Parody in Kyūgen. Makura Monogurui and Tako

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Stable URL: http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0027-0741%28198423%2939%3A3%3C261%3APIKMMA%3E2.0.CO%3B2-1

Monumenta Nipponica is currently published by Sophia University.
Parody in *Kyōgen*

*Makura Monogurui* and *Tako*

by **Carolyn Haynes**

In parody, the characteristic style or themes of a work are imitated in such a way as to make the original appear ridiculous, especially by applying them to inappropriate subject matter. Parody is a singular form of art insofar as it has no independent existence. The etymological derivation of the term from the Greek *para-oidē παρά οίδη*, 'songs sung beside', is indicative of its relationship to a 'parent' work. In this most literal sense, parody is an apt term for *kyōgen* 狂言, comic interlude drama, for it developed and is still usually performed side by side with classical noh plays. Although the humor of *kyōgen* is by no means solely derived from parody, a number of plays in the repertory skillfully exploit structures and motifs that are prominent in noh, turning them to humorous effect by undermining the audience's expectations. The present article explores the various ways in which two *kyōgen* pieces, *Makura Monogurui* 枕物狂 ('Pillow Mania') and *Tako* 蛙 ('The Octopus'), imitate and transform into comedy the themes and formal structures of noh.

The story of *Makura Monogurui* is typical *kyōgen* fare: an old man is so infatuated with a young girl that he behaves abnormally. This common theme is here portrayed both for the humor of its incongruity and for the fundamental auspiciousness of its resolution, which partakes more of the nature of a fertility rite (to which it may be related historically) than of the realm of the probable. In its structure and language, however, the play is clearly indebted to noh.

The opening scene is typical of both *kyōgen* and noh: the secondary characters (the grandsons) announce their identity and the situation (a rumor that their grandfather is in love), and then set out to visit the old man. After the entrance of the *shite*, the principal character, parallels with noh on the levels of sight, sound, and meaning are consistent and striking. In his physical appearance, the old man...
resembles the kyōjo 狂女, women deranged by longing for lost children or lovers, of the fourth-category noh plays. One sleeve of his outer robe is slipped off his shoulder and he carries a branch of bamboo. The branch is reminiscent of ancient shamanic traditions, where it served as the vehicle through which spirits descended to possess a medium. It remains in noh to indicate the possessed or obsessed nature of a woman crazed by grief.

While the bared shoulder and the branch recall the kyōjo, the rest of the shite’s appearance could not be further from the beautiful women of noh. He wears the ōji 祖父, or old man, mask, a type of mask that can be either pitiful or joyful, but in either case is characterized by a lopsided mouth, missing teeth, and one drooping eye, and the actor walks with the stooped gait of an old man. Tied to the bamboo branch is the symbol of his possession, a mundane pillow. Thus at the initial, visual level of perception, Makura Monogurui presents a humorous incongruity. The shite’s dress and prop betoken a beautiful woman driven mad by the power of love, but the rest of his appearance is either sad or silly, and the sacred wand of the shamaness is profaned by an object symbolizing carnal desire.

The shite’s entrance is accompanied by the flute and hand drums of noh, which rarely perform in kyōgen, playing a sagariha 下り端, a pattern taken from noh. The shite begins to describe his plight, singing in noh-style utai 説. The chorus, also seldom used in kyōgen, soon takes over as the shite starts to dance. As in noh, the verbal presentation of the shite’s situation is made through allusion and word play. Predictably, the unifying motif in this section is one of pillows; this portion of the play can in fact be seen as a list (monotsukushi 物尽) of different kinds of pillows.²

The old man’s first words express his problem clearly: he is crazed, driven to madness, by the pillow, which reminds him of the woman he loves. He proceeds to couch his complaints in a phrase from a well-known classical poem.³ Lines from this poem figure prominently also in the noh play Matsukaze 松風, where they highlight the climactic moment when the shite succumbs to her obsessive longing and, in a possessed state, believes that she sees her lover before her.⁴ Then follows a pun on makura, or pillow. The phrase sasa no harimakura links the prop, a branch of bamboo leaves (sasa no ha) to the pillow attached to it by pivoting on the ha of harimakura 張枕, a papier-mâché pillow. The passage concludes with a popular song that is itself a monotsukushi of pillows: the pillow of the lover’s arm, the pillow of the speaker’s own sleeve, the personified pillow that shuns the speaker even as the lover does.⁵

² Brazell, p. 7.
Thus the shite paints a verbal picture of his state of mind, lending it elegance and intensity with the reference to the classical poem, known also for its association with the tragic obsession of Matsukaze, but at the same time suggesting a light-hearted, self-mocking quality through word play and the inclusion of a popular song about love. The kyōgen touch is unmistakable in the mismatched levels of the literary and performance forms here—monotsukushi, allusions to literature, instrumental music, dance, and noh-style chanting (here made more imposing by the use of the chorus)—and its humble, slightly risqué content.

