shūnen mono* (resentful attachment pieces) adds *Koi no omoni* (The heavy burden of love) and *Aya no Tsuzumi* (The damask drum)—two *noh* versions of the same story in which a man resents harsh treatment at the hands of a higher-class woman—and *Kinuta*, which features a lonely wife whose resentment causes her to suffer in hell. These plays are related to another group, *shūshin mono* (devoted attachment pieces), in which the main character longs for a loved one or for life in general, as in *Kayoi Komachi* and *Motomezuka*.

Donald Keene's translation of *Dōjōji* was first published in his *Twenty Plays of the Nō Theater* (1970). The Japanese text in Yokomichi and Omote 1963 describes several variations of the work. The editor made some changes in the translation (such as adding technical terms and expanding the stage directions) to follow the conventions used in this anthology and to reflect a specific performance of the play, that by Izumi Yoshio in December 1980.

CHARACTERS

SHITE: in act 1, a dancer; in act 2,
a woman serpent
WAKI: the abbot of Dōjōji
WAKIZURE: two priests of the temple
OMOAI: a temple servant
ADOAI: another temple servant

MUSICIANS

Chorus of eight to ten members
A flute, two hand drums, and a
stick drum

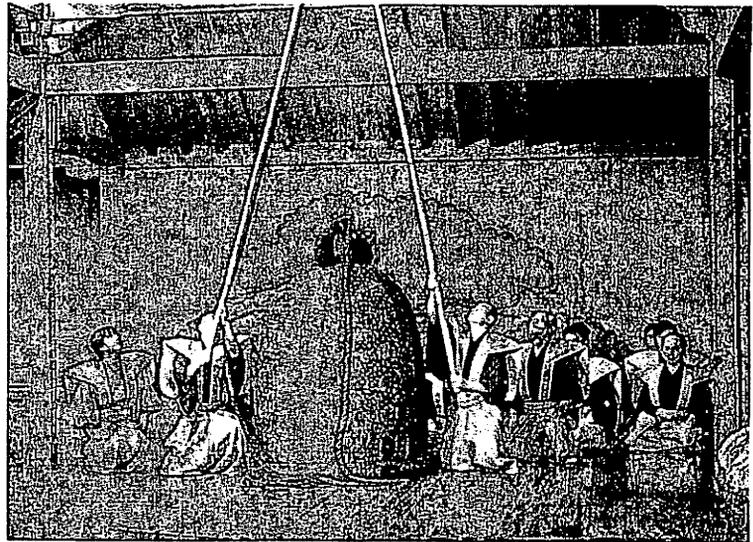


FIGURE 2.30. Dōjōji requires an unusually large number of stage attendants to carry the bell down the bridgeway and hang it from the hook in the middle of the stage roof. (Photo by Monica Bethe.)

ACT 1

The stage attendants carry in a large bell prop and hang it from a hook in the center of the stage ceiling.¹ Extra stage attendants remain in the left upstage corner of the stage to manipulate the bell later [figure 2.30].

Nanori flute entrance music *As the flute plays, the waki (abbot) enters, followed by the two The stage attendants carry in a large bell prop and hang it from a hook in the center of the stage wakizure (priests) and the two temple servants (aikyōgen). The waki goes to center stage, and the others kneel on the bridgeway.*

Nanori *Spoken, facing front.*

WAKI: I am the abbot of Dōjōji, a temple in the province of Kii. For many years, no bell has hung in the belfry tower of the temple, and for a good reason. I have decided lately to restore the ancient custom, and at my order a new bell has been cast. In the calendar, today is a day of good omen. I have ordered that the bell be raised into the tower and that there be a service of dedication.

The waki sits at the waki spot, and the two wakizure sit upstage of the waki.

Mondō *The waki calls toward the bridgeway.*

Servant!

WAKI: Have you already raised the bell?

OMOAI (*Approaching the waki, he kneels*): Yes sir, the bell is raised. Please see for yourself.

WAKI: Then we will hold the dedication service today. For certain reasons best known to me, women are not to be admitted to the courtyard where the ceremonies are held. Make sure that everyone understands this.

OMOAI: Your orders shall be obeyed.

He goes to the shite position and faces forward.

