

Danjuro's Kabuki Theater and the Pilgrimages to Narita

Danjuro I's (1660–1704) popular performance of Naritasan Shinshoji Temple's Fudo Myoo in Edo (Tokyo), coinciding with an increase in leisure time for the townspeople, resulted in an increase in the number of people making the three-day one-way trip to visit the temple.

Eating establishments and places to stay that opened in the Edo period (1603–1867) to serve the needs of pilgrims to Naritasan Shinshoji Temple form the basis of the *omotesando* main route to the temple today.

The Ichikawa family have been involved for generations in welcoming pilgrims to Narita. The seventh generation of the Ichikawa line, Danjuro VII (1791–1859), became head of the family when he was only ten years old. He would become a celebrated master of modern theater, and established the repertory of the Ichikawa school, which is still performed today. Danjuro VII dedicated the first Gakudo (a hall to display votive offerings) at Naritasan Shinshoji Temple in 1821. Tea and sweets were served to visitors to the temple here.

Unfortunately, the Gakudo Danjuro VII dedicated burnt down in 1965. After the fire, a stone statue of him was restored and relocated to the second Gakudo, where it still watches over the temple.

Danjuro VII enjoyed the protection of the Enmeiin Temple after 1842 when he was banished from Edo during the Tenpo Reforms. The Tenpo Reforms attempted to stabilize the economy by enforcing simplicity, frugality, and self-discipline, which extended to Kabuki theater. Danjuro VII changed his name to Naritaya Shichizaemon, and ever since the symbol of the Enmeiin Temple has been the Naritaya *mimasu*, three interlayered wooden boxes, which may still be seen at the Enmeiin Temple.