With the conclusion of the opening section, speech returns to the level of normal spoken delivery in kyōgen as the grandsons engage the shite in a dialogue, comparable to the mondo 間答, or spoken exchange, of noh. The old man is careful to disguise his infatuation by hiding its symbol, the pillow, within his clothing, and by pretending to misunderstand and deny his grandsons’ allegations. In an attempt to distract them, he offers to tell them ancient tales about love and does so in a katari 講り, a dramatic recitation of a type found also in noh. The katari provides literary and historical precedents for socially unacceptable passions such as the shite’s own. Both stories concern monks whose love violates their vows of celibacy. The first is a story recorded in Taiheiki 太平記, late fourteenth century, while the second is based on an incident in Gempei Seisuiki 源平盛衰記, late Kamakura period. References to the latter tale, in which the priest Kakinomoto no Kiaki 柿の本の紀 throws himself into the river at the Kamo Shrine and turns into a green demon, are found also in the noh play Kanawa 鉄輪.

The old man becomes so excited by recounting these tales that he cannot refrain from expressing his own feelings, which he does by comparing himself to Kakinomoto. At the same time as he makes this explicit parallel between the story and his own situation, one that is dramatized on the formal level by the elevation of recitation into utai, he reminds himself (and the audience) of the unavoidable truth that his is not so impressive a situation. After all, his love is impossible not because it transgresses Buddha’s laws or because the object of his desire is an unapproachable empress, but because the humble girl he loves, whose only claim to beauty is her dimples, finds him physically repulsive. So rather than jumping into a sacred river, he decides to jump into a well and, unable to become a demon, he will at least become a frog. The sacred is thus transformed into the mundane, the terrifying dwindles to the ridiculous. Again, the incongruity between form and content is accentuated, the singing style becoming more elevated just as the meaning becomes most silly.

5 Kanginshi 関吟集, 171, an anthology of popular songs compiled in 1518. For further information, see Frank Hoff, Song, Dance, Storytelling: Aspects of the Performing Arts in Japan, Cornell University East Asia Papers 15, 1978, pp. 111–12 & 123–24.
6 This katari has existed as an independent performance piece in the Ōkura 大倉 school since the Meiji period, as well as in one branch of the now-defunct Sagi 資 school since the early nineteenth century. Furukawa Hisashi 吉川久 et al., ed., Kyōgen Jiten 狂言辞典, Tōkyōdō, 1976, II, pp. 330–31.
7 Yokomichi & Omote, NKBT 41, p. 351, and note on p. 443.
The grandsons bring the old man back to earth by pointing out that he has let the truth slip out. The phrase used here, *iro ni deru*, 'color emerges', is a poetic expression commonly found in noh to refer to the revealing of a character's true identity. In *Makura Monogurui* it has a felicitous multiple meaning: metaphorically, the old man's true feelings are showing, and literally, the color is rising in his face as he flushes with excitement and embarrassment. *Iro* is also found in classical literature in reference to passion or sexuality, and here indeed the old man's renewed sexual interest comes once more to the fore.

Realizing that there is no point in further prevarication, the old man tells his grandsons how he saw and was smitten by the young girl Oto at a religious gathering. He couldn't refrain from pinching her, whereupon she scolded him and threw at him the thing she found closest to hand—her pillow. This, the climactic moment of the play, is accentuated on all levels. The flute and drums join in and the recitation rises to *utai* just as the content degenerates to the least poetic and most profane ('What a dirty old man!'). With mention of the pillow, the *shite* retrieves the pillow from the bosom of his robe and begins a mimetic dance with it, reenacting the moment when the pillow hit him in the face and he saw black (a pun on *makura*, 'pillow', and *makkura* 真暗, 'completely black'). At this point the pillow becomes not only the symbol but the object of his possession, for it reminds him of the girl he longs for.

Here again we have a parody of the scene of obsession and transformation in *Matsukaze*. The lover's keepsakes in the noh play, an elegant court robe and hat, become the pillow that the irate Oto threw at the old man. The text, still in *utai*, follows the scene from *Matsukaze* almost verbatim. With the exception of one extra 'pillow' slipping into the text, the humor of this scene is based not on language but on the imbalanced equation of a silly old man's infatuation with a humble girl with the transporting love of a beautiful woman for a famous nobleman, a passion so great as to prove an indissoluble bond even in death. After Matsukaze 'sinks down in agony', she rises again in a state of possession and dances to express her longing. The agony of the old man in *Makura Monogurui* must surely be due in part to simple exhaustion, and when he rises it is to return to the world of reality. One of the grandsons has exited and returned with Oto, and they call the old man to come and meet her.