1. In *shimogakari* schools, the priests (waki and wakizure) enter first and order the servants (aikyōgen) to get the bell. They make a humorous scene out of carrying the bell in and raising it (see Keene 1970:241–42).

Fure

Listen, you people! The new bell of the Dōjōji is to be dedicated today. All who wish to attend the ceremony are welcome. However, for reasons known only to himself, the abbot has ordered that women not be allowed inside the courtyard where the service will take place. Take care that you all obey his orders!

He walks to the spot in front of the flute player and kneels.

Shū no shidai *The shite enters to quietly ominous instrumental music. She wears the middle-aged woman's mask (fukai), a long wig, a brocade outer robe, an inner kimono with a fish-scale pattern, and a crested garment tied around her waist. She stops at the shite spot.*

Shidai *Sung in the dynamic mode as she faces the rear.*

SHITE:

My sin, my guilt, will melt away,
my sin, my guilt, will melt away,
I will go to the service for the bell.

Nanori *(Spoken as she faces forward)*

I am a dancer who lives in a remote village of this province of Kii. I have heard that a bell is to be dedicated at the Dōjōji, and so I am hurrying there now, in hopes of improving my chances of salvation.

Ageuta *Sung in the melodic mode to congruent rhythms of the drums.*

The moon will soon be sinking;

Instrumental interlude.

the moon will soon be sinking;
as I pass the groves of little pines
the rising tide weaves veils of mist around them,
but look—can it be my heart's impatience?—

She takes a few steps to the right, then returns to her original position. This indicates that she has reached the temple.

Dusk has not yet fallen, the sun's still high,²
but I have already arrived;
I am here at the temple of Dōjōji.

She faces forward.

Tsukizerifu *(Spoken)*

My journey has been swift,
and now I have reached the temple.
I shall go at once to watch the ceremony.

2. There is a play here on the name of the river Hitaka (sun high), on whose banks the Dōjōji is located.

Mondō *She moves toward the center of the stage. The omoai rises and moves toward the front of the stage [figure 2.31].*

OMOAI: Stop! You can't go into the courtyard. Women aren't allowed. Go away immediately.

SHITE: I am a shirabyōshi dancer who lives nearby, and I am to perform at the dedication of the bell. Please let me see the ceremony.

OMOAI: A dancer? That's right, I suppose she doesn't count as an ordinary woman.³ *(To the shite)* Very well, I'll let you into the courtyard on my own, but in return you must dance for me. *(He goes in front of the flute player, picks up a tall court cap lying on the stage, and brings it to the shite)* Here, take this hat. It just happened to be around. Put it on, and let's see you dance.

SHITE: With pleasure. I'll dance for you as best I can.

Monogi ashirai *To instrumental music, the shite goes to the stage attendants' position to alter her costume, and the omoai returns to the kyōgen spot on the bridgeway and sits beside the adoai. The attendants help the shite put on the tall cap.*

Ashirai *The shite goes to the first pine and stares up at the bell. The taiko drum begins a solo passage, rapidly increasing the tempo, and she moves back onto the stage to the increased tempo of the drums. She stops at the shite spot.*

[Unnamed] *She stands just upstage of the corner.*

SHITE: How happy you have made me! I will dance for you! *(She describes her actions)* Borrowing for a moment a courtier's hat and puts it on her head. Her feet already stamp the rhythm.

Shidai *(Sung in the melodic mode)*

Apart from cherry blossoms,
there are only the pines,
apart from cherry blossoms,
there are only the pines.



FIGURE 2.31. The omoai, a temple servant dressed in mizugoromo, kukuri-hakama, and a zukin, addresses the shite, a dancer wearing a shakumi mask, warning her not to enter the temple grounds. The adoai is seated at the kyōgen spot. (Photo by Monica Bethe.)

3. Many texts have a section here in which the servant asks the priest for permission for the woman to enter. Although permission is denied, he allows her to enter anyway, because he wants to see her dance. This is usually omitted in current performance practice. *Kanemaki* has a long passage in which the dancer reveals her reasons for wishing to enter the temple grounds and the depth of her religious understanding.