In this final part, the play returns to its model in the madwoman noh plays. When the grandson beckons the old man, his words are similar to those of the *waki* in the reunion scenes of madwoman plays. The old man's response incorporates an allusion to *Hyakuman* 百万, where the distraught mother is angry at the *waki* for not telling her earlier of her long-lost son's presence; then, as she approaches the child, she expresses her joy by comparing him to the udumbara (*udonge* 優曼華), a mythical flower said to bloom only once every three thousand years. In *Makura Monogurui*, the old man expresses his anger at being put to shame with the same phrase found in *Hyakuman*: *urameshi to wa omoedomo*. The following line, however, is altered and the parody is accentuated again by the recommencement of
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instrumental accompaniment. In place of tamatama au wa udonge no hana, the ‘miraculously or rarely encountered udumbara blossom’, we find tamatama au wa Oto goze, the ‘miraculously encountered girl Oto’, who is indeed unexpectedly brought before him.

Here the kyōgen departs once and for all from its noh models, ending on an auspicious, light-hearted note. To express his elation, the shite executes simple dance steps as he chants, ‘Genimo saari, yayoo garimo sou yono!’, a phrase that has the vague meaning, ‘Yes, it’s true!’, but is often used in kyōgen primarily for its sound value. He then beckons to Oto and they go off together. The Ōkura 大蔵 school has a particularly exuberant ending for this play: Oto jumps on the old man’s back, a humorous reversal of the traditional theme of the young bearing the elderly on their backs.8

The above discussion has illustrated the intricate, if not always subtle, ways in which a kyōgen such as Makura Monogurui parodies the noh with which it shares the stage. Scholars and actors of kyōgen acknowledge the structural similarities of such a play,9 yet there seems to exist little in the way of formal analysis of this relationship or even established terminology with which to describe it. The term nōgakari 能懸 (or 能掛), ‘noh-related’, has been in use since at least the eighteenth century and refers to kabuki as well as kyōgen plays that have structural and thematic parallels to noh, but the term is not employed with complete consistency in discussions of kyōgen.

There is, however, a traditionally acknowledged category of kyōgen grouped according to their relationship with noh. These are the five to ten plays known as maikyōgen 舞狂言, ‘dance kyōgen’,10 a group defined as those plays that take the form of a mugen 夢幻, ‘dream’, noh and center around the dance of the shite, who is a ghost.11 The assignation of plays to this category is established by the traditions of the three schools of kyōgen. All schools include Rakuami 楽阿弥, Tsūen 通円, Yūzen 祐善, and Tako; Ōkura also lists Nushi 塗師,12 but Izumi regards this play, called Nushi Heiroku 塗師平平 in its repertory, as only quasi-maikyōgen.13 In

8 This happy conclusion is typical of many kyōgen, which are positive and life-affirming even as they ridicule human excesses and foibles. In particular, plays such as Makura Monogurui reinforce traditional values and social structure. The importance of grandfathers in the strongly patriarchal society of late medieval Japan finds expression in the auspicious and likable roles of the old men in plays such as Makura Monogurui, Ōjida wara 祖父原, Mago Muko 孫甥, and Saihō 財宝. Nakamura Yasuo 中村雅雄. ‘Kyōgen no Men to Shōsoku’ 狂言の面と装束, in Ikeda Hiroshi 池田広司 & Kitagawa Tadahiko 北川忠彦, ed., Kyōgen:‘Okashi’ no Keifu 狂言:「おかし」の系譜, Heibonsha, 1970, p. 182.


10 Also referred to as shimaikyōgen 仕舞狂言, nisenō 偽能, and nōgakari.

11 Furukawa, p. 329.

12 Kobayashi, p. 216.

13 Nomura Manzō 野村万蔵, Kyōgen no Michi 狂言の道, Wan’ya, 1956, p. 59. Nomura does not offer any explanation of this qualification, but Kobayashi Seki 小林謳 notes that Nushi Heiroku is noh-like only in its second half and that there are other dissimilarities. Kobayashi is probably referring to the fact that the shite in this play is not actually a ghost but a living man pretending to be one. ‘Maikyōgen’ 舞狂言, in Kawatake Shigetoshi 河竹繁俊, ed., Engeki Hyakkakai Daijiten 演劇百科大事典, Heibonsha, 1960–1962, v, p. 216.
addition, there are plays considered maikyōgen existing in only one school’s repertory: Sugoroku 双六, Semi 螠, and Tokoro 野老 in Izumi 和泉, and Hamaguri 蟹蛤 (the only play in the group with a female shite) and Sazae 栄螺 in the now-defunct Sagi 鯉学校.

Of these plays, only half have human subjects, with the shite in the rest being creatures of the land, sea, or air. In a mugen noh, the ghosts of great warriors who died in battle or of beautiful women who died of love return to reenact in song and dance that part of their former lives to which they are still sinfully attached and which prevents their attaining paradise. In maikyōgen, on the other hand, the characters are more humble and their plights are either less tragic or at least less imposing. Rakuumi and Sugoroku concern master artists, of the flute and of backgammon respectively, who appear as ghosts. Although artists were esteemed in medieval times, they were socially far below the aristocrats and warriors portrayed in noh. In both plays, the secondary character, called in all maikyōgen by the noh term waki rather than the usual kyōgen term ado, is himself a devotee of the master’s art, and the two perform together before the ghost recounts his life and death and then returns to the world of the dead. Tsuëen also concerns a master artist, this time a famous tea master. An explicit parody of the noh Yorimasa 頼政, this kyōgen includes the dramatic reenactment of Tsuëen’s death. But whereas Yorimasa dances with sword drawn to describe his final battle, Tsuëen dances with his tea whisk, relating how he and his disciples engaged in a valiant struggle with a crowd of three hundred overly eager tea-drinkers. Yūzen concerns the most humble of the humans in maikyōgen. The ghost of an umbrella maker, a mere craftsman and an unskillful one at that, accosts a priest taking shelter from the rain (a fitting situation for an umbrella maker’s tale) and relates how he went mad and died after years of poverty owing to his lack of talent.

Just as the ghosts of the people portrayed here are of lesser station than their counterparts in noh, so the ghosts of plants and animals in the other maikyōgen are humble creatures. When noh portrays the spirits of animals, which it does only rarely, they are likely to be the majestic and auspicious lion or the malevolent spider demon. In the world of kyōgen, by contrast, we find the ghosts of more ordinary creatures: an octopus (Tako), a cicada (Semi), a mountain potato (Tokoro), a clam (Hamaguri), and a wreath-shell (Sazae), who return to this world not to shower blessings or to cause harm but to complain about their sufferings when they were caught, slaughtered, cooked, and eaten.

An analysis of the play Tako will help illustrate the structural and thematic parallels between this representative maikyōgen and the mugen noh that it parodies. The waki, a traveling priest, enters and chants a shidai 次第, an introductory poetic passage used in noh to set the mood of the play. He then announces his identity and embarks on a journey, signified by a few steps and an accompanying travel

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14 Although listed in the seventeenth-century Ōkura text Toraakibon 虎明本, Sazae is not in the current Ōkura repertory. Furukawa Hisashi & Nonomura Kaizō 野々村戒三, ed., Kyōgenshū 狂言集, Asahi Shimbunsha, 1964, 1, p. 38.
song (*michiyuki* 道行). He is accosted by a ghost, which disappears after begging that prayers be said for it. The priest calls on a local person to explain the identity of the ghost and then prays for the repose of its soul. The ghost returns in gratitude and dances as it tells the tale of its bloody death. The final lines indicate that it has been released from torment and has entered paradise, thanks to the efficacy of the priest’s prayers.

In terms of structure, the only significant difference between this play and a typical *mugen* noh is the brevity and directness of the *shite*’s first scene. What is often in noh a lengthy scene of poetic and ambiguous exposition, with the *shite*’s disguised identity revealed cryptically only at the end, is here reduced to the bare minimum as the *shite* states his supernatural identity explicitly and asks the priest to pray for him. There is no indication in the text that the *shite* changes costumes between his two scenes, as he would in noh, and his physical appearance expresses unambiguously his non-human (and non-tragic) nature from the very beginning. The Izumi school uses the *usofuki* 見吹 (‘whistler’) mask for this role, a mask whose contorted mouth and bulging eyes are deemed appropriate for the spirits of plants, insects, and fish. The Ōkura tradition calls for the *kentoku* 証德 mask, with its huge eyes, half-open mouth, and generally vacant expression. The *shite* also wears a special headaddress with a small octopus perched on the top. The rest of the costume is standard *kyōgen* attire, with no indication of the *shite*’s animal nature; he usually wears an unpatterned *noshime* 煮斗目 or *atsuita* 厚板 robe, *hakama* 袴 trousers with *kyahan* 腳幹 leggings, and a *mizugoromo* 水衣 outer robe.\(^{15}\)

In structure, therefore, *Tako* is simply a smaller-scale version of a *mugen* noh. Once again, however, we find the humor of *kyōgen* deriving from a juxtaposition of elevated form with inappropriate content. It has already been shown above that in *kyōgen* a humble animal, one which is commonly used for food, serves as a comic foil for the brave warriors and beautiful women of noh. The role of the priest who serves as the *waki*, always such a somber figure in noh, is also enlivened in *kyōgen* with some light-hearted ridicule. Mendicant priests were common in medieval times, but here the respect that they traditionally enjoyed is turned on its ear. In the lofty format of the opening *shidai* in *Tako*, the priest proclaims not the beauty of the landscape or the religious nature of his journey but the extent of his impoverishment, too poor even to afford a simple cup of tea. His pilgrimage to the capital is seen in the harsh light of practical economics; with his begging bowl as his only means of livelihood, he will make his way on the generosity of others, a social parasite. Furthermore, he admits that his native region is notorious for the dishonesty of its inhabitants, and so in his travel song he feels obliged to emphasize the sincerity of his own motives.

Even the minor role of the *ai* 間 is put to humorous effect. Although there is nothing amiss in his identity and speech, his explanation is inherently humorous. And in erecting a memorial to the spirit of an animal slaughtered for food, the

\(^{15}\) Nakamura, p. 183.
local people (represented by the ai) exhibit both a comical naiveté and a degeneration of the concept of goryō 御霊, the belief in malicious ghosts that can harm the living and need to be appeased by prayers and memorial services.