When the darkness starts to fall
the temple bell will resound.⁴

Rambyōshi The shite dances to the shoulder drummer's piercing calls, drumbeats, and long pauses. She lifts the hem of her robe a little with her left hand and lifts and stamps her feet as if she were climbing step by step up to the bell. The drumbeats and the dancer's movements are matched, and they are repeated many times, with increasing tension [figure 2.32].

Rambyōshi utai Sung in the dynamic mode as the shite continues to dance.

SHITE:

Prince Michinari, at the imperial
command,
first raised these sacred walls,
and because the temple was his
work,
Tachibana no Michinari,
they called it Dōjōji.⁵

The shite stamps numerous times.

Waka Sung in the dynamic mode, to noncongruent rhythms.

CHORUS: To a temple in the
mountains

Kyū no mai The shite performs a rapid dance to the feverish music of the flute and the three drums.

Waka Standing at the shite spot, she holds her open fan in front of her face.

SHITE:

Now, on this evening in spring,
I have come, I have seen

4. *Kanemaki* includes a kuse scene here detailing the temple's founding.

5. The characters for Michinari may also be pronounced *dōjō*.

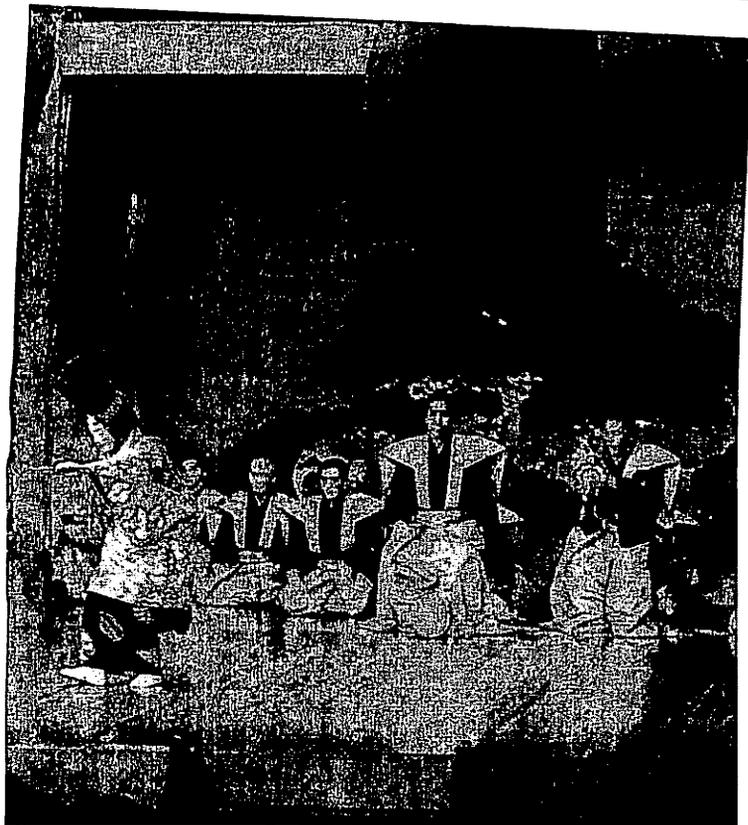


FIGURE 2.32. The bell has been raised and the shite has donned a tall lacquered hat (*eboshi*) to prepare for the *rambyōshi* dance, performed to solo shoulder drum accompaniment. The foot movements and posture are unlike those in a regular *noh* dance. The hip drummer in the top photo is in a resting position; in the bottom photo he has returned to his stool in preparation for the next segment. (Photos by Monica Bethe.)

CHORUS (*Sung in the dynamic mode to a strong, steady beat [ōnori] as the shite waves her fan to the left and right*):

the blossoms scattered with the evening bell;
the blossoms scatter, the blossoms fall.

Noriji *The singing and dancing continue quickly and rhythmically.*

SHITE:

And all the while,
and all the while,

Faces forward.

at temples everywhere across the land

CHORUS:

the sinking moon strikes the bell.

The shite moves forward and looks up.

The birds sing, and frost and snow fill the sky;
soon the swelling tide will recede.
The peaceful fishers will show their lights

She stamps, then makes a circle and goes to the corner.

in villages along the riverbanks—
and if the watchers sleep when danger threatens,
I'll not let my chances pass me by!