Finally, although this play is far less sophisticated from the literary point of view than Makura Monogurui, there is humor in the language of Tako in the form of word play. Most prominent are the corruptions of prayers and incantations that slip the word tako into the least likely contexts. These have been freely rendered in the translation below in an attempt to reproduce at least the tone of the original. In the opening line of his prayer for the departed octopus, for example, the priest’s anticipated phrase is Anokutara sanmyaku sanbodai 阿諾多羅三藐三菩提, an invocation extolling the perfect, universal wisdom that is the attribute of every buddha. In Tako, however, the phrase is altered to Anokutako sanmyakusan sen ni te kōte あのくたこ三百三センにてかうて, with the new meaning, 'Buying an octopus for three hundred and three sen.' The final line of the prayer is another travesty, this time of the nembutsu. Namu Amida or Namanda becomes Namadako, namandako, 'raw octopus', which is, not coincidentally, the most common way of eating octopus in Japan. It is the efficacy of these prayers in the name of ‘raw octopus’ that releases the tormented ghost from the hell of reliving its last bloody moments and enables it to enter paradise.

Another instance of language parody is the use of the title shō (or jō) 尚 indicating the rank of lieutenant in the palace guards, a title that is often employed in noh for old men but is here applied in mock respect to the ghost of the octopus. There is also a notable and perhaps deliberately overused repetition of the phrase, to kakikesu yō ni usenikeri, ‘so saying, it vanished,’ a line commonly appearing in noh to signal the preternatural disappearance of an otherworldly spirit.

In the foregoing discussion of Makura Monogurui and Tako, one recurrent aspect of kyōgen parody of noh has emerged: the incongruity of form and content. All of the humorous elements noted here ultimately derive from this imbalance, whether they are the accouterments of a madwoman in the hands of a silly old man, the tale of a fearsome demon degenerating into the image of a frog, or the spirit of a lowly creature imitating the dramatic dance of a tragic warrior and entering paradise through prayers in the name of ‘raw octopus’. Many of these situations are humorous in and of themselves, but the total effect of the plays can be appreciated only in light of their relationship to noh. This relationship is intimate in both time and space: the time of historical development as well as contemporary performance, and the overlapping spatial dimension of the stage on which the two dramatic forms are presented.

The audience for a kyōgen performance has, for the most part, a primary interest and concern in the noh on the program. It is safe to assume, then, that it will catch all the clues to the forms of noh that are parodied, will have in mind the beautiful woman displaced by the old man, and will recognize in the priest’s entrance an occasion for poetic imagery. By surprising the expectations of such an
audience, *kyōgen* presents a particularly fresh and affecting type of comedy in the Japanese theatre.

The following translations are based on the texts of the Ōkura school. For the translation of *Makura Monogurui*, I have relied primarily on the annotations by Koyama Hiroshi 小山弘志 in *Kyōgenshū* 狂言集, while for *Tako*, the edition edited by Ikeda Hiroshi 池田広司 and Kitahara Yasuo 北原保雄 in *Ōkura Toraakibon* 大蔵虎明本.  

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16 *Kyōgenshū*, i, pp. 196–201 (see n. 9, above), and Ikeda Hiroshi 池田広司 & Kitahara Yasuo 北原保雄, ed., *Ōkura Toraakibon*: *Kyōgen no Kenkyū* 大蔵虎明本: 狂言の研究, Hyōgensha, 1974, ii, pp. 399–401.
Makura Monogurui

Pillow Mania

Shite GRANDFATHER
Ado GRANDSON A
Ado GRANDSON B
Ado OTO

Grandson A enters, followed by Grandson B. Grandson A stops at the jōza, and Grandson B sits in front of the flute player.

GRANDSON A
I am a resident of this area. I have a grandfather who has, I hear, fallen in love. It hardly seems likely but everyone tells me it’s true, so today I am going to visit him and see for myself. I have a cousin who lives nearby. I think I’ll ask him to join me, since this is a family matter. Well, I must get going.

He begins to walk.

If he’s at home, this trip will be worth the trouble. But if he’s out, what a waste of time this will prove!

After circling the stage once, he stops again at the jōza.

My, here I am already! First, I’ll see if he’s in. Hello there, is anyone home?

GRANDSON B
Stands. There’s someone out front. Who’s there? Who is it?

Crosses to the wakiza.

GRANDSON A
It’s me.

GRANDSON B
Oh, it’s you! There’s no need to be so formal. Why didn’t you come straight in without calling?

GRANDSON A
I knew there was no need, but I was afraid you might have guests so I called first.

GRANDSON B
That was very considerate of you. Well, what brings you here today?

GRANDSON A
It’s nothing very important, but I hear that Grandfather has fallen in love. Do you know anything about it?

GRANDSON B
I’ve heard the same thing, but I couldn’t believe it. Is it really true?