The servants have become hypnotized by the rhythm of the dance. The dancer looks at the waki and the priests.

CHORUS:

Up to the bell she stealthily creeps
Pretending to go on with her dance.

She holds up her fan and looks at the bell.

She starts to strike it!

She swings the fan back and forth like a bell hammer.

This loathsome bell, now I remember it!

She unfastens the cord of her hat, then strikes the hat from her hand with a blow of her fan. She stands under the bell.

Placing her hand on the dragon-head boss,⁶
she seems to fly upward into the bell.

The dancer rests her hand on the edge of the bell, then leaps up into it. At the same moment the stage assistant loosens the rope and drops the bell over her [figure 2.33].

She wraps the bell around her,
she has disappeared.

6. A metal ornament in the shape of a dragon's head on the bell.

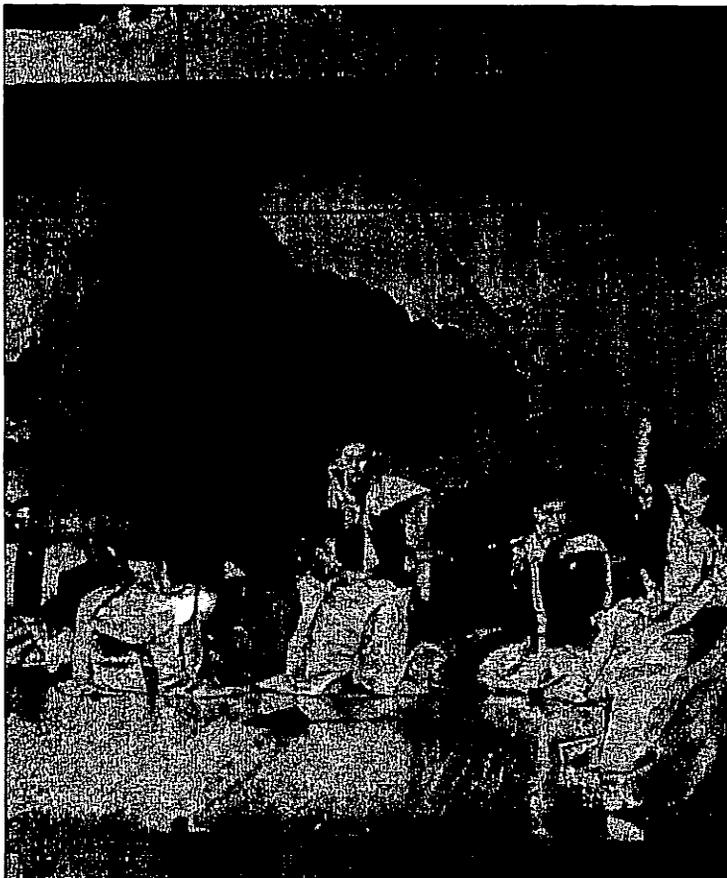
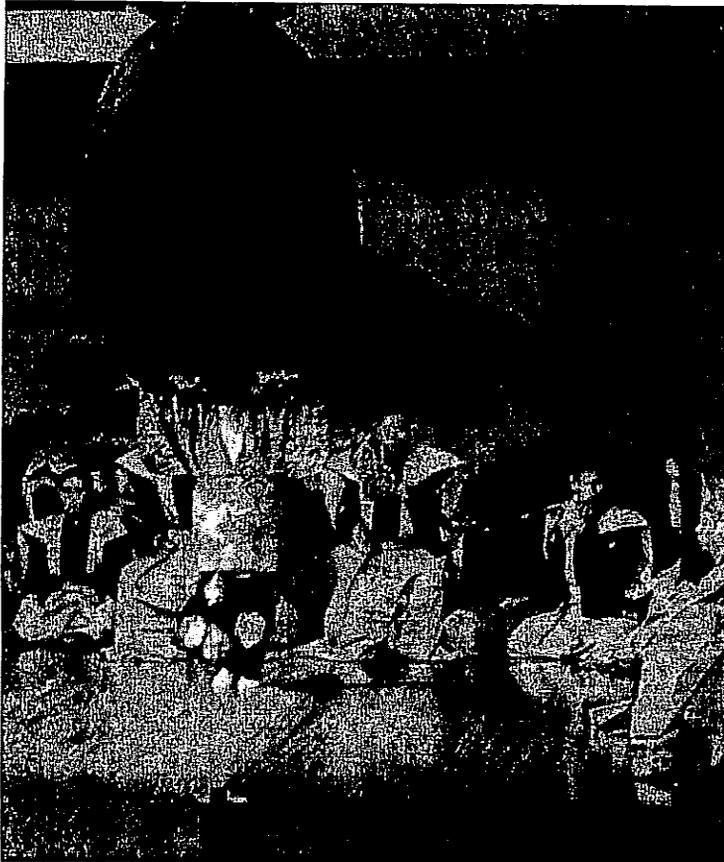


FIGURE 2.33. The dancer stands under the bell, touching the inside of the rim; she jumps up as it falls, leaving an empty space between the bell and the floor. (Photos by Monica Bethe.)

Kyōgen Interlude

Mondō The *aikyōgen*, who have been drowsing, hypnotized by the dance, wake up, startled by the noise of the bell falling. The *omoai* tumbles in confusion on the stage, and the *adoai* falls on the bridgeway.

BOTH (*Variously*):-Ho! Hi! What was that frightful noise? That awful crashing racket? I'm so frightened, I don't know what I'm doing.

OMOAI: That certainly was a terrible crash. I wonder where the other fellow went. (*He sees the adoai*) Hey there, are you all right?

ADOAI: How about you?

OMOAI: I still don't know.

ADOAI: No wonder. We got so carried away by her dance, we dozed off. Then came that awful bang. What do you think that was?

OMOAI: Do you suppose it was thunder? If it was thunder, there should have been some sort of warning—a little clap or two before the big one. Strange, very strange.

ADOAI: Yes, you're right. Whatever it was, the earth shook something terrible.

OMOAI: I don't think it was an earthquake. Look—come over here. (*He discovers the bell and claps his hands in recognition*) Here's what made the noise.

ADOAI: You're right!

OMOAI: I hung it up very carefully, but the loop must've snapped. How else could it have fallen?

ADOAI: No. Look. The loop's all right. Nothing's broken. It's certainly a mystery. (*He touches the bell*) Oww! This bell is scorching hot!

OMOAI: Why should falling make it hot? (*He too touches the bell*) Oww!
Boiling hot!

ADOAI: It's a problem, all right. What do you suppose it can mean? It's beyond me. Well, we'd better report what's happened. We can't leave things this way.

OMOAI: That's a good idea. Too bad if the abbot heard about it from anyone but us! We've got to do something. But I don't think I should be the one to tell. You tell him.

ADOAI: Telling him is no problem, but it would look peculiar if I went. You tell him—you were left in charge.

OMOAI: That's what makes it so hard! You tell him, please (*he pushes the adoai forward*).

ADOAI: No, it's not my business to tell him. You tell him. Hurry! (*He pushes the omoai.*)

OMOAI: Please, I beg of you, as a favor. You tell him.

ADOAI: Why should I? You tell him. I don't know anything about it.

The adoai leaves, and the omoai watches him go.

OMOAI: He's gone! Now I have no choice. I'll have to tell the abbot, and it's going to get me into trouble. Well, I'll get it over with. (*He goes up to the waki*) It fell down.

WAKI: What fell down?

OMOAI: The bell. It fell from the belfry.

WAKI: What? Our bell? From the belfry?

OMOAI: Yes, Master.

WAKI: What caused it?

OMOAI: I fastened it very carefully, but all the same it fell down. Ah! That reminds me. There was a dancer here a little while ago. She said she lives nearby and asked me to let her into the courtyard to see the dedication of the bell. Of course I told her that it wasn't allowed, but she said she wasn't an ordinary woman and that she was going to offer a dance. So I let her in. I wonder if she had something to do with this?

WAKI: You idiot! What a stupid thing to do! I knew this would happen. That's why I forbade you strictly to allow any women in here! You blundering fool!

OMOAI: Ahhhh (*bows to the ground*).