GRANDSON A
Indeed, it appears to be. I thought today we should go visit him and see what’s happening. I certainly hope we’ll be able to help bring him some pleasure in his old age. What do you think?

GRANDSON B
I think that’s an admirable idea.

GRANDSON A
In that case, after you.
GRANDSON B  No, you go first.
GRANDSON A  You want me to go first?
GRANDSON B  That will be best.
GRANDSON A  Walking. Well, then, let’s go, let’s go.
GRANDSON B  Following. I’m coming, I’m coming.
GRANDSON A  Falling in love at Grandfather’s age is unseemly, but I hope we’ll be able to bring him some pleasure in his old age.
GRANDSON B  It certainly is preposterous, but I’d like to help him too.
GRANDSON A  Having circled the stage, stops at the edge of the bridgeway.
     Ah, here we are already!
GRANDSON B  At the jōza. So we are.
GRANDSON A  Now, let’s see if he’s home.
GRANDSON B  A fine idea.
     Both face the curtain and call out.
GRANDSON A  Hello, Grandfather! Your grandsons . . .
GRANDSON A  . . . have come to visit you. Come quickly!
GRANDSON B
     Both go and sit in front of the flute player. As sagihara music is played, Grandfather enters carrying a branch of bamboo to which a small pillow is tied. The right sleeve of his outer robe is slipped off the shoulder, indicating his obsessed state. He stops at the first pine. The chorus has entered through the side door shortly before and sits at the back of the stage.

GRANDFATHER  Am I crazed by this pillow?
     sagariha  he dances.
CHORUS  Am I crazed by this pillow?
     sung  I lie down but cannot sleep,
       Neither can I arise.
       It’s because of this pillow.
       From it ‘and from the foot of my bed
       Love comes pursuing.'17
       I cannot even rest.
       Bewitched by a pillow,
       I’m a block-headed pillow!18
GRANDFATHER  Ariya! Pillow, you’re stuck on bamboo
CHORUS  Ariya! Pillow, you’re stuck on bamboo
But your owner wants to pillow with Oto,
He’s stuck on her!
‘On nights when we meet, I have your arm-pillow,
When you do not come, I have only my sleeve-pillow.
Oh pillow! My bed is too big!
Come to me, pillow; come here, pillow!

17 Quotation from a poem in Kokinshū; 18 A pun pivoting on the word ki, meaning both ‘heart’ and ‘wooden’.
Am I shunned even by my pillow?  
Oh, what a state I’m in!  
*Genimo saari, yayoo garimo soo yono!*  
*As the singing ends, the grandsons go to the edge of the bridgeway.*

**GRANDSON A**  Hello there, Grandfather! Your grandsons . . .

**GRANDSON A**  . . . have come to visit you!

**GRANDFATHER**  *At the first pine.* What’s that? You say my grandsons have come to visit?

**GRANDSON A**  That’s right.

**GRANDFATHER**  Well, well! How good of you! Come over here!

**GRANDSON A**  As you wish.

**GRANDFATHER**  Your old grandfather’s joints are stiff. Won’t you bring me a stool?

**GRANDSON A**  Certainly.

**GRANDSON B**  *To Grandson B. Get it, quickly.*

**GRANDSON A**  Certainly.

**GRANDSON B**  *Grandson A goes and sits at the flute pillar. Grandfather proceeds to the central position in front of the drums. Grandson B gets a stool from the kōken and places it behind Grandfather.*

**GRANDFATHER**  Sits. Come here, both of you.

**GRANDSON A**  Certainly.

**GRANDSON B**  *Grandson A goes to the waki seat, Grandson B to the front corner of the stage; both sit facing Grandfather.*

**GRANDFATHER**  It’s been a long time since I’ve seen you. Yes, a very long time!

**GRANDSON A**  Neither of us have had much time to spare recently. That’s why we’ve neglected to visit you. We’re glad to see, Grandfather, . . .

**GRANDSON A**  . . . that you haven’t changed at all.

**GRANDFATHER**  No, I haven’t changed, but my grandsons seem to have forgotten me. Now I hear that certain lords are recruiting men. I think that in spite of my age I’ll go and become a bowman, or maybe I’ll become a musketeer!

**GRANDSON A**  Your resentment is understandable, but we have really had no time to spare. That’s why we’ve neglected to call. Well now, rumor has it that you are love-sick. Is it true?

**GRANDFATHER**  What’s this? You’ve brought me a love-fish?  

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19 A popular song in *Kanginshū*, 171; see n. 5, above.  
20 A pun based on the word *koi*, meaning both ‘love’ and ‘carp’.
Aah... GRANDFATHER

I'm delighted! But your old grandfather has such bad teeth, I'll just eat the soft parts—you can have the head and bony parts.

GRANDSON A Of course we'll give you a love-fish, but people are saying you are in love. Is it true?

GRANDFATHER What's this? That I'm in love?

GRANDSON A Yes.