WAKI: I suppose I must go now and take a look.

OMOAI: Yes, Master. Please hurry. Help! Help!

He exits up the bridgeway, still crying for help.

WAKI (*To the wakizure*): Priests, come with me.

They stand up and go over to the bell.

Do you know why I gave the order that no woman was to be permitted to enter the temple during the dedication of the bell?

WAKIZURE: No, Master. We have no idea.

WAKI: Then I will tell you.

WAKIZURE: Yes, please tell us the whole story.

Katari *Spoken, with the waki at the waki spot facing front and the wakizure standing upstage of him.*

WAKI: Many years ago there lived in this region a man who was the steward of the manor of Manago, and he had an only daughter. In those days, too, there was a certain yamabushi priest who came here every year from the northern provinces on his way to worship at the shrine of Kumano, and he would always stay with this same steward. The priest never forgot to bring charming little presents for the steward's daughter, and the steward, who doted on the girl, as a joke once told her (*faces the wakizure*), "Some day that priest will be your husband, and you will be his wife!" (*Faces front*) In her childish innocence the girl thought he was speaking the truth, and for months and years she waited.

Time passed, and once again the priest came to the landlord's house. Late one night, after everyone else was asleep, the girl went to his bedroom and chided him, "Do you intend to leave me here forever? (*Faces the wakizure*) Claim me soon as your wife."

(*Faces front again*) Amazed to hear these words, the priest turned away the girl with a joking answer. That night he crept out into the darkness and came to this temple, imploring us to hide him. But having nowhere else we could hide him, we lowered the bell (*looks up at the bell*) and hid him inside.

(*Faces the wakizure*) Soon the girl followed (*faces forward*), swearing she would never let him go (*takes three swift steps forward*). At that time the river Hitaka was swollen to a furious flood, and the girl could not cross over. She ran up and down the bank (*looks left and right*), wild with rage, until at last her jealous fury turned her into a venomous snake (*three steps back*), and she easily swam across the river.

The serpent glided here, to the temple of Dōjōji, and searched here and there (*moves forward and looks left and right, then looks suddenly at the bell*) until her suspicions were aroused by the lowered bell (*stares at the bell*). Taking the metal loop between her teeth, she coiled herself around the bell in seven coils. Then, breathing smoke and flames, she lashed the bell with her tail. At once the bronze grew hot, boiling hot (*faces front and claps his hands together*), and the monk, hidden inside, was roasted alive. (*To the priests*) Isn't that a horrible story?

Mondō

WAKIZURE: Unspeakable! The worst I have ever heard!

WAKI: I have felt her jealous ghost around here, and I feared she might bring some harm to our new bell. All our austerities and penances have been for strength in this moment. Pray with all your hearts. Let us try to raise the bell again.

WAKIZURE: We will, Master.

ACT 2

Notto *The waki and wakizure put their fans in their waistbands and take out their Buddhist rosaries. As the instruments begin playing forcefully, they approach the bell [figure 2.34].*



FIGURE 2.34. The priests rub their rosaries and pray to raise the bell. The shite has changed his mask and costume in the dark interior of the bell without the aid of stage attendants. (Photo by Monica Bethe.)

Unnamed *Sung in the dynamic mode.*

WAKI:

Though the waters of Hitaka River seethe and dry up,
though the sands of its shores run out,
can the sacred strength of our holy order fail?

They pray, their rosaries clasped in their hands.

WAKIZURE:

All raise their voices together:⁷

WAKI:

to the East, the Guardian King, Conqueror of the Three Realms;

WAKIZURE:

to the South, the Guardian King, Conqueror of the Demons;

Their hands remaining together in prayer, they stare at the bell.

WAKI:

to the West, the Guardian King, Conqueror of Evil Serpents and Dragons;

WAKIZURE:

to the North, the Guardian King, Conqueror of Frightful Monsters;

WAKI:

and you in the Center, Messenger of the Sun, All-Holy Immovable One,

7. The following passage is a prayer much favored by yamabushi priests for invoking the five *myōō*, or *rajas*, the messengers of Vairocana's wrath against evil spirits.

ALL THREE (*Holding their rosaries between the palms of their upraised hands, they rub them together furiously at each of the following lines*):

Will you make the bell move?