GRANDFATHER What madness! What madness! Love and passion are for nineteen- and twenty-year-olds. What would a hundred-and-some-year-old man like me be doing falling in love? Love-fish, gold-fish—I don't know anything about such things!

GRANDSON A I understand your feelings, but we really have a purpose in coming today. We hope we'll be able to help bring you some pleasure in your old age. So please don't hide anything from us.

GRANDFATHER Well, I'm certainly not in love, but I can tell you some dreadful tales about love. Listen well!

GRANDSON A Of course.

GRANDFATHER You listen well, too.

GRANDSON B Certainly.
Once long ago the imperial consort Kyōgoku went on a pilgrimage to Hiyoshi Shrine. It happened that a breeze lifted up the blind from the window of her carriage for a moment, and the High Priest of Shiga Temple caught a glimpse of her and fell passionately in love. It was not the sort of thing he could keep secret and the other monks of the temple heard about it.

‘It’s not so terrible, really,’ they advised him. ‘But you should send her a letter; it will ease your heart.’

So he presented this poem to her:

‘The jeweled broom bestowed today—
The first Day of the Rat in the New Year—
When I take it in my hand, so softly,
Clearly sounds the jeweled cord.’

So softly, softly he expressed his love. Her answering poem was equally delicate:

‘May it lead me to a jeweled dais,
A lotus blossom in paradise,
This softly sounding cord of jewels.’

The virtue of this poem was so great that the High Priest’s passion left him and he rose to even greater prominence in the world.

Here is another story. The priest Kakinomoto no Ki was unable to quench his desire for the Empress Somedono. So he threw himself into the Mitarashi River at Kamo Shrine and was transformed into a green ogre, thus escaping from his passion.

This old man’s love, too, goes unrequited.
I’ve made up my mind,
I’ll throw myself into a well,
And if I can’t become a green ogre,
At least I’ll turn into a big green frog!

‘Love, O love,
Do not forsake me halfway to love.’

‘The winds of love blow,
Twining my sleeves about me,
Oh, how heavy are my sleeves!’

---


22 Man’yōshū 万葉集, 4493, composed by Ōtomo Yakamochi 大友家持 in 758 at a New Year’s ceremony in which courtiers were presented with ceremonial brooms like those used to sweep the sericulture rooms. In the Taiheiki story, the High Priest likens Kyōgoku’s hand to the jeweled broom of Kōmon’s poem; the jeweled cord refers to the priest’s heart, unable to remain silent about his feelings.

23 Kakinomoto no Ki 柿の本の紀, 800–860, was a Shingon monk and a disciple of Kūkai 空海. The story is based on Gempei Seisuiki 源平盛衰記, ch. 48.

24 Quoted from a song of unknown origin. The song appears in two other kyōgen, Kanaoka 金岡 and Ōjidawara, and the noh Koi no Omoni 恋重荷.
How weighty are the winds of love!"25

*He weeps.*

How I hate this fleeting world!

*Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Butsu!*

**GRANDSON A** Ah, your true colors are showing, even if you do pretend otherwise!

**GRANDFATHER** What do you mean? My color is showing?

**GRANDSON A** Yes, indeed.

**GRANDFATHER** Is it really?

**GRANDSON A** It really is.

**GRANDFATHER** Truly?

**GRANDSON A** Absolutely.

**GRANDFATHER** In that case, what is there to hide? You remember that Gyōbu Samurō at the crossroads was host for last month’s meeting of the Jizō Association?

**GRANDSON A** Yes, I remember. Samurō was host.

**GRANDFATHER** Well, you know Samu’s elder daughter. . . .

**GRANDSON A** Aah, it’s the elder daughter!

**GRANDFATHER** No, no, it’s not the elder! She has a younger sister, Oto.

**GRANDSON A** So it’s Oto?

**GRANDFATHER** Oh, oh, Oto was putting on her tooth-black when I wandered into the room. She said to me, ‘What is it, Grandpa? You’ve come a long way, so aren’t you going to chant the prayers to Jizo?’ When she smiled, she looked so pretty, with seven or eight, no, *ten* dimples as big as teacups!

**GRANDSON A**

**GRANDSON B** Really!

**GRANDFATHER** She was so pretty, I couldn’t help myself and pinched her bottom as I passed! Oto was angry with me and she spoke her mind.

**GRANDSON A** What did she say?

**GRANDFATHER** She spoke her mind. . . .

**GRANDSON A** What did she say?

**GRANDFATHER** *Singing.* ‘What a dirty old man!

**CHORUS** What a dirty old man!

*Dark and swarthy,*

*With gaps in his teeth and sunken eyes.*

*Have you gone senile, Grandpa?*

**GRANDFATHER** I’d like to hit you with my mirror!’

**CHORUS** But she didn’t hit me with that or with her rouge dish either.

*Grandfather takes the pillow from his sleeve and mimes to the following words.*

She grabbed this pillow and smacked me in the face!