Show us the power of your avenging noose!

Namaku samanda basarada

senda makaroshana sowataya

un tarata kamman

“I dedicate myself to the universal diamond,
may this raging fury be destroyed!”⁸

“He who harkens to My Law shall gain enlightenment,
he who knows My Heart will be a Buddha in this flesh.”

Now that we have prayed
for the serpent’s salvation,
what rancor could it bear us?

As the moon at daybreak

WAKI:

strikes the hanging bell—

Noriji *Chanted to a steady beat as the priests rub their rosaries.*

CHORUS:

Look! Look! It moves!

Pray with all your hearts!

Pray to raise the bell!

The stage attendants raise the bell a little as the shite shakes it from within.

Here the priests, joining hands,
invoke the sacred spell of the Thousand-Handed One,

The priests back up, slowly rubbing their beads.

the Song of Salvation of the Guardian King,
the Immovable One, the Flaming One.

Black smoke rises from their frantic prayers,

Frantically rubbing their rosaries.

and as they pray,
and as they pray,
though no one strikes the bell,
it sounds!

The shite inside the bell strikes cymbals.

Though no one tugs the rope, the bell begins to dance!

The stage attendants raise the bell up higher, and the shite shakes it.

Soon it rises to the belfry tower,
look! A serpent form emerges!

8. This is the mantra of Fudō, the Immovable One, and the following quotation is part of the w of Fudō.

Inori *The attendants lift the bell completely. The shite is kneeling, face to the floor, with her brocade robe covering her head. She rises, lowering the robe behind her to reveal her transformation into a demonic figure [figure 2.35]. The flute and drums play strong rhythms as she stands, wraps the robe around her, and tries to drive away the waki. The waki and wakizure pray, trying to subdue her. The shite is driven onto the bridgeway, where she drops her outer robe. Then she is forced back as far as the curtain, only to turn on the waki again, this time making him withdraw. She stands with her back to the shite pillar, throws one arm around it, pauses, and then invades the stage again. She tries to pull down the bell, but the waki forces her to the ground with the power of his rosary. The demon rises again, and during the following passage sung by the chorus, she and the waki struggle.*



FIGURE 2.35. When the bell is raised, the dancer has been transformed into a demonic figure. As she stands, she wraps a robe around her, later shedding it as a serpent would shed its skin. She wears long red hakama, a *hannya* mask, and a red headpiece (*kashira*) and carries a demon's mallet. (Courtesy of Eileen Katō.)

Chūnoriji *Chanted in half-beat rhythm as the instruments play loudly. The shite advances and falls back as the waki rubs his beads [figure 2.36].*

CHORUS:

Humbly we ask the help of the Green-Bodied,
 the Green Dragon of the East,⁹
 humbly we ask the help of the White-Bodied,
 the White Dragon of the West;
 humbly we ask the help of the Yellow-Bodied,
 the Yellow Dragon of the Center,
 all ye countless dragon kings of the three thousand worlds;
 have mercy, hear our prayers!
 If now you show your mercy, your benevolence,
 what refuge can the serpent find?
 And as we pray,
 defeated by our prayers,
 behold the serpent fall!

She staggers back under the pressure of the waki's prayers and drops to the ground.

9. This begins the invocation to the five dragon kings, only three of which are included in the play.



FIGURE 2.36. The demon fights against the priests, in a group (*inori*) and then against the waki alone. In the picture at the top, she wears a bold robe wrapped around her hips (*koshimaki*) rather than long *hakama*. In both cases the upper kimono (*surihaku*) has triangles to suggest the scales of a serpent. (Top: courtesy of the Noh Research Archives of Musashino Women's College; bottom: photo by Monica Bethe.)

Again she springs to her feet,
the breath she vomits at the bell
has turned to raging flames.

She rises and rushes to the bridgeway.

Her body burns in her own fire.
she leaps into the river pool,

She rushes through the curtain.

into the waves of the river Hitaka
and there she vanishes.

The priests, their prayers granted
return to the temple,
return to the temple.

*The waki performs the closing stamps
at the shite spot and exits up the
bridgeway, followed by the wakizure.*