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25 Another popular song from *Kanginishū*, 72.
My eyes saw black.
I'm hopelessly in love with Oto!
I stamp my feet in anguish and fall weeping.

**Grandfather**
*Stands and throws the pillow aside.*
Even when I cast it aside I cannot leave it.26
*Picks up the pillow.*

**Chorus**
When I take it up, I see her face before me.
Awake or asleep, 'from my pillow
And from the foot of my bed,
Love comes pursuing.'
What can I do but pillow?
I sink down in agony.

*He lies down in front of the drums. During this passage, Grandson A has exited along the back of the stage and returned with Oto, who wears a robe over her head. As the singing ends, Oto stands up at the waki seat. Grandson A removes the robe that has hidden her face.*

**Grandson A**
sung
Hello, Grandfather! Your darling Oto is here!
Come see for yourself!

**Grandfather**
sung
*Sits up.* Oh no, I'm lost! I'm lost!
How hateful! That you should bring her here
To witness an old man's shame like this.
How hateful it is, and yet. . . .
*He goes toward Oto.*

**Chorus**
Could this, miraculously, be my Oto?
It is! It really is!
*Genimo saari, yayoo garimo soo yono!*
*Dances to the jōza.*

**Grandfather**
Come, my dear, come over here!
*He beckons to Oto, who crosses the stage and exits, followed by Grandfather. Grandsons A and B then exit, and the chorus leaves through the side door.*

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26 The following lines, down to 'I sink down in agony,' are taken almost verbatim from *Matsukaze*. 'What can I do but pillow?' is changed from the original, 'What can I do but weep?"
Tako

The Octopus

Shite GHOST OF AN OCTOPUS

Waki TRAVELING PRIEST

Ai VILLAGER

Priest sung
Too poor to buy a cup of tea,
Hither and yon I roam,
Too poor to buy a cup of tea,
Hither and yon I roam.
Where will this wandering end?

spoken I am a man from the region of Tsukushi. Since I have not yet been to see the capital, I think I will take my alms bowl and beg my way there.

sung Tsukushi men are said to be knaves,
Tsukushi men are said to be knaves,
But these are sincere, the devotions
Bringing me now to Shimizu Shore.

spoken I have traveled quickly and arrived at the place known as Shimizu Shore.

Ghost sung I have something to ask you.

Priest Something to ask me? What is it?

Ghost sung I am the ghost of an octopus
Who passed away last spring.
Please take pity and pray for my soul!
So saying, it vanished.

Priest How extraordinary! I must ask a local person about this. Hello? Is there anyone around?

Villager What is it you want?

Priest It’s nothing important, but could you tell me whether there was an octopus caught around here last spring?

Villager There certainly was. Last spring a huge octopus was caught on this beach. People here had never seen such a big one so a crowd gathered to feast on it. Then, lest it seek revenge against those who caught it, they raised this monument to its memory. What makes you ask about it?
I only inquired because when I arrived here I heard a voice from somewhere calling, ‘I have something to ask you, priest.’ When I looked at it, it said, ‘I am the ghost of an octopus who passed away last spring. Please pray for my soul.’ Then it vanished. That’s why I asked.

Yes, that must have been the ghost of the octopus. Although you have only a passing connection with it, please stay and pray for it.

Yes, since this is the monument to its memory, I will pray for its soul here, fleeting though our bond may be.

If you need anything, please let me know.

Thank you, I will.

Now, there are many services that could be sung

For the ghost of Old Man Octopus,
But I will recite the Heart Sutra:
In the name of the Great Buddhapuṣṭa
I present an octet of prayers,
I present an octet of prayers.
Praised be the Exalted,
Praised be the Salted Octopus!

Ah, the ill-fated octopus!
Extraordinary! It is broad daylight
When one sees human dwellings, not spirits,
Yet surely this is not a man,
Although it so appears.
Tell me what you are!

I am the ghost of the octopus who spoke to you a while ago. In gratitude for your prayers, I have appeared again.

Is this really the ghost of the octopus?
Please tell me how you met your end last year.

Ashamed though I am, I will tell you how it happened. I lived for many years in the waters by this shore, evading the nets of the fishermen, swimming this way and that, until last spring they spread a large net offshore. I could not escape and so was caught and dragged up. My grimy hide was roughly scrubbed, and on a freshly planed chopping block. . . .

Ghost mimes to the following words.

I was stretched out.
Then across my back the cleaver fell:
My eyes saw black, my breath choked,
As they pressed me on my face,

The following lines contain puns on several Buddhist invocations; for details, see p. 268, above.
Spitting and sputtering, I fell,
Spitting and sputtering, I fell.
And so, when I rose again,
And so, when I rose again,
On all sides octopus was spread to dry,
Arms and legs chopped off for salting. . . .
But instantly I leave this suffering
And enter the garden of the Miraculous Law,
Attaining buddhahood.
How grateful I am
For a lone voice chanting
Praise to Buddha,
For a lone voice chanting
Praise to the Salted Buddhapus!
So saying, it vanished.